



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 31 January 2013

Session 4

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# Scottish Parliament

Thursday 31 January 2013

[The Deputy Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 11:40]

## General Question Time

### Tax Payments (Companies in Receipt of Government Grants)

**1. Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with HM Revenue and Customs regarding the tax paid by companies in receipt of Scottish Government grants. (S4O-01759)

**The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** The Scottish Government is in touch with HM Revenue and Customs about a range of issues. However, questions about tax paid by individual companies that are in receipt of Scottish Government grants are covered by taxpayer confidentiality and so are not discussed. The amount of tax paid by companies in the United Kingdom is a matter for HM Revenue and Customs and the UK Government.

**Chic Brodie:** We welcome investment wherever it comes from, but does the minister agree that if a company has been in receipt of funding from the Scottish Government it should at least declare its financial performance and taxes paid in this country? I sought information regarding Vion UK's tax liability through a freedom of information request, but HMRC advised me that it will refuse to reveal any information, citing a catch-all exemption.

**Fergus Ewing:** HMRC operates within a legal framework that regards taxpayer information as confidential. There are good reasons for not disturbing that framework. However, information about tax paid by a company should be available from its published reports and accounts. Recent experience shows that such information is available and can be used to support public debate about the taxes that corporations pay.

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** Does the minister think that revenue Scotland would be a more efficient tax collector for Scotland than HM Revenue and Customs is? Will he say why?

**Fergus Ewing:** From April 2015, revenue Scotland will be responsible for collecting two devolved taxes in Scotland: land and buildings transaction tax, which will replace stamp duty land tax; and landfill tax. Through revenue Scotland, we will serve the needs of the people of Scotland at a lower cost than the UK set-up does. We will

therefore deliver a better system that is more in line with Scotland's needs. We are satisfied with the work that has been done to that end thus far.

### Orkney Ferry Services (Service Model Assessment)

**2. Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government when it will complete the service model assessment for ferry services in Orkney. (S4O-01760)

**The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown):** As is noted in "Scottish Ferry Services: Ferries Plan (2013-2022)", which was published on 19 December 2012, our intention is to take the work forward this year. Following publication of the ferries plan, I met Orkney Islands Council and agreed with the council that we will seek to conclude our consideration of its internal ferry services as quickly as possible.

**Liam McArthur:** The minister will be aware of concerns about lack of detail in the ferries plan that was published before Christmas, but I welcome what I understand was a constructive meeting earlier this month with Orkney Islands Council.

Does the minister recognise the urgency of the need to define the model for ferry services in Orkney, not least so that funding can be put in place to provide the infrastructure and ferries? Will he set a deadline for completing the work, so that vital decisions about lifeline services for my constituents can be taken without undue delay?

**Keith Brown:** Perhaps it will reassure Liam McArthur to know that I said to Orkney Islands Council that we will not wait on discussions with other councils to progress what we are doing with Orkney Islands Council.

We must go through a proper process. Orkney Islands Council was grateful, for example, for the routes and services strategy that we used for the ferries plan and are applying to its internal ferry services. There are important considerations about financial recompense for the Government taking on some services, should that happen, but there is not and never has been an intention to delay progress unduly. We are working with council officials and councillors to ensure that we make progress as quickly as possible.

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Will ministers ensure that they continue to consult hauliers, including livestock hauliers, so that the specific needs of the sector are factored into any agreement?

**Keith Brown:** I am struggling to see the connection between that question and Liam McArthur's. We consult hauliers as a matter of routine. We have done so in relation to the road

equivalent tariff. We also have a process whereby we intend to have a unified, comprehensive system of commercial fares across the ferries network, and during the course of work in that regard we will of course talk to hauliers and those who transport livestock.

### **Blacklisting**

#### **3. Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):**

To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to tackle the issue of blacklisting. (S4O-01761)

**The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** The Scottish Government is aware of the on-going House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee inquiry into blacklisting in employment, which was established to determine the scale of the problem and what is being done to eradicate it. We are following the progress of the inquiry and await its findings with interest.

Following the Information Commissioner's Office investigation into the practices of the Consulting Association, the United Kingdom Government introduced the Employment Relations Act 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations 2010, which prohibit blacklisting. The regulations provide rights if blacklisting results in refusal of employment, detriment, dismissal or redundancy.

**Richard Baker:** I am sure that the minister shares my concern about recent reports of more than 50 construction workers in the north-east featuring on a blacklist—and many more across Scotland, as we know. Will he join me in congratulating Unite and all the other trade unions that are campaigning for an end to this pernicious practice? Does he agree that the forthcoming procurement bill presents an opportunity to consider measures to ensure that any firm that engages in blacklisting does not win public sector contracts?

**Fergus Ewing:** Yes, I think that, broadly speaking, we share concerns about any proven use of blacklisting. We would all deprecate such a practice. We will take the member's remarks under advisement and look carefully at the specific request that he has made. However, it is fair to say that we can proceed only on the basis of evidence and not on the basis of allegations. I hope that all members agree that it is in that way that we must consider these matters.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** A parliamentary answer that I received last week revealed that the Forth crossing contractors' joint venture appeared on the list of names operated by the Consulting Association, which was running the blacklist. About 400 workers across Scotland, including 70 of my constituents, appeared on the blacklist. Will

the minister support my call for a Scottish Parliament inquiry into this human rights abuse?

**Fergus Ewing:** I am aware of the answer that the Deputy First Minister provided to Mr Findlay on 22 January. A comprehensive reply has already been provided to him. I repeat that we share the general concern about blacklisting and we will follow the progress of the existing inquiry at the House of Commons closely. However, I remind members that this is a Parliament and not a court. It is not appropriate, in my view, to bandy around allegations without evidence. In that light, we must proceed with great caution in this matter, and that is the approach that we will take.

### **Concessionary Travel Scheme (Government Support)**

**4. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when it will decide on how much support it will provide for the concessionary travel scheme. (S4O-01762)

**The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown):** Earlier today, I announced that we have reached an agreement with the Confederation of Passenger Transport on the reimbursement and funding arrangements for the national concessionary travel scheme over the next two years. The agreement is based on independent research developed in full consultation with the CPT. It is fair, robust and financially sustainable.

The reimbursement rate will reduce from 67 per cent of the adult single fare to 60 per cent next year and 58.1 per cent in 2014-15. By way of transition, I have agreed to phase in the reduction and to provide an additional £10 million in this financial year to operators who are participating in the scheme during March 2013.

I believe that we have a good agreement that will secure the continuing benefits of the scheme and promote our common interest in successful and affordable bus services.

**Sarah Boyack:** Surely the reality is that we will now see bus fares rise and more services lost. In the end, the price will be paid across the country by hard-pressed low-income bus users and pensioners, who will find that it is more expensive to use the bus or that there is simply no longer a bus on which to use their pass.

**Keith Brown:** If the member believes that the scheme that we offer is so bad, she should compare it with some of the schemes—those that still exist—down south. She must acknowledge that an additional £10 million is being put in this year and an additional £5 million will be put in in future. We have one of the most generous schemes in these islands. It protects those people whom the Labour Party has said that it wants to

look at. For example, Richard Simpson and Elaine Murray have talked about changing pensioners' entitlement. We are not doing that. We are keeping the scheme completely as it is.

If Sarah Boyack wants to put more money into the scheme, will she say how that squares with Johann Lamont's demands through her cuts commission that it should be cut? Will Sarah Boyack also say how she reconciles that with her positions on other matters? We will wait to see whether the Labour Party lodges an amendment to the budget to make that happen.

**Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP):** In addition to the national scheme, how many local government concessionary schemes exist in Scotland?

**Keith Brown:** Local authorities across Scotland have discretionary powers to provide local concessionary schemes. The terms and conditions of each scheme are for individual authorities to decide, taking account of local needs and circumstances. Most local authorities provide local travel concessions, but the concessions and the modes of transport involved, which include ferries, rail and taxis, differ from area to area.

All councils participate in the national concessionary travel scheme for blind people, which provides free rail and ferry travel throughout Scotland for blind and partially sighted people.

#### **Mortonhall Crematorium (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society Lothians)**

**5. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action the Minister for Public Health is taking following his meeting with SANDS Lothian regarding Mortonhall crematorium. (S4O-01763)

**The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson):** As Kezia Dugdale will be aware, I met with representatives from SANDS Lothians on 17 January. Mr MacAskill also attended the meeting in his constituency role. Following the meeting, I asked officials to explore what assistance we may be able to provide to SANDS, given the exceptional circumstances. As a result, the Scottish Government has provided the charity with some one-off funding to support its work with those affected by the practices at Mortonhall crematorium.

The Scottish Government has also made an offer to the City of Edinburgh Council to provide to the independent inquiry any support and information that may be helpful. That offer will stand throughout the work of the inquiry. I have asked my officials to continue to liaise closely with SANDS and the City of Edinburgh Council over the coming weeks.

**Kezia Dugdale:** I welcome the additional money that is going to SANDS. I am sure that the minister agrees that SANDS does a wonderful job of supporting families who are in a very vulnerable position.

Does the minister agree that, in the eyes of those affected, whether people get baby ashes is still a postcode lottery across Scotland? Is the Government minded to look again at the guidance on stillbirth and neonatal death and the laws on cremation?

**Michael Matheson:** I thank the member for that question. I recognise that this is a very sensitive issue and it is important that those who have been affected by it get the answers that they require. I have no doubt that the independent investigation that Elish Angiolini will conduct, for which the City of Edinburgh Council will be responsible, will provide answers to those parents who still have questions.

On guidance for and regulations on crematoriums, we have already given a commitment to look at the issues in the coming year, with a view to bringing forward further legislation, possibly in 2014, to update the laws in this area, some of which are more than 100 years old. Some work has already been undertaken to look at where we need to make improvements.

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** The minister will be aware that the historic cremation practices at Mortonhall do not just affect Edinburgh residents. What measures are in place for parents who may have been affected from my constituency in Midlothian and the Borders, who have contacted me directly because they were not aware of what was happening? Are there measures to extend arrangements beyond Edinburgh?

**Michael Matheson:** I urge anyone who was directly affected by the practices at Mortonhall and wishes answers to contact the City of Edinburgh Council. It has committed to investigating every case that is reported to it and making answers available. Information is available on the council's website, and there is a dedicated phone number and a form that can be used to contact the council. I encourage any families who may have been affected and wish answers to make use of those facilities.

#### **Local Planning Decisions**

**6. Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether local planning decisions should be made by local councillors. (S4O-01764)

**The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay):** Planning decisions

should be made at the appropriate level. Whether a decision is made by the planning committee or is delegated to planning officials is a matter for individual planning authorities. Scottish ministers may occasionally call in cases for determination when they consider that it is appropriate to do so. The appeals process is also a feature of the planning system, under the provisions of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006.

**Iain Gray:** Those are fine words, but our experience in East Lothian does not really match them. In recent times, decisions on the Dunbar incinerator and the demolition of the Cockenzie boat repair yard have been overturned on behalf of Scottish ministers but, more notably, wind turbines at Oldhamstocks, Innerwick and East Linton that were deemed inappropriate by the local planning authority have been railroaded through on behalf of Scottish ministers, and our local capacity strategy has been simply ignored. Does the minister understand that that contempt for local democracy is undermining confidence in the planning system and unhelpfully fuelling blanket opposition to wind power?

**Derek Mackay:** I disagree with the member's comments. The facts speak for themselves: Scottish Government reporters overturn a minority of local authority decisions, which just goes to show—[*Interruption.*] I know that Labour members do not like the facts.

That just goes to show that we are delivering our policies in harmony with and taking on board local people's views as material considerations in any application.

I recognise one of the applications that the member highlighted and point out that we have amended the appeals system with regard to statutory timescales, local review bodies and so on to give greater flexibility. Indeed, that was agreed at committee earlier this year.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** Is the minister aware that local councillors' rejection of planning permission for a pyrolysis incinerator in my constituency was overturned by reporters? Will he meet my constituents to hear their case for stopping that development?

**Derek Mackay:** Although I will need to stay within the statutory guidance on live planning matters that might be subject to judicial review, I am happy to meet the member's constituents and representatives of the organisations that she referred to.

#### Renewable Energy Investment Fund

**7. Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how the renewable energy investment fund will operate. (S4O-01765)

**The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** The fund, which is delivered by the Scottish Investment Bank on behalf of the Scottish Government, will provide bespoke investment deals in the form of loans, loan guarantees and equity finance alongside co-investment partners to accelerate renewable energy deployment.

**Rob Gibson:** Will the Government ensure that, with the introduction of this most welcome development fund, an increasing amount of renewable components will be manufactured and more clean power jobs created in Scotland?

**Fergus Ewing:** Yes—and much of our work is devoted to precisely those objectives. Indeed, I was delighted to attend the all-energy conference in Aberdeen yesterday where a memorandum of understanding between Highlands and Islands Enterprise and four Highland ports—Kishorn, Ardersier, Cromarty and Nigg—was entered into. That is a move in the right direction to achieve precisely the objectives that Mr Gibson has described and to see more Scottish jobs and businesses created and more existing business benefit from renewable energy developments in Scotland.

#### Offpeak Train Travel (Discussions with Transport Scotland)

**8. Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with Transport Scotland regarding the price of offpeak train travel. (S4O-01766)

**The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown):** The Scottish Government wants to further encourage commuters to switch to offpeak services to better spread demand and encourage greater use of the train rather than the car for leisure travel. After discussions with Transport Scotland, and successful negotiation with ScotRail, a package of fare measures has been developed to make rail a more attractive and affordable option. For example, the price of offpeak train travel will not increase for the remainder of the current franchise from 2013, provided the retail prices index remains below 3.5 per cent.

**Stuart McMillan:** Constituents in the west of Scotland have brought it to my attention that some rail travellers are missing out on offpeak train travel because they miss the threshold by one or two minutes. However, in other parts of the west of Scotland, the offpeak fare is offered before 9 o'clock in the morning. What action is being taken to address that differentiation and to prevent my constituents from having to pay higher costs?

**Keith Brown:** I reassure Stuart McMillan that we are looking at services, timetables and fares



and, as I have said, we have already negotiated with ScotRail a freeze on fares. Major enhancements to services in Ayrshire and Inverclyde were introduced in December to improve service frequency and increase passenger options for offpeak travel, and ScotRail is reviewing all aspects of those changes, including the timetable from Wemyss Bay. I hope that that reassures Stuart McMillan and his constituents that the matter is being looked at.

## First Minister's Question Time

12:00

### Engagements

**1. Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what engagements he has planned for the rest of the day. (S4F-01153)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** Later today I will be meeting the managing director of Microsoft UK to discuss the company's plans for its apprenticeship programme. As the chamber will know, this week we have had some fantastic analysis showing that 92 per cent of the youngsters in the greatly expanded modern apprenticeships programme are in work six months after completing their modern apprenticeship. A great deal of interest has been stimulated among companies and the commitment that Microsoft UK will make today is that, in the run-up to 2016, it and its partners, suppliers and stakeholders will guarantee a minimum of 2,016 new young modern apprenticeships.

**Johann Lamont:** We must obviously welcome any opportunities for our young people. We would only hope that the Government had more of a focus on the issues of youth unemployment and the challenges that young people face. Some of the figures on young people being in jobs after an apprenticeship are because they were in those jobs before they got the apprenticeships.

The process of the referendum is almost agreed, bar the date. Now we can get down to the substance of the debate, but how will the First Minister conduct that debate? The people of Scotland have made it clear that they want clear, honest information. When we have said that an independent Scotland would have to apply to join the European Union and that those negotiations could take time, we have been accused by the First Minister of scaremongering. When the Irish Minister for European Affairs says that an independent Scotland would have to apply to the EU and that the negotiations could be lengthy and complex, what is she guilty of?

**The First Minister:** I am glad that there is so much agreement now on the processes of the referendum. I am glad that Johann Lamont and I can go forward on that basis and I look forward to the debate.

I recommend that Johann Lamont reads the information from the Irish European affairs minister. What the minister said, of course, looking at the Scottish National Party timetable for negotiating our position from within the European Union, from a yes vote in the referendum to the independence election in 2016, was that she

regarded that position as entirely satisfactory. Coming from the minister of a country that has presidency of the European Council at the moment, that seems to me to be a strong endorsement of the SNP position.

Johann Lamont asked how we would conduct the debate in Scotland. We will conduct our debate for an independent Scotland in a positive manner. I wonder if the bitter together campaign of Labour and the Tories can match that commitment.

**Johann Lamont:** I am not sure how positive it is to misrepresent what people say when they raise legitimate concerns and express a view on what the Scottish Government claims to be the case, because the Irish European affairs minister's comments fall well short of Nicola Sturgeon's definitive claim that Scotland's membership of the EU would be "automatic". In her clarification, Lucinda Creighton says:

"I think it is clear that a newly independent state would have to ... negotiate the terms of membership."

She adds that those terms

"would undoubtedly be somewhat different to the existing terms".

What part of that does the First Minister disagree with?

**The First Minister:** We have always said that there would be negotiations. The crucial point is that those negotiations will take place from within the European Union. The Irish European affairs minister, Lucinda Creighton, says that the SNP position of, between 2014 to 2016, negotiating our position within the European Union,

"sums up the situation ... well."

That is an exact quote.

I do not know the terminology that Johann Lamont uses, but it seems to me that that is something of an endorsement of the position that the SNP has been putting forward.

Johann Lamont will have to catch up with how the terms of the European debate have changed. Her unionist partners in the better together campaign want negotiations perhaps to take the United Kingdom out of the European Union altogether. Is it not entirely possible that negotiating for Scotland and Scotland's interests from within the European Union—wanting to stay part of the European Union—will be rather more successful than an in-out referendum, as postulated by her allies in the Conservative Party?

**Johann Lamont:** Anyone would think, to listen to the First Minister, that Nicola Sturgeon had never said that our membership of the EU would be—I quote—"automatic". The problem with the First Minister is that he lives in a world in which we

are never supposed to remember what he said yesterday and we are never supposed to expect that tomorrow will match what he says today. The people deserve better. If the independence debate is to be conducted in what he describes as positive terms, heaven help us all.

When the BBC reported Lucinda Creighton's comments, it was accused by the SNP of misconstruing what she said. Scandalously, one SNP member suggested that the report had been "heavily spliced", yet what she said, and what was reported, is backed by the comments of the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso, the Czech foreign minister, the Spanish European minister and anyone who understands the European Union. What was it that was misconstrued and provoked such a hysterical response from the SNP? Why could not the SNP just admit the truth?

**The First Minister:** I ask Johann Lamont to cast her mind back to First Minister's question time a year ago. Patricia Ferguson congratulated the Government on publishing its consultation document, which said that there would be negotiations with the European Union. I replied:

"I say that it has never been our position that there would not be negotiations; the point is that negotiations would be held from within the context of the EU."—[*Official Report*, 25 January 2012; c 5613-14.]

Maybe it takes a year to clarify the position between Patricia Ferguson and Johann Lamont. Perhaps if Ms Lamont sorts out her internal communications within the Labour Party, it will be easier to challenge.

