

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 25 November 2009

Session 3

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SCOTTISH MINISTERS AND LAW OFFICERS

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MINISTER FOR PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS—Bruce Crawford MSP

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25 November 2009

Scottish Parliament

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is the Rev Tom McWhirter, the minister for Old Luce and New Luce parishes in Wigtownshire.

Rev Tom McWhirter (Old Luce and New Luce, Newton Stewart): Good afternoon. One of my predecessors at New Luce was a covenanting minister called Alexander Peden. Some of you may have heard of him. The covenanters were particularly strong in the south-west of Scotland. I believe that they were right to insist that man's first duty is not to the state, but to God. Nevertheless, Christian citizens have a duty towards the state, and I want to share with you some of the things that the New Testament says about that.

In Romans, chapter 13, we are told to pay our taxes,

"for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour."

We have not always honoured you as we should, and for that we owe you an apology.

In 1 Timothy, chapter 2, the apostle Paul writes:

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."

We have a responsibility to pray for you. We have not discharged that responsibility as we should and we have been quicker to criticise than to pray. Again, I apologise.

In governing us, you are serving God. You have a duty to him to do what is right and to act with integrity, compassion and justice. We, in turn, have a duty to you to respect you and to pray for you. You have a difficult job. You have many hard decisions to make. You will be aware of your critics, but perhaps you have not been aware that many of God's people are praying for you. We appreciate the good that you are doing and are trying to do. We want to support you and to help you to govern us well.

I would like to pray for you now.

Heavenly father, king of kings, please help these men and women to serve you by governing Scotland well. Grant

them wisdom to understand all the issues before them and to know the right thing to do. Grant them also the courage to do what is right even when it may be unpopular. May they know your leading and blessing. Help them to make Scotland a better place.

In Jesus's name, amen.

Renewable Heat Action Plan

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a statement by Jim Mather on the renewable heat action plan.

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. It is my understanding that ministerial statements are meant to be about announcements of Government policy on matters that are not yet in the public domain or are not substantially in it. The statement that we are about to hear relates to the Scottish renewable heat action plan, which was published on the Government's website on 5 November. I find it a little difficult to understand how that could be considered not to be in the public domain, other than the fact that the Government did not announce it by way of an inspired parliamentary question or provide an advance copy to either of the relevant committees. I seek clarification as to why we are having a ministerial statement about a document that was published two weeks ago.

The Presiding Officer: I will look into that and will provide that clarification—considerably after we have had the statement—at decision time today.

The minister will take questions at the end of the statement. Therefore, there will be no interruptions or interventions during it.

14:35

The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather): I welcome the opportunity to mark the publication of the Scottish renewable heat action plan. It underpins the Government's commitment to make energy a priority in our economic recovery programme and contributes towards our ambitious, world-leading emissions reduction targets.

Heat in Scotland constitutes some 50 per cent of energy demand. Although the Government has attached great priority to developing Scotland's outstanding renewables potential, renewable heat has still to show its full potential here in Scotland. However, as is evident in our Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, the need for transformational change in that area is at the forefront of our minds. We have an ambition to create a completely decarbonised heat sector by 2050, with an interim target of deriving 11 per cent of heat from renewable sources by 2020. The action plan outlines the way in which the Government will begin to develop the sector by working in partnership to achieve a comprehensive delivery infrastructure, a supportive policy and a suitable regulatory framework.

Published in tandem with the action plan, a report by the Sustainable Development Commission Scotland identifies our current and potential renewable heat use. The report includes research that shows that current levels of renewable heat stand at a mere 1.4 per cent of heat usage. Despite that modest base, it also indicates that our target can still be reached and even exceeded. It should be noted that the report will be complemented in due course by further research on Scotland's potential for energy from waste.

Although it is reassuring to know that our ambitions are attainable, we recognise that they present a significant challenge. We must make the changes that have been identified today—changes that use and enhance technology; reform current regulations; and, perhaps most important, require a concerted and collaborative effort throughout Scotland.

The action plan highlights the need to use all available technological options at a range of scales. In the short to medium term, industrial and commercial-scale biomass will be the sector's key driver. In urban areas, there are tremendous opportunities for district heating schemes while, in rural areas that are off the gas grid, individual solutions such as biomass boilers or heat pumps will be particularly important.

I am pleased to say that progress is already under way. Renewable heat is the focus of an industry-chaired sub-group that reports to the main forum for renewable energy development in Scotland—FREDS—which I chair. FREDS brings together key stakeholders in renewable energy to make strategic decisions to develop the sector and was heavily involved in producing Scotland's renewables action plan, which was published in July this year.

The heat sub-group—chaired by Samantha Fuller of Scottish and Southern Energy—has taken enthusiastic and energetic steps to make progress. It has met twice and plans to do so again before the end of the year, developing clusters of expertise among its members to take forward key actions. The group will also ensure that those actions flex, change and evolve in order to maximise progress.

The most recent heat group meeting was held at Mitsubishi's air-source heat pump factory, which is based in Livingston. The plant is a prime example of how Scotland can utilise its outstanding skills base. It is clear that there is now a major opportunity for more people in Scotland to manufacture, install and maintain renewable heat equipment. The action plan ensures that Scotland has the skills in place to support growth in the market. As members might expect, focus has also

been given to the funding that is needed to make those changes.

I was delighted to be able to announce further grants from the second round of the Scottish biomass heat scheme earlier this month. The Hill of Banchory district heating development—a pioneering scheme that uses heat from biomass to supply more than 200 homes—is one of 16 projects to share more than £1 million-worth of awards.

I announce that the third round of the Scottish biomass heat scheme is formally open for applications, with a closing date of 12 February 2010. The scheme is competitive and is open to small and medium-sized businesses that wish to install biomass boilers. We are particularly keen to receive applications for district heating schemes. At the same time as launching the third round of the scheme, we want to establish what the demand is for funding for larger-scale projects for district heating schemes and we seek expressions of interest. I will review the potential for continued support in the coming months.

However, we recognise that a greater stimulus to the market is required. From 2011, the United Kingdom Government will introduce a renewable heat incentive across England, Scotland and Wales, which will act as the principal driver to decarbonise the heat sector. Meanwhile, the promotion of renewable heat is a devolved matter. However, members may recall that the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee agreed last year to the ceding of powers to the UK Parliament to legislate on our behalf in order that Scotland could benefit from the renewable heat incentive. That was necessary as the scheme is to be funded by a levy placed on suppliers of fossil fuels used for heating purposes, which is a reserved matter.

We are in contact with our counterparts at the Department of Energy and Climate Change to discuss the design of the scheme, taking into consideration Scotland's specific needs; the differences in climatic conditions; the number of houses off the gas grid; and the level of fuel poverty in some regions. A public consultation on the incentive is due to be announced before the end of the year, and the Scottish Government will provide a comprehensive response.

Like many others, I want to see this sector take control of its future. Equally, like many others, I know that there are issues to be resolved and problems to face, but I am confident that there are solutions. In early 2010, I propose that we bring together stakeholders from across the industry—from factory manufacturers to installers; from electricity suppliers to community groups; and from people in urban and rural areas—for an event during which we can tap into the aspirations and ideas of such a wide group. It is clear that only

through such close relationships and a common goal will we be able to transform and strengthen the sector. The event will take place in Glasgow on 22 February, and I encourage all those who have an interest to ensure that they are involved and present on the day.

Meanwhile, the Government has made clear its intention to pursue an ambitious programme for renewable heat. Through our action plan, we are placing this crucial area rightly in the spotlight, maximising its chances of playing a vital role in addressing climate change and our renewable energy ambitions, and taking advantage of the vast opportunities that exist for renewable energy to drive sustainable growth in Scotland. It is a huge challenge, but the opportunities are huge and the challenges are surmountable. It is vital now that Scotland prepares for a new post-renewable heat incentive, beginning in the area of renewable heat.

The Presiding Officer: As I intimated earlier, the minister will take questions on any issues raised in his statement. We have until just after 3 o'clock for questions. We will take front-bench questions first, starting with Lewis Macdonald.

Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab): I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement and I welcome his announcement today on biomass heat. However, does he not recognise that district heating schemes will be critical in promoting low-carbon heat going forward, whatever the fuel source that is used? The Sustainable Development Commission Scotland report to which he referred, which was released with the action plan, is clear that action to support district heating should be taken forward as part of Government work to stimulate low-carbon heat sources between now and 2020, even though larger urban district schemes are likely to be fuelled in the short term by fossil rather than renewable fuels. Does the minister not agree with the SDC that we need to move now to put in place district heating or combined heat and power schemes, because doing so will make the conversion from fossil fuel heating to renewable heating much simpler in urban areas later on?

The Government's consultation on energy efficiency raises the possibility of financial support for up-front costs or for local councils to establish companies to develop district heating schemes or combined heat and power schemes. This year's UK budget, as the minister knows—I have written to him on the matter—offered Scottish ministers £2 million to do just that. Why has that not been done? Why has that opportunity not been taken? Why does the renewable heat action plan offer no action on that particular front?

Jim Mather: The member will find that our emphasis on district heating schemes, and the

priority that we place on combined heat and power, is there in what we are doing with renewables obligation certificates. That is where we have put the priority. We are genuinely trying to create a new, open beginning and a situation whereby, in advance of the new market mechanism coming through, which will be material—changing one thing at a time is a sensible way to go—we move forward in as collegiate a way as possible to achieve our goals, which are important. We have a massive issue of fuel poverty, and there is no doubt that district heating schemes could play an enormous part in addressing that.

We need to be open going through this phase. That is why the event on 22 February will be so important. We all have our own ideas, including what might be the truth and the best strategy going forward, but we must be generous and blend in other ideas that are coming forward. I suspect that engagement in the group will produce a similar phenomenon to what has happened in FREDS, whereby sub-groups of interest are beginning to come forward to collaborate and to compete with one another. I hope that we can have representatives of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee in the room during the 22 February event, as that will provide a comprehensive help.

This is a new beginning and we are open to all ideas. We want to work together to achieve our goal, because the issue is terribly important for Scotland. In essence, heat accounts for 50 per cent of our energy requirements, so getting the issue right will allow us to make big moves on every front.

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement and the—even greater in advance—copy of the renewable heat action plan. I am pleased that renewable heat is the subject of an action plan and ministerial statement.

The minister stated that the Government's target of increasing the amount of heat produced from renewable sources from 1.4 to 11 per cent can be reached and even exceeded. My fear is that the Government has made some very rosy assumptions about what will happen in the short and medium term. On the short-term assumptions that appear on page 4 of the plan, how many megawatts of renewable heating are currently under construction, how many are in planning, how many have received planning consent and how many are in "other known projects", as referred to on page 4?

Jim Mather: I thank the member for his question and urge him to approach the issue with a further degree of positivism. We are building a database about what we have, and we want 2GW of

renewable heat power to be available within the 2020 timeframe. We are also carrying out a pilot mapping exercise in Highland to understand where the renewable heat is and how that might be better mapped to where the conurbations and communities are. As I said, we are making a new start for a new beginning. As an accountant, I always appreciate the fact that the member's legal training gives him a strong focus on numeracy, but I promise him that we will focus very much on the numbers to manage the issue. However, we need first to take the comprehensive snapshot by building a database of what we have just now before we can move forward.

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): I thank the minister for providing an advance copy of his statement and of the action plan.

I certainly agree that renewable heat is a critical area of policy that provides significant opportunities. However, why has the minister adopted an interim target of 11 per cent for renewable heat, whereas the FREDS group to which he referred indicated in February 2008 that a 20 per cent target is achievable? Is that connected to the Government's decision to support an amendment during the 11 June debate on waste policy strategy that called for large-scale waste-to-energy plants to be ruled out in the future? Will he assure us that the Sustainable Development Commission will be invited and encouraged to overturn that position as part of its research into Scotland's potential for energy from waste?

Jim Mather: As the member will understand, the Sustainable Development Commission has been firmly involved in helping us to carry out research to help us to define the target. The 11 per cent target is based on factoring in the renewable heat incentive, so we feel that it can be sensibly achieved. I will be delighted if we exceed the target and we will certainly put in energy to ensure that we have every chance of doing so.

We have a strong focus on energy from waste. We have assumed that the amount of solid waste that will be used in renewable heat will be capped at 25 per cent, but we think that energy from waste could provide as much as 5 per cent of Scotland's heat requirements, which is a significant contribution. I repeat that we must bring together those threads—weaving in the issues that the member has raised—and do so openly, so I encourage him, too, to attend the event on 22 February. We need people to be involved in that open debate, in which we will try to get the sector to work together as collegiately as possible. If necessary, we can break out into individual groups on different strands, such as waste and biomass, to ensure that we get the best possible future for renewable heat in Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: We come to back-bench questions.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): As someone who successfully lodged an amendment to beef up the delivery of the renewable heat plan in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, I am delighted by today's statement. What contribution does the minister foresee the plan and renewable heat as a sector making to the European target of meeting 20 per cent of our energy needs from renewable energy by 2020? How do our targets in that area compare with those of the rest of the United Kingdom?

Jim Mather: We see the plan making a highly material contribution to the meeting of that target. It is worth noting that our target for 2020 is to meet 20 per cent of our energy needs from renewable sources, whereas the UK's target is only 15 per cent. We must take advantage of our comparative advantage and consolidate that. We anticipate that renewable heat could make up 20 per cent of the overall 20 per cent target for 2020. The contribution that renewable heat will make in Scotland—11 per cent of our heat will be produced from renewable sources—represents about 8.9 per cent of the UK target, so we are ahead of our pro rata population share.

We believe that there are indicators that we will get the necessary momentum. The fact that on 22 February we will fill the room with industry representatives and all the other allies and stakeholders who could help us to meet our target or who would benefit from what we are doing is indicative that we are on course to achieve the results that the member and I want us to achieve.

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): The minister helpfully made it clear in his statement that the report by the Sustainable Development Commission Scotland was published in tandem with his Government's action plan. The SDC's report includes a section entitled "Policy Recommendations for 2020". Are any of those recommendations not being taken forward by his Government in its action plan? If so, why is that the case?

Jim Mather: To give the member the accuracy that she requires, I would prefer to reply to that question in writing. My ability to memorise two reports, do a check and balance, and compare and contrast them is not total. It is a good question, which opens up an extra stream of work that we could and should do, and probably have done, but we will report back and fulfil on that front.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I always thought that civil servants wrote speeches for ministers so that they did not have to memorise everything.

I am at a bit of a loss. I always thought that it was traditional for an action plan to include lots of bold, new actions for us to discuss, so that we could identify what they would achieve. The minister could have told us that from now on the planning system would ensure that no new buildings would be put up in Scotland without incorporating renewable heat or that local authorities would be required to focus on the real polluters when it comes to air quality, rather than making life difficult for wood-fuelled biomass, or he could have announced an increase in the paltry £2 million loan scheme for buildings that cannot take insulation. He did not do that. He told us that in four months' time there will be a meeting of stakeholders. Is that not all a bit limp?

Jim Mather: I am trying not to be limp. The glass-half-empty approach is not the most constructive one for Patrick Harvie to take.

We are moving in the right direction. We are trying to get everyone involved. A further independent report will be published later in the year, which will look at issues such as permitted development rights for air-source heat pumps and micro wind turbines. Recommendations from the report will be included in the planning guidance thereafter.

We are trying to move forward. A negative approach does not get us very far. If we frame things positively, we will make better progress. I heard recently that at one of its plants in Japan, Toyota gets 46 suggestions a year. General Motors averages zero. Volvo, which copies Toyota, gets three. The reason why Toyota gets so many is that all the suggestions are framed in the positive. Everything is evaluated and an effort is made to make everything work. That is the climate that we need to create here. I would welcome Mr Harvie's conversion in due course.

Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP): The Scottish biomass heat scheme, which is now in its third round, is specifically targeted at small and medium-sized enterprises. SMEs are vital for jobs and the economy, and they have a huge potential in contributing towards cutting Scotland's emissions. Will SMEs be able to benefit from the upcoming UK renewable heat incentive funding stream? How is it envisaged that SMEs will contribute as a sector to delivery of the plan?

Jim Mather: The short answer is that SMEs will benefit in business installations and in being part of the supply chain. Indeed, before the RHI, they are already benefiting from the biomass scheme. In my constituency, Sandy Brunton, who runs the post office in Fionnphort on the Ross of Mull, is giving up his post office and retail outlet in favour of going full time at air-source heat pumps. Holiday homes in the Kintra area of Mull might benefit from that in due course. There are real

opportunities for small businesses to be the backbone and a catalyst of the renewable heat revolution. Such opportunities merge with energy efficiency in the potential business mix. The building trade is seeing real potential in that respect; we may even have a new trade. I would certainly welcome SMEs as individual organisations and SMEs' representative organisations engaging with us as we proceed with the debate.

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): The Scottish Government has still not responded to calls to introduce permitted development rights for air-source heat pumps. The renewable heat action plan commits it only to commissioning work to explore the feasibility of introducing permitted development rights by the end of March next year. Can the minister not simply move ahead and inform members today that he will introduce permitted development rights for air-source heat pumps and include micro wind generation in that?

