



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 18 May 2011

Session 4

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 18 May 2011

[The Presiding Officer *opened the meeting at 10:00*]

Business Motion

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Good morning. The first item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-00041, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out today's business programme. I ask any member who wishes to speak against the motion to press their request-to-speak button now.

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Government Strategy (Bruce Crawford): Presiding Officer, it gives me pleasure, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move the first business motion in this new session of the Scottish Parliament.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Wednesday 18 May 2011

10.00 am	Business Motion
10.30 am	Selection of the Parliament's nominee for First Minister

Wednesday 25 May 2011

11.00 am	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	First Minister's Motion to appoint Scottish Ministers
<i>followed by</i>	First Minister's Motion to appoint Junior Scottish Ministers
<i>followed by</i>	First Minister's Motion to appoint Scottish Law Officers
<i>followed by</i>	Election of Members of the Parliamentary Corporation

Thursday 26 May 2011

10.30 am	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	First Minister's Statement: Taking Scotland Forward
<i>followed by</i>	Scottish Government Debate: Taking Scotland Forward
2.30 pm	Continuation of Scottish Government Debate: Taking Scotland Forward
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Business Motion
5.00 pm	Decision Time

(b) that the period for lodging First Minister's Questions for First Minister's Question Time on Thursday 2 June 2011 should end at 4.00 pm on Thursday 26 May 2011;

(c) that the period for Members to submit their names for selection for General Question Time on Thursday 2 June 2011 should end at 4.00 pm on Thursday 19 May 2011;

(d) that the period for Members to submit their names for selection for General and Themed Question Time on Thursday 16 June 2011 should end at 4.00 pm on Thursday 2 June 2011.

The Presiding Officer: No member has asked to speak against the motion, therefore the question is, that motion S4M-00041, in the name of Bruce Crawford, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: Under rule 4.1.3 of standing orders, a period of 30 minutes must elapse between the closure of nominations for First Minister and the start of the voting period for the selection of the nominee. The nomination period for First Minister is now closed, and I suspend this meeting of the Parliament until 10.30 am, when the voting period will commence.

10:02

Meeting suspended.

10:30

On resuming—

First Minister

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is the selection of the Parliament's nominee for First Minister. I have received one valid nomination for appointment as First Minister, and that is Alex Salmond.

I will ask Alex Salmond to speak in support of his candidacy. Members will then be asked to cast their vote. Members may vote for or against or they may abstain. I will then announce the results of the vote. The candidate will be selected if a simple majority of votes in the candidate's favour is obtained. Under rule 11.11.2, no account will be taken of any abstentions in establishing whether a simple majority has been achieved.

I call on Alex Salmond to speak in support of his candidacy.

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Madam Presiding Officer, I have learned at least two things in the Parliament over the years—that might be a surprise to many who think that I have not learned anything at all.

First, I have done an exact calibration of the record of the previous occasions on which I have been in this position, and there is an exact correlation between the length of the speech and the number of votes received. That is to say, the shorter the speech, the more votes received. That is absolutely true from the record. Therefore, to maximise my chances of success, my opening remarks will be very brief indeed.

The second thing that I have learned, through our long experience as colleagues, Presiding Officer, is that it is best not to try your patience under any circumstances.

Therefore, with those things in mind, I put myself and my candidacy in the hands of the Scottish Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: We now move to voting. Members should ensure that their cards are inserted correctly in their consoles. Members will have 30 seconds in which to cast their vote. The vote is for Alex Salmond. Please vote for or against or abstain.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)

Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLetchie, David (Lothian) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: In the selection of the Parliament's nominee for First Minister, the result was: For 68, Against 0, Abstentions 57.