Johann Lamont gets very upset about any suggestion that the BBC might be misconstruing the remarks of the Irish Minister for European Affairs. I quote exactly the Irish European affairs minister, who said:

"I am concerned that an interview which I conducted with the BBC is being misconstrued".

She went on to endorse the SNP position in the way that I have just outlined. In fairness to the BBC, it should be said that she said that the BBC position is being misconstrued. When it comes to finding misconstruers in Scottish society, the best place to look is the better together campaign of Labour and the Conservatives.

**Johann Lamont:** This is the man who went to court to cover up the fact that he did not have legal advice. He has never been able to explain what he understands by the term, "terms of the debate." We do not need a lecture from the First Minister about clarity; what we need from him is a degree of honesty.

Everyone agrees that the people of Scotland have the right to the best, most accurate

information in the run-up to the referendum, but how can they have faith—[*Interruption.*]

I know that members are doing their job, which is to make a racket. It is the only internal communication that the First Minister requires from them.

How can the people of Scotland have faith in the information supplied by the Scottish Government when so often—remember—it has been forced to admit that it is wrong and when those giving accurate facts are ridiculed, bombarded with complaints and pilloried by the cybernats?

What does it say about Scotland when the minister of a foreign country is bombarded with abuse for telling the truth and news organisations from *The Scotsman* to *The Herald* to the BBC are traduced for reporting facts that turn out to be true?

People want information so that they can make a judgment on what an independent Scotland would look like. So far, is it not the case that all we know is that it will be a land where no one is allowed to disagree with Alex Salmond?

**The First Minister:** I know that Johann Lamont would not want to descend into the language that was used by some of her colleagues in the House of Commons a couple of weeks ago, when some actually questioned the democratic credentials of this proportional Parliament and upheld the legitimacy of the House of Commons as a model of modern democracy.

I have quoted the exact words of the Irish minister, Lucinda Creighton. It was she who said that she thought that the BBC's coverage of her remarks was being misconstrued. That is a reasonable thing for Ireland's Minister for European Affairs to say, and I think that it is important to note that she found that the SNP's position was entirely sensible and endorsed it. Hopefully, that sort of confidence in Scotland's European future will translate itself to the unionist parties in this Parliament, which cannot seriously doubt that energy-rich, oil-rich, renewables-rich, fishing-rich Scotland would be anything other than—as the Irish minister indicated—welcome in the ranks of the European Union.

I was intrigued by the reference to cyberspace, because I have been looking at a bit of cyberspace myself. The Facebook site of Labour for Scotland has been tweeted all over the place. I was particularly interested in the comments on the page by Robert McNeill, who is the chair of East Lothian constituency Labour Party and a better together campaign co-ordinator. He wrote:

“the labour party in scotland, in my opinion have a long way to go before we will once again become a party which is electable to the scottish people. however until the party

recognise what the problems are then i am afraid it may take much longer”.

That is one of Johann Lamont's own constituency chairmen and a co-ordinator of the better together campaign. I think that Johann Lamont better get a grip of him. He is probably listening to the Tories who he is campaigning with in East Lothian.

### Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

**2. Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland. (S4F-01150)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** I have no plans to do so in the near future.

**Ruth Davidson:** Now that the Electoral Commission's report has been widely accepted by all sides of the chamber, we know the spending limits and the question for the referendum. However, as mentioned, a piece of the jigsaw is missing. Therefore, can the First Minister tell the people of Scotland the exact date on which the referendum will take place?

**Alex Salmond:** That will be introduced to Parliament with the bill that comes to Parliament in March. I am sure that that is what Ruth Davidson would fully expect to happen.

**Ruth Davidson:** I am amazed by the First Minister's coy reticence, particularly since he is no stranger to making grandstanding announcements in this chamber at First Minister's question time.

Why is the First Minister trying to keep his poker hand hidden from the room? If the referendum is the property of the people of Scotland, why can he not be straight with them? Why were members of his Government briefing national newspapers a year ago?

We have known for more than a year the date of the 2014 Ryder cup at Gleneagles and we have known for more than five years the date of the Glasgow Commonwealth games. Important though those things are, they do not impact on the course of this nation's history in the same way as a referendum. [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** Order.

**Ruth Davidson:** The people deserve to know the date now. Why will the First Minister not tell them?

**The First Minister:** Ruth Davidson has just said that she knows the date and has done for a year. If she knows the date, why is she asking me? It is entirely reasonable to introduce the date to Parliament with the bill. Surely that is what Parliament would expect.

I am delighted by Ruth Davidson's agreement on the question of the process for the referendum. I remember that she described the Scottish National Party Government's question as "fair and decisive" in her reaction just a year ago. Of course, she subsequently changed her mind, after some processes that I will not go into.

Ruth Davidson said that all parties accept the Electoral Commission's report. That is excellent news. Will she now communicate that to the Prime Minister and follow up the Deputy First Minister's request for serious discussions on the areas of practicality that the Electoral Commission rightly identified? So far, we have had a no in terms of Europe and a no in terms of Trident. At what stage will the Conservative Government start to follow the Electoral Commission's recommendations?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Jenny Marra has a constituency supplementary.

**Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Can the First Minister confirm that two inspectors resigned after Healthcare Improvement Scotland failed to publish a September inspection of Ninewells hospital? Can he confirm that the health secretary, Alex Neil, was alerted to the issue by the minister, Roseanna Cunningham? Why has the Government not made the original report public, when it contained serious reports of 20 elderly people lying on trolleys in corridors? Will the First Minister ask Healthcare Improvement Scotland to publish the original report, because failure to do so only raises suspicion that there has been a cover-up? Why the whitewash, First Minister?

**The First Minister:** I remind Jenny Marra that the process of Healthcare Improvement Scotland inspecting the care of older people in acute hospitals was initiated by this Government. Before that, there was no process for the Healthcare Improvement Scotland reports. Thus far, 12 hospitals have been inspected out of the 23 acute hospitals that will be inspected by Healthcare Improvement Scotland. In, I think, three of those examples, there has been a follow-up report, which is an unannounced inspection. I think that it is a thoroughly good thing to have an unannounced inspection after an announced inspection. In two cases—the case that Jenny Marra cites and, I think, the case in Wishaw—the reports have been published as one, which seems to be part of the Healthcare Improvement Scotland process.

However, the clue to this is in the title. The purpose of the reports is to bring about improvement in the standards of care in the health service, so that we can avoid the situation that has happened elsewhere, where dramatic and very difficult findings have been made in England's health service without a process of inspection.

In fairness, Jenny Marra will see that the report states on page 6:

"Following our unannounced inspection, we feel assured that progress is being made to address the issues we identified in the acute medical assessment unit."

That seems to me exactly the purpose of the process of inspection, which was initiated by this Government.

It is important that the whole Parliament accepts that the process of inspection from Healthcare Improvement Scotland is exactly the process that is a good thing in the health service, which is prepared to see inspectors go into our hospitals so that, when deficiencies are found, improvements can be made. That seems to me very much in the interests of the care of the patients in our hospitals.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Claire Baker has another constituency supplementary.

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** The First Minister will be aware of the decision by the board of the Byre theatre of St Andrews that the theatre is to go into liquidation; the theatre has already closed its doors. What discussions has the Scottish Government had with Creative Scotland over the closure? Can the First Minister give an assurance that ministers will do all that they can to support discussions between Fife Council and Creative Scotland in attempts to secure a future for the Byre?

**The First Minister:** I can certainly give that assurance. If the member would like to meet the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs on the issue, I am sure that that can be arranged. I am sure that members from across the chamber hope that a good future can be found for the Byre theatre, and we admire the work that it has done in the past. The answer to the question is yes. I hope that the member takes up the offer of a meeting with the culture secretary.

### **European Union Member States' Foreign Ministries (Contact)**

**3. Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind):** To ask the First Minister for what purpose the Scottish Government has recently contacted the foreign ministries of European Union member states. (S4F-01158)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** The Deputy First Minister wrote to all 26 European Union foreign ministers to reiterate the Scottish Government's position that we wish Scotland to remain a constructive member of the European Union. That was partly in response to the messages coming from the Westminster Government that many members of the Conservative Party are looking towards an exit

door for the United Kingdom as far as the European Union is concerned.

**Margo MacDonald:** I thank the First Minister for his reply, but let me probe him on the issue. In her letter, the Deputy First Minister says that his Government considers there to be

“a case for reform of certain aspects of the EU”

and that

“we are supportive of the on-going process of institutional reform”.

Does that support of institutional reform mean support for the creation, as the Commission has made quite clear, of a sovereign united states of Europe based on fiscal and political union?

**The First Minister:** No, it does not—and the opposition to that idea is shared by many states across the European Union.

The comment in the letter points to our belief that there are within European Union structures a number of policies that could do with fundamental and democratic reform. Not least among them is the common fisheries policy, which I was surprised to see the Prime Minister cite as a success in his negotiations, as if all the problems were solved. That is hardly surprising, of course, as it was a Tory Government under which the Scottish fishing industry was once described as—I quote—“expendable” in terms of Britain’s wider European interests. That is exactly why this nation of Scotland should represent its own interests in the wider Europe.

### **Nursing and Midwifery Staff (Numbers)**

**4. Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what steps the Scottish Government is taking to protect the number of nursing and midwifery staff. (S4F-01160)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** Nurses play a vital role in maintaining the health of the nation. Like all NHS Scotland staff, they have the security of our no compulsory redundancies guarantee.

From September 2006 to December 2012, we have seen an increase of 423 whole-time equivalent qualified nurses, from 41,026 to 41,449. It is also worth noting that we have more qualified nurses working in our national health service today than in any year under the previous Labour-Liberal Executive.

**Jim Eadie:** Nurses are perhaps the clearest embodiment of the NHS and the public service values for which it stands. Can the First Minister provide an assurance that in the application of workforce planning NHS boards will listen to nurses on the front line—[*Interruption.*—]—such as those at the Royal hospital for sick children and

the Royal infirmary of Edinburgh, so that their valuable experience can shape the future of our nursing workforce and deliver the high-quality person-centred care that the people of Scotland rightly expect and deserve?

**The First Minister:** I can. The nursing workforce planning draws on a huge evidence base of nursing in practice. The tools have been developed in partnership with unions such as the Royal College of Nursing and Royal College of Midwives. Boards work in partnership with nurses so that the planning tools are rolled out successfully across the country.

I know that members in the chamber—particularly those on the Labour benches—would not want their natural anxiety to attack the Government, at any opportunity and in any way, to be confused with a lack of support for the efforts and quality of our national health service staff.

**Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** It is breathtaking that the First Minister is accusing members on the Labour benches of not supporting staff in the NHS when his Government has cut almost 2,500 nurses in the past two years. The First Minister often cites England as being worse than us, but England has cut only 7,000 nurses over the same period. That means that his Government has, proportionally, cut more than three times as many nurses. At the same time, his Government has cut the student intake by 20 per cent, thereby denying 600 aspiring students a career. That comes on top of paediatric services being in disarray because of lack of staff.

Is it not the case that, in reality, the SNP’s workforce planning is not the guff the First Minister has just spoken, but a total shambles?

**The First Minister:** With Richard Simpson’s background, he is, I presume, aware that we have a higher quotient of nurses in the Scottish national health service per head of population. I just quoted the figures for whole-time equivalent qualified nursing and midwifery staff, and there are more qualified staff in the health service now than there were when we took office. Furthermore, as Richard Simpson should also be aware, there are more people working in the national health service in Scotland now than when the Scottish National Party took office.

I think that the approach ill-behoves a political party—of which Richard Simpson was a part when it established its manifesto and platform—that refused in 2007 to guarantee increased funding for the national health service. As Lord McConnell said at the time, it would have to cut its cloth accordingly. Again, under the leadership of Iain Gray, Labour refused to confirm the SNP commitment to ensure that, in revenue terms, the national health service would receive all the

Barnett consequentials. Given that the Labour Party was not willing to commit during the election campaign to supporting our national health service, what audacity its members have to come here and tell us that they support the public national health service of Scotland.

### **Police Staff Redundancies**

**5. Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government has approved plans for staff redundancies suggested by the Scottish police authority. (S4F-01165)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** The SPA has committed to the Scottish Government's no compulsory redundancy policy. Any reductions in current police support staff are anticipated to be delivered through not replacing people leaving the service, retirements, and voluntary exit schemes.

Police officer numbers remain significantly higher than they were before May 2007. There were 17,454 police officers in Scotland on 30 September 2012 and an increase of 7.5 per cent, or 1,220 officers, between March 2007 and September 2012.

**Lewis Macdonald:** Let us just assume that that answer to my question was actually a "Yes", because as far as I can interpret it, that is what the First Minister said. If, indeed, his answer is to imply that he has approved the plans, will he confirm that we are talking about 1,400 police staff being made redundant or being offered early retirement? Will he confirm a cost of £61.3 million for that? Will he tell us how those redundancies and retirements are to be funded and at what cost to the police service in the forthcoming financial year?

**The First Minister:** No, I cannot confirm those things. I can confirm that we have a no compulsory redundancies policy, in contrast not only to the Conservative-Liberal Government at Westminster but to the Labour Party when it was in power at Westminster.

As Lewis Macdonald is fully aware—given that his party supported it—the move to a single national police service in Scotland obviously means that areas of duplication across the current police forces will no longer be required when we move to a single national police service. That was one of the arguments for, and one of the points of, having a single police service in Scotland.

The no compulsory redundancies policy is a huge assurance to staff throughout Scotland—not only in the police service, but in the national health service and across the public sector. I see Labour members shaking their heads. Do they not think that a no compulsory redundancies policy in Scotland's public services is a good thing? Do

they not think that it would have been good if the Labour Party had introduced such a policy when it was in government? Are they seriously questioning the commitment that the Scottish National Party Government has introduced?

The key thing to which Lewis Macdonald did not point is that this Government's policing policies, implemented by our police support staff and police officers, have now resulted in recorded crime in Scotland being at a 37-year low.

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** What does the First Minister think of the Westminster Government's proposal—which is, incidentally, shared by the Labour Opposition at Westminster—that senior police officers need not have any policing experience?

**The First Minister:** The consultation on direct entry to the police in England and Wales comes from a recommendation in the Winsor review. The Scottish Government did not commission the Winsor review, which relates to policing in England and Wales, and will not be implementing the Winsor package in Scotland.

Public confidence in the police is at an historic high in Scotland. By contrast, police confidence in the Westminster Government is at an historic low south of the border. It is my firm recollection that the Labour Party in Westminster is not complaining about the principle of police redundancies south of the border, but is just complaining about the number. That contrasts with the expanding situation of front-line officers in Scotland delivering the 37-year low in recorded crime.

**Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con):** Given the First Minister's response to Lewis Macdonald about civilian staff and the escalating numbers of police officers who are being placed on restricted duties, how will there be room for all those people in the back offices of police stations the length and breadth of Scotland?

**The First Minister:** The Government's commitment to the police service in Scotland over the past six years is basically beyond argument, given the success in implementing our commitment on the numbers of police officers on the streets and in the communities of Scotland, and the result in terms of the fall in recorded crime. It seems to me that recorded crime being at a 37-year low and police numbers in Scotland being at a record high are not only related but indicate the success of this Government's criminal justice policy.

### **Non-profit-distributing Model Projects**

**6. Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the First Minister what projects, and at what value,

have been delivered through the non-profit distributing model pipeline in 2012-13. (S4F-01163)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** The £2.5 billion NPD project pipeline is one of the largest programmes of its kind in Europe. Gavin Brown will be delighted to know that the value of the NPD projects that have entered procurement through the hub programme and other means in 2012-13 is to date approximately £900 million.

**Gavin Brown:** The First Minister said earlier that he liked to spend time in cyberspace. I think that cyberspace is where he got that answer. My question was specifically on what has been delivered in 2012-13. Will he now answer that question?

**The First Minister:** As Gavin Brown well knows, the NPD programme is a project-based finance programme. The issue of entering procurement is rather important, because the projects concerned are now being bid for by construction companies across Scotland.

The member wants some detail, so let me give him some detail: Brechin high school, Wick high school, James Gillespie's high school, the NHS Lanarkshire bundle, Woodside health centre, Eastwood health centre, Gorbals health centre, Maryhill health centre, the Royal infirmary of Edinburgh—which is in the area that is meant to be represented by Gavin Brown—[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order!

**The First Minister:** There is also Lochgilphead mental health; Forres, Tain and Woodside, which is a £14 million project; Kilmarnock College, which is a £15 million project that was entered in the *Official Journal of the European Union* on 4 April 2012; the NHS Lothian Royal hospital for sick children, which is a £155 million project that was entered in the journal on 5 December 2012; the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service, which is a £36 million project that was entered in the journal on 10 December 2012; NHS Ayrshire and Arran acute mental health, which was entered in the journal on 14 January 2013; and, most recently, a project that will be of great pleasure to the members from the north-east of Scotland—[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Enough! Order!

**The First Minister:** —the Aberdeen western peripheral route and Balmedie to Tipperty bundle, which is a £472 million project that was entered in the journal on 18 January this year.

**Members:** More!

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order. Can we have a bit of calm, please?

Ken Macintosh will ask a brief supplementary.

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** I had a serious question about digging holes, but the First Minister seems to be the only person who is digging a hole around here.

The First Minister—or, at least, his Government—has confirmed slippage in the programme of at least £300 million this year and at least £300 million next year under the general headings education and health. Will the First Minister promise to tell us specifically in which projects there has been slippage? I understand that they include half the projects on the list that he read out, including Wick high school and James Gillespie's high school.

**The First Minister:** The information was presented to the relevant parliamentary committee, but I am glad that that supplementary has been asked, because the Labour Party seemed to be suggesting that, with project-based finance, it is possible to shift the project-based finance that is dedicated to some projects over to other projects. That is not how project and revenue-based finance works. It has to be based on these projects.

Let us remember why we are introducing the £2.5 billion NPD programme. One of the reasons why we are doing so is that there have been dramatic cutbacks in direct capital spending. Direct capital spending has the advantage that it is possible to implement it very quickly, as John Swinney has demonstrated through the shovel-ready projects that he has announced over the past few months. [*Interruption.*] He has announced a substantial number of shovel-ready projects in the past few weeks. Has the Labour Party been sleeping?

Why has that been necessary? It has been necessary because Alistair Darling, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, postulated a cut of 36 per cent in the direct capital investment budget for Scotland. The Conservative Party has reduced that cut to 26 per cent, which it claims is an increase. I think that the NPD programme, as illustrated by the commitments that are under procurement, is going to deliver substantial benefits for the people of Scotland, and that members of the Labour Party should hang their heads in shame that Alistair Darling created the situation that we face.

## Musicians Union Work not Play Campaign

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):**

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-04971, in the name of Drew Smith, on work not play. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

#### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament welcomes the launch of the Musicians' Union's Work Not Play campaign; understands that this campaign aims to highlight the growing trend of professional musicians in Glasgow and across Scotland who are expected to work for no fee; notes that this builds on the work done by the Musicians' Union in respect of the London 2012 Olympics, which highlighted that the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games had offered many professional musicians unpaid gigs; considers that in an era of illegal downloading, live performance revenue is incredibly important; believes that many people seem to think that music and entertainment are a hobby rather than a career and are unaware of the years of training and hard work that it takes to become a professional performer; further understands that the campaign website, [WorkNotPlay.co.uk](http://WorkNotPlay.co.uk), is available for musicians to post such experiences, and notes that the Twitter hashtag, #WorkNotPlayMU, is also available.