Jim Mather: I mentioned that an independent report that is due to be published by the end of the year will outline what factors should be considered in the context of permitted development rights for air-source heat pumps and micro wind turbines. Its recommendations will be considered and included in planning guidance thereafter.

On top of that, technology is developing. I have heard of various visits to the Mitsubishi air-source heat pump plant in Livingston. I am looking forward to the development of such technologies and products in Scotland and to their having attributes that will make them things that we all want to have and which have favourable permitted developments behind them.

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): An action plan should contain action and it should be a plan. I concur with what Patrick Harvie said about the lack of action or a plan in the document that we are discussing.

I will follow up Marilyn Livingstone's question. I am disappointed about the lack of progress on air-source heat pumps. The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee has pressed for progress to be made on them for a considerable time. Has the minister visited Mitsubishi yet to see an air-source heat pump and discover why air-source heat pumps should be given permitted development rights? On the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, when might the microgeneration council tax reduction proposals come forward?

Jim Mather: I have not yet visited Mitsubishi, but, having twice given it a punt today, I am morally obliged to do so. I am personally interested in visiting it.

The member masks the fact that we have a plan that will really kick into action when the renewable

heat incentive comes along and which is fuelled by a group that we have put excellent people on. That group has already met twice, is meeting again and is producing action out there with real companies. That is the real climate. The idea that everything can be done in the chamber is fanciful. We need to get out there, consider ideas, and get prospects of meeting genuinely commercial requirements that will give us 2GW on the ground through connecting with the sector. We are doing that and I expect that to continue. I look forward to working with the committee on the matter as the weeks and months pass.

Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP): The target that the Government has set for renewable heat is most welcome, given the challenging carbon reduction targets that the Parliament agreed in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. However, can the minister expand on the role that the renewable heat sector can play in alleviating fuel poverty and on how renewable heat can be used in homes in general?

Jim Mather: The FREDS community renewables implementation sub-group will shortly meet for the first time. That group will add some focus on the issue to which the member refers. We also have the energy assistance package, which was announced back in April and which has the full backing of the Scottish fuel poverty forum. That is supported by a budget of £60 million in 2009-10, and it is helping social sector tenants and tackling poverty by offering, for the first time, innovative technologies such as air-source heat pumps in a rural setting. Beyond that and beyond the central heating programme, which continues, we have the prospect of 5.1 million innovative people throughout Scotland using hybrids and variants of those technologies and broadcasting that to their friends and neighbours. The experience of that and the volume that it will bring will, I hope, bring down the price of such technologies. With the incentive schemes, it will create a renewable heat revolution in Scotland.

Education (Scottish History)

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-5266, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on learning about Scotland and its history.

15:02

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): As we approach St Andrew's day, the Government believes that the time is right to recognise the importance of learning about Scotland's history. Today also provides a welcome opportunity to celebrate the contribution of our children and young people to a successful year of homecoming. Over the past 10 months, the homecoming has provided a focal point for a range of activities. As well as encouraging people who have Scottish heritage and those who have an interest in Scotland to come home and visit, the homecoming has inspired thousands of children and young people to reflect on our nation, on its history, heritage and culture and on its place in the globalised world of the 21st century.

More than 270 schools and nurseries have highlighted their activities on the homecoming map and, in June, Iochdar primary school in South Uist was the winner of the homecoming award at the Scottish education awards. Through the homecoming, Scotland's young people have been reclaiming our history—a story of immense achievement in industry, medicine, science, law, world exploration and literature on a scale that belies the size of our population. That learning about Scotland's history, heritage, culture and place in the world is a key part of the legacy of the homecoming.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): From whom have those young people reclaimed their history? I thought that such education had been going on in schools for a long time.

Fiona Hyslop: This is an opportunity for young people to explore their history and to learn about aspects of it of which they were not aware. I will go on to explain why we have, through the online resource, ensured that resources about parts of Scotland's history that have not been known to our young people have been made available.

It is not my job as the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning—nor, indeed, is it the job of any member of the Government—to dictate the content of the curriculum. I agree that there should not be political interference; the attack on teachers' professional integrity in the Conservatives' amendment is, therefore, regrettable. It is my job, however, to show leadership and to provide a framework within

which our education system flourishes and further improves. The curriculum for excellence is such a framework.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am rather confused by what the cabinet secretary has said. I have read our amendment carefully and can see no attack on teachers in it. What I can see, potentially, is an attack on politicians for seeking to politicise Scottish history.

Fiona Hyslop: The Conservatives should perhaps be more explicit, rather than talking about things that are potentially the case. The way I read the amendment, the Conservatives are questioning the abilities of teachers. We trust Scotland's teachers to ensure that history is taught in a way that reflects their professionalism and understanding, and is not interfered with by politicians of any colour.

Although today's debate is about learning about Scotland's history, it is clear from some of the amendments that members want to consider a wider agenda around the curriculum for excellence. There was a considerable amount of media coverage at the end of last week following comments from Carole Ford—the now-retired president of School Leaders Scotland—about details of qualifications for 2013-14, which have yet to be determined, and on which SLS will be fully consulted.

There have been misconceptions around assessment and qualifications. It is not the case that the views of SLS and the other headteacher associations have not been taken into account. I am proud of the unparalleled involvement of the education profession in our work; indeed, SLS was a member of the curriculum for excellence management board, which made recommendations on national qualifications to me, which I accepted. SLS will continue to be involved in discussions and decision making on assessment and qualifications, in particular through the management board and the qualifications governing group. After hearing my speech to the headteachers conference last Friday, Carole Ford stated publicly that she was reassured. School Leaders Scotland also supports our approach to learning about Scotland's history in the context of a global perspective.

Professional engagement has been vital: we established the history in curriculum for excellence group, which brought together eminent professionals in the teaching of history to address some of the concerns that had been raised by teachers in respect of history in the curriculum. We engaged with educators not only to identify why the teaching of Scottish history has been neglected, but to look at ways in which that neglect could be rectified. One of the themes that were considered by the group was the concept of

a Scottish spine that would include the key events and eras in Scottish history. In response to that, Learning and Teaching Scotland produced a Scottish dimension planning tool for history that is consistent with the principles of the curriculum for excellence.

The Scottish Association of Teachers of History has played an important role over a number years and has provided us with invaluable input and support, including help with development of the Scotland's history online resource, which it warmly welcomed.

The history in curriculum for excellence group will meet again early in the new year. I will be delighted to update Parliament on the work of the group.

Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(Con): The cabinet secretary mentioned the Scottish Association of Teachers of History, which is an excellent group. I understand that its last newsletter featured complaints by a number of principal teachers of history across Scotland who feel that the subject is being continually squeezed. How will the curriculum for excellence reverse that trend?

Fiona Hyslop: That is exactly why the history in curriculum for excellence group is considering ways in which we can ensure that we create the time and space that will ensure that the teaching of history—not only the resources that we are talking about today—can be developed.

The remit of the history in curriculum for excellence group focuses on pedagogical issues and will include consideration of continuous professional development and the transition from primary to secondary school, as well as proposals for new topics on the history resource.

I was delighted to launch Scotland's history—a world-leading online resource—last month. The quality and quantity of material is outstanding. Professor Tom Devine described it as

“potentially taking Scotland from the end of the queue in terms of teaching national history to the top.”

At launch, the resource covers more than 200 topics from prehistory to the 21st century, including fascinating topics that are not usually taught in schools, such as the Caledonians and Picts and the history of Gaeldom. It also features resources that were commissioned specially for the year of homecoming on subjects such as the Scottish enlightenment and Scots and Australia. There are links to more than 1,000 resources and interactive supporting materials to help to enrich our young people's critical skills of analysis and interpretation through the study of Scotland's history.

It is important that Learning and Teaching Scotland has marshalled and mobilised the

resources of Scotland. Indeed, all the members of the heritage education forum Scotland have made their resources, image archives, staff time and experience freely available, which has made a huge difference to the resource.

I have encouraged all members to explore the Scotland's history resource, which is accessible at www.scotlandshistory.org as well as through the LTS site. I am pleased to report that it received 21,946 visits and well over 100,000 page views in its first four weeks online.

The range of resources fills important gaps in areas where inspection evidence from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education shows that aspects of Scottish history have been underrepresented in school teaching, such as the making of the kingdom, the late medieval period and the enlightenment. It is important that, with the 450th anniversary of the reformation next year, that aspect of Scottish history is dealt with by resource material as well.

While at the launch, I had the pleasure of meeting pupils from several schools, who share an interest in Scottish history. Pupils from Queensferry primary school, in particular, displayed a keen interest in enhancing their knowledge through the resources. They and the rest of the young people can look forward to maximising the potential of the resource by adding examples of their local history projects to it via glow, which is the Scottish schools intranet system. We in Scotland can be proud of glow, which is the world's first national education platform. It provides a powerful set of integrated online tools and resources. Those are driving motivation and engagement in Scottish education and are leading teachers, pupils and parents into a rich and innovative learning process that enables them to explore, learn, create, share and showcase. Teachers and learners alike are already using glow to share best practice, and to collaborate to enhance their experiences by cultivating and sharing their interest in the rich history of Scotland. Those 21st century skills and behaviours underpin the curriculum for excellence, and they showcase Scotland to the world as an evolving, embracing and innovative nation.

We must ensure that our young people have the opportunity to learn about Scotland's history throughout the senior phase of their education, which is why we have ensured that the higher history course will from next year contain a mandatory Scottish unit. The unit will give pupils the opportunity to learn about many important points in Scotland's history, including the age of the reformation and the impact of the migration of Scots in the 19th and 20th centuries, which will embed the legacy for learning from homecoming. I have been impressed with the passion and

dedication of all those who have been involved in making that positive change to the qualification. As well as the Scotland's history online resource, there are dedicated resources from Learning and Teaching Scotland for the higher history unit, which have received particular praise at recent Scottish Qualifications Authority events.

We are bringing history to life for thousands of young people by supporting school visits to iconic, historic sites. Through the National Trust for Scotland, we have throughout the year of homecoming funded visits to Bannockburn and Culloden. From St Andrew's day, the education suite at the Burns museum will be open, which will enable our young people to enhance their understanding of our national poet. We know from the National Trust for Scotland that schools are travelling from further afield to benefit from such experiences—the number of those who are travelling for more than an hour to get to Bannockburn and Culloden has increased by more than a third. The widening of access to our history and heritage is good news for young people throughout Scotland.

As well as the first-hand experience that is gained from visiting such sites, learning about our past is being invigorated by technology. At Bannockburn, a high-definition film that was launched in September tells the story from the perspective of a young boy who witnesses the battle. It uses computer-generated imagery to bring to life for visitors the size, scale and significance of the events.

Learning about and understanding Scotland's history enriches our understanding of how we see ourselves and how others see us. As we help our young people to prepare for the challenges of a 21st century globalised world, understanding and knowledge of Scotland's history inspires and stimulates critical appraisal. It is vital for the future that we provide our young people with skills for the 21st century. It is important that we consider the achievements of the past to promote a progressive, successful and confident Scotland in the future. We do not teach our young people what to think; we give them the skills to think for themselves.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the contribution of Scotland's children and young people in schools to a successful Year of Homecoming; acknowledges the importance of learning about Scotland's heritage, history and culture and place in the world, and welcomes the recent launch of Scotland's History online, a world-leading online resource from Learning and Teaching Scotland, which draws on resources from the National Galleries of Scotland, National Museums Scotland, the National Library of Scotland, the National Archives of Scotland and other sources.

15:13

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): As most of us who are participating in the debate are very aware, this is our second debate on history in the current parliamentary session. Those who are not in the know might suspect that there must be some sort of problem with the subject—that it is an issue of controversy on which we struggle to reach agreement and which demands our parliamentary time. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. The teaching of history continues to attract support from across the political spectrum and commands respect from pupils, parents, teachers and employers.

Today's debate does not reflect any of the real problems in our schools or in the curriculum; rather, it reflects a nationalist obsession. The promotion of Scottish history in the curriculum, direct Scottish Government subsidy for trips to Bannockburn, investment in Scotland's history online: there is nothing wrong with any of those individual decisions, or with the provision of the additional resources. However, when those things are taken together, it is difficult not to worry about implicit politicisation, and about nationalism creeping into the curriculum.

Fiona Hyslop: Does Ken Macintosh think that the use of taxpayers' money by the BBC to create programmes about Scottish history is some kind of nationalist plot to overtake the public in Scotland?

Ken Macintosh: Far from it. The BBC has many roles. I am sorry, however: it is not the Government's role to promote Scottish history or to involve itself in the choice of elements of the curriculum. My concern about the various items that I highlighted is that we do not see similar Government intervention in any other part of the history curriculum or any other subject, for that matter.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): I find it a fascinating concept that we can somehow learn about ourselves without being taught. Can Ken Macintosh explain why it is that, south of the border, where great numbers of people come from a great array of histories, people should mainly be given access to learning about the history of England? The Government there seems to understand that it is important for people to know where they have come from and where they have arrived at.

Ken Macintosh: I do not think that Margo MacDonald understood my argument. I doubt that anybody in the chamber is against the teaching of Scottish history. The question is why specific Government intervention is needed to promote it. What is the perceived problem with Scottish history teaching? Scottish history has always been taught in our schools. I learned Scottish history,

and I am very proud of it. However, I do not need a Government—I certainly do not need a nationalist Government—to promote its choice of items within the curriculum. I think that history is important, not the Government's choice.

Most teachers in Scotland, including most history teachers, face a range of concerns about implementation of the new curriculum for excellence. Most parents want to know what the reforms will mean for their children's qualifications, and most pupils will be faced with a new range of subject choices in the next few years. However, none of those groups is beating down the door to say how much they worry about Scottish history.

To be clear, I am not complaining that some resources are being made available to support the teaching of history, such as the new Scotland's history online service. Looking at the choice of material on the website, my eyebrows rose at the prominence that is given to some topics, such as English immigration, the supposed rise of nationalism, and SNP shibboleths that I suspect are of little significance to the rest of us, such as the removal of the stone of destiny or the unsung second verse of the national anthem. On the whole, however, the website is reasonably balanced and it certainly provides access to some excellent and stimulating material.

However, I make two points about the website. First, I highlight the stark contrast between the welcome national resource of an online service and the local and immediate budget cuts that most teachers are struggling with in the classroom. Each of us will be hearing constantly from our constituents stories of schools where there are no books or limited equipment, and no money to replace teaching resources. Putting money into a Scottish history website does not strike me as being as important as providing all our history teachers with the materials that they need to engage their pupils in a range of topics.

Secondly, although there is some limited central investment, it appears that all the resources that are being applied are going into Scottish history. I say again that I trust our teachers not to give young people a Braveheart education, but if Scottish history is clearly better resourced than other fields of historical study, that begins to tip the balance in one direction. I would have thought that most of us want young people to leave school with a broad grasp of modern and ancient history and an understanding of Scottish, British, European and world history. Skewing resources either implicitly or explicitly to reflect a political agenda does not help to achieve that and might indeed exacerbate other problems that are thrown up by the curriculum for excellence.

Fiona Hyslop: Ken Macintosh might not be aware that the cost of the website is £60,000.

Ken Macintosh: As I said, I have no concerns about the work on the website itself. I am concerned about the cumulative effect of several interventions, all of which are solely concerned with Scottish history and none of which, it seems, is concerned with the other academic and real problems that our children face in accessing the curriculum.

Perhaps the most worrying of those problems is the continuing lack of clarity about the examinable curriculum—a point that was made forcefully last week by the president of School Leaders Scotland, Carole Ford. The curriculum for excellence was supposed to declutter the curriculum and reduce the burden of assessment, but we still have too many exams and too much formal assessment. While, on one hand, we have a continuing overemphasis on assessment, the president of School Leaders Scotland highlighted the difficulty, on the other, in measuring wider achievement under the curriculum for excellence. How do we record and celebrate responsible citizenship or pay sufficient credit to our effective contributors? Most telling of all perhaps, that body, which brings together most of Scotland's secondary head teachers, highlighted the lack of any formal measures to assess literacy and numeracy skills until the 10th year of a child's education, when they are too late to be of any use. These are immediate and pressing issues on which we need clear political leadership.

Alongside the need for clarity in the assessment framework, a number of more prosaic issues simply need to be addressed. For example, at the heart of the curriculum for excellence there is a tension between decentralised flexibility and standardised—or, at least, broad—coverage of the curriculum. Greater local choice means that the teaching of history can vary markedly from school to school. The upside of that is that some teachers have greater freedom to enthuse pupils about areas of particular interest; on the other hand, such an approach could lead to a lack of consistency among schools and certainly makes assessment tricky.

I believe that the Scottish Association of Teachers of History has helped Learning and Teaching Scotland draw up loose guidelines or, at least, a planning tool for history, which describes the broad spread of learning that pupils might be expected to cover before the end of compulsory history lessons. As the cabinet secretary pointed out in her opening remarks, that period spans primary school to the end of second year in secondary school.