As the result is valid, and as Alex Salmond has obtained a simple majority of the votes, I declare that he is selected as the Parliament's nominee for appointment as First Minister. As required by the Scotland Act 1998, I shall now recommend to Her Majesty that she appoint Alex Salmond as the First Minister. I offer Alex Salmond my warm congratulations and best wishes. *[Applause.]*

10:34

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Presiding Officer, on behalf of the Labour group I offer our congratulations to the First Minister and our best

wishes to him and to Moira for the task that lies ahead of them.

To win a majority in this Parliament is indeed a remarkable achievement. That majority is another stage in the coming of age of the Parliament, whose first First Minister, Donald Dewar, said:

"Scotland's Parliament is no longer a political pamphlet, a campaign trail or a waving flag. It is here; it is real."—*[Official Report, 13 May 1999; c 18.]*

Whether in government or opposition, we must now put the campaign trail behind us and face the real challenges ahead.

For the First Minister, there is the challenge of delivering all that he promised without the limitations of minority government. For this Parliament, and our democracy, there is the challenge of holding a majority Administration to account.

That is why this moment matters so much. It is a reminder that even in these circumstances, our First Minister must still be elected by the Parliament, not appointed. The symbolism is profound and important. The First Minister and his Government are answerable and accountable to the whole Parliament, and thereby the whole people—I know that he understands that.

Across the chamber, we have great responsibility, too: the more powerful the Executive, the more important the scrutiny we bring to bear on it in committee or in plenary, and the more diligent we must be in our engagement with the people and institutions of Scotland through the evidence that they give us, the petitions that they submit to us and the consideration that they seek from us. This is the result that the people chose, so it is up to us to make it work for them.

For those in the Government party, that will require an independence of thought and action, especially in committee, which might not always be comfortable but is their democratic obligation. For those of us on the Opposition benches, it will require a willingness to accept the mandate that the Government has and to style our opposition and scrutiny accordingly. That will not always be comfortable either, but it is an obligation, too.

I thought that I would check Mr Salmond's own remarks as leader of the Opposition when he congratulated Donald Dewar on the equivalent day in 1999. He said:

"although I know and hope that Donald will speak for Scotland, he will certainly eat for Scotland at every opportunity."

Far be it from me to suggest that the current First Minister will live up to that. *[Laughter.]*

Alex Salmond also said of opposition:

"There has been some debate about how we can have the new consensus politics and still have vigorous debate. I suggest that we can have both."—[*Official Report*, 13 May 1999; c 25.]

I agree. Where we agree on what is best for Scotland, Labour will work with the Government, but where we disagree, we will debate vigorously.

I think that we agree that we need to get Scotland working. Today's unemployment figures show a welcome drop in unemployment, yet there are still more than 200,000 Scots unemployed. This week, we saw that three of the four worst unemployment black spots in the United Kingdom are here in Scotland.

In the past 10 days, we have heard plenty about the 57 varieties of independence. Yes, we will explore the powers that we might have—that is a consequence of the election result—but the most urgent and pressing matter is how to exercise the powers that we have now to create opportunity for our people now.

We will debate what divides us, but let us begin with something that unites us. Scotland needs an action plan for jobs and economic recovery, and we need it quickly. That would be a good start in taking Scotland forward from here together. [*Applause.*]

10:39

Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con): Madam Presiding Officer, the First Minister has achieved a remarkable election result. On behalf of the Scottish Conservatives, I congratulate him on his election as First Minister for a second term of government.

The First Minister has been basking in his party's triumph, with that mixture of chutzpah and undisguised glee that he has made his own unique style. However, I will haul him back to planet earth with a little dose of realism. The First Minister may have a majority of seats in this Parliament, but he does not have a majority of votes from Scotland. He may want separation, but most people in Scotland do not. The only mandate that he has from the election is to lead a devolved Government in the Scottish Parliament. I do not want to rain on his Scottish National Party parade, but voters expect his priorities to be jobs, education, our health service, law and order, local government and all the other essential services for which this Parliament is responsible.