12:36

**Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab):** I thank all those members who supported the motion for the opportunity to have it debated today. I thank particularly my colleague Patricia Ferguson for her support on the issue. She cannot take part in the debate as she is on parliamentary business at the Committee of the Regions.

I refer you, Presiding Officer, and members to my register of interests, not as a performing artist but as a past member of the Scottish Trades Union Congress general council, to which the Musicians Union is affiliated.

The trades union movement has shaped my politics, and it continues to do so. I take this opportunity to congratulate the MU on all that it does to represent musicians, support a successful music industry and remind us that musicians are workers, too. I welcome to the public gallery Rab Noakes, a member of the MU executive committee, Fraser Speirs and Bill Martin, members of the regional committee, and Jen Hunter, the MU's regional officer.

Music enriches our lives as listeners and spectators. Those of us who can play or who have had the opportunity to learn to do so are enriched. In common with amateurs, many professional and semi-professional musicians love making music, but for most the job of being a musician is unlikely to enrich them in monetary terms.

The MU's excellent publication "The Working Musician" is the culmination of a major research project that the MU commissioned last year. In the document, the MU has brought together some sobering statistics about the reality of life for the jobbing musician, which I will share with Parliament and the public at large. More than half of the musicians surveyed by the project—56 per cent—earn less than £20,000 a year. Almost two thirds of working musicians are not regularly able to contribute to a pension, and 60 per cent of musicians report that they have worked for free in the past 12 months.

The evidence detailed in "The Working Musician" is the result of a survey of more than 2,000 workers and in-depth interviews with both musicians and industry insiders. Most working musicians are multiskilled; four out of five have been performing for more than five years; two thirds have invested four or more years in learning their craft through formal training and education; and 40 per cent hold a degree in music. Other self-employed workers face some similar challenges, but the situation for musicians is on a different scale. I mentioned pension contributions a moment ago: at present, one in five of all workers are without pension provision and one in three self-employed workers do not have a pension, but only 35 per cent of musicians pay into a pension.

The MU undertook its research because it suspected that the scale of the problem among its membership was large. However, it was also prompted to undertake the research by the explosion in the numbers of musicians reporting the expectation that they would work for free during the London Olympics. The legacy of the cultural Olympiad should not be impoverished music makers. I therefore ask the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs to consider how we should address that specific issue as we prepare for Glasgow 2014.

Nearly all of us love music. I enjoy gigs, music festivals and, some colleagues might be surprised to hear, even the odd orchestral performance or opera when I can. We will all have different favourite bands, pubs where we go to hear music, clubs and companies that we support. Why do we all value music, but fail to value musicians?

The United Kingdom and Scottish music industries are extremely successful. Money is made, but it does not always go to those who make music. UK music exports amount to £17 billion a year. The UK is one of only three countries in the world—the others are Sweden and the United States—that are net exporters of music. Half of all albums that are sold in the UK are recorded by British artists. The British music market is the third largest in the world, and 10 per



cent of all the recorded music that is sold in the world is British. In one year, British orchestras played to UK audiences of 4.18 million, toured in 39 countries, performed 457 concerts overseas and generated an income of nearly £150 million. Britain loves music, and Scotland loves music.

One of the reasons why I ended up in my city of Glasgow was the live music scene. Glasgow is recognised as one of the world's foremost musical places, even by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. As Celtic Connections continues in Glasgow this week, so does the rock, pop and indie scene. Glasgow's music scene is legendary, and it stretches across the whole spectrum, from contemporary and classical to Celtic and country music. Its venues are equally varied, and it hosts an average of 130 music events each week, which is more than the figure for any other place in Scotland.

Many gigging artists, session musicians, orchestra players, music arrangers and teachers are told by promoters in the industry and others, "I've got a great gig for you. Lots of exposure. A great support slot. But sorry—no pay." The industry itself has a lot to answer for. My former Labour colleague Pauline McNeill was closely involved with musicians and promoters in efforts to empower artists and improve their working conditions, but there are problems outside the industry, too. Charities are among the worst offenders. Musicians will often hear the statement, "It's for a good cause." Most of us will have attended events—we will possibly have paid a ticket price for them—for which the sound person and bar staff have been paid and the venue has been hired, but the musicians have been told, "We don't have a budget for music."

Fraser Speirs, who is in the public gallery, has said:

"The problem occurs when a charity event approaches asking for a band to play 'just half an hour, maybe an hour at most' and no fee is available. Often I have financed a four piece band only to discover that the PA company, sound crew, lighting rig and guest speaker have all been engaged at their regular commercial rate".

There is nothing wrong with musicians donating to a cause if they want to do so, but the donation should be just that, not an expectation. Every time a musician gigs for free, the likelihood of others being asked to do so increases. Every time someone has to give up music as a job, every one of us who loves music misses out.

Like other workers, musicians are facing tough times. Their income is threatened by illegally downloaded music, which means that they have to rely on live performance fees more and more. Making music can be a career, not just a hobby. Professional musicians are like any other professionals and should be recognised as such.

I do not have much more time available in this short debate. I appeal to the Scottish Government to ensure specifically that, wherever music is part of an event that the Scottish Government is involved in supporting, work is not play, and work should be paid.

12:43

**Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I, too, am pleased to be taking part in this debate, and I thank Drew Smith for bringing it to the chamber.

My family has had a long association with the Musicians Union. As I grew up, my father was a well-known trumpet player in the Lanarkshire area. He was the Eddie Calvert of his day. For those who do not know about Eddie Calvert, I should say that he was a famous English trumpet player, who enjoyed his greatest successes in the 1950s. Calvert had his first UK number one in 1954 with "Oh Mein Papa". My father—also called Richard Lyle—was a fervent Musicians Union member, and I well remember him taking part in other union activities in the 1960s and 1970s. He played in a dance band. In those days, he earned £15 a week in his day job, but he could supplement the family income by playing at least two nights a week in Lanarkshire.

The debate centres on the actions of current hall and club owners who want musicians to play for nothing in their hall or club. When I first heard of that, I was appalled. A campaigner informed me that owners of halls or clubs force musicians to sell tickets for their gigs, and they must have a certain number of tickets sold prior to the performance to perform. Hall and club owners now have their cake and eat it by not paying the musician and getting an income from ticket and food and drink sales. That cannot be right.

The London Olympics brought that escalating problem to the attention of many. I can see the benefits that the London games brought to many, but it is unfair to ask for such an important part of the games and the supporting activities to be done for free.

We must all remember that musicians train and develop their skills as a career choice, not as a hobby, and they must be compensated for the work that they undertake. Research has shown that more than half of professional musicians earn less than £20,000 a year and that 60 per cent have worked for free in the past year. Those figures are particularly stark when we consider that the United Kingdom Government failed to include music in its £6 million boost to the creative industries.

Because of those low incomes, only 35 per cent of musicians pay into a pension scheme, which is a worrying trend given today's economic

uncertainty. Compounding the problem is the fact that a large number of people in today's society think it acceptable to download music for free—or, if they pay for it, it is often extremely cheap. That has led to many professional musicians relying on live performances to make up for the loss of earnings. If that income, too, is threatened, many musicians will no longer be able to continue in their chosen profession.

Scotland is known for its world-class musicians. However, if the problem is not resolved, we will no longer be able to make that claim, as many musicians will have to face the stark reality that a career as a professional musician is not a viable option.

12:46

**Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con):** I congratulate Drew Smith on securing the debate. I am pleased to be able to explore some of the important issues that it raises.

It is important to begin, as other members have done, by recognising the important place of live music in our culture. The motion focuses on professional musicians in Glasgow and across Scotland. The issue is important precisely because we have such a proud tradition of live music in our country. From major international acts to traditional musicians, singers and performers, Scotland has a vibrant and diverse music scene.

The public perception is often that professional musicians play to crowds of thousands and are among the highest earners in our society. Although that might be true for a small number of performers who are in the public eye, the reality for most professional musicians is very different. Indeed, recent research that was conducted by the Musicians Union highlighted the issue as one of the main challenges that face those who seek to make a living from music. According to the research, more than half of professional musicians earn less than £20,000 a year, with many taking home considerably less than that.

It is worth identifying the difference between those who perform for enjoyment and those who perform to try to make a living. We should note that musicians have a variety of motivations for performing. Those who play for enjoyment are often in competition with those who are trying to make a living from music. Others are somewhere in the middle, and use music as a means of earning a bit of extra cash alongside another job.

Often, for people who are just starting out and trying to make it as professional musicians, free gigs might give them the exposure that they need early in their careers. However, other musicians who are playing for free, possibly on the same bill at the same venue, might have no such desire.

Therefore, it is hard to differentiate between professional performers and those who play as a hobby, as they often play on the same stage.

That does not mean that there are not real issues that need to be considered. The work not play campaign has highlighted that, in some areas, there seems to be a culture in which venues or promoters take advantage of aspiring musicians. If someone is making money from the playing of music, be it a promoter, bar owner or venue manager, it is only fair that the profit is shared with the musicians. That issue is challenging enough to address properly at local level, but I am also aware of concerns about professional musicians being asked to do unpaid gigs that were attached to last year's Olympic games. The organisers of Glasgow 2014 will want to be aware of those concerns as preparations for the Commonwealth games continue.

Common sense suggests that, in that situation, musicians should be remunerated for their work. However, there will be events that might not break even and for which profit was never a primary concern. In such circumstances, it would be difficult to expect a promoter, who might be investing their time, effort and money into an event, to pay out of their own pocket if there was never an agreed commercial contract.

The campaign website that the motion refers to includes the experiences of a number of musicians, some of whom describe being pressurised into performing at charity events for little or no pay. Clearly, bands might wish to offer their services for free to a charity that they support, or for other reasons. That could range from bands supporting national campaigns such as Live Aid to a ceilidh band waiving a fee for performing at a friend's wedding. However, using guilt to compel musicians to play for free is a worrying road to go down—playing for free should always be at the behest of the musicians.

We also need to be aware of charitable gigs that are not so charitable after all. There are a number of reports of events that have been billed as charity events with high ticket prices but with very little money actually going to charities. Those often involve organisers and promoters taking their usual fee whereas the musicians are expected to play for nothing. The key thing is that musicians should not be exploited by unscrupulous promoters.

If musicians are happy to perform with no fee, that is their right, but nobody should be pressured into working for free. It is good that the work not play campaign is raising public awareness of the issues. Members of the public might often believe that musicians are being well paid when the opposite is true. Years, often decades, of hard work go into becoming a professional musician,

and musicians should expect to be paid fairly for their work.

12:50

**Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP):** I welcome this afternoon's debate. This is a very important issue, and I congratulate Drew Smith on bringing it to the chamber.

As members will know, I play the bagpipes, so I know how hard it is to learn an instrument. Years of hard work and dedication go in before someone becomes proficient in any instrument. I can fully appreciate the frustration that is felt by musicians when they are expected to play for free. For me, it is a hobby, not a profession. I always considered playing my instrument as a hobby and never as a profession for some point in the future.

As we have heard, the recent report from the Musicians Union highlights the fact that 56 per cent of the musicians who were surveyed earned less than £20,000 per year. That is not a great deal of money, particularly for a professional musician. It is not a great reward for a career that has involved many years of training, rehearsals and dedication, not to mention the personal and financial sacrifices that are required to achieve the level of skill that enables someone to be a professional musician.

The motion highlights the fact that too many people seem to regard music as

"a hobby rather than a career".

There have always been examples of musicians being asked to play and work for free for charity, as Drew Smith indicated. At the recent London Olympics there seemed to be a blanket policy of not paying for music. Recently, other organisations have started to do the same. That has had an impact on the work that is available for musicians. There are reports of some venues trawling around for open mic nights, looking for musicians who are just starting out and getting them to play at venues for free, rather than paying for professional musicians. I understand the arguments about the showcasing of new bands, singers and musicians wanting to break into the scene—I understand the idea of providing someone with the opportunity to play. However, there needs to be a balance if that is to take place, rather than what appears to be the norm now of getting musicians to play for free.

To be a top-class musician takes years and years of dedication and study. It is a full-time job. Although it is largely true that musicians enjoy their jobs, that does not mean that those jobs should have no value. It should be remembered that the enjoyable part of a musician's job is often their time on the stage or in the studio. However, those enjoyable, creative times are short

compared with the time devoted to work behind the scenes, including travelling, rehearsing and administration. A one-hour gig can be part of a musician's 12-hour day.

I have played at many an event in the past. When I was younger, playing at weddings, the wedding might start at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, but our day would then be over—we did not do anything that day apart from going and playing our pipes at that wedding. When someone is being paid to go and do a job, it is not just for the time when they are performing—they are getting paid for the whole of their time that day. I suggest that that is how it should be.

Music is already a difficult career to sustain. Unless a musician makes it to the very top, it can be very poorly paid. Most of the Musicians Union's 30,000 members have to do other jobs alongside music to make ends meet.

While we highlight the problems that are currently faced by working musicians, it is still necessary to provide support for the musicians of the future. We need to do what we can to ensure that the study of music is available to everyone who has the ability and who wants to do it. I therefore congratulate the Scottish Government on the additional £1 million of funding to provide schools with the means to buy musical instruments.

I also congratulate all local authorities in Scotland on the excellent music tuition that goes on across the country. A short time ago, the Parliament had a debate about the varying fees that local authorities apply but, in the main, local authorities do a tremendous job on music tuition and singing.

I welcome the debate and hope that it goes some way towards highlighting to the general public and the people who run venues the importance of music as a career and the reasons why professional musicians, like any other professional, deserve to be paid for their services.

12:55

**Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** An American writer once said that music is the fourth great material want, after food, clothes and shelter.

I think that we all have powerful memories of music in our lives. I still remember the first live gig that I went to, more than 40 years ago, when 900 people—some 300 too many—were in the Inverness Caley hotel ballroom to see Rory Gallagher. That memory has stayed with me for a long time. I remember being in the Usher hall in 1991 to hear the St Petersburg Symphony Orchestra play the Leningrad symphony on the very night that tanks were rolling towards their city.

I have talked in the Parliament about the emotional impact of seeing the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra play in the Raploch, in Stirling.

I also remember a folk festival in Glen Nevis, which featured no one that I had ever heard of or have heard of since but somehow managed to channel the grandeur of the setting into a memory that will live with me for ever. I remember stumbling across a jazz band in a hotel bar in Inverness, which featured a guitarist who, although he was part time, was quite able to rip off John McLaughlin solos that I thought no one else on the planet could play. We all need music to enrich and punctuate our lives, and we do not just need stars.

My daughter is an instrumental teacher in Haddington, the town where I live. She is part of a rich music scene in that small town. I say “rich”, but that is ironic, because none of the people who are involved is in any way rich, however talented they are. They all scrape a living, managing an ever-shifting portfolio of teaching jobs, youth work and any non-musical activity that pays—performing and recording come on top of all that. Even when they have a gig for which they are meant to be paid, they often have trouble getting the money out of the promoter or venue.

I was therefore not surprised when Drew Smith said that 56 per cent of musicians earn less than £20,000 a year and two thirds of musicians have no pension. The Parliament has sometimes debated the iniquity of industries that use interns and tell young people that they must work for nothing to gain experience and show that they can do the job. That approach is endemic in the music industry—hence the 60 per cent of musicians who say that they have had to work for nothing in the past year.

We should support the work not play campaign. We should support anything that increases the opportunity for paid employment for our musicians. The campaign relates, I think, to the let the children play campaign for instrumental tuition in schools in Scotland. Just as we must ensure that local authorities do not regard charges for instrumental tuition in our schools as a soft touch and put them up at budget time, we must ensure that authorities do not regard instrumental tuition itself as a soft touch and cut the number of tutors. That is the kind of work that many musicians do to get by, so that they can play the music that they want to play.

Luther said:

“Next to the word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.”

Those of us who cannot sing a note and cannot play an instrument need musicians, and not just

the stars. We should welcome the work not play campaign, and we should value and invest in the treasure of music and do everything that we can to support it.

12:59

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** I congratulate Drew Smith on his motion, which has enabled us to have a debate—with a healthy number of impassioned speeches—about how we can best encourage support for Scotland’s music industry. Drew Smith set out the issues well, including the pensions issue, the social expectation that musicians will play for free and the impact of digital downloading. I hope that we will return to the area, and not just in a members’ business debate, as I believe that we need to look at it more closely.

I am sure that we all agree that the music industry is an essential part of the fabric of Scotland’s culture, and today’s debate marks a critical step towards ensuring that we place a value on our musicians’ art and performances. Scotland’s music culture and the industry that delivers it are world class, and it is the duty of the culture secretary to ensure that this part of Scotland’s identity is promoted, nurtured and developed. However, I am sure that members understand that there are limits to what the Scottish Government can do directly in relation to commissioners. We cannot direct private venues, charities or those who organise weddings to pay, but we can support the campaign to raise awareness of the concerns that have been raised today.

The latest Scottish annual business statistics tell us that, in 2010, Scotland’s performing arts industries contributed more than £77 million to Scotland’s economy, with 460 registered businesses turning over £160 million and providing 4,700 jobs. Specifically on musicians, the annual population survey, which calculates on an occupation basis as opposed to looking at registered businesses, tells us that there are about 3,000 working musicians in Scotland.

As we heard, musicians tend to operate a portfolio approach to their business, which centres on their networks and their reputation to secure their next piece of work. Although the music industry necessarily operates in a flexible manner, the compulsion to work for free has the potential to compromise the professional integrity of the industry and create insecurity and hardship for musicians. We heard about that in the debate.

The Government continues to support the music sector in Scotland in a range of ways. Our national performing companies, which are the Scottish

Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Ballet, the National Theatre of Scotland, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Scottish Opera, operate under contracts with their musicians. The terms and conditions, including rates, are cleared by the Musicians Union. However, I appreciate that there is a wide spectrum in the music industry and that the national performing companies are at the more structured end of the scale. It is important that we look at models of best practice, as set out by the campaign, and that those who commission live performances, who might previously have expected to get performances for free, consider providing at least minimum compensation for musicians' performance time, for example by paying the living wage. We expect that in other areas—why do we not expect it in this area?

Drew Smith's points about performances around the Commonwealth games were well made. I will take that forward.

Scotland loves music, but we also need to love our musicians. We need to ensure that we respect them and recompense them for the work that they do in inspiring our nation. A fairer deal all round for performers, the sector and the country needs to be engendered. The Musicians Union and the responses to the recent survey that Creative Scotland commissioned might confirm the value that our culture places on our music industry, but the dilemma that our performing musicians are facing needs to be addressed by both event managers and artists themselves.

I commend the Musicians Union for its fair play guide, which sets out a simple model for musicians in managing their business. I recognise from my work with the culture sector that those who earn a living through art or culture have their art as their focus and might not have business planning as their top priority, but I also know that the commitment and passion that are delivered by artists are things that set them apart from other businesses. The artist's passion might sustain their brand and image but, unfortunately, it does not necessarily sustain their livelihood. The Musicians Union's simple guide could help to unlock some of our musicians' potential through the clarity that they will experience in defining their activities and the articulation of their choices. Patterns are likely to emerge from the exercise in planning, highlighting the venues and events that their genre might tend towards supporting in kind and those with which a commercial relationship is emerging and there is more stability.