However, with the budgetary and time constraints on teachers, the often problematic relationship between primary and secondary schools is not getting any better. If not enough

attention is paid to those areas, and without good liaison between primary and secondary schools, pupils might end up not with a broad education, but with what has been described as a pick-and-mix approach to history. Although the dilemma has faced the curriculum for excellence since its inception, the worry is that we seem to be no nearer a conclusion and that, if anything, the debate is becoming more polarised.

In history, as in mathematics and the sciences, there are still outstanding concerns about the emphasis on content or knowledge in the curriculum for excellence. For example, under the new curriculum, teachers are encouraged to interact more with pupils using debate or classroom discussion as learning tools. Although such techniques are important and help to engage learners, they take up more time and therefore leave even less time for learning content.

Added to those curricular changes is the fact that little yet is known of the impact of the move to new broad-ranging teaching departments or faculties. The approach has not been implemented in every authority, but the worry remains that if stand-alone subjects such as history are merged into, say, a social studies faculty, they will lose their principal teacher and will, in effect, be downgraded. So far the worries and concerns are mostly anecdotal, but we should have firmer information on which to base our conclusions and policy development, and I believe that the cabinet secretary should look at the issue with a view to collecting evidence.

As well as debating history early last year, we discussed the implementation of the curriculum for excellence. When I look back at both debates, I find it striking how little progress has been made. Among the questions that were raised in the debate on the curriculum, we asked what the Scottish Government was doing to engage parents. What subjects will pupils choose and when? What exams will they sit? What qualifications will they have to show for their efforts? Will a child definitely be able to read and write when he or she leaves school? Will history remain a stand-alone subject? The best that we can say today is that there has been limited progress in some of those areas, but the reforms are crying out for stronger and more decisive leadership. The call now, as then, is for greater clarity around the new curriculum, for decisions on the examinations and qualifications framework and for resources to support implementation.

My looking back at speeches that were made by some members in the previous history debate served merely to illustrate my central concern that the SNP view of history is that it exists to puff up Scotland and to tell us how great a country this is. I believe that that is a blinkered and very limited

perspective to give our young people. Surely the confidence that is to be gained from learning history lies in the skills that are instilled by the discipline to evaluate evidence and to criticise objectively, not from developing an overblown regard for our country's past.

There is no lack of enthusiasm or support for Scottish history in this chamber, but many of us worry about the Government's overemphasis on one topic when there are real challenges elsewhere. I do not believe that the SNP view of history is how the subject is taught in our schools, and I trust history teachers to exercise their judgment instead of reflecting a political perspective. However, I worry that this Scottish Government's actions could add an unhelpful dimension to that task at a time when more pressing problems demand teachers' attention.

I move amendment S3M-5266.2, to insert at end:

"and, following concerns expressed by School Leaders Scotland and others over the Curriculum for Excellence, asks ministers to report to the Parliament on the place of history in the developing curriculum."

15:24

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

There is nothing like a lively debate on a Wednesday afternoon. However, I am sure that one thing that we can all agree on is that there is far too much ignorance among young people about aspects of our history, as was highlighted in a recent survey of children's knowledge of the second world war that was carried out by Erskine, the Scottish veterans charity. One in 20 children thought that Adolf Hitler was coach of the German football team and that the Holocaust was a celebration of the end of the war. One in 12 believed that the blitz was a European clean-up following the war, and one in 10 thought the SS stood for Enid Blyton's secret seven.

When we last debated Scotland's history in January last year, I mentioned some other survey results, which showed that 37 per cent of young Scots thought that we became part of the United Kingdom when we were conquered by England, another 28 per cent thought that it was the result of a referendum, and 41 per cent thought that the battle of Culloden was a conflict between wholly Scottish and wholly English armies. So there is much to be done.

We support the Government's intention to strengthen the teaching of Scottish history in the school curriculum. As someone who is passionate about Scottish history, I welcome the increased public interest in the subject. The BBC's "A History of Scotland" series, presented by Neil Oliver, has generated debate, with Professor Devine wading

in with his criticisms. Although he might be right to say that it is a rather superficial treatment of the subject, we are seeing Scottish history on prime-time television, so the BBC should be congratulated on its scheduling of such an important series at such an important time of the week.

The Government's motion welcomes the Scotland's history website, to which Ken Macintosh referred. It is certainly a valuable resource that contains a great deal of information. However, I question some of the entries and the omission of certain key and relevant facts. The website is intended to teach about Scottish history—which is of course linked inextricably to the history of England, Wales, Ireland and France—but there is little mention of what happened elsewhere, despite developments in other countries often being highly relevant. For example, in the section on the reformation, there is reference to Martin Luther and the French regency in Scotland, but no mention at all of the reformation in England and how significant that was. The importance of that is highlighted in Harry Reid's excellent new book "Reformation: The Dangerous Birth of the Modern World".

The website's section on devolution reads more like a party manifesto than an objective historical analysis. Ken Macintosh gave some other excellent examples of the website's dwelling on nationalist obsessions, such as the unsung second verse of the national anthem, about which no one in the real world is the least bit concerned.

The Scottish Government has form for promoting a nationalist agenda in everything it does, and we must be extra careful to ensure that there is no attempt to distort Scottish history. In particular, historical resources that are made available to schoolchildren should never be used as a vehicle for propaganda.

Fiona Hyslop: Does the member accept that the Scottish Government was not involved in any in the content of Scotland's history online, and neither should it be? The content was developed by professional historians.

Murdo Fraser: Perhaps the cabinet secretary should have waited for a moment to hear my next concern about the funding of school trips to historic sites such as the battlefields of Bannockburn and Culloden and Robert Burns's birthplace. I should say for the record that I have no problem with encouraging schoolchildren to visit historic sites. I have not yet had the opportunity to see the new visitor centre at Culloden for myself, but by all accounts it is excellent and it gives a balanced view of the battle. The centre at Bannockburn is in need of a facelift and I have raised with the Scottish Government the hope that it will consider assisting

an improvement of that facility as we approach the 700th anniversary of the battle.

However, I question the focus of the initiative, given that two out of the three sites that have been selected were the scenes of conflict with our southern neighbours, although we know that there were as many Scots supporting the Hanoverians at Culloden as were supporting the Jacobites. So why restrict the initiative to those three sites? Why is there such a narrow focus? Why not have visits to the David Livingstone centre in Blantyre to learn about that great Scottish missionary and explorer, who led the campaign against the slave trade? Why not visit the People's Palace in Glasgow to learn about the social history of Scotland? Why not visit the Museum of Flight in East Lothian to learn about the Scots' role in the battle of Britain? Why is there so restrictive a choice of subjects? Again, the suspicion must be that it is about pursuing a narrow nationalist agenda.

The Minister for Schools and Skills (Keith Brown): In relation to the trips that he is talking about, does Murdo Fraser accept the view of Tom Devine, who said:

"If this is under the supervision and organisation of both schools and NTS, I would certainly trust them to be responsible?"

Given that Murdo Fraser cheered when Ken Macintosh said that the stone of destiny being returned to Scotland was a nationalist shibboleth, can he explain Michael Forsyth's role in that event?

Murdo Fraser: I did not mention the stone of destiny in my remarks. All I would say—I am sure that Professor Devine would agree with me on this—is that if we are going to encourage schoolchildren to visit historic sites, which is a worthwhile initiative, why can we not have a menu of opportunities for young people to see the richness of the history of Scotland and its place in Great Britain and its place in the world? Why should we have such a restricted choice?

Margo MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Murdo Fraser: No. I need to make some progress, if Mrs MacDonald will forgive me.

The SNP Government's selective view of history again came to light when it was revealed in a parliamentary answer to me earlier this year that there were no plans to mark the 450th anniversary of the Scottish reformation, which falls in 2010. It is without doubt that the reformation is a hugely significant event in Scottish history, not only in religious terms but also in that it marked the point at which Scotland as a nation started to turn away from our historical links with France and continental Europe and increasingly towards links with Protestant England—perhaps it is for that reason that the SNP is so uncomfortable with it.

Historians such as Tom Devine and Harry Reid, who is himself a nationalist, have also criticised the SNP Government, which is so keen to celebrate other anniversaries—such as those associated with Burns—for not being prepared to mark the reformation. We have learnt that even the Edinburgh hogmanay celebrations are to focus on the 450th anniversary of the reformation, with a series of events and activities. Even now, it is not too late for the Scottish Government to join the party, so I hope that it seizes that opportunity.

My amendment, which seems to have caused so much upset among SNP members,

“regrets any attempts to promote a nationalist agenda through the use of public resources and the teaching of history.”

I hope that there are, in fact, no such attempts, although I fear that there is some evidence to the contrary. It is vital that our children have a balanced and objective view of history that is not dominated by any one political viewpoint. For that reason, I hope that the Scottish Government will support our amendment to put the matter beyond any doubt.

I move amendment S3M-5266.1, to leave out from “welcomes” to end and insert:

“notes the recent launch of Scotland’s History online and regrets any attempts to promote a nationalist agenda through the use of public resources and the teaching of history.”

15:32

Hugh O’Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): As I listened to Murdo Fraser, I wondered how enthusiastic Mr Knox might have been about a party to celebrate the reformation, but we should perhaps gloss over that observation.

As other members have said, the last time that we debated this subject was back in January 2008, when the SNP was bullish and on the front foot about what it claimed as its successes. The one thing that we have learned since then is that that particular history lesson has not served our education system well. From its record throughout our education system, it is clear that the Scottish Government is not focused on education and, frankly, valuable though Scottish history is, a debate on it is a diversion from the various challenges that our educators face.

Let us be clear: there is hardly a part of our education system where the SNP has kept any of its manifesto promises. On dumping student debt, it has failed; on class sizes of 18, it has failed; on the school building programme, it has failed; on teacher numbers, it has failed; and on the curriculum for excellence, it must try harder. I sometimes wonder who, when the time comes, the SNP will get to write the history of the first two and

a half years of its Administration—were he alive, Hans Christian Andersen might be a good choice.

The Government’s motion refers to the contribution of our country’s children and to the various agencies, museums and galleries that have brought together the online service. In fairness, history is an emotive subject and it is often said—I may be misquoting someone—that the writing of history falls to the victors. Unfortunately, there are circumstances when that comes back and bites the rest of the country. When we look at some of the things that happened in Europe post-1918 and the treaty of Versailles, the consequences of misrepresenting history are apparent to us all.

Margo MacDonald: I agree with most of what Murdo Fraser said but, talking about our history in the context of global history, what are Scottish and English schoolchildren taught about the British empire? Was it a good thing or a bad thing?

Hugh O’Donnell: Given that I am not a history teacher or privy to the detail of classroom lessons, it is a little difficult for me to answer the question specifically. However, I observe that Scots in a variety of guises played a dramatic and significant role in the British empire and that should be taught. Two of our big cities were founded on the back of Scots involvement in some of the less savoury aspects of the empire.

Sometimes we overstate things, but I understand why Ken Macintosh and Murdo Fraser are concerned. It is stating the obvious to say that this Administration has a nationalist agenda that it promotes explicitly as well as implicitly. Our concern, which has been expressed across the chamber and will be again in subsequent speeches, is that using any part of our education system to promote a political agenda—whether covertly or overtly—is far from acceptable. I will say more about that later.

Given the challenges that our education system faces, we could have debated a wide range of topics, not least the plans for teachers’ retirement packages that would allow newly qualified teachers to get posts.

Scottish Liberal Democrats endorse the decision to include compulsory questions in the advanced higher in history, but we caution the Government, as other speakers have done, that it is not for any Government of any political complexion in any circumstances to dictate overtly or otherwise the content and structure of teaching materials. Murdo Fraser made a similar point.

History is not a recipe book. Past events are never replicated in the present in quite the same way. Historical events are variable and so are their interpretations, which are part of a constantly shifting process; they are not fixed in time. There

is no certainty about finding the future in the past. No political party should attempt to drive a political agenda by using Scottish, European or global history—that is just not acceptable.

We can learn from history how past generations thought and acted, how they responded to the demands and challenges of the times and how they solved their problems. The main thing that history can teach us is that our actions have consequences and that certain choices, once made, cannot be undone easily, or at least not without further consequences.

The ability to analyse past events dispassionately is critical. It is good that our young people's interest in our history continues. It is important that we understand how we came to be where we are, but we must ensure that it is contextualised against the wider background of European and world events. It is not enough just to teach more Scottish history; it has to be about more than kings and queens, battles won and lost, perceived injustices and perceived victories. We need to teach social and local history and, increasingly, our personal history.

We should welcome the website, the resource that it represents and the chance that it gives us to enlighten our young people about Scotland's roles in the world and how the development of the world and of Scotland have impacted on each other, from Mons Graupius and Calgacus to the Hanseatic league, the Panamanian adventure and the slave and tobacco trades, at which Margo MacDonald hinted. The Government has to remember that, if we are going to be made wise and just, it will not be just by reconciling and recollecting our perceptions of the past but by our actions in the present and the responsibilities that we have for the future.

I move amendment S3M-5266.3, to insert at end:

“; reiterates its belief that history should be taught without political interference; recognises that the effective teaching of history and all other subjects requires teachers to be equipped with the necessary resources and training, and calls on the Scottish Government to provide urgent clarity over the substance and implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence and the changes to Scotland's national qualifications.”

15:40

Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP): There is an awfy temptation for Scots to ask, “Wha's like us?” and to answer by saying, “Damn few and they're a' deid.” That is the knee-jerk reaction of a people who have felt disfranchised and have reacted with a prickly pride.

We can reel off lists of Scots who have done marvellous things and we are, quite rightly, proud

to be associated with them. What we do not seem to be able to do easily is place those characters in the period in which they lived. We have no sense of the nation in which they lived and no taste of the air that they breathed. Many of us will punt the greatness of the Scottish enlightenment by quoting Voltaire, who said:

“We look to Scotland for all our ideas of civilisation.”

We will praise David Hume's “A Treatise of Human Nature” and argue about whether Adam Smith was a socialist. However, few of us can place those people in the stretch of history. We have a pantheon with no walls—an unfinished monument to mirror the national monument on Calton Hill.

Surely our duty is to ensure that coming generations have a context for their heroes, know what social forces in Dundee helped Mary Slessor to choose her life as a missionary and understand how difficult it was for Elsie Inglis to practise medicine and how Mary Fairfax Somerville came to write influential scientific tomes in the first half of the 19th century.

Delivering a view of the past that explains the country that they inherit is essential for a child in any nation and it is no less so in Scotland.

Johann Lamont: I wonder how Christina McKelvie imagines that a greater understanding of Elsie Inglis and Mary Slessor would be gained by a visit to Culloden.

Christina McKelvie: The member will know better than I do that Culloden is just one choice of all the things that children can visit. My son is going to visit something in Glasgow during the week, which is subsidised by the local authority, too. Whether it is coming from the Government or the local authority, it is all coming from the one pot. It is great learning for our kids.

Delivering a view of the past that explains the country that they inherit is essential for a child in any nation and it is no less so in Scotland. I have repeated that sentence, because it needs to be repeated. Scottish pupils should be aware of the Glasgow rent strikes; the radicals who echoed the calls of the French revolution; how the Church of Scotland made Scotland the most literate nation in the world; how Scottish merchants seized the opportunities of empire; and why Scots cannot walk away gently from the wrongs that were committed in building and maintaining that empire—they should remember that Scots, too, were involved in the slave trade and they should remember, with pride, that they were involved in its abolition.

Margo MacDonald: The member has just given a very good example of history being written by the winners. She said that Scottish merchants took advantage of the opportunities of empire, which

can be interpreted in two ways. I submit that it is impossible to have an unbiased view of history.

Christina McKelvie: I cannot add anything to that.

Perhaps if there was a better general understanding of Scotland's history and our links with Ireland—viewed with a less jaundiced eye—we might step along the road to addressing some of the irrational itches of sectarianism.

When our children can easily access the treasure troves of art and architecture from Scotland's past and present, mark our nation's remarkable role in the development of modern medicine, banking and commerce and be inspired by the exploration and adventures of Scots who criss-crossed the world, they will have more chance of becoming bigger people than we currently imagine.

We have a remarkable country with a remarkable history. We have made an incredible contribution to the world and we have an incredible contribution still to make. We should help Scotland's children to celebrate that.

There is great strength in a nation that can look at its own history, mark it well, bask in the reflected glow of achievement, note its downfalls and learn from all of it. We do not own the past and we cannot prescribe or narrow it. That is not our job. We set a framework and we let the teachers teach. We do not tell them what to teach and we do not check their jotters. What is taught in Scottish history classes will be the decision of those who set the classes, those who set the exams and those who inspect them. Politicians cannot and will not interfere.

I have some respect for Murdo Fraser and I suspect that he wrote his amendment in haste. I imagine that he did not mean to insult our history teachers by suggesting that they would promote a political agenda through their teachings. I am sure that he knows as well as the rest of us do that Scotland's teachers are professional and dedicated individuals who will ensure the best possible scholastic results for pupils and who would resist strongly any attempt by any politician to interfere with that and with how they teach children in the classroom.