When he tucks himself up in bed in his "Alex Salmond for First Minister" nightshirt, interspersing his dreams of a Scottish republic should be the sobering thought that the buck now stops with him. He has a majority in the Parliament: he cannot blame others. He knows how much money there is. The comprehensive spending review has made

clear the financial settlement. When services are cut, he has to explain why. When universities contract and departments close, he has to explain why. When local authorities shrink essential facilities, he has to explain why. When he breaks election promises, he has to take the blame. He would not be the astute and crafty political operator that he is if he did not try to suck others into his blame game. The First Minister and the SNP now stand alone, and they alone will take the blame.

Our role as Scottish Conservatives is to support what is good for Scotland and vigorously oppose what is not. Just because Alex Salmond declares something to be good, that does not necessarily mean that it is. When he is wrong, I and the Scottish Conservatives will put him right. When he tries to pursue his separation agenda for Scotland, I and the Scottish Conservatives will fight him every step of the way.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): Hear, hear. [*Laughter.*]

Annabel Goldie: The First Minister has a majority of seats in the Parliament, but not a monopoly of wisdom. He has a big SNP presence, but he has even bigger challenges. His imperative is to put the interests of Scotland before the interests of his party. I remind him that his mandate is to be our devolved First Minister—to act in the national interest, not in his nationalist self-interest. I and the Scottish Conservatives will hold him to that obligation. [*Applause.*]

10:42

Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): Thank you, Madam Presiding Officer. I congratulate the First Minister on his re-election. I did not expect those to be the first words that I would speak in this chamber—and I am sure that, at some points in the past, the First Minister might not have expected to hear them. However, I congratulate him on his achievement, on the way in which he conducted the campaign, on the way in which he framed the election debate and on the result that he achieved.

This time, the people of Scotland have chosen not to have strong Liberal numbers in the Parliament. That makes it even more important to have strong liberal voices. It is important that public life is not dominated by the forces of nationalism or conservatism, in this country or anywhere else.

The First Minister has won a majority. He will be marked and judged by how he uses it. He now faces serious questions, and people will seek clarity on what exactly he is claiming a mandate for. If his majority becomes a bulldozer for

nationalism, we will do what we can to oppose him, inside this chamber and outside its walls.

When he commits—as he has done this morning—to a positive future for Scotland; when his Government supports business and a growing, sustainable economy and society; when he makes a reality of our shared ideas for investment in Scotland's future through early intervention and excellent education; and if he can be tempted away from the path of centralisation and control, we will gladly work with him. I wish him well. *[Applause.]*

10:44

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I add my congratulations and those of the Scottish Green Party to Alex Salmond on his nomination as Scotland's First Minister. As other members have done, I recognise the scale of the achievement of the entire SNP group—it would be wrong not to recognise it—which was largely due to the positivity of the messages that were heard during the campaign.

This Parliament will have to operate very differently. There is not much doubt about how, at 5 to 5 on Wednesdays and Thursdays, 65 votes will come together to form majorities, issue by issue, each week. It is to the credit of many in the Administration, not least Bruce Crawford, that the SNP managed to clear that hurdle more often than not in the previous session. Mr Crawford's blood pressure may be a bit more stable at 5 to 5 on Wednesdays and Thursdays over the next few years, but government will not be about putting together those majorities. The Government will have the advantage of numbers, but with the freedom to act will come the responsibility for all commitments that are made and for all consequences. In this session, the electorate has given the SNP a bigger task, not necessarily an easier one.

Opposition will also have to change. None of the Opposition parties will achieve much by trying to win votes, by simply opposing every Government action for the sake of it or by calling for limits on our ambitions and political priorities. Opposition will need to be a positive, constructive process—a source of new ideas that add to our political debate rather than detract from it. We need solutions for Scotland in the face of savage cuts by the UK Government, not attempts to blame Scotland for them. If the Opposition can do that in this session, and if the Government is willing to listen, this Parliament as a whole may be greater than the sum of its parts, and our achievements together may be more lasting. *[Applause.]*

The Presiding Officer: I now call Margo MacDonald for a brief contribution.

