

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 8 October 2008

Session 3

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 8 October 2008

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

Time for Reflection

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): Good afternoon. The first item of business today is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is Mr D Graham Sherry from Lenzie.

Mr D Graham Sherry: Good afternoon. The peace of Christ be with you all.

I am an elder in my local Church of Scotland church, but, more important, I am an enthusiast for the gospel. The Bible was written in Koine Greek, which was the language of the marketplace, so it is ideal for all Jock Tamson's bairns.

Scotland was once referred to as the land of the book, which is the book that I have here—the Bible. It is a dangerous book and should have a Government health warning on it. Mine has

“Danger. If opened, this book may seriously change your life”

on it, because it is a book that is all about change. Abraham was changed from a pensioner to a patriarch; Moses was changed from a slave to the leader of a nation; Paul was changed from a persecutor to a persuader; Peter was changed from a fisherman to a church builder; and I was changed. Maybe it changed you, or is about to change you. But see this book? It is pure dead brilliant.

We need to get back to the book. I am becoming more aware that the Lord wants the love and reverence for his word to be restored. Scotland has relaxed its grip on God. It is just as well that God still has a good grip on Scotland. He has an agenda to restore this wonderful land by sending his Holy Spirit in a move of revival, which prophetically has been foretold by many preachers in recent years. It is building like a wave, and it will shortly break over the northern isles and on to the mainland, and flow down the length of Scotland into England, then across into Europe. This will be a move of God to bring his people back to him.

When you went into a strange town and wanted to know where the entertainment was, pressing buttons on an illuminated map would show the cinemas, the bowling green and the churches. Press the revival buttons in Scotland and you will begin to see wee lights coming on for spirit-filled churches, Bible study groups, home/cell groups, men's prayer breakfasts and children's prayer

meetings—aye, children's prayer meetings. Do we notice them? Have we heard of them? Are we part of them? Aslan is on the move.

Now, a prayer.

Lord, we thank you that your word is sovereign. It has authority. Thank you, Father, that your desires for Scotland are so much greater than ours. Help us, by the power of your Holy Spirit, to seek your agenda, so that your will becomes our will.

In Jesus's name, amen.

Scottish Broadcasting Commission

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a statement by the First Minister on the Scottish Broadcasting Commission. The First Minister will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:33

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): In August 2007, the Government established the Scottish Broadcasting Commission to undertake an independent review of broadcasting in Scotland. The review is now complete, and the commission published its final report on 8 September. Today, I will set out how the Scottish Government plans to respond to the commission's recommendations.

The commission has set out a range of substantial recommendations to enhance the economic and cultural weight of the Scottish broadcasting sector, secure a better, fairer deal for the industry, and build a platform for long-term success. Those proposals would provide a vital economic boost to Scotland, amid challenging global conditions.

I put on record our appreciation of the work of Blair Jenkins and the commission. In particular, I welcome the constructive approach that the commission took over the past year, which was reciprocated, in the main, by this Parliament. Let us all acknowledge, in particular, the outstanding contribution of the late Ray Michie, both as a member of the commission and as a major figure in the democratic and cultural life of Scotland.

The commission has brought substantial expertise to a national debate. It sought views from across the political spectrum and engaged the broadcasting industry and the wider public. As a result, the commission's agenda offers a firm and common purpose for the future of Scottish broadcasting.

Even before the commission's inception, there was widespread acceptance that Scotland was underrepresented by the main television networks. Indeed, the 2006 report by the Office of Communications showed that Scotland's share of total United Kingdom production had declined from 6 per cent in 2004 to a measly 2.6 per cent in 2006. The commission responded swiftly to arrest that decline, and by framing its recommendations within the current constitutional settlement, it has enabled immediate action.

The commission's recommendations are far reaching. They propose nothing short of a blueprint for a revolution in Scottish broadcasting.

The Scottish Government's response to the commission will focus on three central aspects: first, delivering a fair share of network production for Scotland; secondly, creating a new Scottish public service network as a focal point for the long-term development of Scottish broadcasting; and thirdly, strengthening accountability and diversity in broadcasting, to ensure that Scottish interests are properly and fully represented.

The commission recommends that Scotland should receive a fair share of network production. It sets out the expectation that, as public service broadcasters, the BBC and Channel 4 should be obliged to establish a substantial commissioning presence in Scotland, and that both networks should devote a minimum of 8.6 per cent of programme budgets to commissioning programmes from Scotland. That target matches our population share and thus has some objective basis.

Furthermore, Mark Thompson, director general of the BBC, said in September last year that he regarded the 8.6 per cent target

"as a floor rather than any kind of ceiling."

As someone who uttered the very same phrase a mere six weeks earlier, at the commission's launch, I fully agree with Mark Thompson's analysis. Where we differ is on the pace of change: the BBC wants eight years to make the change, whereas the commission argues strongly that it can be made in half that time.

Certainly, new network commissions for Scotland will bring tens of millions of pounds of new investment into Scottish broadcasting. The industry must be ready to take full advantage of those opportunities. For its part, the Government will do all that we can in support, so we will act on key recommendations of the commission.

By the end of this year, Scottish Enterprise will produce a strategy for the economic development of the broadcasting sector that builds on the commission's analysis and recommendations. Our skills delivery bodies will work in partnership with the industry and our further and higher education sector to meet the skills needs of Scottish broadcasting, now and over the longer term. From its inception, as part of its remit, creative Scotland will take on a leadership role in the sector, bringing together the key partners to move Scottish broadcasting forward.

The commission's central proposal is for a new Scottish digital television channel, which will form part of a wider media network of Scottish content and be complemented by an online platform. The Scottish independent production sector will be able to provide the bulk of programme content. Scotland has never had its own universally available television channel—it is high time that it

did. Culturally, economically and democratically, Scotland deserves its own Scottish network. Such a network will be an important complement to the newly launched Gaelic language channel BBC Alba. Moreover, a Scottish network will strengthen our creative economy. It will help us to ensure that the best of our talent—whether writers, directors, producers or actors—can achieve real success here in Scotland. The new network will act as a global shop window, showcasing our country and our creativity to our friends abroad, not least the Scottish diaspora, which is estimated to be some 50 million strong.

The commission argues that a Scottish network is the missing piece in the United Kingdom's jigsaw of public service broadcasting. The Government agrees. Linda Fabiani has already written to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Andy Burnham, to make direct representations in support of the commission's proposals, in particular for the creation of a Scottish network channel. Shortly, I will meet Ed Richards, the chief executive of Ofcom, to pursue that case further. In January 2009, the UK's culture secretary will outline important decisions on the future of public service broadcasting. We are determined that Scotland's interests will be fully and fairly represented.

As for the funding of the new Scottish network, responsibility for public service broadcasting remains—currently—a reserved matter. We therefore fully support the commission's recommendation that the budget for the new Scottish digital network—estimated at between £50 million and £75 million—should be fully funded, whether directly or indirectly, under the remit of public service broadcasting. That is entirely just, as the UK Government already provides around £95 million annually to the comparable Welsh language channel S4C.

Broadcasting is vital to the cultural and democratic life of Scotland. Securing these positive changes will bring significant economic dividends for Scottish broadcasting. The immediate benefits may amount to an estimated £65 million in production activity by the major networks—BBC and Channel 4—and an additional £50 million to £75 million for the new Scottish digital network. In other words, there will be the potential to double production and create a truly sustainable, highly creative cluster in Scotland.

The Scottish Broadcasting Commission has recognised that a stronger accountability framework will be necessary in order to deliver change. If broadcasting is to be a window on the world, it must be a world that we recognise, portraying Scotland's identity and cultural diversity, and portraying the new confidence and ambition of our people.

The independent commission was asked to make its recommendations in light of the existing balance of constitutional powers. On that basis, it has recommended that arrangements should be set in place to ensure that Scotland has greater influence over the broadcasting that specifically affects Scotland, such as BBC Alba and the proposed new network.

We welcome the proposal that Parliament should take an active role in considering Scottish broadcasting and the services that audiences receive. We support the recommendation that the Scottish ministers should assume greater responsibility for functions that directly affect Scotland—specifically, for the appointment of Scotland's representation on UK broadcasting organisations and for the executive functions relating to MG Alba and the future Scottish network.

The commission proposes that Scotland should have an increased influence on broadcasting policy, which should fully reflect the diversity of the nations of the United Kingdom. The Government agrees, which is why we are pursuing Scottish representation on the Ofcom board: Linda Fabiani has already written to Ofcom in those terms. The Welsh Government has indicated its aim to seek similar representation.

News services have a vital role in Scottish broadcasting and in informing public debate in this country. The Government was concerned by the conclusions of Professor Anthony King's recent report to the BBC trust, which highlighted that

"BBC network news and current affairs programmes taken as a whole are not reporting the changing UK with the range and precision that might reasonably be expected".

That is an important finding and it needs to be addressed. The BBC is taking some action, and I welcome yesterday's announcement of changes that are designed to enhance the role and representation of the UK nations within the corporation. However, the issue is broad and perennial, so the Scottish Government will continue to press all the UK networks to ensure that news output meets the needs of Scottish audiences.

In conclusion, the commission's recommendations have set a clear and positive agenda for the future of Scottish broadcasting. The Scottish Government will respond to the recommendations where it has the power to do so, and will report annually to Parliament on progress, starting in September next year. Delivering the broad agenda will require firm commitment from all partners—the UK Government, the regulator, the broadcasting industry and others. Each will have to step up to the plate and exercise responsibility.

This marks the start of a sustained effort to deliver high-quality broadcasting that speaks for the people of Scotland and benefits them economically and culturally. The support and engagement of colleagues across this chamber have helped to bolster the case for change, and will continue to be an important source of strength. I reaffirm this Government's commitment to work with all partners, openly and constructively, to deliver the changes that we need for broadcasting and for Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The First Minister will now take questions on the issues raised in his statement. I intend to allow 20 minutes for questions, after which I will move to the next item of business.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I thank the First Minister for his statement and for allowing me early sight of it. I associate the Labour side of the chamber with his comments on the work of the commission, and especially those on the life and work of Ray Michie.

When the commission reported a month or so ago, the Scottish Labour Party welcomed its conclusions. We are not surprised that the commission says that Scotland has undoubtedly benefited from being part of the overall broadcasting ecology of the United Kingdom. We also agree with the commission that broadcasting should not be used as a surrogate for the constitutional debate. The proposal for a new Scottish channel and the recommendation that the BBC and Channel 4 should increase commissioning from Scotland are particularly welcome.

By their nature, many of the commission's recommendations are not for the Scottish ministers, but three important ones are: the requirements for Scottish Enterprise to produce an action plan; for Skills Development Scotland to realign its activities; and for creative Scotland to ensure a thriving creative content sector. In his statement, the First Minister committed to all of those. I ask him now to provide more detail of how he plans to do that, what specific requirements he will place on those bodies and what new financial capacity he will provide to allow them to meet the requirements without deprioritising their other responsibilities. In particular, what funding does he expect Scottish Enterprise to have to establish support for the broadcasting sector, as the commission recommends?

The First Minister: I thank Iain Gray for his remarks, especially those on Ray Michie. He rightly says that I addressed in my statement all the points about the obligations that are being placed on Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Enterprise and creative Scotland.

I am interested in Iain Gray's question on deprioritisation. He will acknowledge that, within a fixed budget for the Scottish Government, that is exactly the process that must be gone through throughout the Scottish budget. As he recommends—I presume in good faith—increased expenditure in one area, no doubt he will tell the chamber in which other areas he thinks that expenditure should be reduced.

I welcome very much Iain Gray's congratulations on the tone and content of the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's report. That is a huge step forward. In the dark days before he took control of the Labour Party in the Parliament, it made a submission to the commission that said:

"The Scottish Labour Party is ... concerned that this submission should not be used by anyone to portray support for or endorsement of the conclusions of this body, given our overriding concern that the commission's independence is compromised by the tone and content of the comments from the First Minister."

I am glad indeed that we now agree that it was a cross-party, independent commission. That point was recognised by Pauline McNeill in episode 1 of her article that appeared in *The Scotsman* today, when she wrote:

"The commission has lived up to its reputation for independence."

Unfortunately, by the later editions, that statement had disappeared—I hope not under the influence of any of Iain Gray's spin doctors.

Let us recognise that the commission has established its reputation for independence and has made recommendations on which we can all agree, and let us move forward on that basis.

Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): The Scottish Conservatives welcome the First Minister's statement on the Scottish Broadcasting Commission. I also endorse his comments in relation to Mr Blair Jenkins, the work of the commission and the late Ray Michie.

It was the Scottish Conservatives who first promoted the idea of a Scottish digital channel. That was at the heart of our submission to the Scottish Broadcasting Commission. The decision of the independent commission to recommend the creation of a digital channel is, therefore, welcome. In a spirit of conciliation, I congratulate the First Minister on his co-operation—yet again—in delivering another Conservative policy.

However, the fundamental issue of funding for the new digital channel remains, the cost of which is estimated to be about £75 million. There must be concern about who will be responsible for providing that funding. Does the First Minister agree that it would be unfair to burden taxpayers with another significant financial commitment, particularly in the context of the current global

financial crisis? Does he accept that it would be sensible to fund the channel commercially, either wholly or partially, through advertising or sponsorship? The commercial sector has expressed that it is willing and able to become involved in both funding and operating the new channel.

The First Minister: I am delighted to have Annabel Goldie's support, yet again, for a joint initiative. I assure her that, when the station broadcasts, it will not have Leeds as its final destination, unlike the train network that is being proposed by the Conservative party. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that she recognised from an early stage that the commission was independent and that its recommendations were based on the evidence that it received.

As she knows, the commission did not agree with the idea that the station should be commercially funded. It put forward two points of view on the funding, pointing out that the licence fee that is raised in Scotland amounts to something like £300 million at present and that direct expenditure by BBC Scotland is £140 million. Interestingly, the commission also pointed not only to the existing Welsh example but to the funds that will be available as a result of digital switchover, particularly from freeing up the analogue spectrum. Those funds run to many times the funding that would have to be committed to a public service broadcaster.

The commission was particularly swayed by arguments about competition, which is why it looked to public service broadcasting as the funding model, as opposed to the model that the Conservative party suggested.

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): I thank the First Minister for the advance copy of his statement and for his kind remarks about my colleague Ray Michie.

There is much in the First Minister's statement and the commission's report with which the Liberal Democrats agree. We hope that the First Minister will continue with the constructive and consensual approach of the commission by working with all parties in this Parliament to deliver the key recommendations.

The First Minister's statement recognised that much of what the commission recommends has to be delivered by others, but it contained little—just three paragraphs—on the areas that are under the direct control of his Government: economic development, skills development and leadership. Can the First Minister give us more detail about how he intends to address the serious deficiencies that the commission has identified and tell us who is responsible for providing leadership to ensure that the present and future skills needs of the

sector are identified and addressed and that the full economic potential of the broadcasting sector can be delivered?

The First Minister: I thank Iain Smith for his support. I should have noted that I understand that Blair Jenkins is in the gallery, watching over us.

The answers to Iain Smith's questions are contained in the commission's report and in the Government's response. The report argues strongly that there is some confusion about who is responsible for the aspects that he mentions—small though they might be in the overall ambit of broadcasting—in terms of the response of Scottish policy and the Scottish Government. The report argues that the roles of Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland should be clearly identified, and that creative Scotland should take on a leadership role in terms of the whole industry's approach.

The commission made another recommendation that I am sure we will want to take forward. It said that the Scottish Parliament should have a role not in directing the content of individual programmes but in debating the future of broadcasting, and should act as a forum for that debate. This Parliament clearly has a substantial responsibility to carry forward the commission's excellent work.

Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP): The First Minister mentioned that the Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture had written to the UK culture minister in support of the commission's recommendations, particularly on the creation of a Scottish network channel, and had written to Ofcom to seek independent Scottish representation. Are there any early indications of whether those proposals will fall on sympathetic or deaf ears?