Likewise, I am sure that Margaret Smith did not seek to disparage the good work and professionalism of our teachers with the empty phrase in her amendment

"history should be taught without political interference".

I am sure that she will make it clear at the earliest opportunity that she does not suspect that Scotland's teachers would impose their political beliefs on their pupils.

I am sure that the framers of all the amendments—I include Ken Macintosh, of course—know that the Government reports to Parliament regularly and is scrutinised by Parliament every sitting week, and particularly at noon on Thursdays. I look forward to Parliament continuing to follow the progress and improvements in Scottish education that the Government is bringing about and I look forward to members welcoming those improvements.

The subject is important not because studying history lodges facts, names and dates in young Scots' minds but because it gives them a panorama of time and a vista of the nation's experience that can inform their thinking and their concepts about the nation and the world in which they live. If memory serves, it was Ken Macintosh who said that in the chamber a while back.

History belongs to the nation. [*Interruption.*] I am pleased to support the motion.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): We move—perhaps with a slight delay—to Elaine Murray.

15:46

Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I apologise for selecting the collapsing lectern.

I will broaden the discussion from the subject of history and focus on Scotland's contribution to science, engineering and technology and on our future in those subjects. Scotland has a proud record in those fields that is an important part of Scotland's history—it is much more important than battles against the English. Scots like to point out—particularly to our friends south of the border—that Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, John Logie Baird the television, James Dewar the vacuum flask and James Watt the steam engine; that Alexander Fleming discovered antibiotics; and that Joseph Lister introduced antiseptic surgery.

The great James Clerk Maxwell, who was brought up in Glenlair in Kirkcudbrightshire, founded the theory of electromagnetism from which Einstein's theories of relativity grew. Maxwell is not yet as well known in his native land as he should be, but I was pleased to attend the unveiling of an Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers plaque at Glenlair in the summer to celebrate Maxwell's equations.

Thomas Telford, the famous civil engineer and builder of roads and bridges, was born at Westerkirk, just outside Langholm. He is a famous son of my constituency.

Scotland has not produced only male scientists, although they predominate. The mathematician Mary Fairfax Somerville, who was born in

Jedburgh, was one of the first two women scientists to be recognised in the United Kingdom and admitted to the Royal Astronomical Society.

Will Scotland's reputation for science and engineering in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries be replicated in the 21st century?

Fiona Hyslop: Elaine Murray touches on an important point, which is why emphasis has been placed on science in the baccalaureate. It is important to note that, in the experiences and outcomes of the curriculum for excellence, an understanding of the likes of James Clerk Maxwell is exactly what we want people to have.

Elaine Murray: I will touch on concerns from the scientific community about the curriculum for excellence.

Scotland has achieved well in some new technologies, such as games technologies, but the concern is that we might not continue to achieve without considerable investment. Scotland will not continue to excel in science and technology if we do not get the fundamentals right. Resting on our laurels and past greatnesses will not deliver a proud record for the future.

I have always believed that science has something for everyone and that, if it is presented accessibly, everyone can enjoy aspects of science, as with art and music. It is not difficult to enthuse young children about science projects, particularly if they involve going outside, getting dirty, making noises or smells and examining bugs and insects.

However, a transition must be made from enjoying finding out about concepts in a rudimentary manner to developing the skills that are essential to higher-level scientific practice. Mathematics and numeracy are vital and problem-solving skills are essential but not always understood. Swotting up to remember a formula is not the same as understanding a problem and knowing how to apply the appropriate procedures to find the solution.

Some such skills are generic and interdisciplinary. When I worked for the Open University, I was part of a group that taught transferable skills. However, by the time that I left the Open University, I had concluded that such skills could not be taught out of context—the context of a scientific discipline is important to developing the skill.

What concerns me and many people with an interest in science education about the curriculum for excellence is that it does not recognise sufficiently the importance of developing core scientific competencies, skills and knowledge through the study of scientific disciplines. If that does not happen, we will not produce the next

generation of good Scottish scientists and engineers. I appreciate that the final version of the curriculum for excellence has clarified the scientific concepts that underpin the five areas of science that are to be taught, but concerns remain that the requirements are too vague and lack focus and fundamentals. In the view of science professionals, it remains important that discrete sciences should be taught by graduates in those subjects, as they are best able to pick up on the points that lead to students' later development in the subject. Science changes rapidly and, unless teachers are confident of their capabilities in the subjects that they teach, it will be hard for them to imbue their pupils with enthusiasm.

Teachers need support through professional development. Last April, Professor Lindsay Paterson expressed dismay at the lack of subject expertise, particularly among primary teachers, and called for a fundamental reform of training to improve the situation. More recently, he has suggested an apprenticeship style of teacher training to transfer practical teacher training into schools.

For many years, there have been problems with recruiting science teachers in secondary schools and the age profile of science teachers has been increasing. A cynical interpretation of the curriculum for excellence is that it tackles the problem of the shortage of science subject teachers by reducing the teaching of individual science subjects. Rather than try to avoid the issues, we must address them, even though they are difficult. Science must be made more attractive to students in the later years of secondary school. We need to get away from the prevalent view that, if someone has good grades, they should study medicine. We need some of the most able students to choose positively to study science at university.

That means that the problems of career progression, pay and retention must be addressed. About 18 months ago, I spoke to a meeting of post-doctoral scientists at the University of Edinburgh. Honestly, I was horrified to discover that the issues had not moved on since I was a young scientist. I am not by any means trying to place the blame for that at the door of the Scottish Government, but we have not addressed the issue in 30 years. It needs to be discussed and tackled.

I fear that the curriculum for excellence's approach to science remains somewhat expedient and that it does not totally address the fundamentals. If we do not get the curriculum right, Scotland's contribution to science will be something that we study as part of the history curriculum. I believe that Scotland will continue to have a lot to contribute and that Scottish scientists

and engineers could make a valuable contribution on many major and important problems that face the world. However, we must get the curriculum in schools right so that we can do that. I ask ministers to examine the curriculum for excellence and to talk to science professionals about their continuing concerns on some aspects of the curriculum.

15:53

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I declare an interest as a published author of several books about Scottish history.

I will start by thinking about the emergence of the chamber in which we now debate. A huge cultural awakening took place in the 1970s, and perhaps slightly before that, through to the period when the movement for creating a Scottish Parliament took form. That cultural awakening embraced our history in the wider context and wished to celebrate aspects of Scottishness that we embody. History and learning about history in Scotland are about the people we are. Knowing more of that helps us all to be comfortable and to celebrate who we are as a people.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Rob Gibson: Not just yet, thank you. I would rather develop my argument. The member might find something in it on which she can intervene later.

In Hamish Henderson's foundation lecture for the Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland in the 1960s, he said:

"Scots songs are evidently full of heart and reality. They are not written for the stage. They were the slow growth of intense passion, simple tastes, and a heroic state of society. Love, mirth, patriotism were not the ornament but the inspiration of these songs."

Knowing who we are as a people embraces all those aspects of Scottishness comfortably. Scottish history in our schools, especially in more recent years, has begun to develop as a means to give our young people a much more balanced view of their history than we got when I was at school, and that is why people are becoming more comfortable and knowledgeable. How many adults and children in our population know enough of the thread of Scotland's history to be able to tell us how it all evolved?

Margo MacDonald: I am interested in what the member says, having known him since just after he left school. I put it to him, and ask him to agree, that we are children not only of our country but of our era. While the Scottish nationalism that he talked about was beginning to develop in the 1970s, there were similar national movements throughout the world—we could even include the black consciousness movement in America. We

are children of our time, so Rob Gibson and Murdo Fraser should get together and work out how our history as taught in schools would exemplify that.

Rob Gibson: There are many things that I could say about that intervention—I could give a whole lecture about it—but Margo MacDonald is right that Scotland was developing at a time when other people's struggles were developing too. Is it not interesting that it seems only natural to someone in the United States—or any other country—that they study their own history? Members should ask the young interns we have from the University of Edinburgh whether they understand that it is only recently that we have had a range of material in history through which young Scots could study their own country. It is an incredible circumstance. However, the position has improved thanks to the cultural awakening and the development of democracy in Scotland, and here we are discussing it.

The year of homecoming was intended to engender pride in and celebrate the Scots' cultural heritage. Schoolchildren have embraced that through their work in all sorts of exciting ways. The cabinet secretary and others have commented on those ways and I wish that I had seen some more of that work, which I hope to do. I believe that members would be inspired by it and realise that it is not some narrow nationalistic view of Scotland but one that embraces aspects of Scottishness that we all recognise and is therefore to be cherished.

I wish that we would get away from the suggestion that there is somehow a nationalist slant on history. We refer in the motion to the bodies that support Scotland's history online. They are the National Galleries of Scotland, the National Museums of Scotland, the National Library of Scotland and the National Archives of Scotland—not the nationalist archives and so on. Do members want to get rid of the word "national" as well and reserve it for the UK nation? We must recognise that we should deal with some of our national history in that context too.

The curriculum for excellence guidelines to help teachers to embrace the Scots language and Gaelic have energised many more of them to use those media to tell our story and include Scottish life in it. I also recall that everybody agreed that we should have a Scottish history question in the advanced higher; it was seen as a good development. Therefore, I suggest that, when we examine the materials, think about where we have come from and think about the point that we have reached, we should see in the first flowering of Scotland's history online the kinds of stories that people can pick up—I do not understand how members can call "Trainspotting" nationalistic either—and we should be able to find issues in

those stories that excite children and allow them to understand more of our Scottish story, whether urban squalor, votes for women or whatever else, in a national and international context.

The motion is excellent and the begrudging amendments only take away from the excellent view that people are beginning to have as they become relaxed about their own history.

15:59

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): I am happy to participate in this debate. I declare an interest as a former history teacher and, indeed, as someone who was taught Scottish history in a Glasgow school 40 years ago. This subject is not new. I am a bit despondent at the way in which some of the minister's comments were largely an opportunity to hook on to the issue of the homecoming. All who love history should resist the temptation to create a year-zero approach to what has been and is being done in this field.

More generally, there are loads of opportunities to have an interesting discussion about the role of history in schools, but people want us to wrestle with big issues in, for example, education and the care system. I am concerned that the Scottish Government has chosen this debate, which feels, notwithstanding the quality of the speeches, a bit like a stocking filler. There is a danger that what we see now in this Parliament is Executive action with little opportunity for scrutiny, and this place simply being a debating chamber and nothing more.

It has always been the case that, in teaching history, people have wrestled with the balance between history at the level of local communities, at the Scottish level, and far beyond, to give young people an international dimension. That issue is nothing new. It is important that our young people understand how some of the broader movements across the world were expressed in Scotland.

On the question that Margo MacDonald raised, I do not think that we teach our young people something as crude as whether the empire was good or bad; we develop in them an understanding and a capacity to think for themselves, with enough information—which in the past would not have been given to them—so that they can come to a judgment. If our history is about anything, it is about developing the minds of our young people in that regard. I believe that we should have described this debate as being not about Scotland and its history, as if it were one entity, but about the people of Scotland and their history, and an understanding of the diversity of experience, culture and values in Scotland and how they have related to the wider world.

We know that some in the Scottish National Party are keen to recast the political debate as being between us and them; between Scotland and England in the past and, perhaps a little more subtly, now between Scotland and London or the rest of the United Kingdom. Some in the SNP seek to capture the language of oppression and freedom for now and our past in describing the relationship with the rest of the UK. That is a political debate, which will be reflected in our understanding of history. I believe that the debate is about a partnership with the rest of the UK, but others believe that it is about oppression and freedom. That is a legitimate debate for us to have, but we must be careful about the way in which we present the priorities for teaching in history. There are fundamental differences.

I was concerned about the language that the minister used when she talked about “reclaiming our history”. If young people are reclaiming their history, who has taken it from them? Young people will always take the opportunities that are provided in school to learn, test and understand. The idea that our culture has been silenced in some way resonates with the SNP's view of the relationship with the rest of the UK, but few other people recognise that view.

Margo MacDonald: I have too much respect for the member to disagree with a great deal of what she says, but I tried to make the point in my earlier intervention that there will always be at least two views of historical events. For example, some children were taught in Scottish schools—I do not know whether they still are—that Winston Churchill was a great war leader and that we should remember that that was his contribution; other children were taught that he turned the guns on the miners at Tonypany. Both views were correct, but both indicated a bias, or perhaps not a bias—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: This is going on just a bit too long.

Johann Lamont: I accept what the member says. My point is that history teaching at its most liberating encourages people to scrutinise for bias and to test it against other information that they are given. We must recognise the importance of taking a rounded view of history and understanding how change happens and why. For example, there are those in the Parliament, particularly in the SNP, who emphasise that this Parliament is a reconvened Parliament, but the interesting question for me is why this place, its elected members, its purpose and its priorities are so different from the Parliament that joined the union in 1707. This Parliament's story is one of a journey of radicalism, of change and of movements in which people recognised that things in the past were unacceptable. The fight for

suffrage was part of that journey and it is, in my view, a far more interesting issue—

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member give way?

Johann Lamont: Let me make this point.

We need to seek to understand the movements that transformed the lives of ordinary people and that tackled injustice and exploitation within our communities—some of which was perpetrated by Scot upon Scot. I was taught about the clearances. If some who were involved in making decisions about the year of homecoming had a better understanding of the clearances, they would not have put the clan chief gathering at the centre of a celebration of the people of Scotland in the modern age.

For me, the big issue is how we make history not just about the big history. Too many people in the SNP want to talk about the big history—I recognise that Christina McKelvie identified individuals and movements below that—but, in my view, the big argument that we need to wrestle with in history is understanding the individual, the community and the local, and how events there paralleled with what happened in other parts of the world. History should be a liberating subject rather than being about them and us or oppression versus freedom.

Fiona Hyslop: On the member's point about the different views of particular events in history, one aspect of the online resource is interviews with history professors who take different perspectives on the same period in history. That will help to develop skills for analysis and debate and to get people to make up their own mind. Does she welcome that part of the online resource?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): You must wind up, Ms Lamont.

Johann Lamont: I have not not welcomed anything that encourages young people to think about all of their history. My point is that a separate element to the debate is the overlaying of a template or view of Scotland's relationship with the rest of the world and of Scotland as one entity. Our job is to provide the resources and teachers to ensure that young people are given the capacity to think for themselves and to come to their view of how our history—the history of all the people of Scotland—has shaped our priorities and choices for the future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to wind-up speeches.

16:07

Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): As Hugh O'Donnell said, history is emotive, and we have had some emotive—as well as some good—

speeches this afternoon. However, I worry a little for Johann Lamont's Christmas if she thinks that this debate is a stocking filler. More seriously, we can and must give children the information that they need so that they can learn, scrutinise, test and understand. On that, I totally agree with Johann Lamont.

Every one of us will have had a teacher who inspired us. For me, it was my higher history teacher, Mr Sommerville, with his tales of Bismarck, Waterloo, the great exhibition and the second battle of Bull Run, which I remember in particular—

Murdo Fraser: Who won?

Margaret Smith: Let's not go there.

When I think back to my schooling, I cannot remember being taught a great deal of Scots history, so I agree with the Government on that point. I remember having an interest in Scottish history that I took on in later life, but I do not remember it being taught much in school. At least, we were not taught the kind of history that would have told me who we are and how we came to be the nation that we are today. We heard little about the enlightenment or the men and women of innovation who literally built the modern world, never mind modern Scotland. Elaine Murray mentioned some of them: Fleming, Alexander Graham Bell, Logie Baird, Adam Smith and James Watt.

However, it is right to point out as we approach St Andrew's day—I feel strongly about this, but the cabinet secretary should not take this point the wrong way—that I am not prepared to allow the SNP, or any political party or any other group in Scotland, to take away our flag, our history, St Andrew's day or any of those other things from any Scot. We should not be afraid of teaching Scottish history in Scotland's schools or of standing up and saying that we want to celebrate St Andrew's day and waving our flag. It is our flag. It is no more Fiona Hyslop's flag than it is mine. That is not meant in any way as an attack on the cabinet secretary.

We should accept that a successful year of homecoming is good news for Scotland and for all of us, and is something that we should all want to see. A number of members have talked about the homecoming, an idea that was championed many years ago by my former colleague Donald Gorrie, who used to be a teacher. I am sure that he, like me, would want to commend the hundreds of schools across Scotland that have embraced and celebrated this year of homecoming. I have been hugely impressed by some of the efforts that I have seen in my local schools.

I applaud the work that has been done across Scotland by local authorities, Historic Scotland, the

National Trust for Scotland and others in preserving our historical buildings and passing on the history of Scotland to our children and to visitors and Scots alike.

I believe firmly that Scottish students should be taught Scottish history, and I agree that it would be appropriate to have a compulsory higher element that covers a wide range of topics, but it must be handled professionally by teachers, not by politicians.