10:46

Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind): Thank you, Presiding Officer. A N Other—it is okay.

I expect that the First Minister will be as surprised to hear congratulations from me as Willie Rennie was to be making the statement that he did, but I wish him all the very best—he had a wonderful victory. What Annabel Goldie said is absolutely true: the First Minister was elected by the Scots to govern as well as he could within the constraints of devolution. However, he has another responsibility because the Scots knew what they were voting for when they voted for him—they voted for a man who believes in independence of sovereignty. I hope and expect that, as well as governing as well as possible, the Government will run a commentary comparing and contrasting what we do with what we could do had we the full panoply of powers that most Scots are coming to realise we should have.

Patrick Harvie and I had a big fall-out. We were going to go for a job share and he thought that I wanted it with him, but I wanted it with the First Minister. I wish him and the Government party all the best.

10:48

The First Minister: I turn first to the speeches of the other party leaders. I thank Iain Gray for his congratulations and good wishes. I thank him also for reminding me of what I said in 1999 and acknowledge that commenting on Donald Dewar's eating habits was perhaps not my wisest expression. I have something to say to Iain Gray personally about that period. I had led the party to election defeat in 1999 although I had tried the best that I could and thought that I had put forward some good arguments; however, from that defeat a number of things became apparent to me about the presentation of whatever we had to say in politics. I thank Iain Gray for the way in which he has expressed his good wishes. More important, however, I know and believe that, in whatever format, he will continue to make a substantial contribution to Scottish public life and I wish him extremely well in pursuing that. *[Applause.]*

Annabel Goldie has set several hares running, as is her tendency. A number of people up there, in the press gallery, are currently wondering how they will express the fact that she seems to have an intimate knowledge of what I wear when I am tucked up in bed at night. I am not sure whether we will easily escape that particular hare, but I am sure that the joint efforts of our spin maestros will be employed to get us out of that fix.

It was with a mixture of sadness and some relief that I heard the announcement that Annabel Goldie, too, has decided to pass on the torch:

sadness because I will miss enormously the wit with which she pursued her case and her cause at First Minister's question time; and relief because I was often the subject of that wit—there is therefore consolation in that sense of regret. I wish Annabel Goldie, when the time comes, every success in the endeavours that she chooses to pursue. [Applause.]

Michael Foot once said of David Steel—and I know that Michael meant it kindly—that David was an example of someone who had gone from boy wonder

“to elder statesman without any intervening period whatsoever.”—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 28 March 1979; Vol 965, c 577.]

Willie Rennie is an example of someone who has gone from new member to party leader with no intervening period whatsoever. However, he is right to say that a position in a Parliament is dependent not on numbers—I have had personal experience of that in the Westminster Parliament—but on the strength and calibre of argument. It will be the clarity of the voice that Willie Rennie and his party put forward on which they shall be judged. I thank him very much for his congratulations and good wishes today. [Applause.]

Of the various contributions, I am certain that Patrick Harvie has caught the lesson of this election for all of us—not just for other parties, but for my party. Positivity was what the people of Scotland responded to in the election campaign. Understandably, at tough times—and times are tough—some people say, “That’s not necessarily the message that people in Scotland want to hear.” A positive message is important not just in difficult times, but particularly in difficult times. The essence of that lesson, for this party and for the entire Parliament, is extremely valuable and important as we conduct all our politics as we move forward as a country.

If anyone wanted an example of how to deploy arguments in such a way that a parliamentary party of two members had a substantial influence, they need look no further than Patrick Harvie’s example in the previous session of Parliament. I am certain that he and his new member, whom I welcome to the Parliament, will deploy those skills in the next session of Parliament. [Applause.]