We recognise the challenging economic conditions that are being faced across the music industry, from artists and their managers through to labels, promoters and venues and, critically, high street retailers. We have seen the difficulties faced by HMV, for example. What is required is

the cultivation of more proactive support of and by that community, not just the music makers and performers but those who stand to benefit from its production—promoters, venues, retailers and, most important of all, music fans and audiences.

Only today, we saw the launch of the CREATE—creativity, regulation, enterprise and technology—centre at the University of Glasgow, which is a £5 million research initiative by a consortium of seven universities. It will look at copyright and new business models in the creative economy. It is very important. As was mentioned in the debate, the importance of live performances will increase in a time of digital downloads.

We must strive to develop a culture that recognises the interdependency of the music community and increases the intrinsic value of music itself. One of our nation's defining characteristics is our passion for music, and we must focus our efforts on creating the most supportive commercial environment possible for our artists, labels, venues and retailers, so that they can earn a living from entertaining, enlightening, informing and inspiring our audiences.

I hope that the issue can be addressed through mutual recognition of artists and commissioners. Musicians should place value on their work and not too readily accept having to deliver their business for no fee, and commissioners might consider musicians' right to be compensated fairly for a fair hour or two's work, as we have discussed.

The Government believes in investing in and supporting music. Despite the pressure on budgets, I have maintained the youth music initiative, which is in its 10th year and which has inspired so many. We have also seen great strides forward. For example, the Scottish Brass Band Association has grown by 500 per cent in five years. We are at a point where we are creating more demand: we are creating more capacity for musicians and we are inspiring more young people to take part in music. Some of those young people will have a future with music as a hobby, as Stuart McMillan mentioned, but some will want to move on.

As well as the success of the youth music initiative, there has been support for Fèis Rois, which established a successful ceilidh trail programme across the Highlands and provides valuable professional development and employment opportunities. We are looking to extend that into the central belt. It provides the transition from playing for experience to paid performances. The Fèis Rois trail included 78 performances to more than 5,000 people over the summer.

One of our challenges is to support that increased passion and activity in music with structures. The more music we produce, the more audiences we grow locally and, indeed, nationally and the more music festivals we have, the greater the expectation sometimes that access to music should be free and that musicians do not necessarily have to be paid. The Government will continue to support the music industry through our partners, agencies and varying initiatives and programmes, but we need the various parts of the industry to come together, which I would be more than happy to help facilitate, to make sure that the lives and the livelihoods of people who are involved in music in Scotland can be respected and promoted so that music can be loved for generations to come.

It is right that we take time in Parliament to recognise the importance of music to our country and the importance of respect for our musicians who provide that music.

13:07

*Meeting suspended.*

14:30

*On resuming—*

## **Child Benefit**

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):**

The first item of business this afternoon is a debate on motion S4M-05521, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on child benefit. I call Nicola Sturgeon to speak to and move the motion.

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon):** I very much welcome this opportunity for the Parliament to debate recent changes to child benefit and the impact that the changes, together with wider welfare and benefit changes, will have on women, children and families right across Scotland. I very much hope that whatever else we may disagree on in the chamber, we will all be able to agree that it is simply unacceptable—indeed, I would describe it as morally unacceptable—that almost one in five children in our rich country lives in poverty and that those in the poorest three income deciles share just 14 per cent of our collective income. It is incumbent on us all—the Government and everybody in the Parliament—to address that to the best of our ability. On behalf of the Government, I accept unreservedly our responsibility in that regard.

Tackling those levels of poverty and inequality is a central priority for the Scottish Government and, as I have just said, it should be a driving priority for all of us in Scotland. Indeed, it is, perhaps above all else, my desire to see greater equality, fairness and social justice that will lead me next year, when faced with the excellent question “Should Scotland be an independent country?”, to vote yes.

Under the Westminster Government, we are part of the fourth most unequal society in the developed world. I do not believe that we should settle for that, because that is not as good as it gets. I believe that Scotland can and should do better. It is that passionate belief that drives my support for Scotland being an independent country. I believe that not just because greater equality will enhance the quality of life for individuals in Scotland, although it will undoubtedly do that, but because a wealth of international evidence shows that countries that achieve greater social equality and social justice also perform better in economic terms.

Social justice leads to social cohesion, which is the building block of economic success. That is why our Government's economic strategy and national performance framework includes cohesion and solidarity targets that are designed

to increase incomes and reduce the disparity between different sections of our society.

While we continue to pursue that approach in Scotland, the United Kingdom Government, as we all know, is implementing far-reaching changes and significant spending reductions across the welfare system. I believe that the package of welfare cuts being introduced by the UK Government will have a significant impact on some of the most vulnerable people in our society. All the devolved services of health, housing, social care and employability will be affected in some way. We have a situation in which reserved decisions over which we have no say are impacting on devolved areas of responsibility, which in my view highlights the inadequacy of our current system of government.

The scope and scale of the changes present really significant challenges for people and organisations in Scotland and threaten to undermine and, indeed, cancel out so much of the good work that we collectively are able to do here in Scotland. That is true of the removal of disability living allowance, the reductions in working tax credits and what I would describe as the scandalous imposition of the bedroom tax that will see more than 100,000 tenants of social rented property lose an average of £12 every week as a result of underoccupancy restrictions. It is also true of the child benefit changes that the UK Government introduced recently. Those newly implemented changes will see around 90,000 families in Scotland having their child benefit income reduced or removed.

The UK Government says that that does not matter because it affects only the better off, except that its cack-handed implementation means that many people losing benefit will actually be on lower incomes than some of the people retaining the benefit.

There is a more fundamental point of principle at stake with child benefit. We have had a lot of debate in the chamber recently about universal benefits. I believe that the universal provision of key benefits is part of the social wage, and I will say more about that later. I accept that others disagree with that view. Some, such as the Conservatives, have probably always disagreed with it, whereas others, such as the Labour Party, have more recently come to betray the principle of universality. However, until recently, I thought that one thing that we all agreed on was that, of all benefits, child benefit was the one that should without doubt be universal. In my view, it should be.

Child benefit is paid directly to women in many cases—indeed, probably the majority of cases. It is therefore more likely than many other forms of support to directly benefit children and families,

and it is fundamentally wrong that it will be subject to a means test.

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Obviously, we have very different policy perspectives, but I do not disagree with some of the Deputy First Minister's analysis. Will there be a commitment to reinstate universal child benefit when the Government outlines its policies for an independent Scotland?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** We will outline our welfare policy in an independent Scotland in order to persuade people of the benefits of independence. Our commitment to the universal provision of key benefits will be a key part of our policies. It will also be our aim over time, when we have our hands on the levers of power in an independent Scotland, to ensure that we build a welfare system that reflects our values as a society. In my view, that is one of the key, overriding arguments for the Scottish Parliament being independent and in charge of welfare.

The cuts to child benefit go further than just the introduction of a means test. At the same time as the benefit is being removed or reduced for 90,000 families, it is, for others, being subject to a three-year freeze followed by the 1 per cent uprating cap. That means that a family with two children will be £1,100 worse off. We must recognise that, when we talk about those amounts of money, we are talking about a direct impact on the wellbeing of children throughout Scotland.

The Department for Work and Pensions has estimated that, compared with the current method of uprating benefits by the consumer price index, its latest changes to benefits uprating, which take effect between this year and 2016, will result in an extra 200,000 children throughout the UK being in relative income poverty. Based on the current share of children in poverty, that will result in an estimated 15,000 children in Scotland being pushed into poverty as a result of the UK Government's misguided policies. Some 15,000 Scottish children will be plunged into poverty as a result of policies that we do not support and which were introduced by a Government that Scotland did not vote for. It is beyond me how anyone who cares about democracy and social justice—I include those in other parties, because I know that we all care about democracy and social justice—can argue against welfare powers being in the hands of the Scottish Parliament so that we can ensure that we have a welfare system that reflects what we want it to reflect.

**Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab):** The Deputy First Minister rightly talks about the 200,000 children who would be at risk of falling back into poverty across the UK, and she has pinpointed 15,000 children in Scotland. How will her solution help the

185,000 children throughout the UK who are not in Scotland?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I do not want to see a single child anywhere in the UK or in the world living in poverty. However, as a Scottish minister, I have a primary responsibility to ensure that we do everything that we can in Scotland to lift Scottish children out of poverty. It infuriates me to have a situation in which a Government that Scotland did not vote for—a Government that Drew Smith's party does not support—is introducing policies that run counter to our attempts to tackle child poverty. Frankly, it is not good enough for us simply to wring our hands and say that we accept a situation in which 15,000 more Scottish children get plunged into poverty. This Government will never accept such a situation.

The situation is of even greater concern when we consider the Resolution Foundation's estimate that 60 per cent of the cuts that will result from the 1 per cent cap on the uprating of benefits will fall on in-work households. That gives the lie to the UK Government's claim that the reforms are all about the so-called work shy.

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** Are those not the same in-work households that have benefited from a massive rise in the tax threshold, which will result in a typical earner getting £2,500 more in income?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Even if that was correct, where is the logic, according to Alex Johnstone's analysis, in giving with one hand just to take away with the other? The point is to try to lift people out of poverty, not to push them straight back into it.

The totality of the welfare changes and the changes to benefits uprating will affect 1 million working-age households in Scotland and we estimate that they will reduce the total income of Scottish households by about £210 million by 2014-15. Again, that is putting a brake on the economy when we should be trying to get it going. For households with children who are living in poverty and where benefits make up more than half of the income, frankly, the situation is of serious concern. There are different projections and predictions, but one thing is clear and central: the changes will have a significant negative impact on child poverty in Scotland.

Mitigation of all that is beyond the powers of the Scottish Government. Responsibility lies with the UK Government, and we will continue to press it to do more. However, we will continue to do what we can, where we can to protect the most vulnerable in our society. Just last week, I announced a package of more than £5 million to support organisations that are on the front line delivering advice and assistance and which are under pressure as more people come to them for help.

The money will help to provide much-needed support to individuals and families.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention on that?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Yes—briefly.

**Jackie Baillie:** Why did the cabinet secretary delay that package, which she recognises as so important, for about 18 months, when the consequentials had already been given to the Scottish Government?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I sometimes wonder what side Jackie Baillie is on. Why can she not join with Citizens Advice Scotland and welcome the announcement of help that we are giving, instead of appearing sometimes to defend the UK Government that she supposedly does not support? [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Could we have a little bit of order, please?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** We are also providing more than £9 million for the new Scottish welfare fund to top up the funding that is to be transferred from the Department for Work and Pensions. Again, I hope that Labour will be able to support that.

We will do everything that we can to mitigate, but would it not be so much better—indefinitely better—for this Parliament not to have to spend valuable resources mitigating the wrong-headed policies of a Tory Government in Westminster and instead be able to design a welfare system that we want and invest those resources in lifting people out of poverty? That is what we need to aspire to do.

As I said, the changes to child benefit are not just about the impact, important and devastating though that might be; they are also a matter of principle. In my view, the removal of entitlements is at odds with the principle of universal benefits and the benefits that I believe it can deliver for all. We have protected the social wage over the past years, as part of the contract between the people of Scotland and their Government. Under that, we will defend core universal services, rights and benefits. We have introduced or maintained free university education, prescriptions and personal care for the elderly and we have provided a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies, which the First Minister talked about in the chamber before lunch time.

Those are the right policies. I believe that it would be so much better if this Parliament had all the powers, so that we did not have policies that are introduced elsewhere running counter to the work that we seek to do here.



**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab):** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Yes—if I have time. Do I have time, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Yes.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** Since the cabinet secretary uses the term “universal benefits” to cover the devolved universal services, is she saying in the last two lines of her motion that it would be impossible, post independence, for a devolved Scottish National Party Government to protect what she calls “universal benefits”?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Post independence, there will not be a devolved SNP Government—I hope that there will be an SNP Government of an independent Scottish Parliament. A consequence of people in Scotland voting no next year will be that we will continue to be at the mercy of Tory Governments that cut our budgets and cut welfare for the most vulnerable in our society. I have the greatest respect for Malcolm Chisholm, which is why I cannot believe that, deep down inside, he is happy with that prospect, because I know that he wants better for Scotland.

It will give me great pleasure to move the motion—actually, it will not, because I wish that we did not have to debate the issue and that we had the powers that we need to ensure that we have a welfare system that suits our people. I hope that, before too much longer, that is exactly what we will have.

I move,

That the Parliament notes with concern the changes to child benefit announced by the UK Government and the impact that these will have in Scotland; considers the decision to remove or reduce this universal benefit for over 90,000 Scottish families to be unfair to those families and children; particularly notes the impact of the three-year freeze from 2011-12 to 2013-14 and the 1% uprating cap for child benefit in both 2014-15 and 2015-16, which means that a family with two children will lose £1,100; regrets that cuts to child benefit will directly impact on the wellbeing of children across Scotland and notes that the Department for Work and Pensions acknowledges that the UK Government's welfare cuts will lead to an increase in child poverty, and recognises that it is only through the full powers of independence that it can properly protect the universal benefits that produce fair and equitable outcomes.

14:45

**Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab):** Family allowance was introduced in 1946 by the great reforming Labour Government, which did so much to create and extend the welfare state. It was replaced by child benefit by another Labour Government in 1975. The last Labour Government augmented support for children through a system

of tax credits. Child benefit has, until this month, been paid on a universal basis, with a recognition that, as a society, we all have a responsibility to all the nation's children. Universal provision has had the effect of tying middle-income and higher-income families into a system of support that is provided to all. It has meant that the administration of the system has been easier, and there is less of a danger of those most in need failing to claim.

As the Deputy First Minister rightly said, child benefit has historically been a benefit paid directly to women for the purposes of supporting children. In the overall architecture of our welfare state, it has always been a crucial component of the welfare system. The decision of the UK coalition parties to attack child benefit has been condemned by my party elsewhere, and I am happy to repeat that Scottish Labour regards the changes that have been made as the wrong approach.

One of the tests that should be applied to any universal provision is whether its application to all makes it easier to reach those most in need and whether or not the cost of means testing would be proportionate. We in Labour recognise the need for money to be spent wisely. We have always argued that most support should go to those who are most in need. It is regrettable that the reform of child benefit and the callous cap on benefits uprating has resulted in a direct attack on children and cruelty towards the vulnerable, who have been labelled “skivers” by the Tories and Liberal Democrats. The unfairnesses of that are manifest when they are viewed in the round, and particularly against the tax cuts for millionaires.

That said, we are wary of parties who have never had to administer a welfare system promising the earth or, as Mark McDonald described it last week,

“the moon on a stick”,—[*Official Report*, 22 January 2013; c 15763.]

if only people are persuaded to vote for their constitutional proposition—a proposition that has been the nationalists' solution to every problem since time immemorial, and which can in no way be described as an argument for the times.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** The member is criticising the Scottish Government's solution. Just for the record, I do believe that independence offers the solutions to many of these problems. Is he simply in a position of having no solution because, as long as we have Tory Governments that Scotland does not vote for, we simply have to put up with these things?

**Drew Smith:** Labour at Westminster put forward a very clear proposal on the Welfare Benefits Uprating Bill that the United Kingdom Government could have followed.

Because of the changes, 1.2 million families in Britain will lose out on child benefit. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, 7 million working households will lose an average of £165 a year because of the upratings cap. Not including cuts to child benefit, new mothers will lose £1,300 during pregnancy and the first year of their child's life because of the combination of cuts to maternity pay, pregnancy support and tax credits.

A further result of the coalition's changes is administrative chaos. Richer families will continue to be able to claim child benefit, meaning that the state must pay money out and then attempt to claw it back up to the total amount that was paid in the first place. As a result, it is likely that many more people will find themselves drawn into self-assessment tax for the first time.

The Deputy First Minister's motion rightly makes reference to both benefits uprating and child benefit eligibility, and I agree with much of what she has said about both. The coalition parties have sought to turn benefits uprating into a political football, which is regrettable. Their description of strivers and skivers is simplistic and, frankly, offensive to those who are labelled as the latter. Many of those who are affected by the uprating cap are in work, including many whose only benefit might, until now, have been child benefit. Many are out of work, and there is a whole range of reasons for that. The first, it must be said, is a lack of jobs due to the mismanagement of our economy and the stalling of the recovery.

I turn now to the part of the Scottish Government's motion which I find slightly less persuasive than the first. The Scottish Government asserts that the only way to

"protect the universal benefits that produce fair and equitable outcomes"

is to support the separation of Scotland from the rest of the United Kingdom. There are a number of problems with that assertion, and I fear that members will be well used to spotting them. First, universal benefits on their own do not necessarily produce fair and equitable outcomes. If Scottish National Party members were genuinely interested in a debate on universality, rather than in trying to score political points against Scottish Labour, they would find it in themselves to acknowledge, as they do in the context of policies in other areas, that fair and equitable outcomes are achieved through a combination of interventions, which must include a targeting of the most support at those who are most in need of help.

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Drew Smith:** In a moment, Mr Stewart.

At any other time and in any other place, such an approach would not be considered controversial, but to the SNP it is apparently heresy.

**Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Drew Smith:** I am happy to take an intervention from Mr Eadie. I apologise to Mr Stewart.

**Kevin Stewart:** I—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Jim Eadie.

**Jim Eadie:** If Mr Stewart will just wait his turn, I am sure that he will have a chance to make an excellent contribution to the debate.

Does Drew Smith not understand the point that advocacy organisations make about targeting, which is that when benefits are means tested, many vulnerable and needy people are cut out, because they lack the literacy or advocacy skills to navigate their way through the benefits system? What we need to help the most vulnerable in society is integration of tax and benefits.

**Drew Smith:** The problem is that there is a balance to be struck between universalism and targeting, as members of the SNP know, given that they voted for the legal aid changes in the Scottish Civil Justice Council and Criminal Legal Assistance Bill just this week and given that they have supported changes to the heating programme.

My second point about the Scottish Government's assertion in the motion is that the SNP is presenting us with a solution that does nothing for people who will lose out because of the UK Government's changes and who happen to live south of Gretna or west of Stranraer.

**Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Drew Smith:** No, thank you.

I am not particularly interested in a debate about the deserving and undeserving poor, but if there are choices to be made I hope that we might at least be able to make them on the basis of material considerations, such as whether a person can afford new shoes for their kid or a meal for a kid's school friend who is staying over, rather than on the basis of geography and national identity.

**Mark McDonald:** I care about child poverty in Mexico, for example. Is it Drew Smith's contention that I can care about that only if we are in a political union with Mexico?

**Drew Smith:** The point is that we currently pay into a pot for UK welfare and the SNP is seeking to withdraw our money from that pot.

SNP members now like to pretend that their nationalism is about social justice and not at all about nationality, but it is on welfare issues that their argument becomes most contorted. People throughout Britain pay into our welfare state, and removing our money from the pot is not progressive—it is as selfish as the claim that all the problems of the poorest will be solved if only the SNP wins a vote is dishonest.