The First Minister: There are no indications as yet, but I do not see that we have any reason to be pessimistic. In response to the commission's recommendations, there has already been substantial movement by the BBC and, to some extent, Channel 4. In addition, structural changes in the BBC have been announced—I think this very day—in relation to the representation of the controller in Scotland, and his equivalents in Wales and Northern Ireland, in the decision-making bodies of the BBC, which is a recognition of the multinational status of the UK.

The broadcasters themselves—not wholly, but substantially—are starting to respond. I do not see why we should be negative about the response that we will get from Ofcom and the UK culture secretary, particularly in light of the fact that—as I said in my statement—public service broadcasting is undergoing a general review at present, with a report to be made early next year. This is exactly

the right time for us to have the most substantial influence in those deliberations and discussions.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): Does the First Minister agree that regional news in Scotland is highly popular throughout Scottish communities and should be protected, particularly as it faces challenges from the new developments in the industry, which might dilute public service broadcasting? I presume that the First Minister has given some thought to this topical issue. What steps will the Scottish Government take to secure vital news services for the future?

The First Minister: We have made clear our disappointment with Ofcom's relaxation in relation to local news. There is an example of that in the Borders, where it appears that the new news programme will be restricted to a mere six minutes, which seems inadequate. We understand, of course, the argument that the independent network puts forward that it no longer has the advantage because the terrestrial platform is being removed to digital. However, I do not think that many people in the south of Scotland will consider six minutes of news on what has been their favourite television station at all adequate to serve their needs. We must put those important arguments forward.

I say to Pauline McNeill that I preferred the first version of her article in the first edition of *The Scotsman* today, rather than the second version.

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Can the First Minister explain why he equates the UK Government's annual investment of around £95 million in the Welsh language channel with funding for the proposed new Scottish channel? Surely a more accurate comparison would be between the Welsh language channel and BBC Alba, the Scottish Gaelic language channel.

As the First Minister is aware, the new Gaelic channel already receives more than £20 million of public support, and given that there are around 60,000 Gaelic speakers in Scotland and half a million Welsh speakers, the public sums that are invested in those channels seem comparable on a population basis. Why should the taxpayer be asked to pick up the full cost of the new Scottish digital channel when commercial operators are keen to be involved?

The First Minister: Ted Brocklebank well knows that BBC Alba is financed partly from the Scottish budget. The commission makes the helpful recommendation that, given that that is the case, the line of accountability in relation to appointments and other matters should lie with this Parliament, where it can be properly questioned.

The commission makes two broader points: first, on the context of what is actually spent in Scotland, in terms of the network share and the general budget of BBC Scotland compared with what is raised through the licence fee; and secondly, on the key issue of the opportunity that is afforded by selling off the terrestrial platform. Those funds will have to be allocated, presumably to public service broadcasting, so there appears to be an opportunity to secure them.

I know that Ted Brocklebank has taken a very constructive view, and that he put forward strong and positive evidence to the commission. His evidence was successful in a number of areas, but on the argument about whether it was a public service broadcasting commission, the commission—which included a member of the Conservative party—came to the unanimous conclusion that it was not unreasonable for Scotland to expect a public service obligation and funding. I know that Ted Brocklebank is big enough to get over that slight disappointment and rally behind the commission's report.

Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP): When Blair Jenkins gave evidence to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee, he made it clear that there was a pressing need for the provision of news broadcasting in Scotland to be reviewed, with a view to ensuring that quality broadcast news reflects Scotland as she stands now and views the world through Scottish eyes. Does the First Minister agree with Blair Jenkins that parallel programming is a step in the right direction—albeit just a small step—for news broadcasting? Can he tell us how the Scottish Government intends to help Scotland's broadcasters continue to improve news broadcasting in Scotland?

The First Minister: The publication of Anthony King's report by the BBC trust represents a sea change in the recognition—certainly by the BBC—of how inadequately network news has reflected the diversity of the countries of the United Kingdom. If I had been told some years ago that a BBC organisation would commission a report that admitted substantial culpability in that regard, I would have been surprised. We should acknowledge the BBC's open-mindedness about the integration of broadcasting and the service that network news can provide.

A new Scottish channel would make it possible for us to have what many of us have wanted for a huge number of years—broadcasting in Scotland that looks at the world through Scottish eyes and looks at Scotland through the world's eyes; a broadcasting platform that provides local news, Scottish news, UK news, international news and the world's news from a Scottish perspective; and a definite window on the world. The commission's

report, in endorsing that idea and considering how it can be deployed within the proposed new Scottish network, gives us valuable insights and the inspiration to take forward that campaign.

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): I welcome the report of the always independent Scottish Broadcasting Commission and the proposal for a new Scottish network. Does the First Minister believe that local television services should be linked to the Scottish network proposal, as the report suggests in paragraph 3.5.5? Will he argue strongly to Ofcom that spectrum must be made available for local services? Does he support the idea of a network of local channels that would provide a local dimension to the new Scottish network?

The First Minister: The commission's report contains excellent comment on the local and national opportunities that newly available spectrum will open up, so the general answer to Malcolm Chisholm's question is yes. I am sure that I would be just as fulsome if he was speaking from the front bench. His contribution was an entirely constructive one.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Some 53 per cent of viewers in the Borders region will receive digital services through relay transmitters and will receive only half the digital services that will be available from the main transmitters, but that has not been mentioned by the Scottish Broadcasting Commission and there has been no statement on it from the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government's late submission to the public service broadcasting review also made no reference to the matter. What is the Scottish Government's position? It argues for a Scottish digital channel, but if that channel was on a network that is not provided under Freeview lite, as it is known, more than half my constituents would be excluded.

The First Minister: As Jeremy Purvis knows, there was a members' business debate on that subject recently. It is an important subject, but it would be unreasonable to expect the Scottish Broadcasting Commission to identify every single aspect of Scottish broadcasting that needs change. We would be better to take its report as a platform on which to build and from which to move forward. That does not preclude further improvements, including the one that Jeremy Purvis has identified.

Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware of the London-centric nature of broadcasting. Can he reassure Parliament that, in implementing the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's recommendations, lessons will be learned so that that centralisation is not replicated in Scotland and broadcasting and

production reflect the whole country rather than being concentrated in one area?

The First Minister: Yes. We already recognise that solid and important point, particularly in relation to the way in which Scottish Television arranges its news broadcasts at present. The opening up of new spectrum will offer far more opportunities. This Parliament, in arranging its business, recognises that it is a Parliament for the whole country: any broadcasting organisation for which we are accountable must recognise that it, too, exists for the whole country. The point is well made.

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): I congratulate the First Minister on his robust and constructive statement.

The commission has argued that a new network would enable media to be

"made available under a Creative Commons type of licence".

Such a move would be of great value in giving children and young people in schools, colleges and universities many creative downloading and broadcasting opportunities. If a new network is established, what will the First Minister do to ensure that all educational institutions are able to download, remix and re-edit material for their own use?

The First Minister: The commission and Robin Harper are right to focus on the opportunities that are presented by this important issue, on which progress has been made. It certainly provides another illustration of how the new arrangements, better access and more space could not only have a pretty obvious impact on Scottish cultural and economic life, but ensure that Scotland's great services, including education, have the maximum number of opportunities.

For example, BBC Alba has certainly had a direct impact in Gaelic areas and elsewhere in Scotland. However, nowhere has its impact been felt more than in Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. The facilities in that college in Skye are not hugely extensive, but I am told that the technology that is in use there is a match for anything that is available elsewhere in the world.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Will the First Minister ask—nicely, of course—the Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture to write to her opposite number in Westminster, suggesting that it is about time that BBC Alba was available on Freeview?

The First Minister: The minister is actively pursuing that matter. I have not managed to find out whether she is doing so politely or impolitely, but I am sure that, no matter which course she has

taken, the suggestion is being made in extremely strong terms.

We are all united in wishing BBC Alba maximum success. However—as we know—that success will be either maximised or constrained by the viewing platform on which it is available.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I say to Margo MacDonald and the First Minister that I have not written to anyone on this subject. I think, however, that Linda Fabiani has.

Scottish Broadcasting Commission

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-2671, in the name of Linda Fabiani, on the Scottish Broadcasting Commission.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament welcomes the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's final report and recognises the cross-party engagement that enabled the commission to carry out its work in a constructive and consensual fashion; notes that the report reflects the importance of broadcasting to the cultural and economic life of Scotland and accepts that the Parliament should take an active role in considering the broadcasting industry and services as they relate to Scotland; welcomes the key recommendation for the creation of a new public service Scottish digital network, which represents a major opportunity to develop Scotland's broadcasting industry; notes that the commission's recommendations require action by a range of parties, and calls on the Scottish Government to respond positively to the report within its responsibilities.—[*Linda Fabiani*.]

15:08

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): I sincerely welcome the debate, the Broadcasting Commission's report and the positive tone of the Government's motion.

Labour believes that broadcasting is important to the people of Scotland. Although they might not have read the report from cover to cover, many of them will be following the main debate. As a result, our deliberations will be directly relevant to them. The quality and choice of programmes and the variety of original programming are important to people. No matter whether the issue is repeats on the BBC or why "Still Game" is subtitled for English viewers, the fact is that people still really care about—and talk about—their telly.

Viewers in Scotland attach particular importance to programmes that are made in and for the country, especially news. In that respect, the proportion of viewers who want competition to be maintained with regard to the BBC is greater in Scotland than in other parts of the UK.

The commission has now reported and its work has created a dynamic around the issues that allows us to consider how we might implement many of its excellent recommendations. It is—and should be—an important reference point for deciding which Parliament has overall control in broadcasting matters. After all, the commission has arrived at its conclusions by examining the industry itself and by judging what is best for it, not for the constitution.

Labour's amendment emphasises that Scotland benefits from being part of a UK-wide framework

and that we do not want to be outside that framework, particularly in research and development, in the digital age. Of course, the commission's view is that that depends on how we can make the industry more accountable in Scotland. That is the way forward. As such, Labour believes that the Calman commission should examine how accountability should be strengthened.

Many observers believe that the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's inquiry, which led to three interim reports, has already forced the BBC to address better its relationship with the UK's nations and regions, and has forced increased spending in Scotland. Indeed, the Parliament's Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee has put broadcasting in the spotlight. People in the wider entertainment and media market predict that the UK sector will grow by 5.8 per cent for the next five years, and the commission has rightly said that

"There is no reason why Scotland's economy and broadcasting industry should not be part of that growth."

Therefore, the suggestions that have been made about broadcasters and the regulator reporting annually to the Scottish Parliament's committees and appointments to UK organisations being made by Scottish ministers are worthy of consideration, as they could improve the sector's accountability.

However, Labour wants to examine how the Parliament can continue to contribute to holding the industry to account on standards and on the commitment to public service broadcasting in particular. Our amendment is designed to embrace the commission's findings and to move things forward in supporting the Government's motion, but we also want to ensure that any additional scrutiny in Parliament is effective.

The commission calls for the BBC to meet a target of 8.6 per cent of network television productions being commissioned from Scotland by 2012. We strongly believe that it should work towards that goal and that 2016—the BBC's current view is that it will meet the target then—is too far away. Currently, 3.3 per cent of network television productions are commissioned from Scotland. Every single year of delay in reaching the 8.6 per cent target costs the Scottish economy lots of money. We should make it clear that such an approach is inapplicable not only to the BBC, but to Channel 4, which has a smaller target that it should meet. Indeed, there is no reason why we should not expect a much greater commitment from Channel 4. The benefit to the Scottish economy in retaining jobs and skills in the sector is too great for us to lose and will be crucial to sustaining the industry in the longer term.

The switchover to digital television will result in universal benefits for the population, but there are

unintended consequences. There is an immense threat to public service broadcasting, which represents a serious challenge for the UK and Scottish Governments. We are concerned about the reduction in public service obligations that the Office of Communications has already agreed and we have already witnessed the threat to regional broadcasting in the Borders area, for example, as was discussed during questions after the First Minister's statement. We want to increase the commitment to regional news because it is key to local communities, and we hope that the Government will lobby strongly on that issue. For that reason, we are happy to support the Liberal Democrats' amendment, which addresses that point.

It is vital that we consider the whole package of broadcasting and join up our thinking. Deeper scrutiny will be required all round if public service broadcasting needs a financial lifeline that must be paid for by the public purse, but the argument has not yet been settled. We are at just the early stages of considering that issue. A lifeline would have to be considered along with the proposal for a new Scottish network channel because it should, some have argued, be funded at least partly by public funding—the commission argued that point. We should discuss models that work.

The Tory amendment is helpful for the debate, but we think that it is a bit premature with respect to how the channel will be funded. I emphasise to the Conservative party that we are not discounting the model, but we want to discuss other models to find out what other options would work. The Government should be pressed to ensure that the model that works has been tried and tested on Scottish listeners and viewers.

Those who, as I and many other members do, love the BBC, think that it needs competition to maintain the quality of its public broadcasting output. That is only one of many reasons why the commission has proposed a new Scottish network channel. Much discussion is needed about how such a channel would be run and be funded. I am sure that we all agree that without high-quality output, it would fail. We need the skills for a new network channel.

Securing a format that people will support will be a huge challenge. We must ensure that, whatever direction we go in, it is in tune with people's high expectations. As soon as we talk about a new Scottish channel, people who are engaged in that have huge expectations. We should not underestimate the challenge.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Pauline McNeill said that people have high expectations of a new channel. When the commission's work was first published, did she not see—as I did—many derisive comments in the newspapers about how

we would have “Hootenanny” all the time and reruns of “The White Heather Club”?

Pauline McNeill: That is exactly the point: people have high expectations that they will not see such programmes. They want a mix of network programmes—such as that from which we already benefit—and they want significant Scottish input. The catalyst is the opportunity to expand Scottish programming, which we all agree is high quality.

Serious discussion is needed. There is no point in promoting and supporting a new channel unless it has public support. How it might be funded also needs to be discussed seriously. I am sure that we will discuss challenges in the industry, the move to digital broadcasting and the sell-off of the analogue spectrum, which it is estimated will bring £20 billion-plus into the Treasury, of which Scotland will, I presume, receive its share. The argument needs to be made that some of that funding could be made available for a new Scottish channel. That would at least kick-start funding so that we could go down the road for the future.

We must get the whole package right. We cannot just support a shopping list of demands for Scottish programming. We cannot just say, “We want this and this and this.” We must support the new Gaelic channel. We want more commitment to Scotland from all public service broadcasting channels. We must also talk about promoting a new channel.

We will not have a similar chance for another decade, so it is important that we join our thinking together and consider what Scottish television will look like as a whole. Scottish audiences can watch some of the best television programmes in the world. Whether people prefer “Life on Mars”, “Spooks”, “Coronation Street” or “Channel 4 News” is their choice. We have a lot to defend. Every other country would love to have a BBC, so any changes that we make must protect the culture of the institution and the quality for listeners and viewers throughout Scotland.

I move amendment S3M-2671.3, to insert at end:

“; agrees with the commission that Scotland should not lose out on the obvious advantages of being part of the UK broadcasting framework, particularly in research and development of digital media platforms, and believes that the Calman Commission should consider the role of the Parliament in playing an active role in scrutinising and promoting the broadcasting industry as it relates to Scotland.”

15:18

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife)
(Con): I begin with a declaration of interest: I am a

shareholder in the Scottish Media Group. However, as I have observed elsewhere, given STV's share price, that is more an intrusion into private grief than a declaration of benefit.

Orson Welles said, “I hate television almost as much as I hate peanuts, but I can't give up either one.” Whether we hate it or love it, most of us share his addiction to the box. At its highest, broadcasting fulfils the three Reithian requirements of informing, educating and entertaining. Even at its lowest, the telly can still fill a void in lives that are otherwise sadly empty.