Finally, I say to Margo MacDonald that job sharing is a rather extraordinary demand to make at this stage, although I am not dismissing the concept out of hand. In the manner of consensus politics, I shall fully consider whether there are days on which Margo could take over and deploy her talents as First Minister. Being elected as an independent member in three successive elections is an extraordinary achievement in this Parliament—or in any Parliament. The whole

chamber should recognise that and should perhaps recognise the ability and presentation that allowed Margo MacDonald to conduct that success. I thank Margo for her remarks. Now that she has been elected three times, there is an argument that Margo should get to keep the Parliament. I shall consider that as well. I thank her for her congratulations. [Applause.]

Iain Gray reminded us of what I said to Donald Dewar in 1999. I remind members what Donald Dewar said to Parliament in 1999 when he invoked Scotland’s diverse voices. He talked of

“The speak of the Mearns”,

“The shout of the welder in the din of the ... Clyde shipyards”

and the

“cries of the battles of Bruce and Wallace.”

Those voices from the past are now joined in this chamber by the sound of 21st century Scotland: the lyrical Italian of Marco Biagi; the formal Urdu of Humza Yousaf; and the sacred Arabic of Hanzala Malik.

We as a Parliament are proud of having those languages spoken here alongside English, Gaelic, Scots and Doric, because this land is their land, from the sparkling sands of the islands to the glittering granite of our cities: it belongs to all who choose to call it home. That includes new Scots who have escaped persecution or conflict in Africa or the middle east, and it means Scots whose forebears fled famine in Ireland and elsewhere: that is who belongs here.

Let us also be clear about what does not belong here. As the song tells us, for Scotland to flourish

“let us be rid of those bigots and fools
Who will not let Scotland live and let live”.

Our new Scotland is built on an old custom of hospitality. We offer a hand that is open to all, whether they hail from England, Ireland, Pakistan or Poland. Modern Scotland is also built on equality. We will not tolerate sectarianism, as a parasite in our national game of football or anywhere else in this society. [Applause.]

Scotland’s strength has always lain in its diversity. In the poem “Scotland Small?”, Hugh MacDiarmid challenged those who would diminish us with stereotype. He asked:

“Scotland small? Our multiform, our infinite Scotland small?
Only as a patch of hillside may be a cliché corner
To a fool who cries ‘Nothing but heather!’”

The point is that even the smallest patch of hillside contains enormous variation: bluebells, blaeberrys and mosses. To describe Scotland as nothing but heather is, as MacDiarmid said, marvellously descriptive but totally incomplete.

To describe Scotland as small is similarly misleading: Scotland is not small. It is not small in imagination, and it is not short on ambition. It is infinite in its diversity, and it is alive with possibility.

Two weeks ago the voters of Scotland—the people of Scotland—embraced that possibility. They like what this Parliament has done within the devolved settlement that Donald Dewar negotiated. They like what the first minority SNP Government achieved, and now they want more. They want Scotland to have the economic levers to prosper in this century, and they are excited by the opportunity to reindustrialise our country through marine renewable energy, which offers skilled, satisfying work to school leavers and graduates alike. However, they know that we need tools to do the job properly, and I believe that this chamber understands that as well.

My message today is, let us act as one and demand Scotland's right. Let us build a better future for our young people by gaining the powers that we need to speed recovery and to create jobs. Let us wipe away past equivocation and ensure that the present Scotland Act is worthy of its name.

There is actually a great deal on which we are agreed. Occasionally in the hurly-burly of an election campaign—and I am as guilty of this as anyone else—we tend to forget that, so let us just remember the extent of the agreement that we share across the Parliament.

The three economic changes that I have already promoted to the Scotland Bill were chosen certainly from the SNP manifesto, but also because they command and have commanded support from other parties across the chamber. All sides of the Parliament support the need for additional and immediate capital borrowing powers so that we can invest in an infrastructure and continue the growth in our economy, and I am very hopeful that that will be delivered.