I have always loved history. I studied it through school and into university. A few years ago, when my children were small, I worked as a tour guide in Edinburgh, out of a desire to instil in others the same fascination with this country and this city that I feel, so I have no hesitation in saying that I want Scottish children to be inspired in the same way.

However, it is not good enough to have history lessons that are full of narrowly drawn characters that are more at home on the front of a shortbread tin, and it is certainly not acceptable for the teaching of Scottish history to be hijacked by any group of politicians. Teaching a version of Scottish history that views everything as being bound up in Scotland's relationship with England is no better than Scottish history being completely absent from the curriculum, and it represents no more modern and certainly no more enlightened an approach.

Keith Brown: Will the member take an intervention?

Margaret Smith: No, I want to make some progress.

We know that Scotland has a rich and varied history. Whether through formal education, the new Scotland's history website or television—including the history of Scotland programmes that are on at the moment—there is a place for history across all the media. That is to be applauded, but we must not forget that the mere fact that we are proud of our country does not mean that every thing that we have ever done is good. We should ensure that our children have the skills that they need to look at our history and the swings and roundabouts of political, social and economic change, and to ask the right questions, so that they can get the right historical balance. We do not want them to have a perception of past events that is skewed to satisfy any one political agenda.

It is clear from the debate that many members share that concern, which is encapsulated in our amendment and that of the Conservatives. Ken Macintosh was right to highlight that the Scottish Government does not appear to be taking a similar level of interest or involving itself as much in other parts of the curriculum. Why does Scottish history need such a high level of intervention? Elaine Murray's points about science posed the same question.

Fiona Hyslop: I have two points to make. First, we have not had a history summit, but we have had a summit on science in schools. Secondly, history is about facts and evidence. There has been a great deal of assertion throughout the chamber, which is reflected strongly in the content of some of the amendments. What evidence or facts can Margaret Smith produce to show that her view of what might happen is happening now?

Margaret Smith: A number of members have commented on the fact that two out of the three visitor attractions for which extra money is being provided for visits are sites of battles between Scotland and England.

Christina McKelvie: Culloden is not.

Margaret Smith: Children could be funded to visit all sorts of other places. The perception is backed up by the reality of money being put into field trips to places where we have had battles with people whom the SNP sees as enemies but whom other members see as partners. Those are the places to which the Government thinks that our children should be taken.

It is important that our children learn about the wider lessons of history. That is why it is important that funding continues for school visits to Auschwitz, which I know is an issue that Ken Macintosh has taken up and the cabinet secretary has supported. Such visits are extremely important. There is also a need to ensure that some of our industrial museums that welcome children will survive, so that they can continue to tell young people and students in this country about our economic and social history, which is just as important.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should be finishing now.

Margaret Smith: I know that teachers share some of the concerns that we have heard about today. Developing outcomes for the teaching of subjects is only part of that. The curriculum for excellence is in serious need of further attention from the cabinet secretary. She can try to prevaricate on the issue and she can try to run away from it, but she cannot hide from it. It must be addressed and it must be addressed now.

16:14

Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): This has been a stimulating debate. I do not think that any member would disagree that Scottish history and its inclusion in the examination curriculum are of paramount importance. However, like Ken Macintosh and Johann Lamont, I am puzzled and more than a little alarmed by the Government's assertion that something new is happening and that debating

history twice rather than debating other subjects such as physical education is a greater priority in this session. To my knowledge, we have not had a debate on PE or modern languages; we have certainly not had the further debate on reading, writing and arithmetic in primary schools that the cabinet secretary once promised.

Scottish history's rich diversity and our deep-rooted links with many other parts of the world are good enough reasons to study the subject. In addition, everyone in Scotland should learn about Scottish history, because by doing so we become much better equipped to understand ourselves, where we came from and the complexities of our cultural, economic and social heritage. Learning about Scottish history also provides us with necessary insights into many other academic disciplines. Without a good understanding of Scottish history, our understanding of our nation is at best incomplete, and at worst insular and sectarian.

Tom Devine wrote that Scottish history is a subject

"of enormous dynamism and relevance".

He was right. He also made the valid point that the erosion of Scottish history teaching began with the insistence by some that there could be a place for history in the curriculum only if it was shared with geography and modern studies. As a result, history became no longer part of the compulsory curriculum beyond the second year, and it is not without reason that groups such as the Scottish Association of Teachers of History express deep concern about the decline in the number of principal teachers of history. Throughout Scotland, history departments are feeling that they are being continually squeezed out of the curriculum, with the result that they are forever being asked to condense the subject down to tight, simplified modules that bear little resemblance to the Scottish history courses of the past. That is regrettable.

I am concerned about the replacement of knowledge with skills-based learning. People such as Professor Lindsay Paterson of the University of Edinburgh have referred to that. Modern approaches to teaching should be introduced, by all means—otherwise, we could never hope to move forward or even stand still—but it is wrong to suggest that that can happen only if some of the knowledge-based curriculum gives way.

Conventional wisdom has also been challenged by people who think that history can be taught only in the context of concepts such as war, migration, industrialisation and revolution. Such an approach is perhaps fascinating for a university postgraduate degree, but how can we expect children to understand events if they are not put

into chronological context? The obsession with skills to the detriment of knowledge and the absence of chronology have done great damage to the teaching of history in our classrooms. Some of the problems that the Government has attempted to flag up this afternoon are the result of that.

Fiona Hyslop: The member makes a good point. That is why we want to bring back the work of the history curriculum for excellence group, which has looked at pedagogy and the Scottish spine to ensure that there is context and knowledge. I agree with the member that we cannot replace knowledge with skills; rather, we must ensure that skills are in addition to knowledge. I am with her on that. Does she acknowledge that that is where the Government is taking history and curriculum for excellence work?

Elizabeth Smith: I hope that it is, because the Government does not have the confidence of the teaching profession that history is a discrete enough subject in the senior school curriculum. Ken Macintosh alluded to that in his opening remarks. The teaching profession wants more help with what the knowledge content of history should be within the chronological structure to which I referred.

It is important to put Scottish history in the right context and to ensure that what is taught is, first and foremost, factually correct and balanced. That picks up on many points that have been made. The Scottish National Party might in many cases be well intentioned in that respect, but let us consider things such as "Braveheart" being paraded as a cultural icon of modern Scotland. Perhaps it is in terms of box office returns and in light of the exciting imagery of Scotland's wild landscapes and swirling kilts, but never let it be said that that film is in any way an accurate interpretation of Scottish history. It is the opposite.

I want to pursue that theme for a moment. Introspection is the worst possible offence that we can commit in teaching history. Scotland has always been at her best in leading the world in economics, science, medicine and philosophy when she has been at the cutting edge of the international community. We have been highly regarded throughout the world as a result, and being such an integral part of the political, economic and social networks of the wider world has meant much to the rich tapestry of the nation.

Scotland has a very proud history. We need no contortion, no twist nor any attempt to alter our past. By all means, we can challenge established views—that has always been an integral part of the learning process. By all means, let our pupils be exposed to different interpretations of historical events and the different commentaries that describe them. However, whether our pupils are

being taught about Bonnie Prince Charlie or Mary Queen of Scots, they deserve to be taught evidence, not myth. Above all, they deserve their history to be well taught and from the correct perspective.

16:20

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie)

(Lab): At the beginning of his speech, Ken Macintosh asked why we are having this debate today. Given the opportunity to have an education debate, I am sure that the attendees of this morning's higher education conference would have welcomed the opportunity for Parliament to debate the future of higher education, especially in the context of the potential changes to arrangements south of the border and the impact that they might have on the competitiveness of Scottish education. People in the schools sector would have wanted us to discuss teacher numbers and the current problems that the cabinet secretary is wrestling with. Those issues have not been brought to the chamber today, however, and nor has the cabinet secretary come here to discuss the criticisms of her implementation of the curriculum for excellence that were made last week by headteachers.

It is a measure of what is important to the SNP that Scottish history is the chosen topic.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member give way?

Des McNulty: It is not just the SNP; it is important to certain people within the SNP that we focus on Scottish history for a particular reason. I will give way to the cabinet secretary to discuss that point if she wishes.

Fiona Hyslop: I am conscious that the member was late in arriving for the debate. In my opening speech, I addressed some of Carole Ford's concerns and explained how she was reassured by explanations of the future qualifications that she had criticised. I am sorry that the member did not hear that—he might otherwise have reflected on it.

Des McNulty: I heard the cabinet secretary's comments. Although she may have had a discussion with Carole Ford, many of the points that Carole Ford made have some validity. That is why I have lodged a series of questions to the cabinet secretary, to which I hope that she will be able to respond quickly.

It has been an aspect of Scottish education in both primary and secondary schools to focus on the nature of Scotland—on Scotland's culture, history, identity and institutions. That permeates the curriculum in Scotland, which is entirely correct. The idea that, somehow, Scottish history was not taught in the past is entirely erroneous:

Scottish history has always had a significant place in the curriculum of Scottish schools.

The issue that we must confront is the kind of Scottish history that is taught. Is it the kind of history that is selected on the basis of the professional judgments of teachers and other professionals in the field, or is it the kind of history that is dictated by the whimsical, political and ideological approaches of ministers? The ministers will argue that they do not want to interfere in any way with the teaching of history, but there is quite a lot of evidence of at least encouragement to move in particular directions and some evidence of interference. There is a big danger in that.

When we teach history, we must not teach a prescribed set of facts. We must not say, "This is how history was" from our perspective. We must give people an understanding of what people at the time thought that they were doing—what they were fighting for, what motivated them, what animated them, what ideas created their perception of the world and what social movements they were engaged in. That means that we must be true to the period and understand what was going on at the time. We cannot impose our 21st century perceptions, values and aspirations on the 19th or 18th century and say that they were what people were working towards.

All too often, when I listen to SNP members, I think that they want to rewrite history because, from their perspective, it has the wrong ending or has not come up with the right answers. I do not think that Scottish teachers think that, but there is a significant element of people in the SNP that does. Their approach is why we keep coming back to this debate; it denies the reality of history.

The rent strikes were mentioned, so I will use them as an example of what I am talking about. There were rent strikes in the second decade of the 20th century in Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle. Those rent strikes were built up out of the industrial experience of those communities at that time and were similar to each other. To try to understand what happened with the rent strikes through a national prism is not to be truthful about what was going on.

Likewise, the enlightenment was not a Scottish enlightenment in a narrow sense. It was a cultural enlightenment that took ideas from all over Europe and blended them in a new way. Scotland had an important cultural role in that, as it provided the fulcrum of that synthesis, but we borrowed and we handed on. We are part of European history. If we teach Scottish history in isolation from European history, we are not serving our children well.

It is important to consider the intellectual training that we are giving to young people when they study history and how we are equipping them to

get on in the world that they will encounter afterwards. If we teach a particularly enclosed and selective version of Scottish history, which Murdo Fraser talked about, we will do a serious disservice to young people, as they need the skills, knowledge and capabilities that come not from a narrow, parochial view of the world but from a broad understanding of the cultural context. For Scotland, that cultural context includes the rest of the United Kingdom and places such as Ireland and Wales. It includes Scotland's link with the British empire, which Tom Devine has written about, the spread of the diaspora into the United States, Canada and Australia, and Scotland's role in Europe.

Rob Gibson said that he was relaxed about our own history, but I do not think that the SNP is relaxed. Actually, I am a bit worried about the use of the word "our" in that phrase. History is history. It is not about "our" history; it is about what happened and how we understand how it felt to the people who experienced it.

We do not want to have political interference in the process. It might have been the right decision to teach a Scottish subject instead of the policy of the appeasement of Germany as a control subject in the higher examination, but was that decision exclusively and solely made by the teachers who are responsible? I do not know, and I would like an answer from the minister to that question.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should be winding up now, Mr McNulty.

Des McNulty: It is important that we get the right balance between various elements in the curriculum. It should not be dictated by ministers or by the prejudices of those who animate ministers to bring this kind of debate to the chamber.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, Mr McNulty. You had eight minutes in which to speak; I thought that you had six. I cut you off a bit sooner than I should have.

16:28

The Minister for Schools and Skills (Keith Brown): I was really looking forward to Des McNulty's last two minutes.

I thank members for what has been a stimulating, engaging and lively debate. My notes suggest that I should say that the level of historical knowledge in this Parliament is truly impressive. I would say that it is, in most cases, but I will come back to that issue later.

There seems to be widespread agreement about the importance of learning about Scotland's heritage, history and culture, and a strong recognition that Scotland's history provides a

wealth of material that can inspire our children and young people and enable them to develop the critical skills that are essential for the challenges of the 21st century.

Johann Lamont: Will the minister give way?

Keith Brown: I would like to make a start to my speech first.

Although there seems to be widespread agreement about the importance of learning, there is perhaps not the same consensus about the importance of today's debate. It is important that we debate this issue and discuss the important new resource that we have.

Around St Andrew's day, it is natural for many of us to reflect on a sense of history, especially at the end of this homecoming year. I would like to remind everyone how we are actively promoting learning about Scotland's history and equipping our young people with the knowledge and skills that they need to be successful learners, competent individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

First, learning about Scotland's history is firmly embedded in the curriculum for excellence's experiences and outcomes, which were published in April following extensive engagement and which provide a clear framework for the biggest transformation in education in a generation.

We have glow, which is a world-leading secure schools intranet that provides fantastic opportunities to develop innovative teaching and learning practices. It is paving the way for an avant-garde education system that will inspire—and is inspiring—other countries to look to Scotland as an example of a leading education system.

We also have, as has been discussed today, the Scotland's history online resource. Last month, through Learning and Teaching Scotland and in partnership with our national galleries, museums, library and archive sources—the sources do not come from some SNP back room, but from those nationally accepted resources—we launched Scotland's history, which is a world-leading resource that benefits all learners who have an interest in Scotland. The site has had more than 20,000 visitors in the first month, and there have been almost 100,000 page hits to the resource. That is a great start, and it reflects the quality of the materials on the site.

It is worth repeating Fiona Hyslop's point that those materials came about as the result of concerns that history teachers expressed about the lack of materials. History teachers welcomed the materials when they were produced; there is not some ministerial plot to force materials on teachers, as it was the teachers who asked for them.

All those resources build on the exceptional work that schools have done this year on homecoming. The cabinet secretary has already mentioned the winners of the homecoming award. In August, I was fortunate enough to visit one of the other finalists, Dallas primary school, which I understand showcased its work last night at Stirling castle. That brings us back to Rob Gibson's point about some of the excellent work and rich tasks that have been done in schools as part of the curriculum for excellence.

The homecoming research by pupils of Dallas primary school discovered that a former pupil of the school, Thomas Dallas, became a vice-president of America in 1867, and gave his name to Dallas in Texas. Another Dallas boy, Scotty Philip—the research does not explain whether that was his name before he went to America or if he adopted it once he was there—travelled to America in the 19th century, married the Indian Crazy Horse's sister-in-law, and then saved the American bison from being hunted to extinction.

The historical research that those young people undertook to unearth that information was exceptional—I saw the whole process and the narrative that they followed. The pleasure of learning about their own environments and what people from their own area—a very small area—had done gave them a real sense of pride, place and identity. Rob Gibson was right to highlight some of those points.

Some of the proposed amendments to the motion have been mentioned. Murdo Fraser's amendment suggests that we are promoting

“a nationalist agenda through the use of public resources and the teaching of history.”

That was the same line that he took when I visited Bannockburn for the official launch of the funding from the National Trust for Scotland for subsidised school visits to Bannockburn, Culloden and the Burns birthplace museum. I should say, as Murdo Fraser said, that Culloden was not a fight between Scotland and England. It really is important, given all the learning that Margaret Smith told us she had undertaken at school and university, that she revisits that and gets the facts right.

Margaret Smith: I would like to put on record that I visited the Culloden centre a year or so ago, and I think that it is very good. I say clearly that Culloden was not just about the Scottish and the English. People were on different sides: the Irish, the French and all sorts of people were involved. I was simply making a point about public perception. We are talking about two battle sites, one of which the minister's party marches to every single year to commemorate a victory over the English.

Keith Brown: Perhaps Margaret Smith is writing her own version of history. It is worth pointing out that, in many countries in which there has been a battle that achieves national freedom, there tends to be a celebration of it. Perhaps Scots are different in that respect, but I do not think so.

The money that was put aside for the visits and that has been put into the online resource—around £60,000—is completely overshadowed by the £200,000 that we have committed to the Holocaust Educational Trust visits. The idea that we are concentrating on simply Scottish priorities and a Scottish emphasis is wrong, as I said to Murdo Fraser.

It is disappointing that the same argument has been trotted out with regard to our world-leading online resource, which, as I said, has been developed by Learning and Teaching Scotland in partnership with national galleries, museums, libraries, archives and other sources. As Rob Gibson pointed out, those are national resources that I understand have the support of members on all sides of the chamber. The idea that that work is part of a nationalist plot is a nonsense.