I have talked about the parts of the cabinet secretary's motion with which I agree and the part about which I remain to be convinced, so I turn to Labour's amendment. Last week, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published an important report. The report's author wrote:

"With the political debate dominated by the referendum on independence, it's important to point out that the issues that are central to tackling poverty, such as health, childcare, schools and housing fall within current legislative powers of the Scottish Government. The problems highlighted in this report cannot wait; action can and should be taken now."

I listened carefully to the Deputy First Minister when she responded to the report in Glasgow on Monday and I have listened to what she has said since then. I listened to what the First Minister said when I asked him a question about the report last Thursday and yesterday I read what he had to say about the issues when he spoke to the Jimmy Reid Foundation on Tuesday.

Nowhere in any of those comments did I hear an answer to the central point that the JRF made. Does the Scottish Government accept that it could do more with the powers that it has? When will it go beyond responding to statistics on child poverty and poverty across society that span its term of office by highlighting the likelihood of unwelcome new welfare reforms in future?

I quote the JRF again:

"it's important to point out that the issues that are central to tackling poverty, such as health, childcare, schools and housing fall within current legislative powers of the Scottish Government."

I put the quotation in the amendment, too, in case there was a danger of the Scottish Government missing it.

In all the time that we have been discussing UK welfare reform in this Parliament, my party and the Deputy First Minister's party have been fairly well united in our analysis, our concerns and our ambition to do all that we can do to mitigate the impact. The Scottish Government must go beyond blaming others and using the poor as a superficially convenient argument for the powers that it has always wanted. If child benefit were going up and school milk could be laced with honey, the SNP would still want the break-up of the UK welfare state.

On welfare reform, we welcomed the plan to plug the gap in council tax benefit, which will be half-funded by councils, but we still have no idea for how long funding will be provided. On passported benefits, we are still no clearer about how longer-term eligibility will work.

**Kevin Stewart:** Will the member give way?

**Drew Smith:** I apologise to Mr Stewart. I would have liked to give way to him but I do not have time.

I make a serious request to the Deputy First Minister. Why can we not debate with the Scottish Government jobs and training, childcare, tackling health inequalities, the support for vulnerable two-year-olds that the SNP promised, the extra time that general practitioners in the deep-end practices are asking for, addictions services for parents, and support for local councils and communities that are affected by welfare change? Why can we not debate the opportunity provided by devolution to do more to help children in poverty? Those issues, and many more, should be our concerns.

I was elected to the Parliament in 2011, and in the time since then we have debated many issues. Some were worthy, but few were as significant as the one that we are discussing in this debate. The only times when we have discussed poverty in Scotland, however, have been in a few debates about the actions of the UK Government. I suggest that, when the JRF tells the Scottish Government that its past actions are failing and that a young boy in the city that the Deputy First Minister and I represent is likely to die 14 years earlier if he is born poor rather than rich, debating what the Scottish Government does not have power over and avoiding scrutiny of what it does have power over is a wholly inadequate response.

I therefore move amendment S4M-05521.1, to leave out from "and recognises" to end and insert:

“; notes the assessment of Tom MacInnes, the author of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's report, *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Scotland 2013*, that 'with the political debate dominated by the referendum on independence, it's important to point out that the issues that are central to tackling poverty, such as health, childcare, schools and housing fall within current legislative powers of the Scottish Government. The problems highlighted in this report cannot wait; action can and should be taken now', and therefore calls on the Scottish Government to act now and use its powers to tackle poverty and inequality in Scotland.”

14:55

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):**

It always gives me great pleasure to come in and take my seat in the grandstand to watch the SNP perform in its current format. The position is

improved when the prima donna role is taken by Nicola Sturgeon herself.

The truth is that the aims and objectives of welfare reform have been well identified and they need to be defended in the chamber. They are to reform and rationalise the benefits system away from the ad hoc structure that has grown up over the past 60 years and to remove entrenched benefits dependency, which, besides the economic impact on both the state and the individual, actively harms the individual in terms of health, ambition, aspiration and social exclusion. Areas in which long-term benefits dependency is seen as an option tend to have high levels of debt, family breakdown and alcohol and drug addiction and high crime rates. It is therefore essential that we recognise the need for welfare reform, and we must all participate in that process.

**Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Alex Johnstone:** No, thank you. The member can push his button and I am sure that he will get the chance to speak later on.

It is also essential that we ensure that in future work pays, and that when people can work they will benefit financially from doing so.

I take the opportunity to attack the Government for what I see as a degree of dishonesty. I believe that it sees the need for welfare reform and that, while ministers condemn the UK Government for doing it, Nicola Sturgeon, quite rightly, is delighted that the UK Government is doing that job for her before—heaven forbid—she finds herself with her hands on the reins of power. However, that will not happen, and the reason is that the people of Scotland have already seen through that shallow position.

So far, the Scottish Government has used its politically motivated, synthetic outrage to whip up panic among benefits claimants. Today, realising that that has only alienated the hard-working families who pay the tax that funds the benefits, the Government has decided to go for the hearts and minds of the middle classes, who benefit most from child support. It is disingenuous to take that line because, for all Nicola Sturgeon's hand wringing, it appears that not a penny is coming to the table. Promises are being made, yet there is no explanation of how they will be funded.

In the debate on the legislative consent motion, figures were brought to the chamber—they came from the Government's back benches, in fact—that said that welfare reform would cost the Scottish economy £600 million and put 14,000 jobs at risk. That seems a huge amount of money and a lot of jobs. However, the claim betrays the bizarre assumption that the purpose of paying benefits is to provide economic activity. It

completely misses the point that benefits are paid out of the money that comes directly from taxpayers, and the money is therefore drawn out of the economy in the first place. Alternatively, we could choose to borrow it, but I cannot understand how a Scottish Government could ultimately pay back that borrowing other than through increased taxation.

I believe that the pressure is on the Government to be honest about how it will achieve the objectives to which it vaguely, but regularly, refers. That is why, in the Minister for Housing and Welfare's closing speech, I hope to hear exactly how the Government will finance its proposals. I want to hear—for the first time—costed commitments for how it will achieve the reversal of these welfare reforms. I want to hear costed estimates of how the vague promises to restore universal benefit will be funded. If the minister cannot do that, will she at least—as Liz Smith suggested—commit to reinstating child benefit, on which today's debate is centred? I call on the Scottish Government to put an end to its cynical manipulation and rhetoric and bring something material to the discussion.

Before I close, I would like to address the amendments that have been lodged. I assure all members that although it is impossible for the Conservatives to support the motion, all the amendments meet with our approval.

I would like to discuss the Labour amendment specifically, which says, quite clearly:

"it's important to point out that the issues that are central to tackling poverty, such as health, childcare, schools and housing fall within current legislative powers of the Scottish Government."

It therefore falls to the Scottish Government to explain why its argument says almost exactly the opposite.

As I have tried to point out and as the Liberal Democrat amendment says:

"statements have been made by Scottish Government ministers and supporters implying that a full £2.5 billion will be added to the welfare and benefits bill of Scotland after independence".

If that is in fact the cost, will the minister tell us that that is the cost and tell us where in a future Scottish budget that money is likely to be found?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must draw to a close, please.

**Alex Johnstone:** It must come from the taxpayer or from borrowing, which will have to be repaid through greater taxes in the future.

I move amendment S4M-05521.3, to leave out from “with concern” to end and insert:

“the changes to child benefit announced by the UK Government; recognises the budget deficit that the country faces and therefore accepts the necessity of removing substantial benefits payments to higher earners; recognises that child benefit uprating will be capped at 1% for two years in line with recent rises in earnings, and welcomes that many people will benefit from the largest ever increase in the income tax personal allowance and the forthcoming roll-out of the universal credit.”

15:02

**Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):**

We know what the SNP does not like: it takes every opportunity to focus on the Westminster Government's ills. It takes up copious amounts of parliamentary time focusing not on the SNP Government's responsibilities, but on another Government's responsibilities and duties. From an almost lofty position, it likes to complain and commutate, but it rarely provides solutions. Everybody would admit that that is a tough task, and the purpose of our amendment is to allow SNP members to set out what they would like the Scottish welfare state to look like. They can tell us which benefits will be cut, which will be increased and which will remain unchanged. They can also tell us whether they would add £2.5 billion to the budget that an independent Scotland would inherit.

**Kevin Stewart:** Will Mr Rennie give way?

**Willie Rennie:** Not just now.

From ministers' rhetoric—I have numerous quotes here—I assume that the full £2.5 billion will be restored immediately.

The debate is timely, given that the SNP's welfare commission was launched earlier this month and, apparently, will report in the next couple of months. I am sure that commission members would welcome contributions from those on the SNP benches on whether benefits will be cut, which benefits will be prioritised and which will be deprioritised. I am sure that they would welcome SNP members' deliberations, which could feed into their conclusions.

Benefit recipients will also want to hear from the SNP about what its priorities will be for an independent Scotland's welfare budget. They will want to know that the SNP's actions will match the rhetoric.

SNP members—ministers likewise—have said on numerous occasions that they want reform and simplification of the welfare system, but I have not heard from them one single example of a reform.

Perhaps ministers today—

**Kevin Stewart:** Will the member give way?

**Mark McDonald:** Will the member give way?

**Willie Rennie:** Not just now.

I am sure that members will take the opportunity today to tell us.

I am also sure that the SNP's fiscal commission, too, would welcome SNP members' comments on how they plan to restore £2.5 billion to the welfare budget. The commission has been tasked with bringing a degree of fiscal credibility to the SNP's plans for independence. That credibility will be very important as it will impact directly on credit ratings, the cost of borrowing and the sustainability of an independent Scotland's finances.

**Mark McDonald:** Will the member give way?

**Willie Rennie:** Not just now.

I am curious about whether the fiscal commission will meet the welfare commission to ensure a degree of consistency across the numerous commissions that the SNP is setting up. After all, we will want coherence, which previous commissions have lacked, with a commission saying one thing and ministers saying something completely different. That might change this afternoon, but I am not sure whether the Deputy First Minister's speech indicates that it will. I do not think that the SNP is going to tell us which benefits will be prioritised or deprioritised. Who will be the winners and losers? We did not hear a single word about that from the Deputy First Minister.

I think that, this afternoon, SNP members will seek to prejudge the outcome of the welfare commission's work and will, as they have done with many other advisers that they have recruited, ignore its conclusions. They have already made up their minds what they do not like—and they do not like to face up to the reality of having to live within their finances. There will be a lack of consistency between fiscal responsibility and their welfare commission. We need costed plans, not uncostered rhetoric.

To be fair, we Liberal Democrats favour a strong economy and a fair society that gives everyone a chance to get on. That is why we have cut taxes for those on low or middle incomes, increased the state pension and introduced a £1 billion youth contract while at the same time—this is critical—restoring the public finances to create the conditions for growth.

We must make it absolutely clear that under Labour the welfare state increased by 40 per cent at a time of considerable economic growth. In the 10 years before 2010, the costs increased from £132 billion to £192 billion. That is simply not sustainable.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Will the member give way?

**Willie Rennie:** I am in my last minute.

We reject the rhetoric of the skivers and the strivers—I say to Drew Smith that we have never embraced and do not favour that terminology. We want an enabling society that allows people to get up and get on. SNP members should take the opportunity this afternoon not just to criticise the UK Government but to set out their plans in detail. If they do not match their actions to their rhetoric, I do not think that they deserve to be trusted.

I move amendment S4M-05521.2, to leave out from “with concern” to end and insert:

“the position on child benefit in the UK; further notes that the Scottish Government has established a working group to advise it on what welfare policies it would be able to afford in the event of independence; believes that it would be sensible for people in Scotland to wait for the conclusion of that review before accepting any assurances from Scottish ministers on this matter; notes that statements have been made by Scottish Government ministers and supporters implying that a full £2.5 billion will be added to the welfare and benefits bill of Scotland after independence; notes that this figure does not include any costing for additional welfare benefits to be recommended for groups such as carers; awaits with interest the details on how such a bill and the additions will be accommodated within the estimated resources of an independent Scotland; in particular, waits to see if an immediate priority will be set out to restore child benefit to those earning over £60,000 in an independent Scotland; believes that, if the full figure of £2.5 billion is not part of costed plans, that would imply that some welfare changes are not proposed for reversal and believes that those should be clearly set out by the expert group, and further notes that the UK Government will have cut the tax bill for a family of two people on modest incomes by around £5,000 over the period.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We now move to the open debate. I call Annabelle Ewing, to be followed by Neil Bibby. As we are quite tight for time, I ask members to take six minutes, including interventions.

15:08

**Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** I am very pleased indeed to be called to participate in this important debate on child benefit. When I was reflecting on what I wanted to say, the first thing that came into my mind was the old adage that begins “If you live long enough”. Who could have contemplated that the UK Government would go where even Mrs Thatcher feared to tread by means testing child benefit? One might have safely assumed that such a miserly and fundamentally ill-judged course of action was off the agenda, even for the Tories, when the current chancellor George Osborne said in his address to the party faithful at the 2009 Tory party conference:

“We will preserve child benefit, winter fuel payments and free TV licences. They are valued by millions.”

Indeed, they are, Mr Osborne—if you are listening to the debate. The universality of child benefit has been valued by millions since its introduction in the

1940s and its abandonment by the Tory-Liberal Government in London is not just a breach of faith with the people but a breach of the social contract that I believe underpins a decent society.

To Mr Rennie I say, “Shame on the Liberal Democrats”, in particular for doing what even Mrs Thatcher was not prepared to do in means testing child benefit. It is fair to say that such a policy would never have been associated with the old Liberal Party’s values—at least not some years back. It is certainly changed days.

The importance of the role of child benefit and of the universal payment should not be underestimated. That point was well summarised in a report by the House of Commons Social Security Committee in 1999. It recognised the multipurpose role of child benefit, which was, *inter alia*, to involve

“Promoting ‘horizontal’ equity between people of similar incomes, with and without children”

and

“Providing a contribution from society as a whole to the next generation”.

It also recognised, crucially, that such a benefit—as the Deputy First Minister alluded to—was offered to women and was paid to the woman in the household.

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

**Annabelle Ewing:** You were not very keen to take an intervention, but I will take an intervention from you.

**Alex Johnstone:** I will pose a simple question. I respect the fact that the member considers child benefit to be right at the top of the list of priorities. However, in a difficult time, when budgets are difficult to manage, where would she take that money from in order to make child benefit her first priority?

**Members:** Trident.

**Annabelle Ewing:** My colleagues are shouting “Trident.” That is just one example. Obviously, if Scotland had control over its own resources, we could decide how to spend them in accordance with our priorities.

If Mr Johnstone is so keen and confident about being able to defend the indefensible, why is the UK cabinet secretary for welfare, Mr Iain Duncan Smith, running scared of coming formally before this Parliament’s Welfare Reform Committee? There is no answer to that.

We have heard of the deleterious impact that the child benefit cuts will have on hard-pressed families in very difficult economic times in Scotland—difficult economic times that are being

exacerbated by the austerity agenda that is being pursued by the Tory-Liberal Government in London.

How can it possibly be fair to cut child benefit from a single parent who is earning more than £50,000 when that person's next-door neighbours, a couple with a household income of £100,000 equally divided, will not see such cuts to their child benefit? What an incoherent and essentially unfair policy.

How much public money is to be wasted on the administration of that damaging burden on hard-pressed families? We hear that it will cost around £113 million to £118 million of public money to administer the system over the first four years. Of course, that should not come as a surprise, because means testing is costly and unduly complex and impacts negatively on take-up of benefits. We have seen that with Gordon Brown's flagship pension credit. Even approaching the 10-year mark, nearly a third of pensioners who are eligible for pension credit are not taking it up as a result of means testing.

It is not just the cuts in child benefit that are hammering hard-pressed families in Scotland. We are seeing a head-on assault on the welfare system, which is supposed to provide the safety net that is the mark of a decent society. We have heard about the miserable 1 per cent uprating cap for child benefit and the impact that that will have. We have heard about changes to the tax credit system, which again will impact on hard-pressed families and their children. We have also heard about the ridiculous and unfair bedroom tax and the huge impact that that will have on households across Scotland.

I could go on, but I am conscious of the time. This cynical and systematic dismantling of the welfare system by the UK Government is simply not tenable in our country. We have the opportunity, in the autumn of 2014, to respond "Yes" to the question "Should Scotland be an independent country?" Yes, Scotland should be an independent country, and yes, Scotland should take control of all its resources and of the welfare system so that we can ensure that we establish in our country a welfare system that better reflects Scotland's values.

15:14

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** I join other members in welcoming the debate. The Labour Party is absolutely committed to supporting children and families. It was the Labour Party that introduced child benefit and it was the previous United Kingdom Labour Government that supported that with child tax credits, as part of a drive to eradicate child poverty and help families.

A report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development states that more than half a million children were pulled out of poverty by the most recent Labour Government, which was elected by the Scottish people. Considerable progress and achievements have been made but unfortunately that progress has stalled, and the numbers are in danger of increasing rapidly.

As Drew Smith said, child benefit has been paid universally because, as a society, we all have a responsibility for the nation's children. I agree with Nicola Sturgeon that the coalition Government's changes to the system are wrong.

Let me be clear: Labour does not support cutting child benefit—and certainly not while the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats give tax cuts to millionaires and big businesses. They have their priorities all wrong.

**Jamie Hepburn:** The member has set out that Labour does not support cutting child benefit but I seem to recall that Malcolm Chisholm, who is sitting in the row behind Mr Bibby, resigned from the Government because that is exactly what Labour did when it was in government.

**Neil Bibby:** We do not support the current changes to child benefit because the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, with their corporation tax cuts, are cutting taxes for millionaires and big business. We need to remember that the SNP also supports tax cuts for big business.

As has been mentioned, the coalition Government's changes mean that nearly 100,000 families in Scotland are each set to lose a reported average of £1,200 in child benefit this year, and a majority of those will lose their child benefit entirely. That will have serious repercussions for levels of child poverty. Looking ahead, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which was regularly quoted by the Conservatives when they were in opposition, has said that thousands more households will lose the benefit over the next few years because the threshold for receiving it will remain fixed and will not take into account wage inflation.

The policy has serious failings, including the administrative complexities that Drew Smith mentioned. As I said, I agree with Nicola Sturgeon that the changes to the system are wrong. However, it is important this afternoon to focus on what we can do to support families in Scotland and throughout the UK.

We all know that we need an economic recovery. We need to support parents back to work and we need to make work pay. How can we encourage parents back to work if they are paid £6 an hour while, at the same time, they pay £5 an hour for childcare? That is not how we rebuild an economy and get people back to work.

The cuts to tax credits and child benefit will not help, but what is the Scottish Government doing to help parents with childcare? Tom MacInnes, of the highly respected Joseph Rowntree Foundation, hit the nail on the head when he said that action “cannot wait”. The foundation, like so many others, has shown that this Parliament has the powers and resources to effect change now.