The Liberal Democrats, the Greens and many in the Labour Party agree that the Crown estate revenues should be repatriated to Scottish communities; we await Westminster's reply. Our leading job creators back this Government's call for control of corporation tax to be included in the Scotland Bill. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—a Conservative—supports the devolution of that tax, and the cross-party committee that met in the last session of this Parliament agreed unanimously that if the principle was conceded in Northern Ireland, Scotland must have the same rights.

However, those are not the only issues that carry support across this chamber: there are three more to which I want to draw attention.

Why not give us control of our own excise? We in this Government have a mandate to implement a minimum price for alcohol. We intend to pursue that in this Parliament, come what may. Although our Labour colleagues agree that it is correct to set a minimum price, they were concerned about where the revenues would go. Gaining control of excise answers that question. It means that we can tackle our country's alcohol problem and invest any additional revenue in public services. I ask Labour members to join me in calling for control of alcohol taxes so that together we can face down Scotland's issue with booze.

Another key aspect of our national life controlled by Westminster is broadcasting. All of Scotland is poorly served as a result. If we had some influence over that currently reserved area, we could, for example, create a Scottish digital channel, something that all parties and every member in the last session of Parliament supported as long ago as 8 October 2008. We agree that such a platform would promote our artistic talent and hold up a mirror to this nation. How Scotland promotes itself to the world is important; how we talk to each other is also critical. These are exciting times for our country. We need more space for our cultural riches and for a lively, intelligent discourse about the nation we are and the nation that we aspire to be.

Finally, many of us—a great number of us, I think—believe that in this globalised era Scotland needs more influence in the European Union, particularly in the Council of Ministers. At the moment, that is in the gift of Westminster. Sometimes it is forthcoming; more often it is withheld. We in the Scottish National Party argue—and will continue to argue—for full sovereignty, which would give us an independent voice in the European Union. However, short of that, the Scotland Bill could be changed to improve our current position. When the first Scotland Act was debated back in 1998, there was, as I remember it, a proposal from the Liberal Democrats to include a mechanism that would give Scotland more power to influence European policy. It was defeated then but why not revisit that proposal from 1998 to give Scotland a guaranteed say in the forums where decisions are made that shape our industries and, increasingly, our laws?

I have outlined six areas of potential common ground that stretch across this Parliament to a greater or lesser extent: borrowing powers; corporation tax; the Crown estate; excise duty; digital broadcasting; and a stronger say in European policy. I think that we should seize the moment and act together to bring these powers back home. Let this Parliament move forward as one to make Scotland better.

Norman MacCaig observed that when you swish your hand in a stream the waters are muddied but then settle all the clearer. On 5 May, the people of our country swished up the stream and now the way ahead is becoming clear. We see our nation emerge from the glaur of self-doubt and negativity. A change is coming and the people are ready. They put ambition ahead of hesitation.

The process is not about endings; it is about beginnings. Whatever changes take place in our constitution, we will remain close to our neighbours. We will continue to share a landmass, a language and a wealth of experience and history with the other peoples of these islands. My dearest wish is to see the countries of Scotland and England stand together as equals. There is a difference between partnership and subordination: the first encourages mutual respect, and the second breeds resentment.

Let me finish with the words of Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, who addressed this Parliament in 1706, before it was adjourned for almost 300 years. He observed:

“All nations are dependent; the one upon the many, this we know.”

However, he warned that if

“the greater must always swallow the lesser”,

we are all diminished. His fears were realised in 1707. However, the age of empires is over. Now we determine our own future based on our own needs. We know our worth—we should take pride in it—so let us heed the words of Saltoun and

“go forward into the community of nations to lend our own, independent weight to the world.”

[Applause.]

The Presiding Officer: On the basis that I want to start as I mean to go on, I would appreciate it if in the chamber members referred to me as the Presiding Officer or Presiding Officer, not as Madam Presiding Officer.

On that note, I close the meeting.

Meeting closed at 11:05.

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