To be fair, Margaret Smith mentioned the idea of a Scotland-England battle a couple of times, and it was mentioned by other members too. I did not hear anyone on the SNP side of the chamber talking about Scotland-England battles. I heard members talking about the need to understand social change, the environment in which big historical events took place, and the national and local context for those events.

Johann Lamont: In that case, does the minister agree that, as I said in my speech, we should talk about the Scottish people and their history, and therefore emphasise the diversity within Scotland, rather than about Scotland and its history as one entity?

Keith Brown: I agree with the first part of that, but the point about Scotland as an entity should not enter into the debate at all. It just makes a nonsense of the teaching of history. I think that most countries in the world would appreciate that.

I also think that Johann Lamont got her arguments slightly confused when she condemned the entire SNP for talking about oppression. I did not hear anybody talking about national oppression during the debate, although members might have mentioned social oppression. However, she went on to talk about the clearances and the clan gathering. There is a bit of confusion in what she was trying to say. She condemned us for talking about something that she was more keen to talk about than we were.

The vital point was made that the resources that have been provided were not dreamed up by the SNP. They came about as a result of a request

from teachers who were concerned that there has been a dearth of materials in the subject for many years. We responded to that and provided the materials. People quoted Tom Devine, who has welcomed the website as a powerful tool—I think that those were his words.

Elizabeth Smith: I do not think that anybody is denying that, but can the minister explain why the Government has chosen to have two debates on the concept of Scottish history in schools but has not dealt with some other extremely pressing matters in our classrooms?

Keith Brown: I have been here on Thursday morning after Thursday morning to debate education with Elizabeth Smith. We have debated many of the issues. It is within the gift of all the Opposition parties to debate things that they want to debate, and indeed they have done that on many occasions. However, there is no reason why we should not discuss Scotland's history on an occasion that is close to St Andrew's day and towards the end of the year of homecoming.

Margaret Smith's amendment seeks to widen out the debate to include the curriculum for excellence, implementation of which was mentioned a number of times. Not everyone will have the same experience, but my experience is that a huge amount of work is being done on the curriculum for excellence. I mentioned Dallas primary school, but I could have mentioned Monifieth primary school or 101 others. Now that we are in the year of implementation, it is evident that there is real enthusiasm and a real embracing of the change that is coming about. I do not deny that there were some anxieties initially.

Margaret Smith: Does the minister agree that progress is still patchy? Some local authorities and schools are making good progress and people in them are working well, but elsewhere there is still some concern, particularly in the secondary sector. The job still has to be finished.

Keith Brown: There is an element of truth in that, particularly in the distinction between secondary and primary schools. That is perhaps natural, given the subject-specific nature of our secondary school teaching compared with primary school teaching.

Last week, I was at a conference at Aberdeenshire Council that was attended by 3,500 people who are involved in education. It was a proactive, enthusiastic conference: people are looking forward to the changes. Uneven progress is bound to happen when there is such a major change, but we are now seeing good examples being shared among schools and councils, so I am pleased about the progress that is being made.

Johann Lamont asked whether Scotland's history is being reclaimed. It has certainly been

neglected in the past. As Rob Gibson said, most people's experience of being taught history in Scotland's schools was not good. I certainly had to wait until I went off to university to get a reasonable understanding of what I, unlike Des McNulty, am happy to call the Scottish enlightenment. Many academics call it that, and I do not see the problem with doing so, even though it took place, obviously, in a European and global context.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member take an intervention?

Keith Brown: Do I have time, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Briefly, please.

Margo MacDonald: Briefly, to help the minister over his embarrassment, I point out that the Flemish and Dutch schools of painting were not all stuffed full of Flemish and Dutch painters. They were located there.

Keith Brown: I mentioned that the Scottish enlightenment took place in a European context. The interchange between thinkers throughout Europe was extremely important.

Scotland's young people, in particular, need the opportunity to access resources that they have perhaps not had in the past. That point is made not only by me but by teachers of history. Where appropriate, we should also celebrate Scotland's history. As we heard from Elaine Murray and others, it is a story of immense achievement. I do not think that she mentioned James Kilpatrick—is that his name?—who is from her area and who invented the bicycle. Our history is a story of immense achievement in industry, medicine, science and law, and also in global exploration, as I am sure Margo MacDonald would remind us, for bad reasons as well as good. Our history also includes literature on a scale that belies the size of a nation such as ours.

As a Government, we want to build on the achievements of the past to ensure a progressive, successful, confident, flourishing and sustainable Scotland for our young people. We want our children and young people not only to be inspired by the remarkable achievements of their own people but to be knowledgeable about things that were done wrongly or mistakes that were made, including the Darien venture. After all, people learn from previous experience. We want everyone to be moved and motivated to play an active part in this success story so that, as Elaine Murray pointed out, our young people can become the engineers, scientists and historians of the future.

Thanks to the Government's lead, we are helping young people to understand Scotland's place in the world and where they come from, and we are giving them the confidence, enthusiasm

and inspiration to write the next chapter of Scotland's history.

I am happy to support the motion.

Child Poverty Bill

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-5267, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the Child Poverty Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

16:40

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): This is a very welcome opportunity to set out the Government's position on this legislative consent motion, which the Local Government and Communities Committee considered and supported last month. The motion seeks parliamentary approval for the UK Parliament to apply to Scotland provisions in part 1 of the UK Child Poverty Bill. I hope that members will agree to the motion today, as it reflects this Government's commitment, which I know is shared across the chamber, to eradicating child poverty in Scotland.

However, we will not support Mary Mulligan's amendment. To do so would commit us to imposing new and, in my view, bureaucratic duties on local government that would not assist in any meaningful way in the fight against child poverty. Imposing on local government such bureaucratic and burdensome duties would not only contradict the spirit and letter of the concordat with local government but unhelpfully divert the attention of councils and local partners from the vital task of delivering action to tackle child poverty and its causes. That is exactly what we sought to avoid in deciding not to extend part 2 of the bill to Scotland.

We also think that imposing such duties on local government is unnecessary, given that, as all members of the chamber are very well aware, we have a new and better way of working with local government in Scotland that delivers better outcomes. As a result, I do not believe that duties that might well be appropriate in other parts of UK are appropriate in a Scottish context.

Local authorities have already been asked to prioritise our key social policy frameworks on poverty and inequality, the early years and health inequalities. Each and every one of those policies clearly has at its heart child poverty and its eradication. This Government is also committed to working with community planning partnerships to deliver against those objectives, and we believe that local decision makers should be allowed to determine and act on their priorities in the context of the overarching frameworks to tackle poverty and inequality. That is my response to Mary Mulligan's amendment.

That said, I hope and believe that by defining and setting in legislation targets for eradicating child poverty the bill as a whole will help to drive progress on the issue not just in Scotland but across the UK. The targets are UK-wide and measure different aspects of child poverty to ensure a robust account of progress.

The bill will commit Governments to developing strategies and reporting on progress in that respect. The intention is to ensure that the definition of success is as clear as possible, that the UK child poverty targets are future-proofed and that we remain absolutely focused on the measures that are needed to meet them.

The particular provisions in part 1 that relate to Scotland and which require legislative consent place strategic duties on the Scottish ministers. The motion seeks the Parliament's agreement to those duties, which legally bind the Scottish ministers to producing a Scottish child poverty strategy within the first year of the bill becoming law and revised strategies every three years thereafter. The strategies must set out the measures that Scottish ministers propose to take to contribute towards the targets and, more broadly, to ensure that, as far as possible, children in Scotland do not experience socioeconomic disadvantage.

In developing the Government's child poverty strategies, we will be bound to consulting widely and working closely with a range of partners including local government, the third sector and wider society. Naturally, we will reflect the role of relevant delivery partners within those strategies. We already have a good basis for our strategies in our frameworks on poverty, health inequalities and the early years. Those were developed closely with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities—they are joint frameworks—and the third sector. The frameworks demonstrate how those partners are fully committed to working with us to tackle child poverty and its causes.

We fully expect that future child poverty strategies will be developed in the same way, by building on the close, positive links that the Government enjoys with its partners. That is the best way to approach what everyone agrees is a formidable but important task. We are committed to reporting annually on our progress against the strategies.

The provisions will help us to strengthen our efforts, and will galvanise our commitment to working across borders to tackle child poverty. I ask Parliament to support the legislative consent motion.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Child Poverty Bill, introduced in the House of Commons

on 11 June 2009 to make provision within the legislative competence of the Parliament and to alter the executive competence of Scottish Ministers in respect of the duties to develop and lay a Scottish strategy to eradicate child poverty before the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

16:46

Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): I start on a positive note and commend the Scottish Government on moving the legislative consent motion. All members of this Parliament recognise the need to act if all children are to be taken out of poverty. I also welcome the amendment to the bill that the Scottish Government supports and which will ensure that any future Scottish Government reports annually to the Parliament on progress on reducing child poverty. That sensible measure will show whether the actions that are being pursued are helping us to reach the targets.

Having started on a positive note, it is with regret, as my amendment says, that we note that the Scottish Government does not intend to place similar duties on local authorities. Because of the services that they and their community planning partners provide, local authorities have a central role to play in eradicating child poverty. Indeed, much has been made of the partnership between the Scottish Government and local authorities—how often do we hear mention of the historic concordat? However, on an issue as important as child poverty, the Scottish Government does not recognise the local authority partnership role. It is simply not logical for local government in Scotland to be the only part of government in the UK not to have a statutory duty.

When the cabinet secretary attended the Local Government and Communities Committee, she justified the situation by saying that the single outcome agreements would show how local government was addressing child poverty; she has repeated that this afternoon. So let us look at the SOAs.

Members of the campaign to end child poverty provided a helpful briefing for MSPs that analysed the 2009 SOAs, and I am sure that the cabinet secretary will have studied that briefing. I will give two statistics: 20 SOAs set local outcomes to reduce poverty or deprivation, which means that 12 did not; but only two SOAs set local outcomes specifically to reduce the number of children who are living in poverty. Even the cabinet secretary must accept that that is not good enough.

I suspect that the cabinet secretary will say that work to eradicate poverty, and child poverty in particular, is implicit rather than explicit in the SOAs. Although we could continue to debate that, that misses the point. Local authorities and CPPs need to play their part in the eradication of child

poverty and, at present, we cannot tell from the SOAs whether they are being successful.

Today, we have the opportunity to propose a way forward that would see all arms of government working together to deliver the elimination of child poverty. I understand that the concordat was about working together but in practice it appears to have delivered inertia. Are we really saying that local authorities are not serious about tackling child poverty?

The amendment in my name is, I think, conciliatory, so I hope that members across the chamber who are serious about ending child poverty will support it. It offers the Scottish Government an opportunity to review the SOAs and when, like many of us, it sees that they are not focused enough to tackle child poverty, it can return to Parliament with plans to bind its local authority partners into the process. Targets will not be met without local authority partners taking up their role. I encourage the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing to be bold and accept Labour's amendment to ensure that all children are removed from living in poverty by 2020 at the latest.

I move amendment S3M-5267.1, to insert at end:

"and, in so doing, regrets that the Scottish Government will not be placing a duty on local authorities to meet the agreed targets for reducing child poverty, given their partnership role in tackling child poverty, and therefore calls on the Scottish Government to review the single outcome agreements currently available to ascertain whether local authorities have developed a child poverty strategy that will contribute to Scottish and UK targets aimed at abolishing child poverty and, if not, to return to the Scottish Parliament with a proposal to place a duty on local authorities to do so."

16:49

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): I bow to no one in my disdain for the so-called historic concordat and the white-flag capitulation by COSLA to the Scottish National Party Government, which disgraces the name and reputation of an organisation that once prided itself on its independence of thought and action. In today's Scotland, voices that were formerly fearless have been publicly silenced and the discussions between Government and our councils are no longer a matter for public debate but for mutterings in private meetings, of which we are told nothing. So much for transparency and accountability.

We were told that the historic concordat was a great victory for local government, expanding its freedom of action and ending ring fencing. Of course, that is a nonsense, because ring fencing has been replaced by the straitjacket of

alignment—the new COSLA-SNP buzzword—which is just a euphemism for councils doing what they are told by Mr Swinney.

This is a theme upon which I could expand at considerable length, and I would be happy to do so in a debate about the relationships between central Government and our councils and the principles on which those relationships should be based. As it happens, my colleagues and I are not in favour of ring fencing, any more than we are in favour of councils abdicating their powers for illusory freedoms or signing up to a policy programme dictated by national Government on matters where there should be plenty of scope for local discretion.

Equally, I do not believe in placing statutory duties on councils in matters for which they do not bear the prime responsibility, which is undoubtedly the case in respect of child poverty; nor do I believe in placing on them statutory duties that are difficult to interpret or enforce. Accordingly, I do not agree with the principle behind Mary Mulligan's amendment, although what is the most efficacious method of tackling child poverty in this country is a matter for genuine debate. The subject of the relationships between the Government and councils is a far bigger one that transcends even that of child poverty, and it needs longer and more thorough debate and examination than is possible in a 20-minute debate on a legislative consent motion. For that reason, the Conservatives will vote against the Labour amendment and for the main motion, should the amendment fall.

16:52

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): I make it clear at the outset that Liberal Democrats are very clear in their support for the purpose and intent of the Child Poverty Bill, which is passing through the Westminster Parliament. To that extent, we are content that the legislative consent motion has appeared before this Parliament and very content that part 1 of the bill places on Scottish ministers a series of duties and obligations that we believe have a bearing on tackling child poverty.

I found myself much in agreement with David McLetchie's remarks. Indeed, I was sorry that time constraints prevented us from hearing him warm to the task, as he obviously would have done—what a pity and what a sadness that, on a dull and gloomy Wednesday afternoon, we have been deprived of that pleasure. As Liberal Democrats, we certainly do not believe that the solution to problems of child poverty is to place duties on local authorities—we share that view—and we are therefore unable to support Mary Mulligan's amendment.

The major issue is tackling child poverty, but another issue has arisen for the Parliament. There is no doubt that the document prepared by the campaign to end child poverty on the singular failures that it has found in the 2009 single outcome agreements raises matters that need to be addressed. It is clear that the SOAs are not resulting in the outcomes that we all want to see. The cabinet secretary must address those matters. However, like David McLetchie, I believe that a 20-minute debate on a legislative consent motion is not the appropriate way to tackle that issue or give it the attention that it deserves.

I am bound to say that I am concerned that the campaign's comprehensive report confirms my view that the way in which SOAs have been drafted has resulted in the production of horrible statements about making progress that do not make clear when, where, how and to what purpose progress will be made.

Liberal Democrats are quite clear that the Child Poverty Bill in the Westminster Parliament deserves support. The imposition of duties on the Scottish ministers will be helpful. We will support the legislative consent motion, but we will not support the amendment in Mary Mulligan's name.

16:55

Nicola Sturgeon: I thank everyone who spoke in this short debate. Mary Mulligan said that she wanted to be conciliatory; I take that at face value and will respond in kind. I know that in the Parliament we have a shared objective. Rare though this might be, we have absolute unity of purpose in that we want child poverty to be eradicated and we want to be assured that all steps are being taken that can be taken to make sure that that happens. I acknowledge the sincerity of the comments of all members who spoke in the debate.

In many respects, the debate is about not substance but process. It is about not whether we want to eradicate child poverty but how we best going about doing so.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Does the minister agree with what David McLetchie said about the requirement for a debate on the principle of the matter, particularly given that the amount of money that is available will change, before we get down to the process that we are debating?

Nicola Sturgeon: In general terms, I do not disagree with the member. I am always in favour of more rather than less debate on such issues. However, we are dealing today with a specific legislative consent motion, which I hope that the Parliament will back.

I say to Mary Mulligan that it is not true that local government is not recognised as a delivery partner—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Order. I am sorry to interrupt you, cabinet secretary. Will members who are coming into the chamber please keep quiet? A debate is going on.

Nicola Sturgeon: It is simply the case that because of the concordat and the single outcome agreements we do not require to place statutory duties on local government in the way that is required in other parts of the United Kingdom. COSLA is a key partner of the Government in the drive to eradicate child poverty, as is evidenced by COSLA's co-authorship of the poverty strategy, the health inequalities strategy and the early years strategy. COSLA agrees with the Scottish Government's approach to the Child Poverty Bill.

It is not fair to say that 12 single outcome agreements have nothing to say on poverty. The truth is that single outcome agreements deal with reducing poverty in a range of ways. For example, some focus on increasing uptake of benefits and others focus on increasing employment opportunities. All single outcome agreements have that key objective.

We will not support Mary Mulligan's amendment, because we do not think that it is a matter of regret that we have chosen not to place duties on local government in this regard. We think that our reasons for making that decision are the right ones.

I end on a conciliatory note. We will keep under review all our approaches in this area. Indeed, under the duties that we are about to impose on the Scottish Government we will be required to keep those approaches under review. We will do that with a view to ensuring that our approaches are having the desired effect. Although we cannot agree on the precise wording of the motion, I hope that in spirit and in principle not too much divides us. I ask members to support the legislative consent motion.