Today, in this Parliament, we have a chance to make a difference. The Scottish Government should use its powers and resources to support families. Ministers regularly talk about the extension of nursery hours for three and four-year-olds but the reality is that you have been talking about that since 2007. You will not solve the childcare problems of 2013 with a policy that is six years old—a policy that you have still not implemented and a policy that you will not implement until 2014 at the earliest. As I have said before in the chamber, one rehashed or recycled policy—no matter how good—will not deal with the problems that parents face.

Your policy to guarantee early learning to only about 1 per cent of two-year-olds is not good enough, particularly when the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats are planning to offer nursery places to 40 per cent of two-year-olds in England.

It is clear that the Scottish Government is not doing enough to help families with childcare. It tries to speak the language of social justice but falls down when it comes to the crunch. It fails to act while, on this side of the chamber, we campaign to end the scourge of child poverty in Paisley and in Plymouth—child poverty is not acceptable anywhere.

Labour members continue to view childcare as a major priority because it is an issue of equality and fairness. We need a model of childcare in which costs are reasonable and under which parents know that their children will receive high-quality care. That is why, when you say you need the powers to improve benefits for children, people will ask, “What you would do with them?”

Although I did not agree with everything in Willie Rennie’s speech, he made an important point: SNP ministers should be careful about making billions of pounds-worth of benefits promises for their independent Scotland. People will rightly question whether those promises are just slick soundbites when ministers do not use the powers and resources that they already have. They will ask how the SNP will increase benefits when it also supports corporation tax cuts for big business.

Rather than simply calling for more powers, I hope that the minister will outline the positive steps that the Scottish Government will now take to give families the support they need now. A

starting point would be to support Labour’s call for investment in colleges and housing, which could create jobs and opportunities to break the cycle of poverty. The reality is that progress was made on child poverty under Labour and has stalled under this Government.

The Labour Party has consistently demonstrated our commitment to children and families in Scotland and across the UK. I hope that other parties will show their commitment.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** I remind members to address their remarks through the chair.

15:20

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** We have heard a lot today about some of the high-level figures that relate to the cuts and about how many families will be affected. Sometimes, we think too much about those high-level issues in this place, so I want to start by talking about some of the conversations that I have had in my constituency recently about the child benefit cuts.

Just as the cuts were taking place, a woman from my constituency who has a part-time job as a cleaner and whose husband works offshore in the oil industry and earns slightly over £50,000 a year talked to me about the impact that they would experience due to the money that they would lose because of the changes. A lot of folk will say, “If her husband’s earning £50,000 a year, they’re probably pretty well off.” However, we all know that lots of people struggle, no matter what their earnings may be. She said, “I would not be so bothered about us losing money if I knew that the money was going to somebody in society who is poorer than me.” However, that is not the case. She said that it was particularly galling that a household in which there were two earners who each earned slightly less than £50,000 would retain the benefit.

That discussion went on for some time. The lady had her head screwed on, without a doubt, because she went on to talk about the concept of universality. The Labour Party has stated that it introduced family allowance in 1946, which it replaced with child benefit in 1975. That is something for the Labour Party to be proud of. However, my problem is that, at this moment in time, I do not know where the Labour Party stands on universality any more.

The conversation with the lady in my constituency went on. She said, “If this universal benefit is going to be cut by Westminster, is the state pension going to be the next universal benefit to go?”



How can the population trust the parties at Westminster on that issue? Annabelle Ewing has already pointed out that, in his 2009 speech to the Tory conference, George Osborne said:

"We will preserve child benefit"

and other universal benefits. How can folk believe what he has to say?

Mr Rennie refused to take an intervention from me, in which I was going to point out that his leader, Nick Clegg, said, just before the last election:

"We are not putting child benefit into question."

Once again, another U-turn from the Liberals; another failed manifesto promise. How can anyone trust the Liberals on benefits?

It is Labour's position that really intrigues me. Members might be interested in this quote, which says that the Government

"plan to pay the deficit down on the backs of those with low and middle incomes, with a threat to universal benefits such as child benefit and the winter fuel payment ... It is essential that we defend these payments. The alternative is a dangerous erosion of the social solidarity that comes from a universal system."

So said Ed Miliband in *The Observer* on 29 August 2010. Yet here in Scotland there are questions over the Scottish Labour Party's position on universality, what with Johann Lamont's proposed cuts commission. In today's debate, Labour members need to tell the Scottish people where they stand on the principle of universality. For me, universality is key to that social cohesion.

In other small European countries, we see a similar mindset—

**Jackie Baillie:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Kevin Stewart:** I will take a brief intervention from Ms Baillie.

**Jackie Baillie:** I thank the member and I will indeed be brief. Can he take the principle that he has just outlined and apply it to this week's debate on legal aid, where the SNP abandoned any question of universality in favour of means testing and targeting?

**Kevin Stewart:** I say to Ms Baillie that today's debate is on welfare, so universality in welfare is what I am concerned with today.

I turn to small European countries, some of which are our near neighbours. In Denmark, child allowance is paid to families with children under 18. In Sweden, families with children under 16 receive a similar benefit. In Norway, the age limit has just been raised from 16 to 18. In Finland, the benefit is paid until children reach the age of 17. None of those benefits is means tested.

Why, here in Scotland, are we facing the disastrous prospect of means testing not only of child benefit but in many other areas? How can we trust any of the Westminster parties to ensure that universality in welfare remains? That is why I think that this Parliament needs control over welfare, and I hope that the people of Scotland vote yes in 2014 to allow that to happen.

15:27

**Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP):** Family allowances were one of Beveridge's three assumptions about what was needed to make the social security system workable; the others were a national health service free at the point of need—how innovative—and an avoidance of mass unemployment. Five shillings per week were given for each child after the first, and the allowance was the legal entitlement of the mother rather than the father. The reason that child benefit was paid to the woman was to ensure that the money was spent directly on the child.

According to the campaigning groups the Fawcett Society and the Women's Budget Group, more than 70 per cent of the £18 billion in cuts to social security and welfare fall on women. One fifth of the female wage consists of benefits to compensate, for instance, for the low wages associated with female-dominated sectors such as care and retail, whereas benefits make up only one tenth of the male wage. Child benefit changes will actually increase dependency of women on men.

Removing child benefit from families in which one earner pays higher-rate tax impacts almost 100 per cent on women and indirectly on their children. The UK Government's proposals seem to reflect outdated prejudices, as they give the impression that its goal is a world of breadwinning men and homemaking wives.

We now have a situation in which stay-at-home motherhood is viewed in distinctly pejorative terms by UK coalition politicians. How else can we explain the withdrawal of universal child benefit, with the promise instead of a childcare tax break whereby people will be forced to hand over the baby to the child minder, which they cannot afford, to make them more economically viable? Currently, parents in the UK contribute 33 per cent of their total net household income to childcare, whereas the figure is 11 per cent in France and 4 per cent in Belgium.

Taking the cuts to childcare and the cap on in-work benefits together with the ludicrous plan to rip Scotland out of the European Union's social chapter, we are seeing the biggest attacks on the rights of women since before the suffrage

movement hailed victory with the right to vote in the 1928 act. Burns said:

"While quacks of State must each produce his plan,  
And even children lisp the Rights of Man;  
Amid this mighty fuss just let me mention,  
The Rights of Woman merit some attention."

The EU's social chapter gives a woman the right to maternity leave, the right to equal pay, the right to a pension and the right to protections in her workplace.

Following the official figures released by the Office for National Statistics in December 2012, analysis shows that Britain is now the most unequal country in Europe. What an achievement. I hope that the UK Government is proud of such an accolade.

It is a lesser-known fact that there has never been an equality impact assessment of the welfare reforms, in which child benefit reform is included. What a disgrace. No thought or attention has been given to how damaging the reforms are or to whom. No thought or attention has been given to the fact that the biggest losers are low-paid women and their families.

Let us take the example of a woman who, for many reasons, might find herself on her own with her children. She listens to the Government, which tells her that she has to work, and builds herself a career, but around 40 per cent of her earnings go on childcare. If she earns £19,869 a year, she will lose £9.32 per week. That cash could be used to pay for at least two family meals, send a child on a school trip or, depending on how many hours are needed, pay for some after-school care. Parents have to make such choices every day of the week, but the UK Government could not be bothered to pay those women some attention.

Let us say that the woman works hard, gets a better job, works her way up to a senior level and lands a job in which she earns around 60 grand a year. Just as she is feeling that she has made it in a world where it is difficult for women to reach the heady heights of such senior levels, the UK Government says to her, "We need your help to sort out the mess we made of the economy". The child benefit on which she has depended to pay for school trips, after-school care or other childcare will be removed, but her next-door neighbours, who each earn £49,000 a year, will keep theirs. How can that be fair? How can anyone say that it is okay for her neighbours to earn a combined wage of £98,000 but it is not okay for her to earn £60,000 on her own?

Let us not forget that it was Tony Blair as Prime Minister who introduced the welfare reforms agenda. According to the Child Poverty Action Group, under his plans, which are being realised by the Tories at Westminster, another 85,000

children in Scotland alone—1 million across the UK—will be plunged into poverty over the next few years.

The Labour Party sits there with its synthetic outrage about how far its better together pals are going when, in fact, it would have done exactly the same thing. I wonder whether it is a requirement—or indeed a training need—for Labour members to take a course in revisionism. History seems to start only on the day that Labour comes to power and ends on the day that it leaves power. Labour are the great revisionists.

The inequality that I have described is what many Scottish women will experience for several years to come. They will disproportionately forfeit prospects, employment, pay and pensions. That is an abrogation of the social contract between citizen and Government, it represents a loss to the economy and, ultimately, it will exact a high price from us all—a price that we should not have to pay.

The unionists laughed at the misfortune of independent Iceland. They are not laughing now. Independent Iceland jailed its bankers, bailed out its people and increased child benefit at a most difficult time.

Should Scotland be an independent nation? Yes, it should.

15:32

**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab):** I always like to agree with the cabinet secretary whenever I can and I agreed with much of what she said, except of course the conclusion that she drew, as embodied in the last two lines of her motion, and her attacks on Scottish Labour's position, to which I will return. Those attacks did not surprise me, but what did surprise me was the wording of the motion. The whole motion is about child benefit, but I—and I am sure all my colleagues on the Labour benches—have been concerned not just about the attack on child benefit but about the wider attack on tax credits and other changes in the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

Jim Eadie raised a point about tax credits, which I think represent the integration of tax and benefits that he asked for. When we think of tax credits, we are reminded that the welfare state has always been a mixture of universal and targeted benefits. The SNP cannot admit that in its motion or its rhetoric, because that would undermine the whole basis of its attack on Labour in this Parliament.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Mr Chisholm said that he was surprised by the terms of the motion and that the Labour Party is worried about a number of other things, such as the attack on tax credits, as are

SNP members. If Labour is so concerned, why does its amendment not mention those issues?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** Our position on tax credits is well known, because we have been leading a campaign across the UK to oppose the £4 billion being taken out of tax credits in the Welfare Reform Act 2012, on top of other changes such as the cut to the childcare tax credit, which have already made their way into the system.

I am proud of Labour's record on tax credits and other targeted benefits, but I am also proud of Labour's record on child benefit. I am proud of what we are saying about it, because we want to keep child benefit as a universal benefit. We have said that we would pay for that by reversing the £3 billion tax cut from which the richest people in the UK have gained. I am proud of what we said about child benefit at the 2010 election—we said that we would uprate it beyond inflation—and, because I have a long political memory, I am also proud of what the Labour Government of the 1960s did. In 1967, the Labour Government made a significant increase in family allowance, paid for by taxation on the well-off in society.

My colleagues and I do not need any lectures about defending the welfare state. The simple fact of the matter is that the best way to defend it is to elect a Labour Government in 2015. That is why the last two lines of the motion, which are the heart of the SNP's case this afternoon, are simply untrue. However, they reveal how the SNP intends to frame the referendum debate and, crucially, how it intends to invent its enemies.

**Mark McDonald:** Mr Chisholm says that the best way to defend the welfare state is to elect a Labour Government. In 1997, he resigned as a minister because Labour was cutting benefits. It was doing so by following the plans of the Tory Government from which it took office. Is there not an issue there about learning the lessons of history?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** If Labour has made just one mistake since we invented the welfare state in 1945, that is not too much to complain about, considering all the other excellent things that we have done to create and defend it.

Of course, the last two lines of the motion refer not only to reserved issues but to devolved issues. That was the point of my intervention on the cabinet secretary. The last two lines of the motion also repeat the First Minister's surprising statement at the SNP conference that the only way to defend what the SNP called universal benefits in this Parliament was to vote for independence. Is the cabinet secretary seriously saying that, if there is a no vote in 2014, the SNP would be unable to campaign in the 2016 election to defend what it calls universal benefits in this

Parliament, whether free personal care, free concessionary travel or free education?

More importantly, universal benefits are currently being used as a stick with which to beat the Labour Party and—I repeat the phrase—to invent enemies. There have been some astonishing examples even this afternoon. Kevin Stewart said that the state pension would be abolished. SNP people on Twitter and elsewhere regularly say that we will abolish concessionary travel. From time to time, people even say that, because we question one or two universal services or the way that they are implemented, we are against the national health service. That is patent nonsense.

**Kevin Stewart:** I actually said that the fact that child benefit is being slashed from the universal system raises the question of what is next on the agenda. Will it be the state pension? That could well happen. Let us be honest. If the UK Government has done that with child benefit and both parties said prior to the election that they would not, who is to say that they will not do the same with the state pension?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** If Kevin Stewart was listening, he would know that I was talking about Labour policy. Those arguments are being used against what the Labour Party says in this Parliament and in the UK Parliament.

The reality is that the Labour Party invented the NHS and that there is always a debate about how much will be within the universal scope. That is what the argument about free prescriptions, for example, is about. The same goes for free personal care, which I supported and extended into the universal principle.

Let us be honest about this debate: the welfare state is always a mixture of the universal and targeted. It would help the debate if the SNP would recognise that.

**Nicola Sturgeon** *rose—*

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I would give way if I was allowed to, but I do not think that the Presiding Officer will let me.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I can give you an extra 30 seconds maximum.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I have a simple question: I wonder why somebody of Malcolm Chisholm's principles seems to prefer a Tory Government at Westminster to having a Labour Government in an independent Scotland.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I and all my colleagues are working inexorably to have a Labour Government in the UK in 2015. We will strive to achieve that. We believe that it will happen and that it is the best way to defend the welfare state.

15:39

**Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP):** I, too, wish to put on record my opposition to the changes to child benefit. Several colleagues, including Kevin Stewart, Annabelle Ewing and Malcolm Chisholm—whose speech was characteristically stylish, not that I agreed with all that he said—have spoken eloquently and powerfully about the effect that the freezing and capping of child benefit will have. I share their concerns about and criticisms of those attacks on families.

In 2005, David Cameron said:

“A modern, compassionate Conservatism is right for our times ... and right for our country.”

The proposed changes might be right for the millionaires and the super-rich who will benefit from the cut in the higher rate of income tax, but they are not right for the 90,000 families across Scotland who will see their household incomes and living standards fall as a result of them. In effect, those families will have their benefit cut or—in the case of two thirds of them—withdrawn altogether. The cuts are unfair and ill conceived and will have a significant effect on all the families affected. What is most concerning of all is that—as the Deputy First Minister outlined—the changes represent an ideological attack on the idea of universal benefits and the role of the state in supporting children.

**Alex Johnstone:** Does the member accept that the numbers that he cites are accurate only if we consider the child benefit changes in isolation, but that they are not being made in isolation? Many of those families will be significant beneficiaries of the tax threshold changes.

**Jim Eadie:** Even if that were true—I have some doubts about the member's figures—there is no point in improving the situation with regard to taxation if people's entitlement to universal benefits is then removed.

There is another reason why we should safeguard universal benefits such as child benefit as a building block of a fair society: they build social cohesion and help to promote social justice.

If the UK Government would only listen to families and to organisations that are in regular contact with families, it would understand that child benefit is popular and effective precisely because it is so simple and because it is targeted at children. As the head of the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland, John Dickie, has said:

“if the UK government wants to target higher rate taxpayers it should do it through progressive taxation so that households without children share the burden”.

A vital feature of child benefit is that it is paid directly to the main carer for the child or children.

As Christina McKelvie reminded us, it is overwhelmingly the case that women are the main carers. Research has shown that child benefit is spent on children—research by CPAG shows that it is used by parents of all social classes for clothes and shoes, food, essential items such as nappies and education-related items. The Scottish Parliament information centre tells us that, according to HM Revenue and Customs, the average family that is affected by the cuts will have £1,300 less to spend on such products every year. That will be a painful change for those families, which will hit their pockets. The number of families that will be affected is significant. In Edinburgh, 5,000 families will completely lose their entitlement, and in my constituency of Edinburgh Southern more than 700 families will do so.

I pause to reflect on the effect on our economy. When an average cut of £1,300 is applied to 90,000 families, it represents a loss to the Scottish economy of just under £120 million every year. At a time when Mr Osborne's austerity is driving us to the brink of a triple-dip recession, another tax on family spending is surely the last thing that we need. We should contrast that with the efforts of the Scottish Government to protect family budgets at every turn, through measures such as the council tax freeze, free prescriptions and concessionary travel. That contrast in approach explains exactly why the motion calls for recognition that

“it is only through the full powers of independence that it can properly protect the universal benefits that produce fair and equitable outcomes.”

Furthermore, the changes are ludicrously complicated. HMRC has required to put 15 new pages on its website to explain the policy to the millions of confused families. Advice organisations are concerned that many families might stop claiming child benefit when they do not need to, and that the policy will add to hardship when income fluctuates or put an added financial strain on relationships when couples separate.

It is the attack on the universal nature of child benefit that most alarms me. CPAG in Scotland has made the point that, although at first glance the changes might not seem likely to have a direct impact on child poverty, the undermining of a simple, universal benefit will have lasting implications for the role of the state in supporting children.

An extra allowance for children has been a feature of the tax or social security system since the beginning of the 20th century, as Drew Smith said. Every other European country, except Italy, offers a universal child benefit or a child tax allowance for all children. Campaigners worry that the effect of the changes here, along with that of other cuts, will be that people will be made to feel

guilty about receiving a benefit that was once a proud pillar of the welfare state and that children will be seen as a burden for the few rather than as the future for everyone in this country.

The rhetoric of us all being in this together has long since been exposed, as the majority of high earners, who do not have children, are not affected; those with earnings over £150,000, few of whom have children living with them, have even had their tax cut.

The child benefit changes will have a profound social impact on children and families across Scotland, and they will remove significant economic resources of disposable income and money circulating in the Scottish economy and in local communities. We in this Parliament can do better, and with independence we will do better for the children, families and communities of Scotland.

15:45

**Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):**

The changes to the benefits system are being met with anxiety and anger in communities across the UK, and we know that it is not just members in this Parliament who have been debating welfare reform. However, here and now in Scotland there are ways in which we can challenge the impact of the cuts on ordinary families. What is therefore disappointing about the Scottish Government's motion for this debate is that it offers nothing more concrete than that all would be different in an independent Scotland.

I am pleased that Labour's amendment references the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report, "Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Scotland 2013", which recognises that a number of areas

"such as health, childcare, schools and housing fall within current legislative powers of the Scottish Government."