Some months ago, the First Minister claimed that I had been churlish about him in an article on broadcasting. I take the opportunity today to pay tribute to him for establishing the Scottish Broadcasting Commission. That said, if ever there was an open goal waiting for somebody to kick the ball into it, it was Scottish broadcasting. The previous Administration ran scared of the reserved tag on broadcasting, so it failed to fulfil its responsibilities to Scottish viewers and broadcasters. How else can we explain the devastating cuts in Scottish funding for news and current affairs programmes and in Scotland's share of network programming that were allowed to happen on the previous Administration's watch? Broadcasting may be reserved and the British Broadcasting Corporation may be the envy of the world, but that did not have to mean that network bosses sidelined so cavalierly the broadcasting aspirations of people in the devolved parts of the UK.

Equally, following devolution, network editors' news values had become skewed, not in a deliberate sense, but simply because the people who were in charge of the bulletins did not understand which policy aspects were devolved, so network news stories on health, education and justice were simply wrong in the Scottish context. There is no doubt that Scottish broadcasting was being short-changed by the TV networks. The Scottish independent sector was struggling and Scottish viewers were being presented with a home-counties distortion of news and current affairs in news stories that affected Scotland and the rest of the UK. The timing of the first review of Scottish broadcasting in half a century could not have been better.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I understand Ted Brocklebank's views on the commission. However, in standing up for viewers' interests, does he share my concern that, instead of standing up for Border Television's “Lookaround” and news programmes, the commission said that it was appropriate to await the outcome of Ofcom research in the region? That is not standing up for

viewers. We expected more from the commission on that.

Ted Brocklebank: I have some regard for what Jeremy Purvis says. As it happens, I will also sum up for the Conservatives today, during which I will address the Border TV and STV situations.

I pay tribute to Blair Jenkins, who is in the public gallery today, and to his fellow commissioners. If, for media consumption, I jocularly claimed that I supported the commission's proposals because so many were contained in our submission, my doing so served only to confirm the commission's willingness to listen to advice from all quarters.

I do not have time to go through all the recommendations. However, given the BBC's importance to Scottish broadcasting, I draw attention to the commission's view that the BBC should fulfil its commitment to 8.6 per cent of network television production from Scotland by 2012—not 2016—and that this percentage, which is broadly in line with our population share, should be regarded as a floor and not a ceiling. It was disgraceful that the figure had slipped to 3 per cent; that it happened is a demonstrable slight on the talents of Scottish broadcasters. Channel 4 had also dropped its share of commissioning from Scotland. I believe that it, too, should guarantee our national percentage share.

It is also essential for the BBC to establish a substantial commissioning presence in Scotland. That would mean that our independent production sector would, at long last, get a fair crack of the whip. In principle, ITV should also sign up to that. However, at the moment, that organisation has many deep-seated problems. As I indicated to Jeremy Purvis, I will try to deal with that in my summing up.

We broadly agree that the Scottish Parliament should take an active role in monitoring the broadcasting industry, probably through the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee, and that Scottish ministers should have greater responsibility within the UK framework for broadcasting functions that directly involve Scotland, including scrutiny of Scotland's share of the network cake.

I turn to the proposal for a new Scottish public service digital channel. I have long argued for a digital channel for Scotland that would provide the range of programming that we simply do not get any longer from the BBC and STV. In its news programming, the proposed new channel would also provide a solution to the "scottish six" argument. The "scottish six" may well have been a partial answer in the days of analogue, but it was never going to be enough when the digital spectrum allows the opportunity for a full-blown

Scottish channel with all the responsibilities of a public service broadcaster.

However, as I said earlier, we disagree with the commission's proposals on funding. Why should the taxpayer be asked to foot the whole bill for the new channel? We believe that the better solution is a partially public funded channel with scope for the private sector to participate. Given that co-funding of broadcasting by the public and private sectors works in Ireland, Wales, Spain and many other places, why should it not also work here in Scotland?

David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Ted Brocklebank: I am coming to a bit that I want to get through. If time allows, I will let in David Whitton.

The model could also provide the core schedule and stimulus for a range of local or city TV channels that could work in association with the new digital channel. That would create the genuine regionality that—sadly—ITV can no longer afford and it would open up opportunities for new streams of local advertising. It could involve the main Scottish commercial broadcaster in addition to other stakeholders, such as local newspaper groups. The concept is one that has been successful in the United States of America and Canada. There is already wide interest in it here in Scotland.

David Whitton: Why should the new channel be funded by advertising? Surely it would then be in open competition with STV.

Ted Brocklebank: As David Whitton knows from his previous career, the current situation of ITV companies, especially Scottish Television and Ulster Television, is extremely precarious. The companies would welcome any opportunities to develop their activities and to attract other advertising streams.

Regions or cities would be able to opt into or out of the new digital channel's core schedule, which would allow for genuine localised news and current affairs programming. I am glad that neither the First Minister nor the chairman of the Scottish Broadcasting Commission has ruled out totally the involvement of the private sector in delivery of the new channel; they would be foolish if they did. I accept that there is still much work to be done on the funding model, but I welcome the commission's report and have pleasure in moving the amendment in my name.

I move amendment S3M-2671.1, to insert after second "broadcasting industry":

"but believes that further work needs to be done on a suitable funding model, which ensures a substantial private

sector input so that the cost does not fall wholly on the taxpayer”.

15:25

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): I welcome the opportunity to debate the report of the Scottish Broadcasting Commission. I congratulate Blair Jenkins and the commission on producing such a thorough and comprehensive report in such a short time. I am pleased that I recognise in the report some of the evidence that I gave on behalf of the Scottish Liberal Democrats.

The report's publication is tinged with sadness, due to the passing of my colleague, Baroness Ray Michie, during the lifetime of the commission. It would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to Ray on this occasion for her work not just on the Scottish Broadcasting Commission but during her lifetime of public service to Scotland, to the people of Argyll and Bute and to the Scottish Liberal Democrats. Ray, you are deeply missed by us all.

There is much in the commission's report on which we all can agree. Across the chamber and across Scotland there is broad support for where the commission suggests broadcasting in Scotland needs to go. Inevitably, there will be differences of opinion about how we should get there, but I am pleased that the commission has not done a TomTom and taken us down the cul-de-sacs that have been suggested in the past of a Scottish broadcasting corporation or a “scottish six”. The commission recognises clearly the value to Scottish viewers of being part of the UK broadcasting framework, while acknowledging that that framework needs to be improved to ensure that Scotland is not marginalised.

The BBC, in particular, has a duty and responsibility to ensure that it serves properly all the communities, regions and nations of the United Kingdom—it should properly reflect them all in its network programming, not just in local programming. I welcome the steps that the BBC trust has already taken to implement the recommendations of Professor King's review of network news coverage of the devolved nations on the BBC. There has been noticeable improvement. I hope that the days have gone when Radio 5 live, a UK network broadcaster, could announce that England had lost at Twickenham for the first time in 20 years, rather than that Wales had won.

We need continued monitoring and more programmes that reflect the differences in the approaches of the devolved Administrations and the UK Government, so that we can learn from one another and make informed judgments on how we differ. I welcome the BBC's announcement yesterday that the controller of BBC Scotland will become a director of the BBC and will join the main BBC operational decision-

making group, as the Scottish Broadcasting Commission recommended.

The key to the future of broadcasting in Scotland lies with programme making. I welcome the BBC's commitment to secure 8.6 per cent of network television production from Scotland—using the Ofcom definition, which is an important point. However, I agree with the Scottish Broadcasting Commission and other members that there is no excuse for delaying achievement of that target by four years until 2016; 2012 should be the target, and there should be no slacking on that. Channel 4 must also be required to increase its paltry production from outwith London. Ofcom's proposal in its phase 2 review that a mere 3 per cent of Channel 4 production should come from the devolved nations is laughable.

Ofcom's proposals for the ITV network cause me greatest concern and are the reason for my amendment. To some extent, the pass has already been sold. The decision of the UK Government and Ofcom to allow the federal structure of ITV to be abandoned and to allow more and more mergers of regional licensees until there was, in effect, only one ITV plc serving the whole of England has left Ofcom unable to resist pressures from ITV plc to divest itself of its public service obligations. That does not mean that Ofcom should not try to resist those pressures; unfortunately, phase 2 of its second review of public service broadcasting suggests that it has given up trying.

Ofcom has reduced requirements for regional and national news and allowed more mergers of newsrooms, including the disappearance of Border TV into Tyne Tees Television. No doubt Jeremy Purvis will have more to say about that. It has reduced requirements for non-news programming and reduced quotas for out-of-London production, with no requirement for production outwith England. That means that ITV plc, which controls the ITV network schedule, will not be required to commission any network programming from anyone other than ITV plc companies. It will not be required to look to STV or Ulster for any network programming. Surely that is unacceptable.

Of course, STV cannot compete for the 25 per cent of programming that is required to come from independent companies. Perhaps Ofcom will reflect on that. Either it will require an out-of-England quota or it will increase the independents' quota but allow STV and UTV to compete in that market. Reading between the lines, it is evident that the Broadcasting Commission's recommendation for a separate Scottish channel comes partly from its belief that STV cannot survive as a public service broadcaster and partly

from the need to maintain plurality and competition with the BBC.

In principle, Liberal Democrats support the proposal for a Scottish digital channel, although a great deal of work needs to be done to determine exactly how it will be established, what its remit will be and how it will be funded. I agree with Ted Brocklebank to an extent, in that I agree that there needs to be more work on a suitable funding model, but I cannot agree with his amendment because the approach should not be just to describe one option for that model. There must be additional money, with no displacement of current funding or of any of the funding that has been earmarked for more programmes to be produced in Scotland.

I wish also to comment on the proposal in the commission's report for one of the main channels in the BBC network to be moved to Scotland. That reflects a proposal—which I included in my evidence—that either a channel or a BBC service, such as drama or factual programming, be moved to Scotland. It is where the commissioners are based that creates the gravity that draws in the independent producers and others. We need more commissioners to be based here in Scotland if we are to draw funds to Scotland and ensure the long-term viability of the Scottish broadcasting sector.

The one part of the commission's report that is wholly in the hands of the Scottish Government is economic development, skills development and leadership in the broadcasting sector. I regret that the Government seems unwilling—as yet—to engage with other parties in Parliament on the way forward for creative Scotland, but surely that is what needs to be done if the laudable aims of the Scottish Broadcasting Commission are to be delivered.

I draw members' attention to the corrections to my amendment, which are contained in the documents that have been circulated in the chamber this afternoon, I move amendment 2671.2, to insert at end:

"and notes with concern the proposals contained within Phase 2 of Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review, which present a serious threat to the long-term viability of Scottish public service broadcasters, of Borders news programmes and of Scottish content programming and Gaelic language programmes on Channel 3."

15:32

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I am very pleased to take part in the debate. I will first refer to a submission that I made to the Scottish Broadcasting Commission following a consultation of about 20,000 households in the Scottish Borders. I received the views of about 7,000 residents. I completely concur on some of the issues that Jeremy Purvis has raised. Other

members might not concur with this, but it was found that

"Scottish Borders should have their ITV content supplied by STV with additional local input ... Responsibility for broadcasting should be transferred to the Scottish Government ... A 'Scottish 6' should be established on BBC"—

although that has now been superseded through the digital spectrum—and

"Scotland's qualifying football matches should be shown on a 'free to view' channel."

In passing, I note that the issue of digital reception in the Borders was covered in the consultation. If I am correct, that is a UK issue, and it must be addressed. There are some parts of the Borders where there is no reception apart from satellite services. Many people are disfranchised through living in rurality. That applies not just in the Borders, obviously.

The role of Border TV was shown to be contentious. We had a members' business debate on the matter some time ago. Speaking about whether to retain Border TV, I said:

"the status quo is probably not an option".—[*Official Report*, 19 December 2007; c 4622.]

The desire to retain Border TV might have been heroic and worthy, and I know that many people supported the "Lookaround" news programme to some extent, but it was the servant of three maisters—it was trying to serve the Scottish Borders, the Isle of Man and the north of England. However, the solution that has now been advanced, which has seemingly been endorsed by Ofcom, is certainly not acceptable, with just six and a half minutes of news for the whole of the south of Scotland. That is not just for the Borders, if I may differentiate between the Borders and Dumfries and Galloway.

I asked Borderers whether they were

"well served by television broadcasting at the moment".

The response was: yes 23 per cent, no 70 per cent and undecided 7 per cent. That clearly indicates what they thought about what they were getting. There are solutions in this for Borderers.

Paragraph A1.21 of "Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review Phase 2" says:

"In the deliberative research conducted in the Border ITV region, there was considerable resistance to a merger with Tyne Tees."

It is therefore disappointing that, in effect, the Borders has been entrapped into having to support that move.

The point has been made that UK broadcasting does not always reflect UK priorities. I was told not to mention the cricket, but I will do so, because there is a huge home counties distortion in that

regard. On 12 September 2005, the BBC devoted 10 minutes at the top of its major bulletins to England winning the Ashes. On the same day, the 95th soldier to be killed in Iraq was named. I am not making a cheap point when I say that if I had been a parent or relative of that young man, I would have been extremely angry that the bulletins ran 10 minutes on the cricket. There is no problem with reporting cricket, but it should not be top of the news bulletins. Quite often, the distortion is in favour of the home counties and even the north of England is neglected.

Domestic issues in parts of the UK are still referred to as if they were UK-wide issues, particularly on breakfast television. It is clear that presenters have been trained to say that something is happening in England or in England and Wales, but they do that only once, so a viewer who switches on in the middle of an item will not know whether the item refers to Scotland, England, Wales or Northern Ireland. That ill has not been entirely cured and I suspect that, as I think that Ted Brocklebank said, there is a London-centric issue in that regard, because people in broadcasting are unaware of the situation. It is ridiculous that that should be the case nine years into devolution.

I agree with what members said about where programmes are commissioned. There is a huge issue to do with how money follows commissioning and production. Only 3.5 per cent of network production comes from Scotland, whereas 66.6 per cent comes from London, and the situation is getting worse every year. Scotland is losing out.

That is relevant to the debate about funding a Scottish digital network channel, which is probably the mid-term solution for the Borders. I understand that the contracts with STV and ITV are not renewable until 2014, so the area could not come under the STV franchise until then. That is an option for the longer term. There is no either/or situation, because people can have access to many channels. It would be good for the Borders to be part of the STV framework and to have a Scottish digital channel. Such a channel might show some parliamentary business—perhaps it would not be worth doing that, but we remember the good old days of the first session of the Parliament, when people noticed us.

Wales's channel gets £95 million and I understand that a Scottish broadcasting channel would need £70 million to £75 million gross. When we consider the income, businesses and jobs that such investment would generate in Scotland and the skills and creativity that would be developed here, it is clear that the Scottish balance sheet might show a profit. In any event, funding should

be additional to the current funding for the Scottish Government.

If the merger of Border TV and Tyne Tees Television news proceeds so that Tyne Tees Television becomes the centre and only six and a half minutes of news are provided for the whole of the south of Scotland, I ask Ofcom to monitor the situation, to ascertain how representative programmes are and to gather the reactions of people Borders-wide and in Dumfries and Galloway.

15:38

Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): I thank the members of the Scottish Broadcasting Commission for the hard work and commitment that they put into the report that we are debating. They acted with independence—with a small i—in considering a matter that could have been politically highly contentious. I am convinced that they did so in the best interests of broadcasting in Scotland. That is not to say that I agree with every word of the report, although I think that most people will welcome its broad, underlying themes.

In particular, I pay tribute to the chair of the commission, Blair Jenkins, who guided the commission through a complex process of examining broadcasting's impact on our economy, culture and sense of identity. That was no easy task.

There is a temptation to fall into diametrically opposed political positions on broadcasting, which is an industry and public service that has great influence over the Scottish psyche. However, I agree with the commission that we should

"look at the issues around broadcasting with fresh eyes, in an open-minded and non-partisan way."