Business Motions

16:58

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-5270, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme for Thursday 26 November.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 26 November 2009—
after

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

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Aberdeen Royal
Infirmary Healthcare Environment
Inspectorate Report—[Bruce Crawford.]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-5271, 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 2 December 2009

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Safer Lives:
Changed Lives – Working Together to End
Violence Against Women

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 3 December 2009

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

Health and Wellbeing

2.55 pm Scottish Government Debate: Getting it
Right for Every Child

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 9 December 2009

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 10 December 2009

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
Rural Affairs and the Environment;
Justice and Law Officers

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.

Presiding Officer's Ruling

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Before we come to decision time, I will respond to the point of order that Iain Smith made earlier.

In making today's ministerial statement, the Scottish ministers were simply complying with the requirement in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, which Parliament passed on 24 June, that a ministerial statement must be made to Parliament as soon as reasonably practicable after a plan for the promotion of the use of heat produced from renewable sources has been laid before Parliament.

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-5266.2, in the name of Ken Macintosh, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5266, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on learning about Scotland and its history, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: Yes.

The Presiding Officer: We are agreed.

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): No.

The Presiding Officer: Speak up if you wish to vote against the amendment. We are apparently not agreed, so there will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)

Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 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)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 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)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 101, Against 0, Abstentions 16.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-5266.1, in the name of Murdo Fraser, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5266, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No!

The Presiding Officer: That is better. There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

AGAINST

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)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)

Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (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)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 29, Against 46, Abstentions 43.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-5266.3, in the name of Margaret Smith, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5266, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 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)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 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)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 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)
 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)

AGAINST

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)

Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 72, Against 1, Abstentions 46.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-5266, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on learning about Scotland and its history, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)

Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 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)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 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)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

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)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 104, Against 0, Abstentions 15.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the contribution of Scotland's children and young people in schools to a successful Year of Homecoming; acknowledges the importance of learning about Scotland's heritage, history and culture and place in the world, and welcomes the recent launch of Scotland's History online, a world-leading online resource from Learning and Teaching Scotland, which draws on resources from the National Galleries of Scotland, National Museums Scotland, the National Library of Scotland, the National Archives of Scotland and other sources; following concerns expressed by School Leaders Scotland and others over the Curriculum for Excellence, asks ministers to report to the Parliament on the place of history in the developing curriculum; reiterates its belief that history should be taught without political interference; recognises that the effective teaching of history and all other subjects requires teachers to be equipped with the necessary resources and training, and calls on the Scottish Government to provide urgent clarity over the substance and implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence and the changes to Scotland's national qualifications.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-5267.1, in the name of Mary Mulligan, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5267, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the Child Poverty Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (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)

Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (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)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)

Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 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)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 44, Against 74, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S3M-5267, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the Child Poverty Bill, which is UK legislation, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Child Poverty Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 11 June 2009 to make provision within the legislative competence of the Parliament and to alter the executive competence of Scottish Ministers in respect of the duties to develop and lay a Scottish strategy to eradicate child poverty before the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

World AIDS Day 2009

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-5159, in the name of Jack McConnell, on world AIDS day and Annie Lennox. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the importance of World AIDS Day on 1 December 2009 and its aim of highlighting the challenges and consequences of the HIV epidemic around the world, particularly the impact on development in sub-Saharan Africa; acknowledges that UNAIDS estimates that there are now 33.2 million people living with HIV, including 2.5 million children; notes that around half of all people who become infected with HIV do so before they are 25 and die before they are 35; congratulates all those individuals and organisations in Scotland that campaign to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and provide practical support to HIV/AIDS victims, wherever they live; congratulates, in particular, Annie Lennox on the continued success of her SING campaign, which will be two years old on 1 December, and believes that positive consideration should be given to her recent offer to support the Scottish Parliament in its international development work, with an ambassadorial role.

17:07

Jack McConnell (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): I thank the Presiding Officer for selecting the motion for debate before world AIDS day next Tuesday. I also thank him for—I hope—understanding that although I normally adhere to the dress code in the chamber, I have chosen tonight to wear a T-shirt that signifies the sing campaign, which attempts to reduce the stigma that is associated with HIV/AIDS and shows solidarity with people who suffer from the condition, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

Annie Lennox is one of Scotland's greatest artists. She has sold more than 78 million albums worldwide, had 34 hit singles and won four Grammy awards, five Ivor Novello awards, 11 Brit awards, one Oscar and one Golden Globe award. She is now bringing her talent and energy to her humanitarian work and in particular to her sing campaign, which celebrates its second anniversary on world AIDS day 2009. She was inspired by Nelson Mandela, who described the HIV pandemic in Africa as genocide. In turn, she should inspire us as we consider how we support the fight against HIV.

The world has lived with HIV/AIDS for more than a generation. Here in Scotland, the national campaign of the 1980s and early 1990s helped to stop the disease's spread. However, as of September this year, 6,153 people were known to have been infected. Of them, more than 1,600 were known to have died.

Since the mid-1990s, the number of new diagnoses has steadily increased. In the first nine months of this year alone, 322 more individuals were reported to have positive HIV antibodies, half of whom were infected through heterosexual intercourse. We all owe a debt of gratitude to organisations such as Waverley Care and the Terrence Higgins Trust, which have campaigned tirelessly to promote awareness of HIV. With the national health service in Scotland, they have worked to support Scots who have tested positive, and their families, through facilities such as Milestone house in Edinburgh.

I welcome today's publication of the HIV action plan for Scotland and I hope that the Scottish Government will make time for a full debate on its strategy in the coming weeks. In Scotland, HIV is no longer an immediate death sentence. Antiretroviral drugs mean that, with the right support, people can live long, healthy and productive lives. Although the disease is still stigmatised, the extraordinary stigma that was once associated with it has lessened since the terrible early days of the epidemic, when some people would rather risk death than be tested.

The picture in sub-Saharan Africa is less positive. Figures that were released by the United Nations yesterday tell their own stark story: 22.4 million Africans live with HIV, and sub-Saharan Africa is the most heavily affected region in the world. The human cost of the pandemic is almost beyond comprehension. Young adults are cut down in their prime, babies are born with a death sentence hanging over them and millions of children throughout southern Africa are left orphaned. The nine countries in southern Africa bear a disproportionate share of the global AIDS burden, with each having an adult HIV rate of greater than 10 per cent of the population.

One of those countries is, of course, Malawi, our sister country, where, even as I speak, Scots and Malawians are working together to tackle HIV/AIDS. Waverley Care is breaking new ground with a project in Malawi in which it works with YouthNet and Counselling—YONECO—and other organisations. The project works with young people in rural areas to promote safe sex and prevent infection. When I first visited Malawi, I was struck by the number of young teachers, doctors, nurses and civil servants who had died from AIDS or were HIV positive. The epidemic had not only destroyed millions of lives; it had set back development for decades. However, there are signs of hope. This week's report by UNAIDS, the joint UN programme on HIV/AIDS, shows that fewer people are dying with HIV and there has been a significant drop in the number of new infections.

Prevention programmes have had a significant impact by raising awareness and reducing stigma. Better access to ARVs has helped save many lives. Five years ago, following the election of President Mutharika, the Government of Malawi launched the country's first national AIDS policy. With financial help from donors, the Government began supplying ARVs free. Today, more than a quarter of a million Malawians benefit from the programme, which has been hailed as a model for other countries. Malawi also leads the way on self-help and advocacy through the work of the Malawi Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS and the pioneering Coalition of Women Living with HIV/AIDS in Malawi.

However, like other countries, Malawi's efforts are still heavily dependent on international donors. As the world struggles to free itself from the economic catastrophe of the past two years, there is a risk that investment in HIV will suffer. That cannot be allowed to happen. Now is the time to redouble our efforts, not scale them back, because our experience in Scotland and Malawi shows that investment in treatment and prevention does and will save thousands, indeed millions, of lives. We cannot afford to be complacent in Scotland or in the rest of the world. That is why we must add our voice to that of campaigners such as Scotland's Annie Lennox, whose sing campaign has done so much in only two years to raise awareness about HIV among women and children in South Africa and elsewhere.

Earlier this month, Annie received the 2009 woman of peace award from Mikhail Gorbachev at the world summit of Nobel peace laureates. Next Tuesday, on world AIDS day, she will receive the freedom of the city of London in recognition of her humanitarian work. In Scotland, she is already working with Waverley Care to support a Scottish network for women living with HIV. Speaking in the chamber earlier this year at the festival of politics, she offered the Scottish Parliament her support as we develop our international development work. The biggest honour would be to accept that offer and give Annie Lennox a chance to work with us and others to tackle the global crisis in the name of the Scottish Parliament. Let us commit now, in this week of world AIDS day, to working for that goal.

17:14

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): I congratulate Jack McConnell on securing this important debate. The importance of world AIDS day on 1 December should be recognised; its aims are to be welcomed. As Jack's motion says,

"there are now 33.2 million people living with HIV, including 2.5 million children".

Then there is the added issue of the age of those who become infected with HIV: half of them become infected before they are 25 and die before they are 35.

Like Jack McConnell, I attended the event during the festival of politics at which Annie Lennox told us about her sing campaign, which was inspired by listening to Nelson Mandela in Africa. The name of the campaign is extremely positive and reflects the fact that song is an important way to spread a message, particularly in places such as South Africa, which has a tradition of activist songs and singing. It is a way to create solidarity and communicate messages because people are encouraged and inspired by singing.

That is particularly important when we consider the stigma that AIDS and HIV have around the world. It is a big issue. There are communities in sub-Saharan Africa in which people are scared to be tested to find out whether they are HIV positive because of the stigma that it brings upon them. As Annie Lennox mentioned—and I emphasise—those with the best intentions can often inadvertently make that problem worse. Where particular religious persuasions have issues with some of the preventive measures that can be used to combat HIV, that becomes a big problem and the stigma becomes even worse.

I cannot remember the name of the group of visitors from Africa that I went along to listen to one day, but I was fascinated by them. They were a group of clerics—ministers—who were actively working in their respective villages to promote awareness of HIV and preventive measures. That is very important and it was very brave of those religious people to do that within their communities. It is to be welcomed.

Although she was inspired in Africa, Annie Lennox also talked about the situation here. It is a problem. We should never bury our heads in the sand, although, as Jack McConnell says, we are fortunate that we can manage the condition here. The HIV infection and AIDS quarterly report up to March this year said that, cumulatively, there were almost 6,000 HIV reports and 1,500 AIDS cases. It also said that the total number of deaths was 1,594.

I am pleased that the Government is taking action—Shona Robison, the Minister for Public Health and Sport, will speak about that in her response to the debate. It is extremely important that we have a much more co-ordinated approach to improve access to specialist HIV care and to prevent HIV transmission. It is also important that we get that co-ordination right.

Great stuff is being done all over Lanarkshire for world AIDS day on 1 December. There are awareness-raising events involving colleges, North

Lanarkshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council, general practitioners, dentists and pharmacists. I also mention the west Lanarkshire girl guides. Those young women have a link with Ghana and some of them hope to go out there next year. One thing that they want to talk about when they go is AIDS awareness. Young people relating to other young people across the globe can help to make a big difference.

I echo the call for the Parliament to take seriously Annie Lennox's offer to be in some way an ambassador for international development for the Parliament. We should never underestimate the impact that people such as Annie Lennox can have. She is known internationally; people love her and the way that she cares about the issue shines from her. We should back the sing campaign and the Parliament should seriously consider taking up that generous offer.

17:19

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Jack McConnell on securing the debate. I also commend his sartorial elegance this evening.

The debate provides us with a welcome opportunity to discuss HIV/AIDS, which we all know affects the entire globe. As Linda Fabiani said, a staggering 33.2 million people across the world are infected with HIV/AIDS. An estimated 2.5 million were newly infected as recently as 2007, and 2.1 million died from AIDS in that same year. While the problem is spread all over the world, it is not spread evenly; eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa account for almost a third of the world's population who live with AIDS.

In Scotland, more than 6,000 people were HIV-infected as of 30 September this year, more than 300 of whom were newly reported cases. I am surprised at those figures. The higher number of cases of HIV/AIDS in Scotland represents not only an increase in testing for HIV but a true rise in the transmission of the disease. There are treatments for the disease but there is no cure. Further, treatment courses are often expensive and, in many areas of the world, difficult to obtain. Action on HIV/AIDS needs to be taken not only at home but abroad in an effort to lessen the spread and burden of this terrible disease.

I was interested to read in information from Health Protection Scotland that, from 2002 to date, 57 per cent of people here who were reported as having HIV/AIDS acquired the infection outside Scotland. Increasing education and awareness programmes in Scotland is essential, but I am sure that we all agree that more must be done at a global level as well. I applaud the efforts of groups such as sing, which promotes awareness and

action for women and children who are HIV positive all over the world, but predominantly in South Africa. I hope that their efforts to increase awareness and raise money for the global fight against HIV/AIDS will continue to be successful.

Like many in the chamber, I am of a generation to be a fan of Annie Lennox, dating back to her days with the Eurythmics. Linda Fabiani is right: the Parliament should support Annie Lennox in her campaign. We know that the United Nations global fund pledged in 2003 to give more than \$4.6 billion to the fight against HIV/AIDS, but shortfalls and funding that was lower than anticipated have made that goal difficult to achieve—and the global crisis continues.

Another statistic alarmed me: Health Protection Scotland stated that it expects HIV cases and the number of people who require specialist care to increase by 5 to 13 per cent by 2012. That range allows for increases in testing and in early detection and treatment, but it also signals an increase in the transmission of the disease. The challenge for us all is to do more to educate the population, particularly the younger generation, on the dangers of the disease, how it is spread and what can be done to prevent that. There also needs to be more action in treatment and screening for HIV/AIDS, as well as more co-operation across the community to tackle the spread of the disease.

I applaud the Government's HIV action plan, which I believe was published today. It highlights many of the key issues and gives direction for a course of action to increase knowledge and awareness and to begin to crack down on the spread of HIV/AIDS: action in the co-ordination of prevention and treatment; action to reduce the levels of transmission and undiagnosed cases; and action on increased accountability and reporting so that we can see what is happening on the ground. Those actions are essential in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS in Scotland and I hope that the Government can achieve progress on them. If it does, that will lead to better control over the HIV/AIDS problem in Scotland.

I echo Jack McConnell's comments about the scale of the challenge and join him in congratulating Annie Lennox on campaigning on the issue. We should take up her offer of support. In that spirit, I ask the Government to consider how we in Scotland can help and, indeed, learn from those in sub-Saharan Africa who live with HIV/AIDS.

17:24

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I, too, thank Jack McConnell for highlighting the challenges and consequences of the HIV epidemic

not only in Scotland but worldwide, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. He is to be commended for his commitment not only on HIV but on other issues, including the maternity issues that he spoke about so eloquently in a previous debate.

To prepare for the debate I, like Jackie Baillie, trawled a few websites. I want to put it on record that I commend the Terrence Higgins Trust for its excellent website. I hope that the Government and others who work in the field will encourage those at risk to access and use such information.

I will focus my comments on the "HIV Action Plan in Scotland". The fact that the action plan runs from next month until March 2014 is welcome, as it will help us to address the issues that we face. Although there has been a substantial rise in HIV cases in Scotland, that could be attributable to better testing as well as to a rise in transmission. I welcome the block purchasing of antiretroviral therapy to reduce costs—that is not only welcome but common sense—and I hope that the national health service will use bulk buying for a range of drugs and therapies. In particular, I welcome the fact that NHS Quality Improvement Scotland will develop and implement standards for HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care.

I am slightly concerned about the timing of some of the measures. I want things to be done properly and thoroughly, but the implementation still seems to be a bit down the line. The action plan's summary of actions gives action 6 as

"An investigation into the reasons why some people living with HIV do not attend specialist clinical services will be undertaken."

I do not mean to sound negative, but it might have been helpful if that investigation had been done prior to the action plan's publication; it would have helped and encouraged more people to come along. Nonetheless, the fact that that issue will be addressed is welcome, particularly if it examines fear, attitude and stigma.

The action plan gives action 11 as

"An exploration of the educational and training needs of the HIV related workforce will be undertaken. Priorities will be identified and educational solutions developed and implemented."

Again, I had hoped that the action plan would address the education and training gaps rather than just explore and look for them, but the action is welcome nonetheless. I commend the Government on the publication of the action plan.

I hope that GPs will be given the necessary support and advice not only to deal with those who have been diagnosed with HIV but to prevent HIV. The fact that an estimated 40 per cent of gay and bisexual men with HIV are unaware that they have the virus is very worrying. More information on

prevention, early diagnosis and treatment would help to alleviate the fear, destigmatise the testing and, I hope, promote a more confident approach to those who present for testing.

Another issue that we heard about at a recent briefing in the Parliament is that, despite a letter from the chief medical officer, a recent report suggests that GPs do not always make the connections between the potential signs and symptoms that patients present and the concept of HIV testing. I think that the regional HIV facilitation teams will help enormously with that.