The report also notes:

"It is important that the discussion of independence does not obscure the need for policy development in all these areas to tackle problems that will exist whatever decision the Scottish people take in 2014."

Colleagues spoke in the chamber yesterday of the problems of increased costs of living forcing people to resort to payday loan lenders, which traps people in a cycle of debt. It is of course worrying that changes to the welfare system in this country could be driving people in the same direction. Taking action on high-cost lenders is just one example of what we could and should do to help people now. That needs to sit alongside doing all that we can to promote and encourage credit unions as thriving, sustainable social enterprises that provide a service for everyone in

the community and bring real diversity to Scotland's financial services sector.

The need for such assistance is highlighted in a recent survey undertaken by the Poverty Alliance and Fife Gingerbread, which researched the experiences of lone parents in rural Fife. The research report is called "Surviving Poverty: the Impact of Lone Parenthood". What is clear to those who have read the report is the uncertainty and fear that the changes to the welfare system are causing people in Fife. I am sure that the views displayed in the report will be replicated across Scotland. Lone parents face a number of issues, aside from changes to the benefit system, that affect their experience of poverty; those issues include finding adequate and affordable housing, education, training and employment, childcare and advice and support services. Some estimates suggest that the real income of a one-parent family will be reduced by more than £500 by 2015 as a result of welfare reforms, so the situation may only get worse.

In the survey, 71 per cent of respondents described either "great difficulty" or "some difficulty" in making ends meet. That is a shockingly high figure for people just trying to get by in their day-to-day lives. When six out of 10 poor children in the UK live in families in which at least one parent works, the thousands of families who are struggling day to day need to know what help they can expect now. From speaking to volunteers at Home-Start in Fife, I know that they are inundated by concerns about welfare changes from families whom they work with.

Last Saturday, I met volunteers and trustees at Dunfermline Foodbank and heard how local churches and community groups have enlisted the help of supermarkets and other local businesses to work at the front line of the fight against poverty, supporting individuals and families to meet that most basic of needs: food. They raised with me the concern that many of their clients do not even have enough money for the bus and walk long distances in all weathers to and from the food bank depot. I am grateful for the efforts and achievements of everyone involved in food banks, but I am sure that they would agree that they are no substitute for finding solutions to the poverty that is driving the demand.

Rural communities throughout Mid Scotland and Fife face additional problems in getting access to vital support services. Information is sometimes hard to find for them, there is less access to community and social support networks, and transport might not be available or affordable. That leaves many families isolated and without the support that they need.

I was therefore pleased to hear the Scottish Government's recent announcement of funds for

front-line advice and support services, but more details about how and when they will be available need to be forthcoming. I would be grateful if the minister clarified how much of the £5.4 million that is apparently being made available to agencies to respond to the need for support and assistance will be available directly to councils and their community planning partners, as many public sector bodies are already bearing the brunt of budget cuts and are facing increased demand for advice services. In its report, the Poverty Alliance goes as far as to say that the importance of advice services in assisting people with income maximisation and supporting those in and out of employment should be a priority in local and national anti-poverty strategies, and should be included in the new single outcome agreements.

It is disappointing that we see in the motion no such practical suggestions or useful policy indications of how the Government intends to counteract any negative impacts of welfare changes on the lives of people in Scotland using the powers that it already has. The Scottish Government's motion could have been used to engage more constructively across the chamber in discussing the impacts of welfare reform. I hope that there will be such dialogue in the future. People who are being hit the hardest need help now. They cannot afford to wait.

15:51

**Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP):** At the outset of my speech, I should declare an interest: my family is a beneficiary of child benefit.

I cannot exactly say that I welcome the debate—I said the same at the start of our debate on fuel poverty. I would prefer that the changes were not happening, but it is important that we debate the issue.

Before I go into details, I say to Malcolm Chisholm, whom I normally very much enjoy listening to, that it was somewhat galling to hear his upset over the Labour Party being accused of cutting bus passes. I remind him that it was his party that set up a cuts commission for which nothing is off the table. I have lost count of the number of times that I have met individuals when I have been out canvassing on behalf of my party who have informed me that they believe that my party will cut bus passes. Now we know that the SNP is preserving the bus pass and Labour is threatening it.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** As I have said before, I totally support the review, but it is quite a different thing to say that we are going to abolish concessionary travel, when we may be looking at modifying it. As the member knows—the issue

came up at the Finance Committee two weeks ago—Age Scotland, for example, wants to modify it. Does he reject its suggestion as well?

**Jamie Hepburn:** I reject the suggestion, which I have heard countless times, that the SNP will abolish the bus pass. Quite frankly, that was an unconvincing explanation of why the charge cannot be levelled against the Labour Party.

Let me get on to child benefit, because that is what we are debating. I want to look at how the change is affecting people in Scotland.

We know that child benefit cuts will mean that a family with two children will lose more than £1,100 a year and that a family with one child will lose more than £650 a year. According to the UK Government, in the next financial year, approximately 85,000 families in Scotland will be affected by the high-income child benefit charge, which will reduce or remove their benefit. That, of course, creates a nonsensical situation—I think that that has been referred to. It is absolutely bizarre that the UK Government has come up with a formula that means that a single-income family that earns more than £50,000 will lose child benefit, whereas a couple with a combined household income of just under £100,000 might not do so. Even Iain Duncan Smith's favoured think tank, the centre for social justice, has criticised that aspect. There are other flaws with the high-income child benefit charge.

Lest we think that it is only the higher earners who will be affected by the child benefit changes, that is, of course not the case. The Welfare Benefits Up-rating Bill, which is being considered at Westminster, will limit increases in working-age benefits to 1 per cent for three years. That will affect child benefit as well. It will, of course, affect people at the lower end of the income scale.

Today, an article has been published in the *Daily Record* that says that, with the changes, there will be some 15,000 more children in relative poverty in Scotland and 200,000 more children in relative poverty across the UK. I say to Drew Smith that we are all concerned about kids being pushed into poverty anywhere. However, on his party's unwillingness to see the powers invested and used here, I will not go back to my constituents and say, "We won't do anything for you because other parties in the Parliament are not confident enough to take powers here." If we had the powers, we could help our constituents.

I always think that the Labour Party's solidarity is a bit phoney. Mark McDonald made the point well that it seems that the Labour Party's social solidarity extends no further than the white cliffs of Dover.

The changes that make child benefit a targeted measure will make it far more complex. I do not

have time to go into that in great detail, but there are concerns. The Scottish Government has set out solidarity and cohesion as two of its main purpose targets, and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations has suggested that the move away from universality reduces solidarity.

My colleague Mr Stewart referred to the position as espoused in *The Observer* by the leader of the Labour Party. I agree with Ed Miliband that attacking universal benefits such as child benefit is “a dangerous erosion of the social solidarity that comes from a universal system.”

The Labour members here would do well to reflect on that.

Frankly, it is somewhat galling for the Tory amendment to conclude that

“many people will benefit from ... the forthcoming roll-out of the universal credit”,

on a day when the *Daily Record* published an article that says that 15,000 children in Scotland

“will fall below the poverty line”

as a consequence of the changes. I remind those on the Tory benches that those are DWP figures—their own Government’s figures.

I will gently ask Alex Johnstone a positive question. Like me, he is a member of the Welfare Reform Committee. I ask him to name a witness who has come to our committee and spoken of the benefit of the changes, because I cannot remember a single one.

I turn briefly to the Labour amendment, which suggests that

“the issues that are central to tackling poverty, such as health, childcare, schools and housing fall within current legislative powers of the Scottish Government.”

Indeed they do, but the suggestion is that the Scottish Government is doing nothing. I remind Labour members that the SNP Government has protected the national health service budget when Labour would not have ring fenced it; looked to roll out increased hours of nursery education; provided free tuition in education; and delivered more affordable homes.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You need to come to a conclusion.

**Jamie Hepburn:** We heard from Labour members about all the great achievements from the 1940s, 1960s and 1970s. The SNP Government is achieving here and now, but we could do much more with the powers of independence.

15:57

**Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I begin with a Burns quote that is heard frequently in January and which is apt for the debate; it is about the type of Scotland that we want to live in and our values and choices. It goes:

“Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware  
That jaups in luggies”.

Scotland does not want a watered-down welfare system that does nothing to fill the bowls of our citizens. Time and again, Scotland has shown that she wants the bowls filled with haggis, the full bhuna or whatever. We want a welfare system that is built on the principles of universalism: from each according to their ability and to each according to need, and from the cradle to the grave.

We know that Scotland wants that from the overwhelming vote in the 2011 elections for the policies of universalism in the SNP manifesto, such as free education, free prescriptions and free personal care. Those are now described as a something-for-nothing society, but I say to those on the Labour benches that, as soon as we ask why the middle or upper classes should benefit from universal services, we have lost the principle that they are about: the normalisation of welfare.

**Drew Smith:** The member could perhaps take some time to explain why the Scottish Government introduced means testing into the central heating programme.

**Clare Adamson:** We have been accused of not walking the walk, but the Scottish people have shown that they support our record on universal services.

There is more evidence that Scotland wants that. On 29 May 2009, Scotland’s Futures Forum and Glasgow Caledonian University’s poverty information unit co-hosted a conference in this chamber to explore the extent to which the Scottish Parliament in its first decade had reduced poverty and inequalities and to consider what the Parliament should be doing in the next 10 years. I cannot mention all the key conclusions today, but one of them was:

“Inequalities of income and wealth have changed little in recent decades with a corrosive effect on all sections of society. It is therefore vital that we tackle inequality as much as poverty.”

Another was:

“High quality public services that are accessible to all but meet the needs of the most vulnerable are crucial to ensuring a more equal society.”

One of the contributors looked to “The Spirit Level: Why more equal societies almost always do better” to show that an equal society benefits all sections of society, including the richest, who

benefit from lower mortality rates and better mental health.

That benefit from an equal society is also evidenced in the Jimmy Reid Foundation report, "The Case for Universalism", which examines the debate in Scotland today. Mr Smith said that he wanted this debate, but I was very disappointed that a debate in the Parliament on that very report was stopped from happening, because not one member of the Labour Party felt that they could support the principles on which all the welfare benefits that they brought in were based.

In its section on international comparisons and contrasts, the report examines the Nordic model of a truly "universal welfare state". It says:

"Such an approach to organising society and the economy has been described as: 'a broad range of social services and benefits that are intended to cover the entire population throughout the different stages of life, and ... the benefits are delivered on the basis of uniform rules for eligibility. A typical example would be universal childcare or universal child allowances that are distributed without any form of means-testing' ... Such an inclusive welfare state inevitably has consequences for the whole of the community: the welfare system is not just for 'the poor' but for all, building social cohesion, solidarity and inclusion".

By any comparison, the Nordic countries, individually—as evidenced by Kevin Stewart—and collectively, occupy the highest ranks and indices of income, wealth, happiness, life satisfaction and equality, with the lowest levels of poverty and inequality in the world.

Our economic and fiscal choices should be about the society that we aspire to. The recognition that stigmatisation, alienation and poverty traps simply impede economic and social cohesiveness must take centre stage. It is about philosophy; it is not about fiscal decisions.

Scotland's Futures Forum also came up with aspirations for Scotland. It sought

"A more progressive tax system ... Reduction in educational inequalities ... A reduction in inequality of wealth as well as income ... High quality public services accessible to all".

Those are very welcome aspirations.

This debate has been to the fore recently in Scotland. I saw Douglas Alexander on "The Politics Show" trying to defend the indefensible—the Labour Party's lurch to the right. In doing so, he quoted Bevan:

"The language of priorities is the religion of Socialism."

Bevan coined that phrase in 1949. Perhaps Mr Alexander and other Labour politicians should read his 1959 speech, 10 years later, following Labour's defeat, long after Bevan had parted company from the Labour front benches over the introduction of prescription charges, which he saw as an abandonment of the founding principles of the NHS. He said:

"I once said ... that the language of priorities was the religion of Socialism, and there is nothing wrong with that statement ... but you can only get your priorities right if you have the power to put them right ... The argument is about power and only about power, because only by the possession of power can you get the priorities correct."

I look forward to the day when the power is in the hands of a Scottish Government in an independent Scotland.

16:04

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** That the UK coalition has tampered with child benefit in an indefensibly inequitable way is beyond question. Sadly, though, it is a done deal, but it is right that we debate this important issue here, because it impacts on the lives of more than 90,000 people here in Scotland. This afternoon we have an opportunity to debate a vision of a Scotland that puts the welfare of our children at the heart of society.

Child benefit has its origins in post-war Britain, when the ruling coalition of the time sought to ease the burden on families' suffering amid housing shortages and food rationing. At a time when many families are struggling to make ends meet and there is an increasing need for food banks, it is difficult to understand the rationale behind the current decision. Child benefit was originally called family allowance and has been reinvented a couple of times. It became known as child benefit in the late 1970s and further changes were made in the 1990s, when a higher rate for the first child was introduced.

Governments of various colours have continued to invest in that important benefit, which recognises the importance of every child in every household, not to mention the increasing cost of raising a child. According to the Centre for Economics and Business Research's recent report, "Cost of a Child: From cradle to college", the cost of raising a child has soared; it will have cost more than £218,000 by the time the child is 21.

We know that women earn less than men, and that austerity measures, unemployment and underemployment have disproportionate impacts on women. The lack of affordable good-quality childcare is important, as Christina McKelvie said, and deserves our undivided attention, because it greatly affects women and children in Scotland. Although people who work in childcare are not well paid, we have among the highest childcare costs in Europe. That factor might force more women into economic inactivity. Barnardo's made the point recently in its report, "Paying to work: childcare and child poverty", and the Scottish Trades Union Congress made the same point in its evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism



Committee's inquiry into underemployment in Scotland. Child benefit, as a reliable part of a family's income, might enable some women to stay at home and look after their children and it might help others to pay for childcare.

In many households, income is not shared equally, as is suggested by the direct payment of child benefit to women in 94 per cent of cases. Child benefit is an independent income on which many women rely—even women whose partners earn £50,000 and more, as Kevin Stewart said. If a family with two or three children took on a large mortgage when it was perhaps too easy to do so and is now in changed circumstances and struggling with repayments, perhaps with negative equity on the home, and if we factor in credit card debts and the usual household bills, it is quite possible that although the family appears to be comfortably off it is relying on child benefit to buy food and children's clothing.

For some women and children who are escaping domestic violence, child benefit is the only source of income. The excellent campaign work of Zero Tolerance long ago dispelled the myth that domestic abuse is experienced only by women in low-income households.

The Fawcett Society has questioned the policy and has asked whether it will increase or reduce inequality between women and men. We know the answer. I want to live in a country in which policies are fully evaluated for their impact on equality and in which the impact of policies is measured and reviewed as necessary, even after decisions have been taken.

The cross-party group on children and young people has discussed the extent to which Government, local authorities, health boards and key agencies have statutory duties to consult children and young people about issues that affect them. In Scotland, we have legislation that encourages engagement with and consultation of children and young people on decisions that affect their lives. How many children were consulted about the policy on child benefit?

The proposed children and young people bill offers an opportunity to discuss issues fully and strengthen children's rights. I hope that Parliament will take full advantage of that opportunity. When, in December 1991, the UK ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, it agreed to make all laws, policy and practice compatible with the convention. In 2010, the then Minister of State for Children and Families, Sarah Teather, pledged in a written statement that the Government would give due consideration to the convention when making new law and policy. However, no consideration appears to have been given to the views of children who will be affected by changes to child benefit. The UK ratified the

convention, but it is not being applied properly, even when benefits for children and young people are affected.

Child benefit has been a universal benefit. Its mutuality has a benefit that should not be sacrificed. Article 27 of the UN convention places an obligation on states to assist parents to meet the material needs of their children. Child benefit is society's small contribution to its children's welfare. The welfare of our youngest people is central as we debate our future. The UN convention, along with policies such as universal child benefit, is worthy of a place in a national constitution. It says that children matter.

16:09

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** For me, this debate, like many of the debates that we have in the chamber, is about independence. The Opposition parties do not like to hear this, but we will get the socially just Scotland that we aspire to only through the powers of independence. I have said before that politics is about people. We represent the people; how we represent them and the decisions that we make can make a difference to their lives and can lead them to aspire to the lifestyle that we want them to have. I ask Labour members to listen to the arguments over the next 18 months and to see what independence has to offer, because the union is obviously not working in this respect, as the Deputy First Minister said.

I respect the Labour Party for much of what it did in the past—for example in the 1940s, with the introduction of the welfare state. I also respect Malcolm Chisholm for some of the things that he said earlier and for what he says during debates. However, the 1960s were a long time ago. I was not even born then, believe it or not. I am talking about the here and now; I am talking about children and families in Scotland at the present time. They are the people whom we represent and the people for whom we have to make decisions. As the Deputy First Minister said, why should we listen to a Government that we did not elect and would probably never elect? Why do we not work together to ensure that we can have the socially just Scotland that we all wish for?

It is with regret that I speak again about changes to our welfare system that target the most vulnerable and needy people in our society. How many of us stand by the idea that a society is judged by how it treats its weakest members? I suggest that most of us stand by that—although having listened to the speeches by some members, I think that some believe otherwise.

Child benefit—money that is meant to ensure the security of our children—is to be reduced for, or removed from, 90,000 families in Scotland. That

decision was made by a Parliament that we did not vote for and have no influence over when it takes such decisions. The decision will affect families across our country. The Westminster Government's own Department for Work and Pensions has freely admitted that the welfare cuts will increase child poverty. Having heard Mr Johnstone's speech, I can confirm that we are truly back in the Thatcher era, as policies search out, demonise and punish those in society that certain parts of the right wing of the political spectrum believe deserve it.

**Alex Johnstone:** I fully respect George Adam's position and his aspirations. However, looking at the most recent figures, I suspect that if Scotland were to become independent in a couple of years, the overall budget that its Government would look at would be similar to the one that we have today, or perhaps slightly less, given the possible increased borrowing costs. Given the same budget, where would George Adam reprioritise spending to ensure that his aspirations were achieved?

**George Adam:** I say in response to Mr Johnstone's argument that the main difference is that we would be in control of what we were deciding. It would be this Parliament and the people of Scotland who would be making the decisions for our country and ensuring that we have the future to which we all aspire.

In an independent Scotland, if we are told that a policy will increase child poverty, will the Parliament say that it is a price worth paying? That is not likely, but when such a policy comes from another place, we have no ability to change it and we must accept it. That is the human cost of the union. We must remember that, when we have debates such as this. As I have said before, it is the women, children, fathers, daughters, mothers and families of Scotland whom we represent. We must ensure that we do it to the best of our ability.

Why not use the tax system to reduce the deficit that the unionist Governments created? Why not target those who have money and are deliberately avoiding tax, whether that is the rich or the multimillion pound companies that we hear about every week? The Tories seem to think that it is somehow more effective to create an administrative system that will reduce child benefit for a family of two by £1,100 a year and remove a family from child benefit if one member of the family earns £50,000, but to keep paying out to families that earn £98,000. A new system will be created to claw back from families through income tax the child benefit that they were paid.