We should not seek to play politics with this issue. In my view, any position that seeks either to attack or to defend the status quo completely will jeopardise the potential benefits that could accrue from a strong broadcasting industry in Scotland.

The report demonstrates effectively the potential benefit to the Scottish economy of increased indigenous media production. In evidence to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee, Blair Jenkins made it clear that we need to ensure that our further and higher education establishments are geared up for the increased levels of production that will follow the commitment that the BBC has given to have 8.6 per cent of network television production in Scotland by the end of 2012.

If we add to that the implementation of the commission's recommendations, in particular the creation of a Scottish network and the recommendation in relation to Channel 4, we have

a major task on our hands to ensure that we produce enough skilled people to keep such jobs in Scotland. The National Union of Journalists has raised that issue consistently, because it knows that the people whom we train often leave Scotland to seek employment.

The Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government must pursue the issue. We must ensure that we have the right training and education in place so that as many Scots as possible benefit from the additional investment in Scottish production. We must also ensure that the key agencies, such as Skillset, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Enterprise and creative Scotland, work in partnership and with a high degree of synergy. The First Minister said that he would do that, but it would be good if the minister today explained exactly how the Government envisaged that happening. We need certainty on the issue.

The commission's recommendation that a Scottish digital television network be created is important. The commission sets out a strong case for the creation of such a network and for it to have public funding. Blair Jenkins made that clear during his evidence to the committee. He said:

"there are compelling public service reasons for having a Scottish network, which justifies intervention in the market to secure certain public policy outcomes that the market, left to its own devices, would not deliver."—[*Official Report, Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee*, 24 September 2008; c 1454.]

That is an important point. Publicly funded broadcasting services such as the BBC are intrinsically different from their commercial counterparts. They have a commitment to training and employment that does not exist to the same extent in commercial broadcasters or production companies. They also have greater freedom to produce programmes that are not necessarily obvious commercial opportunities.

The commission's report also highlights the concerns about the future of ITV and STV as public service broadcasters—an issue that has been mentioned already today. Those concerns have recently been acknowledged by Ofcom, which has now accepted that STV needs more funding to protect its flagship news programmes "Scotland Today" and "North Tonight".

The report states that STV is

"Increasingly ... on a trajectory which inevitably leads it into more purely commercial territory."

That would be bad for broadcasting in Scotland. The BBC needs competition for its Scottish news and current affairs programmes, and I agree with the commission that STV must maintain its Scottish news and current affairs programmes if it

is to retain its PSB licence and benefit from public subsidy.

I hope that we can reach a degree of consensus today. The report is one of the most exciting and positive documents that has been brought to the Parliament. It is full of ambition, potential and promise. We should welcome the key recommendations and embrace the opportunities that they offer. Let us ensure that we in the Scottish Parliament do everything that we can to facilitate that work and to ensure that it is the people of Scotland, as both producers and consumers, who benefit.

15:44

Christopher Harvie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): The "overall broadcasting ecology" of the United Kingdom is a fine, evolutionary, greenish phrase, but it is also a highly political subject. In 1923, two people grasped where the new medium of radio could go: a thraven Scottish engineer and a racist banged up in a Bavarian jail. Colonel John Reith of the British Broadcasting Company grasped radio's capacity to inform, educate and entertain; Adolf Hitler saw it as a rabble rouser. Of the two, Hitler was the more imaginative because German broadcasting did not even exist at that point. He grasped consciously what Reith accepted unquestioningly: that, in the post-1918 era of ethnic nationalism, broadcasting would be a unifier. The nations in question were the military-based powers of the 19th century rather than any benign ecology. Members should remember that Government Communications Headquarters in Cheltenham has us all in mind as literary and visual stars through its blanket surveillance scheme.

The BBC was invoked in the United Kingdom's defence in the second world war and did it so well that, after helping to lick Hitler, its centralised liberalism could cope with the challenge of commercial TV partly because it was cosmopolitan. It received the refugees from the gangster states—not only musicians but journalists who had started off in the illustrated papers of the Weimar republic and ended up on pioneering magazine programmes such as "Tonight". Members should consider where we were in the much-maligned 1970s: we had the Pythons, "Yes, Minister", Dennis Potter and the regional capacity of STV. Later, we had the innovations of Channel 4 and the BBC's partnership with the Open University—which you and I both remember, Presiding Officer. At that time, I worked a lot in Broadcasting house and it was good. The affection has taken a long time to die.

That was metropolitan, but there was a downside—what George Orwell called room 101.

The commission shows how far the downside has taken over. Today's BBC is operated on commercial principles, with huge bonuses for stars such as Jonathan Ross and ecological menaces such as Jeremy Clarkson. There are rather smaller bonuses for controllers, who were previously on modest civil service or academic salaries. Peanuts remain for academic contributors, together with astonishingly arbitrary editing. That change has not been accompanied by an increase in honesty, objectivity and respect for the BBC's audience—members should just think of the evildoing of "Blue Peter". BBC trust surveys show that people in Scotland have drifted far from their earlier confidence.

The statistics speak for themselves. Two thirds of production is zoned to London, and Scotland gets scarcely a third of its proper entitlement of 8.6 per cent of programme making. Ofcom is dismantling what is left of regional commercial TV culture. It is daft, in a way, but also rather touching that Scotland's one programme on Europe comes out in Gaelic. BBC Alba's "Eòrpa" is a credit to the old tongue—I was recorded in English, dubbed into Gaelic and subtitled in English again for a programme that I did—but European channels such as Arte, which is a brilliant combination of French and German public service TV, do it better.

Given its remit, the commission goes only so far by requesting a Scottish digital network, but we must go further. A centralised BBC is incompatible with a federal or devolved UK. We need a broadcaster that uses the Reithian criteria not only to project Scotland but to aim at specific Scottish audiences, not least those in education—I speak as one brought up on BBC education broadcasting as a primary school kid; it was a marvellous liberation—and our substantial proportion of over-50s, who are probably the central and most sensitive audience and just about as neglected as the customers of our post offices.

We must innovate, experiment and respect freedom of opinion. That has not always been the case. Too often, our TV suggests the migration of Rupert Murdoch's *The Sun*. There is a lovely little poem that goes:

"Tickle the public, make 'em grin,
The more you tickle, the more you win.
Teach the public, you'll never get rich,
You'll live like a beggar and die in a ditch."

To leave Scotland in the hands of the present metropolitan munchkins of Ofcom and the BBC is like leaving one's parents looking at daytime TV.

I leave the last word with one of our best Scots journalists, who wrote in a letter to me:

"I was saying openly what my former colleagues at the broadcasting coal face couldn't say to the Broadcasting Commission because they would lose their jobs ... a typical crony attempt to shut me and them up. Totally

counterproductive because the BBC can't afford to play at toytown McCarthyism. It's behaving like an old Labour municipal authority. I'm glad to be out of it."

Unless there are big changes towards a more decentralised, democratic structure, the sooner we are out of it, the better.

15:50

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): There is much of value in the report. I welcome its support for community radio and many of its other suggestions. Indeed, I am glad that the report echoes the views that others—in particular, members of the cross-party group on culture and media—and I have expressed in the past. How many times have we said that

"Broadcasting is important to the economic, cultural and democratic health of the nation"

and that

"more high-quality creative content should be produced in Scotland",

or other words to that effect? It is no surprise, either, that the report proposes that

"All broadcasters in the UK should review the performance of their news services in reporting the four nations in a manner that is accurate and relevant for all."

Similar points were made about sports coverage in one of the interim reports. More debatable, however, is how all that can be achieved. It is vital that we consider what is possible.

We must make a stronger case for Scotland to increase its share of production, and we must create the conditions that foster that. A stronger and broader commitment to public service broadcasting is a worthwhile goal, but we must look for additional capacity and not merely substitute or dilute what we already have.

Central to the commission's proposals is a new Scottish digital television network. The commission states that that is

"the single most important recommendation we are making in our report."

The proposed network is described as a "linear broadcast channel" enhanced by online services. Looking past the jargon, who would expect anything less from a new channel?

What of its content? The report talks of news and current affairs provision, and

"innovative and ambitious cultural content."

How will we ensure that it is a showcase for all that is best about Scotland: drama, humour, the beauty of the Scots language and our music—traditional, contemporary and all points in between? How will we ensure that it brings democracy closer to people? How will we ensure

that it creates opportunities for people in Scotland?

The report calls for the new network to be set up on a not-for-profit basis. However, to achieve that recommendation and others, the Scottish Government and Parliament would need to look beyond the commission's report. The report says:

"this is only a start ... we hope and expect that the debate will become even more visible and audible".

Further, it says that some recommendations

"require action by UK organisations: Westminster ... the BBC, Channel 4 and Ofcom."

There are significant issues that were not within the commission's remit but which are crucial to implementing its recommendations. For example, I am not sure how easily the proposed not-for-profit basis of the network would sit within current Ofcom proposals for use of the broadcasting spectrum. When the analogue signals are switched off, new capacity will be available for digital broadcasting. Ofcom wants to sell that capacity off to the highest bidder, with minimal restrictions on its future use. The commission mentions the sale of digital capacity with reference to using some of the money raised to set up the Scottish network. However, such a sell-off could make it much harder for the new network to get its digital channel because of big-money competition from richer, UK-wide broadcasters in the great Ofcom digital auction.

The Scottish Government's submission to Ofcom was generally supportive of the auction. It also failed to comment on a significant opportunity for Scottish broadcasting. By virtue of our geography, we have fewer broadcasting neighbours than other parts of the UK do. They will have six multiplexes, but Scotland has the potential for a seventh. If we are prepared to argue for it, we could have not just one extra Scottish channel but several, for broadcasting at Scottish and local level and other uses. As the commission says,

"Ofcom should help the new channel with gifted or discounted digital spectrum".

A seventh multiplex would fit the bill. The Parliament and the Scottish Government should lobby to ensure that the spare capacity is used; otherwise it will be sold off to the highest bidder or even left unused or unusable because it needs to be taken account of when new equipment is installed. We face significant challenges in ensuring that that happens.

We cannot wait for creative Scotland to be set up—we need action now. I hope that the minister will give a commitment to take decisive action. Let us have a seventh channel in Scotland.

15:55

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I acknowledge the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's work and the manner in which it developed its views, many of which I fully agree with. However, I have considerable concern about some of its views, which affect my constituents, and I will focus my comments on the areas of concern.

As I said during Mr Brocklebank's speech, I had hoped that the commission would make a much stronger argument for the continuation of a framework to retain local news coverage and, indeed, local public service broadcasting in the Border TV area. Shortly after Michael Grade's announcement to the stock market, I asked the First Minister whether he would support the local campaign to keep the current level of news coverage in the Border TV area, and I was pleased by his response. I was equally pleased by what he said today.

However, in its final report, the commission did not give a clear statement of support for the save "Lookaround" campaign, which many thousands of my constituents supported. They will be disappointed. Instead of stating that the south of Scotland should retain a full half-hour bulletin as part of Border TV's coverage, along with parts of the north-west and north-east of England, the commission suggested that my area could have a six-minute opt-out from STV coverage in Glasgow rather than from ITV coverage in Tyneside. It felt that key areas of domestic policy and legislation would mean that local news coverage for the Borders communities would sit more naturally with a Glasgow-based news bulletin.

Many of my constituents have been confused about the fact that, although the commission gave considerable time to discussing a Scottish digital channel, it gave barely a passing reference to news and public sector broadcasting coverage for the Border TV region. I remind members of the commission and, indeed, the Scottish Government that the Scottish part of that region covers roughly 4,300 square miles, so it is not a small part of Scotland.

We had hoped that the commission would provide a stronger recommendation. Instead, it suggests that we simply await the outcome of Ofcom's research in the region, which will involve two sessions—one in Hawick and one in Dumfries—at which Ofcom will explain its views to people but not respond to their concerns. Such deference to Ofcom on the part of the commission is regrettable, especially in the context of the regulator's significant failure to recognise the strength of local feeling.

It is beyond doubt that ITV is commercial and that it relies on advertising revenues. We know about the pressures on broadcast revenues as opposed to the large growth in online advertising revenues, but there is still uncertainty about the long-term plans for the Border TV franchise following the switch to digital in the Borders. Neither the commission nor the Government has come out and stated its preference. Basically, the Border TV franchise is being allowed to wither on the vine. Indeed, Ofcom has now all but stated that it no longer regards separate Border provision as sustainable.

News coverage is not the only concern; other public sector broadcasting, such as documentaries and specific regional coverage that reflects the particular social mixture and texture of cross-border life, will vanish. There is no neat cultural divide at the border. Although I understand the argument that, in future, there should be a clear division at the border so that the next ITV franchise in Scotland is for all Scotland, one cannot easily design news coverage for the Border TV region or coverage of its societies and cultures from Carlisle, Newcastle, Glasgow or Edinburgh. A careful approach will inevitably require to be adopted to the exercise of any editorial control from one of those centres. The provision of news from Glasgow or, indeed, Tyneside can never offer a good fit that meets my area's priorities.

I am concerned that, in striving to have a very neat territorial boundary at the border, the commission and some members of the Parliament have disregarded the fact that Borders communities have cultural, economic, transport and family links across the border from coast to coast. Modern technology and the internet operate across borders, yet we are setting up territorial boundaries for state-sponsored television. I am equally concerned—perhaps more concerned—that coverage from Glasgow would not provide proper representation for communities such as those in the Borders.

A long-term concern relating to any Scottish digital channel will be the involvement of a Scottish Government. I simply would not trust a nationalist Government not to seek to interfere with the operation of a Scottish BBC or a national broadcaster. Following an independent appointment and selection process, Alasdair Morrison was appointed as chairman of MG Alba, but the Scottish minister for culture sought to block the appointment. Furthermore, this afternoon, we have heard outlined a Scottish version of the cricket test.

The report contains scant reference to the viewing of digital channels from relay transmitters. Because many viewers receive their signal from a relay transmitter, only 53 per cent of viewers in the

Borders will receive all channels. That is the lowest figure for any part of the UK. It is open to ridicule to suggest that a Scottish digital channel, even under a spectrum that will not be part of the full digital platform available to viewers, could be a temporary move until 2014.

Neither the Scottish Government nor the Scottish Broadcasting Commission has mentioned the impact that the switchover will have in my constituency next month. This is not a long-term position that the Government can simply use as a platform, and neither is it a mere detail that the commission has neglected to cover. Switchover will happen next month and viewers in our area will be disfranchised. That is why I would have expected the Scottish Government to make strong representations about the coverage of digital channels—especially as the Government's main policy is now a Scottish digital channel.

16:02

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Attempts have been made to take a consensual approach this afternoon, but some of Jeremy Purvis's latter remarks were unfortunate. He introduced some rather sour and party-political content. When we consider reports, we will inevitably disagree on some points of detail. People will rightly express a range of views, rather than a uniform view, but it is generally acknowledged that the Scottish Broadcasting Commission has shown genuine independence—even if Karen Whitefield has to regard it as independence with a small i. The commission has considered the issues from an all-Scotland perspective rather than from any party-political perspective.

Margo MacDonald: Can the member sympathise with Jeremy Purvis when he suggests that he does not trust a Scottish Government to be fair and objective on Scottish broadcasting? Christopher Harvie gave us the example of the BBC in London guiding us through the war.

Brian Adam: We can consider many issues of trust, and I have a great deal more trust in the current Scottish Government than has Jeremy Purvis. Then again, I would, wouldn't I?

I accept that the Labour amendment is an attempt to broaden the debate a little, but it has been lodged on a false premise. The commission was not asked to consider the future of broadcasting in the context of an independent Scotland; it was asked to consider the future of broadcasting within the current UK framework. The commission had no remit to examine other possibilities. In an independent country, there may well have been other possibilities. The amendment would therefore add an element of confusion.

Pauline McNeill: Will the member take an intervention?

Brian Adam: I ask the member to allow me to express my view first. I will then be happy to take an intervention.