Like others, I commend the amazing Annie Lennox for her commitment to do as much as she can to bring attention to HIV/AIDS. Ted Brocklebank, who is a member of the executive committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Scotland branch, shares my view that Annie Lennox has done remarkable work on behalf of the emerging nations in Africa. I know that the agenda for the CPA's next meeting before Christmas includes an item about considering how Annie Lennox's talents and concerns for Africa might be best used by this Parliament and Scotland.

Ambassadorial status is reserved to the Court of St James and the diplomatic service, but I know that Ted Brocklebank and the representatives from other parties in the CPA Scotland branch have discussed whether there might be a relevant role for Annie Lennox. Like others, I hope that that can be carried forward.

17:29

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I add my congratulations to Jack McConnell on securing the debate and to the Presiding Officer, Alex Fergusson, who chose this topic for a debate before 1 December. That is highly appropriate.

Jack McConnell rightly paid tribute to Annie Lennox's musical eminence. He also reminded us that Scotland has more than 6,000 people who are infected with HIV and that about 1,600 have died due to the virus.

I echo Mary Scanlon's remarks about the role of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Our colleague Karen Gillon is on the executive committee of that body, and she and others, including Jack McConnell, have done sterling work through the CPA and other bodies to reach out to countries such as Malawi and to highlight the importance of HIV.

It is extremely easy for someone such as me, who lives among the hills and the beauty of the Highlands, to become complacent about the issue, but the fact remains that at least 150 people with

HIV live in the Highland area, and that is a conservative estimate—there are probably many more than 150 cases of HIV in the Highlands. I am indebted to the Inverness branch of the Terrence Higgins Trust for giving me that figure, and I pay tribute to the work that the trust does in Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness. The four-strong team in Inverness, which is led by Caroline Snow, is very good at reaching out and making its work known to the widest possible audience.

Caroline Snow has described to me the particular problems that are associated with the Highlands. Testing can be difficult in isolated communities. It is also the case that if someone who lives in the Highlands goes to a testing centre, there is a chance that a cousin, a neighbour or someone from their community will be there. That makes people understandably reticent and shy about going for testing, which is why the location of the Inverness branch of the Terrence Higgins Trust on the edge of Merkinch and its rather discreet entrance help it to do fine work on a Tuesday night. It is particularly difficult to help people to get over the fear of being tested in the Highlands, where distance and isolation are significant issues.

I agree with others that society still has a great deal to learn, and all of us have a role to play in acting as ambassadors in the Annie Lennox sense and trying to get the message across. As has been said, if HIV is caught quickly, lives can be extended much longer than was possible some years ago, and that is surely a step forward that can be built on in future.

It seems to me that the involvement of someone such as Annie Lennox is hugely important. Because she is seen to be outside politics and is seen as a role model whom people look up to because of her fantastic ability, she will achieve more through what she says and does than almost any politician in the Scottish Parliament will be able to, so I think that her offer should be accepted—bearing in mind the caveat about the Court of St James. I can confirm that the CPA branch will consider what is a most generous offer at our next meeting, which will be held before Christmas, and I very much hope that we can accept it, so that Annie Lennox can carry out a role that is appropriate to the Parliament and which will allow the message to get out not just to sub-Saharan Africa but to every household in Scotland, including those in isolated communities in the Highlands, where HIV is just as much of a danger as it is anywhere else.

17:33

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I congratulate Jack McConnell on securing an extremely important debate, Annie Lennox on her

commitment, to which I will return, and Karen Gillon on the hard work that, as Jamie Stone mentioned, she has done for a number of years, and her involvement in Malawi, which I am sure she will mention.

As we have heard, there are more than 33 million people living with HIV throughout the world. In 2007, more than 2.7 million new cases were recorded, almost 400,000 of which involved children, and there were more than 2 million deaths. Although we often think that the problem does not directly affect us, the truth of the matter is that it affects us to a significant extent. The number of people with HIV in the United Kingdom has trebled in the past 10 years to more than 80,000. In Scotland, the general trend has been an increase in the number of people who are diagnosed with HIV, even though there was a slight fall in that figure in 2008. It would be encouraging if that were to continue and a decreasing trend were to emerge.

According to figures that were released just yesterday by the joint United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS and the data in the World Health Organization's 2009 "AIDS epidemic update", in the eight years since the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS was signed in 2001, there has been a reduction of 17 per cent in the number of new HIV infections. Jack McConnell mentioned improvements in certain areas. In light of the motion, it is particularly heartening that the number of new infections in sub-Saharan Africa is approximately 15 per cent lower than the number in 2008. That is around 400,000 fewer infections. The numbers are startling, but that is nonetheless an improvement.

There have been more encouraging results. Only last month, the genome of the HIV-1 virus was fully mapped out. That paves the way for new and more effective drugs to be developed. In the search for a reliable vaccine, it was reported last month that a possible vaccine, which was tested in Thailand, had made significant advances. Of course, we all know that much work still needs to be done, but I also welcome the HIV action plan that the Minister for Public Health and Sport, Shona Robison, announced today. Among other things, that plan aims to improve the co-ordination of prevention, treatment and care activities across the sectors. I am sure that we all wish that plan every success. I also welcome the commitment that has been given that all the organisations that have been mentioned and organisations that have not been mentioned that help and support people with HIV will be given every opportunity to feed into the action plan. In summing up, perhaps the minister can provide us with details of how those organisations can be involved in it. The longest-serving HIV organisations in Scotland, such as HIV-AIDS Carers and Family Service Provider

Scotland, are to be commended for their services to carers, families, partners, friends and relatives who are affected or infected by HIV or AIDS.

The motion rightly says that

“positive consideration should be given”

to Annie Lennox’s gracious offer of her services to the Parliament in an ambassadorial role. Jamie Stone mentioned that the executive of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, of which I am a member, is actively considering the issue; we will continue our discussions at our next meeting. Mary Scanlon pointed out that a strange anomaly exists that means that the Parliament cannot use the word “ambassador”. Perhaps the word “envoy” could be used if that is better, although I prefer “ambassador”. Obviously, the minister is not an expert on constitutional matters, but perhaps she could check that out. The idea is good. Annie Lennox has offered to work in an ambassadorial role, and we should look forward to that.

I hope that we can move things forward and engage all stakeholders in the strategy, and I hope that the encouraging steps that are being taken internationally continue and that future generations will not be blighted by HIV.

17:37

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Jack McConnell on securing this important debate, and Annie Lennox and her sing campaign, which has had an enormous impact in raising financial resources for HIV/AIDS projects and in bringing the urgency, devastation and scale of the AIDS epidemic to light in the public arena. Annie Lennox’s public and humble commitment to using her gifts and fame as a musician to advocate on behalf of those who are often forgotten or discriminated against is an example to all us. I appreciate her generous offer to play a role in the Scottish Parliament’s international development work. As a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association executive, I am keen to consider how we can best harness and use her talents to the benefit of the Parliament.

We have been reminded that more than 33 million people live with HIV/AIDS around the world. That is the stark reality—the global HIV/AIDS epidemic is not distant from us and HIV/AIDS does not discriminate. It is not a class or an ethnic disease, and it does not favour one gender over another. We are all—rich or poor, black or white, man or woman, South African, Malawian or Scot—vulnerable to its threat.

In 2005, I was part of a delegation of MSPs that went to South Africa and Malawi. That was the first

time I had come face to face with the stark reality of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the developing world. The disease has devastated families and communities. In South Africa, we met some very inspirational women. Annie Lennox is an inspirational woman, as was a lady called Mama Rose, who risked alienation in her community and discrimination because she came out and declared her status. In doing so, she could have been shunned, but she was an inspiration for others. She encouraged others to be tested, to go on to antiretroviral programmes and to get the support that they needed.

Mama Rose was at the forefront of the delivery of home-based care in her township of Orange Farm. Home-based care is what many of us would describe as palliative care for people who are in the final stages of AIDS. It is difficult for us to imagine what it means for people to have to deliver palliative care without access to running water, to health supplies or to reliable food supplies, but Mama Rose was doing that. She was also determined that young people growing up in her township would have the information and support that they need to enable them to grow up in a different kind of world. She supported many young people in the delivery of peer education programmes in local schools and communities, thereby encouraging young people to be better educated and to make more informed choices about their sexual activity.

When we left South Africa, we went to Malawi. About an hour after arriving in Malawi, we found ourselves in the Open Arms infant home, which was probably one of the most moving experiences that I have had not only as an MSP, but as a human being. The Open Arms home cares for babies who have been orphaned, many by HIV/AIDS and many of whom carry the virus. In Scotland, women are routinely tested for HIV/AIDS at antenatal clinics and a proactive treatment is given should they be found to be HIV positive, meaning that transmission of the virus from mother to child is relatively rare. That is not the case in sub-Saharan Africa, where the stigma that is associated with HIV/AIDS does not encourage mothers to be tested. I will never forget the 2lb baby we saw—a baby who weighed less than a bag of sugar—who was carrying the virus and whose chances of survival were slim. Other children were also carrying the virus but, thanks to the support that they had received at the Open Arms home, they were growing and developing and living with the disease. They are now back in their communities, being cared for by family members.

It is estimated that 1 million people in Malawi are living with the virus. In 2007, 560,000 children there had been orphaned. In Malawi, I met children as young as nine who were looking after

their younger siblings. I have three children of my own, the oldest of whom is nine, and I cannot begin to imagine how he would cope if he had to look after his younger brother and sister. That brought home to me the impact of the virus: it robs children not only of their parents, but of their childhood. In other cases, elderly grandparents have taken on the responsibility, which puts a huge strain on them and their communities.

The impact of the virus should not be underestimated—its impact is a lost generation. We, in this community and in Scotland, should have the courage to stand shoulder to shoulder with people in the developing world and in Scotland who are living with the virus. We must tackle the stigma and inequality that allows it to ravage the world, and we must do more to ensure that others who come after us do not face the same discrimination.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am minded to accept a motion without notice to extend the debate in order to conclude business.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Jack McConnell.*]

Motion agreed to.

17:43

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): I, too, congratulate Jack McConnell on bringing this very important debate to the chamber. I echo the praise that has been given to the Waverley Trust and the Terrence Higgins Trust, and I add my own praise for the work that is done in Edinburgh by the Solas centre.

The burden of my speech will be on the prevention of infection. Jack McConnell will remember our combined visits to South Africa and to the world summit on sustainable development, although we did not undertake those visits together—I went under my own steam. We visited schools there and I visited some other schools on my own. I was impressed by the tremendous work that was being done in schools to combat AIDS, and they were not backward in coming forward with their slogans. On the side of one primary school was written in 5ft-high letters, “My friend with AIDS is still my friend.” At another school, again written in 5ft-high letters on the whitewashed wall, were the words, “Use a condom.” That was a very straightforward and in-your-face approach to combating AIDS by advertising in an educational setting. From the figures that Sandra White gave us earlier, it seems that that approach might have had some effect.

AIDS in South Africa, Malawi, Kenya, where I worked for two years, and in Uganda, with which I

am familiar as I have friends who teach out there and come back home occasionally, is a sad story. AIDS is ravaging every sector of society, particularly education—at all levels—the armed forces and the professional classes. We must not forget that it affects every class of society in southern Africa.

I feel that we might well have something to learn from what is happening in education in South Africa. In the 1980s, we had in our schools a highly developed system of education on relationships and sex, but I fear that, because of the conflicting demands on the curriculum, it is not as well resourced as it used to be, either in terms of the number of guidance teachers in our schools or of the time that is devoted to teaching personal and social development.

I would like to be assured that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning and the Minister for Public Health and Sport are working together on this issue and that they recognise how important it is to deliver the highest quality information and encouragement to the children and young people in our primary and secondary schools so that they can understand the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases, especially in the light of today’s report that, along with the rise in HIV infections in Scotland, sexually transmitted disease infections are increasing, as well.

I ask the minister to recognise that it is important for people in Government to work together to combat AIDS in this country and to give as much assistance as possible to Malawi, particularly with regard to education.

17:48

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): I, too, would like to thank—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Some lights may have gone out, but I think that we can carry on.

Shona Robison: I, too, thank Jack McConnell for securing this important debate. The motion highlights vividly the enormity of the worldwide HIV/AIDS epidemic and the issues that we face in Scotland. I welcome the opportunity to set out the work that the Scottish Government is doing in that regard.

From the very good speeches that we have heard tonight, it is clear that the motion has struck a chord with a great many members, many of whom have direct experience of the issues that are involved, having visited some of the areas that are most affected by HIV and AIDS. In addition to our work throughout each year, it is extremely

important that we use world AIDS day to take time to recognise the importance of AIDS and to highlight the challenges that this epidemic brings throughout the world.

As has been stated, more than 33 million people live with HIV across the world. In 2008, there were 412 new diagnoses of HIV in Scotland. Although that figure represents a 9 per cent decrease on the 452 cases that were reported in 2007, we cannot and will not be complacent.

Although the extent of new diagnoses in some way reflects an increase in testing, and recent figures show a reduction in the numbers of undiagnosed cases, there is evidence of transmission occurring among certain at-risk populations in Scotland. Specifically, in Scotland, men who have sex with men and people from sub-Saharan Africa are more likely to be affected by HIV than anyone else.

However—and it is a big however—as Jack McConnell and Karen Gillon pointed out, HIV does not discriminate. The stark figures not only set us a global challenge to work together internationally to reduce the spread of HIV but set the Scottish Government, health boards, local authorities and voluntary organisations a real challenge to reduce the transmission of HIV here in Scotland.

Today, with that in mind, I launched an HIV action plan for Scotland. The plan, which contains specific actions for the Scottish Government, the territorial and special health boards and the voluntary sector to take, aims to reduce HIV transmission and levels of undiagnosed cases of HIV, to reduce stigma and discrimination and to ensure the effective co-ordination of prevention and of treatment and care.

There is currently approximately £29 million each year within NHS boards' baselines for the treatment and care of HIV. In addition, the Scottish Government provides £9.5 million each year to prevent the spread of blood-borne viruses. As our epidemiology is constantly changing, we must ensure that our prevention efforts are targeted and evidence based to ensure that we have the best chance of reducing the transmission of HIV.

Reviewing the evidence and providing guidance on effective HIV prevention are a key action for the plan, which will not only require NHS boards to use their funding effectively but require the Scottish Government and the health boards to work closely with their partners, including local authorities and the voluntary sector, to deliver the actions effectively.

Throughout the development of the plan, the stigma and discrimination faced by people who are infected and affected by HIV were of utmost concern. In Scotland, the extent of that stigma and discrimination was recently highlighted by children

and young people during a needs assessment that was funded by the Elton John AIDS Foundation. That work, which was supported by Annie Lennox, gives us an understanding of the work that we must undertake in relation to HIV services for young people in Scotland. I of course welcome Annie Lennox's willingness to become the Scottish ambassador—or whatever we choose to call the post—for women and children who are affected by HIV, and I would be delighted to do what I can to make that happen.

We have undertaken work in partnership with the International Planned Parenthood Federation to understand the extent of the stigma and discrimination faced by those who are living with HIV. The findings from the research, which will be released for world AIDS day, will be used to improve policies and practices in the UK and to enhance services to meet the needs of people who are living with HIV in 2009 and beyond.

I recognise that changing the long-standing attitudes among so many in the Scottish population is a challenge and will not happen overnight, but it is a challenge that we should not shy away from. Through our national sexual health social marketing work, we must challenge the views that are held by some in Scotland by raising awareness in the general population and by providing education in schools, as Robin Harper requested.

As part of our social marketing efforts, we shall undertake some targeted work that will be aimed at men who have sex with men, to raise awareness of the risk of HIV and to provide safer sex and testing messages. That campaign, which will be launched early next year, has used the learning from the very successful HIV comeback tour and equal campaigns, and will be delivered locally in a range of community settings to ensure effective targeting.

I have already mentioned the importance of working closely with key stakeholders in Scotland to deliver change. The Scottish Government currently provides funding to Oxfam Scotland, which works with local communities in Malawi to assist the most vulnerable people affected by HIV. It is right and proper that the majority of the debate has been focused around that.

I hope that Jack McConnell agrees that it was right and proper to increase the international development budget. Even in these tight financial times, it is crucial that we send a message that that work is important. I hope that no one in the chamber would doubt that increasing the work through the international development budget will directly impact on the work on HIV and AIDS, and I hope that every member who is speaking in tonight's debate can send out that message to others.

To date, the funding has improved access to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment by reaching out to more than 2,000 people through community discussion forums on the rights of those living with HIV/AIDS. It has trained village rights committees on human rights and good governance as well as providing a range of training to build care capacity and support within the community in relation to HIV prevention, care and support.

We also provide more than £350,000 of funding each year to enable a number of voluntary organisations in Scotland to provide not only general HIV prevention activities but specific work with African people and men who have sex with men.

I cannot overstate the value and importance of the work that is done in Scotland. I echo members' thanks to all those individuals and organisations, both statutory and voluntary, who dedicate their lives to raising awareness of HIV/AIDS and work not only to reduce transmission of the infection but, importantly, to provide treatment and support to those who need it most.

Meeting closed at 17:55.

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