If the motion were amended, it would simultaneously accept that the Parliament

“should take an active role in considering the broadcasting industry and services as they relate to Scotland”

and recommend that the Calman commission should consider the Parliament’s role. I am happy for the Calman commission to consider the case for extending the Parliament’s role, which the national conversation is also considering. However, simultaneously accepting an active role for the Parliament and putting the existence of that role up for discussion—which is how the amended motion would read—is not advisable.

Pauline McNeill: The member complains that the Labour amendment causes confusion. I wonder whether he recognises consensus when he sees it. Does he not agree that, if the commission has recommended further scrutiny by the Parliament, it seems logical—from our point of view, if not his—that somebody should look at how that mechanism could work? We suggest that the Calman commission is an obvious place where that could be considered.

Brian Adam: That is certainly not the only place where that could be considered. The wording of the Labour amendment puts the matter in the context of an independent Scotland, whereas the commission’s report was produced against the background of the current UK framework rather than a changing one.

I am delighted to speak on this issue, which is close to my heart. I acknowledge the role that has been played by Cathy Peattie and the cross-party group on culture and media. We must consider a range of broadcasting, down to the community level as well as across the country. I endorse much of what Cathy Peattie said. How we get to that point is something that broadcasters as well as Governments will have to wrestle with.

Those who know me well will know that, although I am only an adoptive Aberdonian, I see little point in paying for subscription services as well as the licence fee. However, Freeview and BT Vision are welcome additions in my home, and I welcome the proposal for a Scottish digital channel as part of the range of public service broadcasting.

Jeremy Purvis: I will attempt to restore consensus and hope that the member will agree with me that there is no point in having a Scottish digital channel if in some areas, such as the south of Scotland, only 53 per cent of viewers are able to

receive it. That is what will happen if the channel is broadcast on a multiplex that is not the standard Freeview package.

Brian Adam: Accessibility is important. The same applies to BBC Alba and the current arrangements.

The content of what is broadcast is probably what the general population is concerned about. I am looking for a much better arrangement for broadcasting such things as international football—I have campaigned for that long and hard, and Christine Grahame referred to that. The moves that are being made south of the border by Mr Burnham in connection with that are welcome, but we want action not just warm words.

I accept that we need to look carefully at how we present all of Scotland—not just its uniformity, but its great diversity. The decision south of the border about the broadcasting of regional news was not welcome. That is a challenge for STV, even in its present role. It is a cause of considerable concern not just for me, but for many members. However, I accept that there are challenges around that, as Jeremy Purvis pointed out.

16:08

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Like other members, I thank Blair Jenkins and his colleagues on the commission for their work over the past year. I also pay tribute to Ray Michie for her lifetime of public service.

This is a welcome and timely report. It is remarkable in that it appears to have generated a fair degree of consensus in a policy area that is normally quite contentious. It is timely in that it follows a period of growing concern about the state of Scottish broadcasting, the number of hours of programming that are produced in Scotland and the future of public service broadcasting in general. Whether or not it was a response to the commission, the immediate response of the BBC and its commitment to increase its Scottish production is very welcome.

I am happy to thank the First Minister for his role in establishing the commission, although I cannot help but wonder whether he expected it to come to a slightly different set of conclusions. Not only has the commission concluded that Scotland benefits from being part of a UK-wide broadcasting network, in particular a UK-wide BBC service; it has effectively dismissed arguments for the so-called “scottish six”, concluding that the idea is not so much wrong as simply irrelevant in the digital age.

Although I do not wish unduly to disturb the broad mood of consensus around the report, I was struck by the fact that, in his statement, the First

Minister concentrated on the conclusions that call on Westminster to provide funding or on the UK Government or BBC to take action, rather than on the areas over which he has direct influence or control.

The First Minister mentioned in passing the commission's recommendations on the creative industries and particularly on the skills agenda. When she concludes the debate, I would welcome hearing from the Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture exactly what the Scottish Government intends to do to meet those recommendations.

We know that one of the reasons why Channel 4 maintains that it cannot commission more from Scotland is its concern about the extent of the skills and production base here. Skillset, the sector skills agency that is responsible for creative media, is working on an ambitious strategy to address that shortage, but it needs ministerial support. I was rather unsettled at last week's meeting of the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee when I heard representatives of Skills Development Scotland defend the real-terms budget cut that it will undergo over the next three years. Of course, we are still waiting for the minister to bring the overall strategy back to Parliament following last year's admonishment.

I am not optimistic that we will hear it, but I would like to hear not what the UK Government can do but what we can do. I want to know what Scotland's specific plans are for the creative industries and the new body, creative Scotland.

The Broadcasting Commission focused unashamedly on television production, and it is easy to be seduced by the glamour of television when we talk about broadcasting in general, but the issues that concern us apply equally to radio. There might seem to have been an expansion in the number of radio channels and supposed choice, but many of the channels offer a fairly similar diet of middle-of-the-road, music-based programming. There has been a steep decline in the number of talk-based factual programmes, particularly on the independent stations. I believe that news production on those stations is also being squeezed and, in some cases, centralised, with news teams being reduced in numbers. There are also worries, which were expressed in the commission's report, about the quality of some of the BBC's radio output.

I am sure that I am not alone—in this chamber, or among the general public—in relying on radio for much of my news and current affairs. However, compared to the £50 million to £75 million estimated cost of a new Scottish public service digital TV network, addressing concerns about public service radio would be extremely inexpensive. I am sure that, for tens of thousands

of pounds, rather than millions of pounds, all our commercial radio stations would be happy to commission and carry more talk-based factual or current affairs programmes.

I worry that this country is even more ill prepared for the switch to digital radio than we are for the switch to digital television. To use a familiar expression, this could be an opportunity, but it could also prove to be a threat. It could allow us to defend the best of public service broadcasting, or it could result in the triumph of the bland. We could end up, like American television of a decade or so ago, with 53 channels but nothing on.

The Broadcasting Commission has offered us a framework and a plan to address the needs of viewers and listeners in Scotland as we enter the digital age. I hope that we can unite on what can be done and on what we in the Scottish Parliament can contribute, rather than concentrating on what others can do. If we do, I am confident that the future for Scotland's TV and radio is still rosy.

16:13

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): I thank the commission for its work, and I should also thank the Scottish Government for commissioning it.

I notice that Blair Jenkins's commission was at pains to depoliticise its report. Quite right, too. However, underlying any policy on broadcasting is its importance in educating, communicating, promoting and helping to evolve a sense of community identity. That is why every distinctive national community has established a broadcasting system alongside the other requirements of a sovereign power. We should not be too polite about it; of course that is what happens, as Chris Harvie pointed out. Iain Gray quickly clocked the point as well, and went on to emphasise that it was recommended that the broadcasting system be a UK broadcasting system. However, that does not mean that it would have to be part of the UK state.

In practical terms, the days of revolutionaries capturing the local radio and TV stations are all but gone. Satellite is the new game in town and the web is where it is at, if someone wants to run a revolution. However, I am going to concentrate on broadcasting, and I suggest that everyone else here should do likewise. I direct members to the lesson of what happened in Qatar in 1995, when the old emir was deposed by the young emir. The first places that the young emir's people went were the local radio and television stations, but the old emir managed to hold them off for a year because he had the chequebook.

If a viewer's preference is for a quiet life watching TV for entertainment, sport or keeping up

with affairs in far-flung corners as well as the latest developments in public affairs in Scotland or over the border, it is a fair bet that they are not overly concerned about the relationship that the channels of their choice enjoy with Government. Nowadays, because of American television standards, viewers and listeners want and expect broadcasting to be of a high standard. They want their programmes to be interesting and/or enjoyable, and nothing like the rubbish that was shown on Channel 4 this week about lap dancing—but that is another story.

If the programmes are to be shown outside Scotland, viewers in Scotland—that is, taxpayers and citizens—want them to be a credit to our national creativity, the quality of our life, our social priorities and, of course, the beauty of our country. That is the perspective that the report quite correctly adopts, but not for the reason of buttressing the unionist side in the ever-present constitutional tug-of-war in the chamber. Let us forget our politics for the moment and consider quality broadcasting from the viewer's perspective. As I said, the days of Government's ability to propagandise without competition from alternative programming and broadcasting outlets are gone anyway—we cannot do all that much to influence people's political opinions through the multiplicity of broadcasting outlets that we have.

When, in the process of establishing Scottish sovereignty and new relationships based on equal legal status between Westminster and Holyrood, we come to negotiate the share-out of assets and liabilities, the BBC, which is presently London-centric and a reserved responsibility, might well become a joint operation that is funded by and answerable—at arms' length—to both Governments through a joint board or trust. That is what I want to happen, because I want to hold on to the broadcasting tradition that has been established in the United Kingdom, although I would want to bring it into the 21st century. However, details on how that would be organised are for the future—the report concerns action to be taken now, and I heartily support the commission's recommendation that there should be a Scottish network.

I was a bit concerned about some comments that one of the reasons for having a Scottish network is to retain technical and creative expertise in Scotland, and that that is linked entirely to the training that is offered by colleges and universities. Those of us who have worked in TV and in radio know that there is no better thing in that respect than in-house and on-the-job training. That is one of the things that we do not talk about—if we are talking about the public responsibilities of broadcasters, we must talk about the training that they should offer, because it has been allowed to fall away.

It is obvious that there should be extra commissioning of programmes from Scotland. I agree with what Ted Brocklebank said about the share of the commissioning cake, and we should be getting that much sooner than is proposed. However, there is one thing that we should clarify. I think that it was Christine Grahame who referred to London and the share that it got—I think that she said 6.3 per cent as compared to our three-point-whatever. London has twice our population. Are we going to look at this in terms of the share that we should have because of our distinctive national identity, or because of the number of people who are paying for a television licence? We had better sort that out. Iain Smith talked about the need for more money. I wonder what he thinks the likely political response to that will be, at a time when "subsidised Scots" is the common phraseology that trips off the tongues of folk in London.

I hope that BBC Alba is put on Freeview, because that will help to allay some of the fears about the parochial nature of the content that a Scottish network might show. Such fears have been voiced in all the popular papers; they are rubbish, and if we get Alba on to Freeview, it might show that they are rubbish.

16:19

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):

A fortnight ago, the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee took evidence from Blair Jenkins on the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's final report. I asked him whether it was the case that, given that a TV licence costs £139, some £320 million is raised annually in Scotland. He said that the figure is about £300 million and that BBC expenditure in Scotland is some £140 million. Thus, some £160 million or so in licence fees heads south every year to those subsidy junkies in London.

Although no one would argue that every penny that is raised in Scotland should be spent in Scotland—at least, not under the current UK structure—there is clearly enough of a surplus for Scotland to get the £75 million or so that is required for a new Scottish channel. The Tory amendment is therefore somewhat spurious when it states:

"further work needs to be done on a suitable funding model, which ensures a substantial private sector input so that the cost does not fall wholly on the taxpayer".

Although I commend Ted Brocklebank for tilting at the windmill of a new commercial or hybrid channel, I doubt that the market could support it at a level that would ensure an enhanced quality of programming for Scotland.

Ted Brocklebank: If the Scottish market would not support it, why has commercial city TV been supported throughout the United States and Canada? Why does Detroit have nine channels? Why does Bangor in Maine—a town the size of Kirkcaldy—have three channels? If it can work there, why not in Scotland?

Kenneth Gibson: What we want in Scotland is quality and not quantity. We have heard about places that have endless numbers of channels with poor-quality programming, and we do not want that in Scotland.

According to Mr Jenkins, the BBC employs perhaps 1,100 to 1,200 people in Scotland out of a UK total of perhaps 24,000 employees. The gap in expenditure in Scotland compared with the metropolis means that hundreds of Scots with talent, skills and ambitions have either to leave Scotland to fulfil those ambitions or stay at home and have them frustrated.

Many of us—perhaps all of us—received a briefing from 29 media companies that includes a number of points that they wanted raised. They state:

“the main priority for us is spend in and from Scotland.”

They also state:

“We believe the Broadcasting Commission has laid the foundations for the recovery that our industry so badly needs.”

In evidence to the committee, Mr Jenkins said:

“One consequence of the steep decline in network television production in Scotland in recent years is that a great many people have relocated—not just people on the creative side, such as directors and writers, but people with technical skills, such as those who work in post-production or make-up for drama. Understandably, people have moved to other parts of the UK where they can make a career and a living. We need to plug the gaps in traditional production skills.”—[*Official Report, Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee*, 24 September 2008; c 1468.]

Mr Jenkins also pointed out, in paragraph 36 of the executive summary of the SBC's report:

“The Commission has not heard a convincing explanation of why it should take as long as 8 years to achieve the goal of 8.6% of productions being commissioned from Scotland.”

I take on board what Margo MacDonald said about Scotland's cultural identity. The matter is not just about figures and statistics, but 8.6 per cent would certainly be a tremendous starting point. The report goes on to say that waiting until 2016 rather than 2012 represents

“a deficit Scotland can no longer afford.”

Of course, £20 million a year is a start, but it should not be our destination. Certainly, 2016 is too far in the future, and waiting until then is not

acceptable. Channel 4 and Channel 5 chronically underspend in Scotland, possibly by as much as £50 million a year between them. As Mr Jenkins pointed out, there is no reason why a commitment cannot be made, at least by Channel 4, to close the gap by 2012.

Pauline McNeill, who has clearly been got at by the Labour thought police, as her two varying articles in today's *Scotsman* show, quoted paragraph 5 of the report's executive summary, stating:

“Scotland has undoubtedly benefited from being part of the overall broadcasting ecology of the UK”.

What she did not add, although it is stated in the same paragraph, is:

“Scotland has always been rather marginalised within this generally successful UK framework and that needs to change.”

Pauline McNeill also stated in her second article in today's *Scotsman*:

“Scottish audiences are able to watch some of the best television programmes in the world, from *Life on Mars* to *Coronation Street* and *Channel 4 News*. This is worth protecting”.

I agree, but I do not know what she is getting at. Perhaps the Labour spokesperson will clarify that when they sum up. Those programmes are not under threat. There is almost an implication that they would be under threat in an independent Scotland, but the United Kingdom broadcasts umpteen programmes to the United States and other countries and I do not believe that that would change if there was a constitutional change in the future. Of course, one would hope that dross such as “Big Brother” would become a thing of the past in an independent Scotland. As Mr Jenkins said in his report,

“There are now global audiences awaiting those with global ambitions.”

Quality programmes made in Scotland are what we all want to see.

In response to a question from me, Mr Jenkins added:

“It is much easier to construct a model for broadcasting in an independent Scotland than it is to construct a model of devolved broadcasting that is fully consistent.”—[*Official Report, Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee*, 24 September 2008; c 1467.]

I agree with that. However, regardless of the constitutional future, when it comes to broadcasting, the needs of the viewers, quality programmes and viewers' involvement in programmes and services will always be paramount.

16:25

Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It would be foolhardy of anyone to ignore the huge opportunity that is presented to Scotland as a result of the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's report, which, as Ted Brocklebank said, we Conservatives support warmly, because we believe that it offers Scottish media a new lease of life and an important new market in which to operate.

At a time when the cultural and economic life of Scotland is under huge financial pressure, with all the uncertainties that that brings to the organisations concerned, it is incumbent upon the members of this Parliament to ensure that there is light at the end of the tunnel and, in particular, that a new public service Scottish digital channel can provide new scope and harness the undoubted talent in the creative industries.

In a world in which there is increasing interest in local news and documentaries, the new channel ought to provide a new framework for developing the coverage of some of the smaller companies—which are often some of our most creative companies—which are often left out in national coverage. Perhaps it will even attract some cricket coverage in Scotland, which would suit the passion of at least some of us in the chamber.

It is also important to recognise the key role that the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee will be expected to play in promoting the best interests of Scottish broadcasting in the new digital age. Although we, unlike the Scottish National Party, cannot be persuaded of the arguments for devolving broadcasting to Holyrood entirely, for the simple reason that Scottish interests are best served by the financial economies of scale and international reputation that come of being part of the UK network, we believe that the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee has a vital role to play in ensuring that there is a fully collaborative approach within the industry—a point that Blair Jenkins made in his submission to the committee on 24 September.

Shared objectives and well-structured links with industry and educational establishments will be paramount, as will ensuring that creative Scotland has what Blair Jenkins described as a “muscular” role. Perhaps we can encourage the Government to be specific about what the roles will be, particularly in relation to paragraphs 28 and 30 of what the First Minister delivered, because there is still confusion about the roles that creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise will play.

We also share Mr Jenkins's view that there is a need for greater accountability in Scotland for the programmes that are run and for greater influence

over policy in responding to the demand in Scotland for different types of programme. If that means extending the debate and including it in the remit of the Calman commission, we would have no problem with that.

Members of the public are concerned about the variety and quality of the programmes that they watch. We must ensure that we have a workable structure. There is a balance to be struck in ensuring that Scotland gets her fair share of funding but also retains the advantage of sharing a network that is renowned world wide. The new Scottish digital channel will not be able to maintain that balance on its own, but it will be a major contributing factor.

When the Scottish Broadcasting Commission concluded its report, it spoke of optimism that the industry had turned a corner. Mr Jenkins made it clear that things had been allowed to slip back badly in recent years because there was an absence of collective determination. It is my belief that this debate is crucial in setting out the principles by which this Parliament can support the Scottish media and that it should be the clearly defined role of the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee to monitor that process in the years ahead. Scottish broadcasting has a real opportunity in the months ahead. That is why I am pleased to support the Conservative amendment.

16:29

Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): Members have been right to welcome the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's report and to thank Blair Jenkins and our late colleague Ray Michie and other members of the commission for their considerable work on that important report.

Pauline McNeill was right: people care about their telly. There are few things that we can say that about. It cuts across every facet of our society: no matter what economic background or part of Scotland people come from, or what age they are, we all care a great deal about our telly. If we had been considering an amendment today to ban “Big Brother”, it might have joined a long list of things that we want to ban.

It is right that we should all care about broadcasting and its impact on our economy, jobs, culture, democracy and institutions. We can be proud that, as the commission's report says, the United Kingdom as a whole has

“a rich tradition of high production values and public service content”

and Margo MacDonald made interesting remarks about a possible federal structure, no matter what happens with this country's democracy.

Quality broadcasting is in the best interests not only of the viewers that it serves, but of society as a whole. The quality of the UK's broadcasting is renowned around the world, which is why BBC World makes considerable profits for the BBC. However, as the report and many members have highlighted, Scotland has always been somewhat marginalised in the wider UK picture. That needs to change. Our country has a distinct culture and distinct traditions and institutions, which means that our audiences require specialist programmes that are distinct from those that are broadcast elsewhere in the United Kingdom. We also need the ability to buy in the quality programmes that we have all come to know and love. In particular, specific news broadcasts are needed to inform the public about work in the chamber and the worlds of Scottish politics and culture.

Members have been right to say that the commission's report, Lord King's review and the work of others have contributed a great deal to the debate, and that what has been done has led to the BBC trust admitting that the BBC was failing to deliver an appropriate news service for the devolved nations. That is a welcome development that results from the on-going debate. It has been clear to all of us for some time that there are on-going issues with the relevance and accuracy of BBC news broadcasts to Scottish viewers. Therefore, we fully support the commission's recommendation

"that all broadcasters in the UK should review the performance of their news services in reporting the four nations in a manner that is accurate and relevant for all."

The commission recommended the establishment of a new Scottish digital television network, and that recommendation has been welcomed around the chamber. Members should think of the possibility of Christopher Harvie being available to a larger audience. He made an interesting speech in which he referred to the evil-doing of "Blue Peter" and the imaginativeness of Hitler. One can only guess what Adolf would have done if he had had access to sticky-back plastic.

The funding of any new Scottish digital television network must be addressed. The commission said that such a network should be provided on a not-for-profit basis, which it thought would not damage the existing Scottish media, as competition for advertising revenue would not be increased. The Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee asked Blair Jenkins about the matter, and he said that there would be an impact on the commercial media as a result of the potentially reduced viewing figures for advertising.

The Liberal Democrats recognise that finance will be a significant issue. It would be regrettable if the establishment of any new channel reduced the resources that are available in the existing

Scottish programme-making budgets in STV, albeit that members have expressed concerns about that organisation's programme making. Notwithstanding Cathy Peattie's concerns about the matter, the First Minister was right to flag up the possibility of funding coming from selling off the analogue spectrum, but the Conservatives were also right, as Iain Smith and Pauline McNeill said, to talk about a co-funding alternative. That said, it is probably premature to go as far as the Conservatives have gone in their amendment by suggesting that we should decide at this stage on the best funding solution. It would be interesting if the minister would say when she sums up whether the Scottish Government has discussed the commission's significant recommendation on that with the UK Government.

A key concern that members around the chamber have expressed is the steep decline in the levels of television production originating in Scotland. Commissioning editors' lack of engagement in Scotland is a great concern, and we would all welcome and support more commissioning and more network management being based in Scotland.

As Karen Whitefield and others said, it is also essential that higher and further education institutions, Scottish Enterprise, skills bodies and creative Scotland are fully involved in ensuring that we have the skilled workforce that we need to take advantage of the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. That is particularly important given that it is hoped that the BBC and Channel 4 will work incredibly hard to turn around the appalling dichotomy between the target of commissioning 8.6 per cent of productions in Scotland and the actual figure. That position costs us about £20 million a year.

Margo MacDonald made valuable comments about the role of in-house training. We have a great opportunity for the creative media and broadcasting industry in Scotland. There is much work to do, but I welcome the commission's report.

16:35

Ted Brocklebank: For someone like me who has spent a lifetime in Scottish broadcasting, the debate has been fascinating—all the more so because many members seem at last to be prepared to engage in broadcasting matters.

In the summer, I visited the new studios of BBC Alba in Stornoway and at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in Skye. What struck me, as it did the First Minister—apart from the stellar equipment, which was light-years ahead of anything that I saw in my day—was the quality of the young people who operated the equipment and their enthusiasm for the new channel that they were about to launch. Here were

much-needed jobs and people who were skilled and creative enough to fill them in a part of the world that for too long has watched its brightest and best leave for the mainland. That could be the model for a broadcasting revolution.

It is a matter of history that Conservative ministers at the Scottish Office—Malcolm Rifkind and Michael Forsyth—first came up with specific funding for Scottish Gaelic programming. That money has matured into the £12 million contribution that the Scottish Government has awarded to make the new channel possible, as the First Minister conceded in his statement. We see the new Scottish digital channel as the national equivalent of what was established for the Gaels. It would receive Government money, but the bulk of funding would come from the commercial sector.

Pauline McNeill gave a solid performance in her debut on the culture brief. She is right that Scots want competition for the BBC. In saying that, I think that she referred to the TNS System Three survey, which also showed that respondents wanted more history, heritage, wildlife and minority sport programmes, which are exactly what a digital channel could provide.

Margo MacDonald: Does Ted Brocklebank believe that viewers want more of those programmes?

Ted Brocklebank: I am referring to System Three's survey. Why would I disagree with a survey that the Government funded earlier this year?

I agreed with much of Chris Harvie's entertaining speech and especially with his view that the BBC is involving itself in aspects of broadcasting that are best left to others. I will not go through all the speeches, as I have more to add to the debate and I want to respond to Jeremy Purvis's questions about Border TV. However, I commend briefly the speeches by Kenny Macintosh and Margo MacDonald, whose experience in broadcasting shone through, and by my colleague Liz Smith, who talked excellent common sense as ever.

We see the new digital channel as a funding opportunity rather than another drain on the taxpayer. We see no reason why advertising revenue could not be raised for local TV channels to run as opt-outs of the new Scottish digital channel, which could be partly funded by the main Scottish commercial broadcaster.

Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): Will the member give way?

Ted Brocklebank: I cannot give way as I have much to get through.

We were particularly glad that the commission highlighted the lack of spending on Scottish programming in recent years, to which members have referred. I do not know whether people understand how much Scottish broadcasters resented the lectures from Michael Grade of ITV and Mark Thompson of the BBC that funding should come to Scotland not by right, but only if Scotland showed that it had the talent. That was rich from those who slashed spending in Scotland in the first place—the BBC transferred money and jobs to production centres such as Manchester and Bristol.

Michael Grade claimed that money follows talent. He is the same Michael Grade who earns £2 million a year and who last week paid off 400 ITV news staff, including 51 at Border TV. Border has been let down by Ofcom and the commission. Mr Purvis might be interested to know that only this morning, in a speech to the Royal Television Society, Mr Grade talked of ITV possibly ditching its public service commitments entirely. That would mean abandoning STV to its own devices, and we are talking about a company whose licence could go negative by next year, with absolutely no bets on what might happen to Border Television.

However, Mr Grade was wrong. Money does not follow talent; talent follows money. That is why so many excellent Scots broadcasters now work in the well-funded network centres. I assume that it is also why the talented Mr Grade traded the £140,000 per annum that he was being paid as chairman of the BBC trust for the £2 million that he now gets as ITV executive chairman. It is also why we believe that the funding model for the new Scottish channel must be got right.

Margo MacDonald was right to say that it was a mistake to limit transmission of BBC Alba to the satellite providers and not to make it available on Freeview. I question the judgment of the BBC trust on that and hope that it remedies the situation as soon as possible to allow the Gaelic channel a fair chance of survival. In that connection, we must ensure that any new Scottish channel is universally available throughout Scotland, including in the rural areas, the Borders and the outer isles. It is also important that it should be listed on the electronic programme guide next in line to the other public service channels. We should be proud of our new channel—as and when it comes—and we should ensure that it is accessible.

This has been a great day for Scottish broadcasting. Let us all work on how to make the way ahead even better for broadcasters and viewers alike.

16:41

David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): I, too, declare an historic interest in the subject. Like Mr Brocklebank, I have some shares in STV. I was also employed at STV and elsewhere in the broadcasting industry for a decade as a reporter, presenter and, producer and—latterly—was head of public affairs at STV. That said, I did not reach the same dizzy heights as Mr Brocklebank.

I also declare that Blair Jenkins, who chaired the commission, was at one time my boss. I know him well. I am not surprised at the way in which he undertook his task, given how passionately he feels about the current state of the Scottish broadcasting industry. Indeed, from his seat in the gallery, I hope that he does not scrutinise my speech in the same way as he used to look at my news scripts.

I turn to contributions to the debate. As Mr Brocklebank said, it has been a great debate. Some spirited contributions were made—indeed, Mr Brocklebank made two of them. In his first speech, he addressed commercial funding, saying that newspaper groups were poised to look at all of this, which is exactly the point that I tried to make in my intervention. He said that the finances of STV and Ulster TV are precarious, which, indeed, they are. However, their finances are hardly likely to get better if a competitor comes along that is competing for the same advertising. I do not rule that out entirely; Labour members are simply saying that much greater scrutiny of the funding model needs to be undertaken before we settle on it.

Iain Smith made the same point in the same way. He said that he wanted to see additional money and not a displacement of what is currently around. Other members mentioned Christopher Harvie's speech. As a former member of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee alongside Christopher Harvie, I am well used to his colourful contributions. His references to Jeremy Clarkson and the

"munchkins of Ofcom and the BBC"

will live long in the memory.

As Ken Macintosh rightly reminded us, the debate is not only about television but about radio. Margo MacDonald made a strange reference to lap-dancing programmes on Channel 4, which left me wondering who controls the remote in her house.

Pauline McNeill: She's never in.

David Whitton: Ah!

Labour members will support the motion at decision time. We will not support the

Conservative amendment, but we will support the Liberal Democrat one.

I do not want to bring a note of discord into what has been a constructive debate, but it is well known that the SNP has long held the desire to bring control of broadcasting in Scotland within the remit of the Scottish Parliament. The report does not recommend that. As Iain Gray noted in his question to the First Minister, Scotland has benefited from being "part of the overall broadcasting ecology of the UK."

I refer the chamber to paragraph 6 of the executive summary of the Scottish Broadcasting Commission report, which states:

"We would encourage everyone to look at the issues around broadcasting with fresh eyes"—

that includes Mr Gibson—

"in an open-minded and non-partisan way. Broadcasting should not serve as a surrogate for the constitutional debate in Scotland."

Margo MacDonald: Will the member give way?

David Whitton: I must give way to someone with whom I used to share a studio couch.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Too much detail, Mr Whitton.

Margo MacDonald: I will not expand on it, Presiding Officer.

If the member agrees with paragraph 6 of the executive summary, as I do, will he urge his colleagues to stop assuming that we are stuck with the constitutional arrangement of Westminster being in charge of broadcasting? There are other, more equal models.

David Whitton: If Margo MacDonald will exercise some patience—for which she is not really known—I will get to that point.

The Labour Party and I are prepared to look at the issue with fresh eyes. Before any other member gets to their feet to argue about programme budget shares, I do not dispute that in recent times Scottish broadcasting has been treated poorly by the BBC, Channel 4 and the ITV network. I cannot put it any more strongly than Mr Brocklebank did in his closing speech.

I was at Scottish Television for 10 happy years. When I left the station, more than £20 million was being spent each year on more than 1,000 hours of local programming. Just as the Scots like to read their own newspapers, so they like to watch their own television programmes—made here, for Scots, about Scots. As Ken Macintosh reminded us, they also like to listen to local radio programmes. Today, Scottish Television's local programme output is a shadow of what it once was. Indeed, we are told that Ofcom believes that

STV will need to be subsidised to produce news and other public service programmes. That is why Labour members have a difficulty with the Conservative idea that the new digital channel should be paid for mostly by commercial means. We do not think that it makes much sense to have another channel competing for a dwindling share of an already decreasing advertising market.

As Mr Jenkins and the commission pointed out, the UK Government will make substantial sums from the next sale of broadcasting spectrum; the £75 million that they estimate will be needed to set up the new channel could come from there. However, my colleague Cathy Peattie made an important point about the positioning of the seventh digital multiplex. I hope that the minister, from whom we will hear in a moment, was listening and will think about sending another letter to Ofcom to raise that issue.

We believe that the Calman commission, which is considering the devolution settlement, may be best placed to consider as part of its deliberations how the new channel could be paid for and who should look out for it. The commission could also consider how best to scrutinise the operation of the channel.

As we have heard, there is no doubt that in the 10 years since I last sat in a television studio the broadcasting industry and the technology surrounding the production of programmes have changed out of all recognition. The other day, my son laughingly pointed out to me that his new mobile phone has more power to connect to the digital world than my old laptop has. That takes me back to the executive summary of the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's report. We agree that broadcasting is important to the economic, cultural and democratic health of Scotland and that Scotland needs a new framework for broadcasting to take us through the transition to digital switchover. We agree that the issue needs to be looked at with fresh eyes; the commission's report offers us the opportunity to do just that. We also agree that it is crucial to provide a substantial source of competition for the BBC in producing high-quality public service content for Scottish audiences.

Many other members have mentioned the poor share of programmes that the BBC commissions from Scotland. I echo the view that it is not good enough that that share has been allowed to fall to less than 3 per cent. A new target of 8.6 per cent has been set but, in typically BBC fashion, the deadline for meeting it has been extended from 2012 to 2016. That is not good enough. The extra programmes that are proposed would inject £40 million, if not more, into the Scottish economy, and we could do with that now. Increased pressure should be brought to bear to increase programme

share rapidly, with the target of 2012 being the worst-case scenario. It has also been said that the BBC should consider moving one of its new channels, such as BBC3 or BBC4, to Scotland. I hope that someone somewhere in the BBC is thinking about doing that.

However, the BBC is not the only outlet for Scottish programmes—there is also Channel 4. Stuart Cosgrove, the channel's ambassador in Scotland, is probably better known for his appearances on BBC radio and television football programmes. I respectfully suggest to him and his bosses that it might be better if he concentrated more on his day job and got Scottish programmes on to the Channel 4 network.

I can remember when Channel 4 had a specific slot for current affairs programmes made by regional broadcasters. If Channel 4 expects a substantial increase in public funding, it should say where the money will go. To spend 2 per cent of its budget in Scotland—like the BBC—is simply not good enough. Channel 4's target should be similar to that set for the BBC, and a deadline should be set for achieving it. That would have an economic impact.

Much has been said about training. Broadcasting is an exciting industry to be involved in. Several colleagues have referred to their training, and it is a matter of pride to me and Mr Jenkins that some of the people whom we helped to train now edit, produce and report on network shows, at home and abroad. I believe that we should support the commission's report and its findings.

16:50

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): I, too, thank Blair Jenkins and the commissioners, as well as the officers who supported the work of the commission. Like many other members, I also pay tribute to Ray Michie. When I lived and worked in Argyll, Ray Michie was my constituency MP, and I saw at first hand her hands-on work and how highly respected she was.

This has been a generally excellent debate. I welcome the support for the work of the commission that many members have expressed. There are many points to respond to, and I will work through some of them.

In the spirit of consensus, I wish to clarify why I feel that we cannot support all the amendments. I particularly appreciated the contributions of Ted Brocklebank, Margo MacDonald and David Whitton. Sound opinions from those who have worked in any particular industry or profession and bring their experience to the chamber are always to be welcomed.

I thank Pauline McNeill for opening the debate by speaking about the wide picture of broadcasting in Scotland and the high expectations that people in Scotland are likely to have because of our bold step of establishing the Scottish Broadcasting Commission. The Parliament must try to live up to some of those high expectations. Ted Brocklebank spoke about the founding principles of broadcasting: informing, educating and entertaining. Those should always be held up as great ideals, and Margo MacDonald and Chris Harvie reminded us how easy it can be to slip away from them.

Iain Smith said that there should be no slacking, and that it was time for action, by having a general agreement on more powers in order to make progress. That important point was contained in the Lib Dems' response to the commission: they said that there should be much greater accountability to the Scottish Parliament, including a formal role for the Parliament in the charter renewal process. On the point that Iain Smith made about it being time for action, I emphasise the time that was available to the Cultural Commission, which Ted Brocklebank mentioned. In 2005, that commission made certain recommendations, but nothing happened as a result.

The Lib Dems' recommendation that there be much greater accountability to the Scottish Parliament might suggest to Jeremy and others that the chair of BBC Alba should be accountable to the Scottish Parliament—it is the Scottish taxpayer who is paying £12 million a year for BBC Alba, and there should therefore be a line of accountability from BBC Alba to Scottish ministers. The fact that there is no Ofcom appraisal system in place for the channel's chair is concerning. I have written to Ofcom about that, and it has now agreed to look into the matter.

I have concerns about what Jeremy said in his speech.

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry to interrupt, minister, but I must ask that you refer to other members by their full names, not just their Christian names.

Linda Fabiani: I am sorry, Presiding Officer.

I was a wee bit miffed by Mr Purvis's lack of trust in the Scottish National Party's ability to be politically impartial. I am concerned by how he tried to tie in the First Minister's comments, saying that the commission had let us down by not taking on board the First Minister's comments about Border TV. Mr Purvis cannot have it all ways. The Broadcasting Commission was clearly independent, which is what everyone would expect and desire. However, I understand the concerns about Border TV that Jeremy Purvis and

Christine Grahame expressed. I will say more about that when I talk about the amendment in Iain Smith's name.

On the amendment in Pauline McNeill's name, the commission considered the future of broadcasting in Scotland within the current UK framework because there was no remit for it to examine other possibilities. However in its comments on devolution, the commission said:

"We are making recommendations in this report to increase the influence Scotland has over its broadcasting services and the accountability of those services in Scotland. We are equally clear, however, that if these steps are unsuccessful in meeting the needs of the viewing public in Scotland, then the question of devolving all of broadcasting to Scotland may need to be considered in future."

We should never close doors; we should always look forward and consider the best solution.

The commission has gone a long way to build consensus across party lines. Although we differ from the Labour Party on the destination for broadcasting and on Scotland's future, I hope that we can maintain the wide consensus that exists on the next steps that are needed to make Scotland's broadcasting better for the people of Scotland. If the amendment in Pauline McNeill's name were agreed to, the amended motion would be confusing, because it would simultaneously call on the Parliament to accept that it should take

"an active role in considering the broadcasting industry and services",

and to recommend that the Calman commission consider that role. I have no problem with the Calman commission considering the case for extending the Parliament's role. The national conversation will do that, too.

Pauline McNeill: Will the minister give way?

Linda Fabiani: No, I do not have time.

If the amendment in Pauline McNeill's name were agreed to, the amended motion would not be clear. Therefore I cannot support the amendment and I will abstain in the vote on it. However, because the key point for all members is that we establish that there is wide support for the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's recommendations, I will support the motion, irrespective of the Parliament's vote on the amendment.

On the amendment in Ted Brocklebank's name, I am happy for the network's commercial activity to be explored by the people who take the network forward. However, it would be wrong at this stage to tie the hands of the people who are involved in future work to develop the network, so we will vote against the amendment.

I understand the concern that is expressed in the Liberal Democrat amendment, which we have no problem accepting—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order. Will members who are entering the chamber please recognise that a debate is going on? Thank you.

Linda Fabiani: Jeremy Purvis expressed concern about proposed changes to Border TV news and Iain Smith expressed concern about Ofcom's target of 3 per cent of Channel 4 production to come from the devolved nations. I emphasise that those proposals are still open for consultation. Everyone should try to meet the deadline for the closure of the consultation on 4 December. I have written to Andy Burnham about the proposals and Ofcom's review and I hope to meet him soon. The First Minister will discuss the matter with Ed Richards, the chief executive officer of Ofcom, on 5 November.

I would like to address many points that were made in the debate. Cathy Peattie made an important point about the sale of spectrum and the seventh multiplex. The matter can be raised when the First Minister meets Ed Richards on 5 November and it can be raised with Andy Burnham, when he has responded to my letter to him. No options for the use of spectrum are closed off. Officials in the Scottish Government have raised many such issues directly in meetings with Ofcom.

Ken Macintosh talked about radio. I recently met Barry Cox, who is chair of the digital radio working group. That dialogue will continue and will reflect people's concerns.

The commission reached across party boundaries and set out an achievable and inspiring vision for broadcasting. Its report is well timed, given all the points that members made in the debate. There can be no solution to the problems that face public service broadcasting in the UK unless we address problems in Scotland. The Government will engage vigorously with Ofcom and Westminster, to advocate the commission's recommendations and in particular to advocate a Scottish network. I encourage members of all parties to continue the commission's spirit of shared understanding by joining us in that advocacy and moving forward in the spirit of team Scotland. I urge members to support the motion.

Business Motions

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-2678, 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 29 October 2008

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Debate: British-Irish Council

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 30 October 2008

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Liberal Democrats Business

11.40 am General Question Time

12 noon First Minister's Question Time

2.15 pm Themed Question Time
Europe, External Affairs and Culture;
Education and Lifelong Learning

2.55 pm Scottish Government Debate: Non-Native Invasive Species

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 5 November 2008

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 6 November 2008

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government 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 Business
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business.—[Bruce Crawford.]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-2677, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a timetable for stage 1 of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be completed by 23 January 2009.—[Bruce Crawford.]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motions. I invite Bruce Crawford to move motion S3M-2682, on the designation of a lead committee, and motions S3M-2679 to S3M-2681 inclusive, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Freedom of Information (Relaxation of Statutory Prohibitions on Disclosure of Information) (Scotland) Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Scottish Commission for Human Rights (Specification) Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Adults with Incapacity (Electronic Communications) (Scotland) Order 2008 be approved.—[Bruce Crawford.]

The Presiding Officer: The questions on those motions will be put at decision time, to which we now come.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

There are six questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S3M-2671.3, in the name of Pauline McNeill, which seeks to amend motion S3M-2671, in the name of Linda Fabiani, on the Scottish Broadcasting Commission, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 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)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 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)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)

AGAINST

Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 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)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (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)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 68, Against 1, Abstentions 44.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-2671.1, in the name of Ted Brocklebank, which seeks to amend motion S3M-2671, in the name of Linda Fabiani, on the Scottish Broadcasting Commission, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)

O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (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)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 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)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, 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)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 16, Against 60, Abstentions 37.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-2671.2, in the name of Iain Smith, which seeks to amend motion S3M-2671,

in the name of Linda Fabiani, on the Scottish Broadcasting Commission, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-2671, in the name of Linda Fabiani, on the Scottish Broadcasting Commission, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament welcomes the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's final report and recognises the cross-party engagement that enabled the commission to carry out its work in a constructive and consensual fashion; notes that the report reflects the importance of broadcasting to the cultural and economic life of Scotland and accepts that the Parliament should take an active role in considering the broadcasting industry and services as they relate to Scotland; welcomes the key recommendation for the creation of a new public service Scottish digital network, which represents a major opportunity to develop Scotland's broadcasting industry; notes that the commission's recommendations require action by a range of parties; calls on the Scottish Government to respond positively to the report within its responsibilities; agrees with the commission that Scotland should not lose out on the obvious advantages of being part of the UK broadcasting framework, particularly in research and development of digital media platforms; believes that the Calman Commission should consider the role of the Parliament in playing an active role in scrutinising and promoting the broadcasting industry as it relates to Scotland, and notes with concern the proposals contained within Phase 2 of Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review, which present a serious threat to the long-term viability of Scottish public service broadcasters, of Borders news programmes and of Scottish content programming and Gaelic language programmes on Channel 3.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-2682, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motions S3M-2679 to S3M-2681 inclusive, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Freedom of Information (Relaxation of Statutory Prohibitions on Disclosure of Information) (Scotland) Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Scottish Commission for Human Rights (Specification) Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Adults with Incapacity (Electronic Communications) (Scotland) Order 2008 be approved.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. Members leaving the chamber should do so quietly.

Fife (Platform of Partnership)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S3M-2609, in the name of Christopher Harvie, on the kingdom of Fife and Fife in the world—a platform of partnership.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament greets the Year of Homecoming and envisages the pioneering of a "platform of partnership" using the Kingdom of Fife as a trial project involving the creation of worldwide internet links between places with Fife names, affected by Fifers or twinned with Fife communities and involving schools, churches, community groups and associations, and hopes that the resumption of the Rosyth to Zeebrugge ferry can make this virtual bond a real one.

17:05

Christopher Harvie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I thank the members who signed the motion and allowed the debate to take place. We talk a lot about the Scottish diaspora, and I will suggest a simple but effective means of activating it. A virtual kingdom in a virtual world can pioneer a platform of partnership by creating worldwide internet links between places with Fife names, affected by Fifers or twinned with Fife communities and involving schools, churches, community groups and associations. In Fife, such a partnership would aim to celebrate the resumption next spring of the Rosyth to Zeebrugge ferry, making a virtual bond a real one. However, it could also be a trial run for a Scotland-wide project to coincide with the year of homecoming and the Burns 250th anniversary in 2009. It is informal, low cost and can be finessed as expertise in handling the data accumulates.

A quick glance at Philip's "Atlas of the World" and a map of Saskatchewan in Canada revealed the town of Cupar. The website of the town—www.townofcupar.com—showed Dysart to the east and Markinch to the west. There is St Andrews in New Brunswick and there are dozens of Springfields in the USA, so let us extend a big, yellow, four-fingered hand to Homer, Madge, Groundskeeper Willie and, of course, C Montgomery Burns, who is 100 years old and counting.

As far as Scottish names more widely are concerned, there are Hamiltons galore. In the USA, many of them commemorate the drafter of the constitution, Alexander Hamilton, but there are also the Mackenzie River, Bryce canyon, Murchison falls and Port Chalmers. There are distant places made famous by Scots, such as Stevenson's Samoa; the Juan Fernandez island of Alexander Selkirk of Largo, alias Robinson

Crusoe; and David Livingstone's Victoria Falls. There are also great Scots-built industrial monuments: the Buda to Pest suspension bridge, which literally united a country, was built by the engineer Adam Clark in the 1850s; Vienna's Prater wheel, which looks as if it was built from bits that were left over from the Forth bridge, was built by William Arrol in the 1890s; San Francisco's cable-cars were built by Andrew Hallidie; and the Delta Queen—the last Mississippi steamboat, which was built by Fairfield in 1926—is still paddling, although we had better be clever about that, because the authorities want to remove it on health and safety grounds.

There are great Europeans of Scots descent—Marshal Keith in Germany, Marshal Macdonald in France, Edvard Grieg, Immanuel Kant and Mikhail Lermontov. There are also incomers who have altered Scotland—Wheatleys and MacIvanneys from Ireland; Contis, Coias and Paolozzis from Italy—and a tradition of Commonwealth statesmen and women, either Scots or influenced by Scotland, from Canada's Sir John Macdonald to Tanzania's Julius Nyerere.

Aside from places that have links, there are other links along which partnerships can run. In Fife alone, they run from Saint Margaret—who was born in Hungary and was one of the few saints to be a mother, as my wife used to remind me—to Jennie Lee, the wife of Aneurin Bevan and founder of the Open University. We can trace the influence worldwide of John Knox, Charles I, James Wilson—one of the Scots signatories of the US declaration of independence—and James Lorimer, or Professor Lorimer of Kellie castle, who first proposed a European federation in 1884. Politicians range from red Willie Gallacher to the Scottish Parliament's first Presiding Officer, David Steel.

Fife towns are twinned. For example, Glenrothes is twinned with Swabian Böblingen, which seems to have started an epidemic of pipe bands in the outlying areas of Stuttgart. I think that there are now three at least in that district

Fifers have travelled: Sir Patrick Spens "tae Noroway ower the faem"; and McDougall Stuart across Australia. Two Anstruther clipper captains, Rodger of the Taeping and Keay of the Ariel, raced each other, practically within eyesight of each other, from Fuzhou to London bridge, taking 83 days. Sir Sandford Fleming, of Kirkcaldy, as engineer of the Canadian Pacific Railway, invented international time zones—so now members know.

Finally, to bring us back to the non-virtual connections, there are our trading partners: places such as Amsterdam, Bergen, Bruges, Rotterdam, Veere in Zeeland, and Zeebrugge.

All those to whom I have referred have left their imprint on Fife and Scotland, and worldwide: from Adam Smith of Kirkcaldy to Andrew Carnegie of Dunfermline. Linking such themes virtually would give all of us, especially the young—those children of three whom Groucho Marx commended when he said, “A child of three could do it. Bring me a child of three”—the chance to reach out from the local to the global in the spirit of the Scots internationalist and social reformer, Patrick Geddes, whose first great town-planning project was in Dunfermline.

It is important for the project to gain cross-party support. It is ecumenical and will not cost much, and it will prove that there is more to globalisation than financial prizes. The initial impetus could be quite informal: contacting local web pages and, through them, primary and secondary schools, town and county councils, churches, and philanthropical and international organisations, and just letting the thing snowball from there. It could, as my friend Pat Kane says, go viral.

I would be keen to set things in motion in Fife. Members may have folk in their own constituencies or region who could take an interest and the initiative in such virtual partnerships. Homecoming 2009 could benefit from intensified links, as could tourism. Goodness only knows where the Scottish economy will be by then.

All this could and ought to further what Adam Smith called sympathy: trust and fellow feeling as a learned drive. That was never more important than it is in today's economic turbulence. What is the alternative? The Fifer for whom the storm was too great comes to mind:

“Half-ower, half-ower to Aberdour,
Tis fifty fathoms deep;
An there lies gude Sir Patrick Spens,
Wi the Scots lords at his feet!”

17:12

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife)
(Con): I welcome this debate and congratulate Chris Harvie, a good son of Lanarkshire, on lodging his motion to give Fifers the opportunity to showcase the many attractions of our native kingdom. My own east neuk connections go back to 1747 at least, and I am proud that Fife has led the rest of Scotland in many fields of endeavour.

I keep telling people that while Edinburgh was still a rickle of mud huts beside a swamp under the castle hill, St Andrews was already the ecclesiastical capital of the nation. When Kenneth MacAlpin emerged from the mists of history to unite the Scots, he did so from a stronghold not very far from St Andrews.

Chris Harvie's list of great Fifers was fairly inclusive. He referred to Professor Lorimer and

David Steel, but I submit that they would normally be associated with Edinburgh and the Borders respectively, rather than with the kingdom. However, Malcolm Canmore certainly had his royal residence in Pittencrieff gardens in Dunfermline, and Robert the Bruce was crowned in St Andrews and held his first Parliament there in 1309. It is no wonder that Fife has always been known as a kingdom.

We have seen many political giants from Fife. There is our illustrious current Prime Minister, who is a son of Kirkcaldy, and the Balfours from Markinch, who produced a Prime Minister of a different view. Of course, as Chris Harvie mentioned, there was Jennie Lee, from Lochgelly, and there is former First Minister Henry McLeish, from Kennoway. Good Fifers, all.

As most Liberals are aware, the house where Jo Grimond was born in St Andrews was owned by the family of Bob Boothby, who may have represented Buchan at Westminster but was always proud of his Fife roots. Fife has produced great thinkers, such as Adam Smith—he will probably be birling in his grave in the Canongate kirkyard this week, of all weeks—and great architects, such as the Adam brothers from Kirkcaldy, who designed the best bits of Edinburgh.

The University of St Andrews, which is Scotland's oldest university and is currently ranked fifth best in the United Kingdom, produced two of the signatories to the American declaration of independence, as well as—incidentally—the inventor of logarithms. Hopefully, the kingdom's links with the United States will be strengthened by the arrival from Harvard of Dr Louise Richardson, who, as the university's new principal, will be the first woman ever to run a Scottish university.

In the shape of Andrew Carnegie from Dunfermline, Fife taught the world how to make money and then, in one of the greatest displays of philanthropy that the world has ever seen, how to give it all away again. We produced the greatest Scottish footballer of my lifetime in the shape of Jim Baxter from Hill of Beath and, from the same mining village, Donald Findlay, who is arguably the doyen of Scottish criminal defence counsels. In the great herring days, Pittenweem gave the world the fifie class of fishing boats and revolutionised the industry from Shetland to Yarmouth. Fife is still producing world-ranking writers, artists and pop stars, such as Ian Rankin, Jack Vettriano and KT Tunstall.

Enough, already. Divided historically from the rest of Scotland by great firths to the north and south, Fifers were always hard-headed and contermacious—hence the line about it taking a lang spoon to sup wi a Fifer—but, perhaps

paradoxically, Fife became a microcosm of the nation itself. Like Scotland, the kingdom's greatest export has always been its people and their talents.

There is much to applaud in Chris Harvie's motion. Fife and Fifers must play a major role in next year's year of homecoming celebrations. Where better to celebrate St Andrew's day than St Andrews? Golf is one of the main pillars that attract overseas visitors to my home town, and I congratulate the organisers of the local festival in the home of golf who have recently secured funding from the Government for this year's St Andrew's day celebrations.

Fife has excellent links with many communities around the world. Kirkcaldy is twinned with Ingolstadt and Glenrothes with Böblingen, both of which are in Germany, a country with which I believe that Christopher Harvie has some passing connection. The link between Dunfermline and Trondheim in Norway, which was established more than 60 years ago, is the oldest twinning arrangement in Europe and possibly the world. I know that other such linkages are in prospect, and Chris Harvie's suggestion that there could be worldwide internet links between places with names that originated in Fife is an imaginative one.

I fully support Chris Harvie's sentiment on the revival of the Rosyth to Zeebrugge ferry, a service that is invaluable to Fife's passenger and trading links with the continent. My one tiny reservation about his motion's envisaging of

"a 'platform of partnership' using the Kingdom of Fife as a trial project"

is that we might be too far down the road for that to play a meaningful part in next year's celebrations. However, if Chris Harvie knows something that I do not about the willingness of his ministerial colleagues, even at this late stage, to designate Fife in that way and to provide the necessary funding for the trial project, he will, of course, have the full support of this Fifer.

17:17

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I congratulate Christopher Harvie on securing this evening's members' business debate and giving us all the opportunity to talk about the virtues and merits of Fife. Professor Harvie's motives in pushing for Fife to have a prominent role in the forthcoming year of homecoming are to be commended, and I am sure that Fife is well placed to be at the centre of events. Like many Scots, Fifers have made their mark around the world, and the homecoming will give us all an opportunity to reflect on those achievements.

I look forward to the minister's reply to Professor Harvie on the proposal that Fife should be a trial project for worldwide internet links. I would be supportive of any project that raised Fife's international profile, but would want to be reassured that any such project that was pursued could deliver high returns, culturally and socially.

Even before the internet, Fife had a long tradition of twinning and cultural partnerships, one of the longest standing of which is Dunfermline's relationship with Trondheim in Norway. That is an interesting example, as it reflects the progress that has been made in the relationships that are established. From being a fairly municipal partnership that existed mainly between councils, Dunfermline's relationship with Trondheim has recently been recommitted to and has grown into a much more community-focused and inclusive partnership.

Since 1996, Fife has taken a much more community-driven approach to twinning and has placed a focus on developing relationships—it is almost a process of dating for a few years before rings are exchanged. Fife has active associations that manage such relationships. As well as economic strengths between towns and villages, the prevalence of beer festivals in Fife seems to owe something to our European twins.

Kirkcaldy has a long-standing relationship with Ingolstadt, which recently led to brass and oompah bands celebrating Ingolstadt's 1,200th birthday at Beveridge park. Glenrothes is twinned with Böblingen—I am sure that Christopher Harvie will correct my pronunciation. It is a vibrant partnership that involves cultural, social, economic, educational, sporting and tourist engagement, although I imagine that Böblingen has a quieter month ahead of it than Glenrothes does.

Compatibility is a key factor in many relationships, and it is increasingly recognised as the bedrock of a successful twinning. In that context, I would have reservations about the internet—that often impersonal tool. I am not sure whether the internet is the best place to foster twins that have long-term prospects. Also, it takes time to develop a twinning between towns and villages, and the timescales to meet the year of homecoming are too sharp to allow any meaningful bonds to develop.

The idea of twinning towns that share a name may be limited. Although Dunfermline may be overwhelmed by suitors, I cannot find an equivalent for Kelty, my home town; Burntisland, my adopted town; or Methil, where my office is—though if they exist, I am sure I will be corrected. For a successful link to be established, there has to be interest and commitment from both partners, and we cannot be sure that Dunfermline, Illinois

would embrace the project in the way that we would like. The point is that there needs to be interest on both sides. The outside world needs to want this level of engagement with Fife. Although I hope that the year of homecoming will successfully focus the world's eye on Scotland, interest needs to come originally from communities.

The key for me is the level of engagement and inclusiveness of the project. Unfortunately, there appear to be new barriers to this, particularly for children and young people. The lack of a foreign language, and the barriers that are presented by the necessary but often onerous child protection tests and disclosures, make successful school exchanges difficult and present new challenges in ensuring that twinning is carried on to the next generation.

The motion mentions the Rosyth ferry. We all know how important the ferry is, and I am concerned that the gap in the service is threatening not only the economic links but the cultural links that have developed over the years. I, along with others, am disappointed that there had to be a gap and I am perhaps less concerned about the virtual bond that can be created than I am about trying to hasten the return of the ferry, to recreate the bond that was there. I urge the Government to do all that it can to return the service as soon as possible.

17:21

Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): I thank Chris Harvie for securing this debate, through which many of us will show the significant role that Fife has played, plays and will continue to play in the world. Dunfermline and west Fife—my constituency and my home—have a proud history of engagement and successful working relationships with continents, countries and communities far and wide. From the old port of Culross and its ancient links with Europe, to the more modern twinning links with Norway, Germany, France, Portugal, Spain and—more recently—America, Dunfermline plays a significant role in Fife and the world.

It is important to remember that Dunfermline was—for many of us it still is—the most important city in Scotland. Long before Edinburgh became Scotland's capital city, built on its international trade through the port of Leith, Dunfermline was Scotland's capital city with international links through its port of Culross. Dunfermline and west Fife were exporting and developing international trade long before Edinburgh even thought about it.

St Mungo, the man who is famed as Glasgow's patron saint, was born in Culross. He practised his religion in Fife long before Glasgow was a

significant place in Scotland. Although that fine city was built on trade and industry from the 17th to the 20th centuries, Fifers were doing similar things from the fifth and sixth centuries. We are still doing so today, with the port of Rosyth providing many of Scotland's international links.

Andrew Carnegie and Admiral Thomas Cochrane are two of the world's most distinguished men from west Fife's history. Carnegie was born in Dunfermline, and Cochrane spent much of his early life in Culross. Both conquered the world in their particular fields: Carnegie was known as "the King of Steel" and was probably the greatest entrepreneur and philanthropist; and Cochrane was arguably the world's most famous sailor—apart from or, perhaps, as well known as—Nelson. Both men demonstrated the quality of being important and successful, while remaining distinguished and respected while they lived and well after their deaths. That quality is something that the First Minister himself is desperately trying to achieve today. If only he came from Fife, he might just have a chance.

Dunfermline has several official twinning links in Europe and the United States. The oldest link is with Trondheim, which is the third-largest city in Norway. That link has existed informally for more than 1,000 years; it is reputed to be the oldest link between two places in the world—another first for Dunfermline. It comes on top of the links that we have through the Carnegie connection with New York and Pittsburgh. This year, Pittsburgh celebrates 250 years since Fort Pitt was established, named after William Pitt the Younger. It was established and named by the famous general and Scotsman, General John Forbes, who was born in 1707. Where was he born? Yes, you have guessed correctly—it was on the Pittencrieff estate in Dunfermline. The same estate was bought nearly a century later by Andrew Carnegie and gifted to the people of Dunfermline as a fabulous park—a wonderful place that people still can and should visit.

Chris Harvie's motion speaks of a trial project. I am happy to go along with that, but the idea of a platform of partnership is already deeply embedded in the collective soul of west Fife's population. We have a proud history of forming relationships all round the globe, which we have built on in recent years.

I have demonstrated that Dunfermline and west Fife are not only world-class destinations, but world-class exporters of intelligent, sophisticated and hugely successful people. Fife—in particular, Dunfermline—is singularly placed and experienced to give guidance on Mr Harvie's project. I wish him success in the future with it.

17:26

The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather): I congratulate Christopher Harvie on securing the debate. I have a personal interest to declare in that my father spent his formative years in Kirkcaldy. I therefore have empathy with the idea of activating the real and proxy Fife diaspora.

The idea of the naming convention is pretty clever because it would enable us to get towns, villages and districts involved. The family names would also enable us to make affinity links and to get people to invite their relatives back by e-mail, phone and Basildon Bond. Fife also has the fantastic facility of the affinity Fifers—the people who play golf. We have just come back from broadcasting Sean Connery's latest video—in which we combined the year of homecoming and golf—when we went over to the Ryder cup. It went down wonderfully well, and we should be getting more copies of it fired out.

I am reminded of an idea that has been expressed by a guy called Joel Kotkin, who wrote an interesting book called "Tribes". His suggestion—his byline—is that, in the future there will be no more Japan, just Japanese, because of the ability of the internet to connect us all. What I like about Chris Harvie's approach is that it would bring in the proxy Fifers—people who live in foreign parts in a Fife-named town that will forever be Fife. The celebrations for the year of homecoming could, therefore, be augmented by the project. I like the link that Chris Harvie has made with the resumption of the Rosyth to Zeebrugge ferry. That is important, and all the French and Belgian folk who do not yet know that they are proxy Fifers will soon get the message.

It is important that there is real momentum for the year of homecoming. It is a great facility that we have had in the pipeline, which can come into play now. It has been supported enthusiastically by ministers, particularly the First Minister, at a time when tourism might face a more challenging year ahead. We have an opportunity, with this truly national celebration, to get out there and persuade many people who do not yet know it that they have a common heritage—a common lineage, whether through ancestral Scots or affinity Scots—and to strengthen that relationship by inviting them to the biggest reunion that there has ever been on the planet.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): When I was the Deputy Minister for Justice, one of the things that I was most proud to promote was the fact that Scotland was one of the first countries to have computerised registers of deaths, births and marriages, and the link to the register of sasines. I therefore make the suggestion—it may have been taken up already—

that what the motion proposes should be a pilot project for establishing linkages to Fife. If someone is undertaking a genealogical search—something that is now very popular—and they come up with a Fife name, a link is provided to Fife and all the wealth of history that Christopher Harvie has talked about. That would enhance the whole thing.

Jim Mather: I thank Richard Simpson for that intervention. The key point that Christopher Harvie is making is about the potential of the project to go viral. The great backbone of our aspiration in that respect is the "Scotland's People" website, which gives us everything that we have heard about in an electronic format that makes it much more accessible and really gives people the chance to connect with Scotland in a very much more material way. I expect the project to evolve, and I hope that we will see Pat Kane and 5.1 million others in and out of Fife help us to take it viral.

Meanwhile, some practical things are on the go. We are running initiatives in Canada, one of which is a photographic exhibition that creates connections by showing photographs from places in Canada and Scotland that have the same name. That sort of work emphasises commonalities between people but also allows us to accentuate and celebrate our differences. It gives people a chance to understand what links them and it educates many of our young people. Recently, it has been identified that some of the Scots in Canada in the early years were bilingual, not in Gaelic and English but in Gaelic and French. Those early years are now being celebrated and connections are being made. One of the pairings that has been made in the photographic exhibition is the one between Kincardine in Fife and Kincardine in Ontario. There are lots of opportunities beyond that.

I was quite taken with what was said about General Forbes. I reckon that he might not have been telling the whole truth when he said that Pittsburgh was named after Lord Pitt and that, perhaps, it was named after Pittencrieff. I therefore suggest that Chris Harvie add Pittsburgh to his list so that that connection is firmly in place.

We have got some real momentum behind the year of homecoming. The attitude that people of a North American persuasion have when they get the message about the year of homecoming is absolute enthusiasm. Last week, we ran an event in Louisville and Chicago that demonstrated some extremely tight working on the part of team Scotland. EventScotland, VisitScotland, Scottish Development International and Scottish Enterprise presented Scotland to a galaxy of people from across the United States of America and got them excited about the idea. Following our speeches—which, I assure members, were pretty crisp and

well organised—we showed the Sean Connery video that I mentioned earlier, which worked well. After that, we had the masterstroke of all masterstrokes: a young band from Tiree, called Skerryvore, who played three numbers. The second song was a remake of Dougie MacLean's classic, "Caledonia", which the Tennant's advert was based on years ago. We had people of a certain age in the audience—some of whom were expats—and they really made the connection. When the song was sung by a young 21-year-old with wonderful clarity, it was accessible to not only people of a Scottish persuasion but anyone with even a fundamental grasp of English. The impact of the song on our guests, some of whom are reconnecting with Scotland after many years, was fantastic. I am thinking, in particular, of Peter Robertson, the vice-chairman of Chevron, who has been away for 25 years. I have to say that there was a rheumy-eyed look to his face as that song finished.

The idea of homecoming is quite magical, and Professor Harvie's idea would augment it. It will go viral, with or without Pat Kane's support, although I know that we will have his support. The challenge in the years to come is to find ways to perpetuate homecoming and make it perennial. That will happen in Fife: I hope it also happens across the rest of Scotland.

Meeting closed at 17:33.

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