The Scottish Government budget has been reduced by the Tory-Lib Dem Government. Even with that, the Scottish Government still has the opportunity to make a difference. It is a tale of two

Governments: one that cares, is aspirational and looks to the future for its people; and another that just wants the people of Scotland to know their role and place, and not to move forward.

It may interest members to know that we continue to have the best package of nursery care in the UK. We have increased free nursery provision by 20 per cent, invested £11 million in the family nurse partnership programme and extended free school meals to people on low incomes. Those are not aspirations; they are things that have happened within the straightjacket of devolution.

Independence is the only way forward for the people of Scotland. This argument—like many of the arguments and debates that we have—is a reason for Scotland to be independent. So, should Scotland be independent? I say yes.

16:15

**Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab):** I am privileged to speak from the Labour Party benches on this issue. We have a history of supporting children and families: we increased child benefit, introduced child tax credits and have fought against the current child benefit reforms every step of the way.

The Tories and Lib Dems in Westminster have the wrong priorities. They are cutting taxes for millionaires and big business while slashing welfare benefits such as housing benefit and child benefit, which is an outright attack on the most needy in our society and will plunge more children into poverty.

The changes that are being put in place by the coalition Government mean that more than 100,000 families in Scotland could each lose up to £1,200 a year. It is neither fair nor equitable that people who earn more than £150,000 are getting a tax cut while single-earner families on £50,000 are getting their child benefit cut. Of course, equality is not something with which the Eton boys are familiar. How can it be right that a couple who each earn £49,000 a year can still access full child benefit whereas a family whose single income is £60,000 a year will get none?

The Institute of Economic Affairs has called this child benefit change:

"the single most incompetent change to the benefits system since the second world war".

I agree that it is deeply unfair and unjust. In the test of fairness and even from an administrative standpoint, the child benefit reform is a complete shambles.

The coalition needs to look at how child benefit is paid. Save the Children believes that child benefit should be paid to the main carer or second

earner in a couple family, which is usually the mother. That gives at least some comfort that the money will go towards the wellbeing of the child and avoid the difficulties that arise in a relationship where there is domestic abuse or where the partner does not provide adequately for children.

I hear the Scottish Government calling for more economic levers. In response to that I ask what it would do with them. It has the power now to change things, but what is it doing? For example, it was announced last year that the amount of free childcare will increase by 125 hours to 600 hours. I welcome that development, but it was announced first in 2007 and then again in 2012.

When female unemployment was rising year on year, up to the 23 per cent rise between 2010 and 2011, why was action not taken? It was viable for the Government to do so, but action was delayed, so I ask the Government when those changes will come into play. They could be of real benefit in supporting children and families and reducing child poverty.

We need to look at ways in which we can change the culture so that childcare goes from being expensive and inflexible to being accessible for working-parent families countrywide. That is a difficult task, but one that we must address.

Many local authorities are considering closure of after-school clubs and breakfast clubs because of budget constraints. Those vital services are often the only way that working mothers can afford to work. Although council budgets are a decision for councils to make, their cuts are a direct result of Government policies, which are not supporting children and families.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, we in the Labour Party have a proud record in Government of supporting children and families. I make no excuse for repeating from our amendment the quotation from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report that has been mentioned so many times this afternoon. Perhaps the SNP will listen to what it is saying.

"With the political debate dominated by the referendum on independence, it's important to point out that the issues that are central to tackling poverty, such as health, childcare, schools and housing fall within current legislative powers of the Scottish Government. The problems highlighted in this report cannot wait; action can and should be taken now."

When it comes to supporting families, we need clear direction and action from this Government. We have to move away from the soundbites and come up with practical solutions right now to protect those who are being hit by the cuts, and to tackle the real inequalities in Scotland. We need to start using the powers that we have today to protect the most vulnerable, to support children and families and to ensure that our children get

the best possible start in life. They should not be used as a political football to score points against the coalition in Westminster.

Labour will in this chamber continue to speak out against the Tory-Lib Dem cuts, and our Westminster colleagues will fight to get them reversed. They are fighting not just for a fairer Scotland but for a fairer United Kingdom. After all, the problems are ideological, not geographical.

16:21

**Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP):**

First of all, I declare that my family are child benefit recipients.

I want to touch on a few issues that have arisen in the debate. I think, for a start, that my colleague Jamie Hepburn dealt very well with the accusation that the Scottish Government is "doing nothing" when he outlined the policy areas where it has taken action. I should also point out that it is trying to ameliorate the harmful impact of the coalition's welfare reforms through the introduction of the Scottish welfare fund, the commitment to plug the gap in council tax benefit and the announcement of £5.4 million for benefits advice groups. All those actions demonstrate the Government's commitment.

Beyond that, the social wage, which comprises the universal benefits that the Government is committed to maintaining, is absolutely about helping those in poverty as well as wider society and the promotion of social cohesion.

**Jackie Baillie:** Will the member give way?

**Mark McDonald:** No, thank you.

As colleagues have pointed out, in order to create social cohesion we need to normalise the benefits system to ensure that it is not seen as something just for poor people, and to engender respect for it among the middle and upper classes.

With regard to the lessons of history, I return to the point that I made to Malcolm Chisholm. When, in 1997, the Labour Party came to power following Tory Government, it chose to implement, instead of reverse, benefits cuts that the Tories had planned in their budget. I therefore say: fool us once, shame on us. As for fooling us twice, I say to Mr Chisholm that I do not think that Labour will get that opportunity. I hope that the Scottish people will see through all that when it comes to the vote in 2014.

On the argument that the SNP has suddenly realised that this is all about social justice and not national identity, I will say that I care deeply for all the people who live in Scotland, regardless of their nationality. To be frank, it is absurd to claim that the independence cause is defined by national

identity. I want a country where people from all over the world want to base themselves and live because it is a fairer and more prosperous society. National identity does not matter a jot to me; this is about building a better Scotland for all of the people of Scotland, irrespective of their nationality.

I tried to intervene on Willie Rennie, but he is obviously not in the mood for a debate today. I wanted to ask him about budget impacts, because in last week's debate on the budget bill I told him to go away, have a look at the UK budget's impacts on income groups in society and come back and tell Parliament what he had found out. Mr Rennie clearly did not do his homework.

**Willie Rennie:** Will the member give way?

**Mark McDonald:** No. Luckily, I have the information that Mr Rennie should have been looking for.

I will quote to Mr Rennie from the Institute for Fiscal Studies budget analysis for the 2012-13 budget:

"The largest average losses as a fraction of net income from the modelled tax and benefit reforms to be introduced in 2012-13 are among those in the bottom half of the income distribution. The lowest-income fifth of households will lose about 1.5% of their net income from these reforms, on average."

It goes on to say:

"Households towards the bottom of the income distribution lose out particularly from the lower benefit rates that arise from using the CPI to uprate them rather than the RPI or the Rossi index, from the time-limiting of contributory Employment and Support Allowance ... to one year for those in the Work-Related Activity Group ... and from the cash freezes to Child Benefit and Working Tax Credit amounts."

Let us hear no more from Mr Rennie that the Tory-Lib Dem budget—

**Willie Rennie:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mark McDonald:** No. Mr Rennie can deal with the point in his closing speech.

Let us hear no more about how the budget that is being put forward by the Tories and the Lib Dems at Westminster is somehow helping those at the lower end of the income groups. It is not helping them; it is detrimental to them.

What have the Lib Dems chosen to rebel on in order to show the difference between them and the Conservative Party? Is it the dismantling of the NHS? No. Is it tuition fees of £9,000? No. Is it benefits destruction? No. It is boundary changes. That'll show them. That is the reality of the Liberal Democrats in Government; they are unwilling to stand up on points of principle and far too willing to stand up on points of self-preservation.

In terms of the Tory arguments, Alex Johnstone continually referred to increased borrowing costs. I know that he is, as a farmer, well used to the construction of straw men, but even he should acknowledge that his own government is now going around telling people that credit ratings are not the be-all and end-all and that they are not all that they are cracked up to be, in anticipation of the fact that the UK Government is likely to lose its AAA credit rating in the not-too-distant future, purely as a result of the ruinous economic policies that are being pursued by the chancellor, whom he supports. Alex Johnstone cannot come to this chamber and start bandying around the notion of credit ratings and increased borrowing costs when his own chancellor is putting that very rating at risk.

The child benefit reforms are, to be frank, a guddle. There is no other way of putting it. The proposal is the most bizarre way to construct any form of benefit. There is the fact that it does not distinguish between single-income and double-income families, which means that a single parent on £60,000 a year loses their entire child benefit, while a couple who earn £49,000 each will retain theirs.

Then there is the high-income child benefit charge. Rather than simply stop or reduce the payments for parents who earn more than £50,000, they will instead be clawed back by forcing those people to go through a self-assessment tax return. It is less a child benefit now and more a child paperwork-intensive interest-free mini-loan. The UK Government should be ashamed of itself.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** We turn to the closing speeches. Willie Rennie has six minutes.

16:27

**Willie Rennie:** I see that Mark McDonald's affection for the Liberal Democrats has not improved.

**Mark McDonald:** I was in coalition with the Liberal Democrats for five years, so what do you expect?

**Willie Rennie:** Maybe that taught him a lesson.

Mark McDonald fails to recognise that we need to look at all the changes over a period of time. If we look at one budget in isolation, we do not recognise, for instance, the significant cuts to tax for people on low and middle incomes. We have to look at everything in the round, not in isolation. I am sure that we can all pick isolated statistics to prove our case, but Mark McDonald needs to look at the matter in a much more considered way.

I know more at the end of the debate about what the SNP does not like. I thought that that was what we would get. I did not think that we would get many answers about what kind of reform the SNP would like. The SNP has previously promised—on numerous occasions—further reform. It has said that it wants simplification and that it does not think that the welfare state should stay the same. However, nothing—not one single thing, not one idea—came forward from any SNP members who spoke today.

Jayne Baxter made the worthy point that the independence debate should not force an absence of policy. She is absolutely right about that, but independence is the excuse; whenever anybody from the SNP is challenged about the detail, they say that that is a future Scotland's choice. They fail to recognise that they need to spell out what it would look like. They cannot criticise and then fail to come up with the answers. Clare Adamson had some fine words—actually, it was quite a good speech—but there was no substance at all on policy. There were no ideas.

I can only assume from all the remarks that the SNP is in favour of increasing the welfare budget by £2.5 billion when Scotland is independent, because not one single SNP member came up with any ideas about reform. Actually, I apologise. Annabelle Ewing came up with a suggestion on Trident.

**Kevin Stewart:** Will Mr Rennie give way?

**Willie Rennie:** I do not know how many times the Trident money has been spent. I am sorry to disappoint Annabelle Ewing, but Angus Robertson has already grabbed that money for defence.

**Kevin Stewart:** Will Mr Rennie give way?

**Willie Rennie:** No.

The Trident money has been spent numerous times, and apparently will also be spent on the welfare state. I look forward to a little bit of consistency.

The Scottish Government's welfare working group will have received a clear message today, which was "Do not change one single thing. There should be no reform to the welfare state in an independent Scotland." At least it gets a clear message from the SNP, which is that the budget needs to be restored by £2.5 billion because the SNP has no suggestions.

The Scottish Government's fiscal commission working group has also received a clear message, which was "Forget about fiscal responsibility and the fact that the welfare budget increased by 40 per cent during Labour's time in government, because we should not change a single thing." That approach fundamentally undermines the SNP's case for independence. It cannot both claim

to be fiscally responsible and, at the same time, not deal with the welfare state. It needs to be dealt with because it is not sustainable and it is not possible to carry on as we are. The SNP's continuing claim that no reform is required lacks credibility.

I recognise that the child benefit changes are not ideal. It is a bit of a crude way of changing the system, but it avoids an expensive means-testing process. I do not think that we can really argue that the top priority should be to protect the highest earners in the country—the wealthiest 15 per cent. I think that it is reasonable to target that group if we are reforming other parts of the welfare state. Although it is not ideal and I would prefer not to do it, I believe that needs must as we reform the welfare state.

Having listened to the speeches from the SNP benches, and some from the Labour benches, one might think that all reform is bad and that nothing should ever change. To me, some of the changes to the welfare state are pretty good.

We all have our own examples of people who we meet in our constituencies and who tell us their story about the welfare system and the changes. Not so long ago, I met a family who told me that they would like to work but it would not pay and it would be difficult to go out to work. They have their family interests at heart—I commend them for that—but they have decided to stay on benefits because it is too difficult and they would not earn enough to work.

The welfare state traps on benefits people who would like to go to work. We have a situation in which someone has to wait five weeks before they get their benefits back if they do not keep the job that they have sought. That happens on many occasions. People fear losing the job that they are going for, so it is not financially worth it to go for it. That is why we have made changes to make work pay, to cut tax on low and middle incomes, and to cap the welfare benefits. In itself, that reform will encourage people into work—and we must all agree in this chamber that work is good for families. We need to encourage people to go to work: it is a good thing. We seem to hear from some people that work is a bad thing that we do not want to encourage or incentivise, but I believe that we need to create a welfare state that encourages.

Let me gently respond to Christina McKelvie. She said that we are attacking women, but she needs to look at just two things. First, the improvements to maternity entitlements have made a significant change to women in work. Secondly, she should consider nursery education for two-year-olds. In England, 40 per cent of the poorest children will get 15 hours a week of

nursery education, while in Scotland the rate is only 1 per cent.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You should draw to a close, please.

**Willie Rennie:** To me, that is an example of the coalition committing to making a difference for women and making a difference for society.

16:34

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I have listened extremely carefully to the debate and will endeavour to deal with the criticisms of the child benefit policy that have been made from around the chamber. Before I do so, I must say that I agree whole-heartedly with the Deputy First Minister and Willie Rennie that it is important to put this debate in context. It is a debate that is happening in this Parliament and in Westminster and it is familiar territory for many countries around the world. Kevin Stewart made that point, although perhaps for a slightly different reason.

We know, from what has been said in previous welfare debates in Holyrood and from the robust exchanges this afternoon, that the parties have substantial differences on the policy way forward. However, looking at the parties' statements on welfare policy, we can see that there is relative agreement on the starting position. The Deputy First Minister set out some examples of that. However, that starting position is also similar because we know that the welfare bill is huge—it grew by 45 per cent between 2000 and 2010—and because we know that it is likely to grow significantly in the years ahead. We all agree that the debate about what can and, more important, what should be available as a universal benefit is only just beginning.

Malcolm Chisholm set out, very fairly, how he sees the Labour Party paying to maintain universal benefits. Over time, the Labour Party must spell out, in the context of the other universal benefits, whether it would drop universality for them. If the SNP is going to say that it will maintain those universal benefits—as the Deputy First Minister and other speakers did today—it is incumbent on it to explain how that will be paid for, in the context of this debate and the referendum debate.

Those are important issues, and the various political parties in the chamber come at them from different angles. Willie Rennie made a good point when he said that we cannot have a situation in which it pays not to go to work. That is as immoral as some people are trying to say our policies are immoral in hammering the poor all the time. In a minute, I will deal with the allegation that our policies are hammering the poor, because that is simply not true.

Underlying all that is the task that faces the Westminster Government, which is to make substantial savings to significantly reduce the budget deficit that was left by its predecessor.

**Mark McDonald:** Does Liz Smith feel that the benefits system should be used as a means of deficit reduction? Does that not undermine the notion that the benefits system should be constructed on the principles of fairness?

**Liz Smith:** I thank the member for his intervention, but there is an economic reality out there. It is there not just because of the size and the needs of that welfare budget; it is there because of the budget deficit. We all have to accept that. Any political party that tries to deny that is not living in the real world.

We have to make justifiable savings, and the coalition Government intends that better-off families should take their share—a policy that it hopes will raise a significant amount of money and will also have a redistributive effect that is important in the context of the overall welfare changes.

We have been strongly criticised this afternoon for the policy that has the effect that the position of a family with two parents who are each earning £49,000 would be very different from that of a family with one person who is earning £60,000, as the latter family would lose their benefits. If members look back through the record, they will see that I raised that issue with concern several months ago. It would be fair to say that the Westminster Government has had the greatest amount of criticism on that point. However, because of that, the Westminster Government has moved to a situation in which some of the loss of benefits will be tapered so that there will be no immediate cut-off, as there was in the original plan. It has listened to concerns about that.

As Drew Smith said, means testing would have to take place if we were to adjust that system to a much more complex system with many more administrative calculations—if we were going to tax on the basis of households rather than individuals, that would lead to considerable means testing and complications.

There have been criticisms of the methodology and the fact that the change is complex. Yes, of course the change is complex, but I come back to the fact that the change must be seen in the context of the overall adjustments that need to take place, including the other tax changes and the targeting of the groups that the coalition Government feels can bear the greater burden.

To sum up, it is important that we have this debate because there is something more fundamental behind the philosophy in all our positions. I accept the SNP's point that the debate

is about the kind of Scotland that we want to live in—that is true. In these times of considerable pressure on welfare, all the political parties must set out how they will deal with that, and we will all come to very different conclusions. It is important that such a debate takes place in the context of the referendum debate, so that we can ensure that the public has a real choice.

16:41

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** The debate has been fractious at times, but that only underlines the seriousness of the issue before us.

I can agree with much that is in the Government's motion on child benefit. It is worth reminding ourselves of the scale of the impact: 90,000 families in Scotland will have their benefit income reduced or removed; and 200,000 children across the UK will be plunged into poverty, of whom as many as 15,000 are likely to be in Scotland. As others have rightly pointed out, those are the UK Government's own figures.

Malcolm Chisholm was right, though, that the SNP is simply wrong to assert that we in the Labour Party do not believe in universal benefits; we do. We are proud to have introduced the family allowance and child benefit, but the difference is that we want to ensure that, where benefits are universal, they are also sustainable and affordable. Child benefit's importance as a universal benefit is widely recognised because the benefit is for children and is paid predominantly to women. We also chose to target those struggling on low incomes by providing tax credits, but even those are being eroded by the Tory-Lib Dem coalition.

I am fond of quoting the Prime Minister. He previously said that the cuts that would occur as a result of the global recession would fall "on the broadest shoulders". At first, those cuts fell on the sick and disabled. Now, it appears that they are to fall on women and children as well.

The attack on women and children is not confined to child benefit, as the Welfare Benefits Up-rating Bill goes even further. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that only the "shirkers", the people with their curtains drawn, will be affected by his cuts to tax credits and benefits. The language that he uses is, frankly, disgusting, but he is also fundamentally wrong. Not uprating benefits is a direct attack on working people and those striving to support their families.

Contrary to what Willie Rennie said, the UK Government has also made a real-terms cut to statutory maternity pay. According to the House of Commons library, when all the benefit changes are taken together, pregnant women will lose £1,300 during the course of their pregnancy.

Taken together, two thirds of the overall hit will be on women, and various members have pointed out the disadvantage that will occur as a result. The impact is clear: poverty will increase.

Jim Eadie was right, because all this is happening at the same time as 8,000 of the UK's millionaires will enjoy a tax cut of £107,000 per year. That is not just unfair but immoral. Therefore, I join with the many members across the chamber, on the Government benches and on the Labour benches, in condemning the coalition for its approach to welfare reform.

Having said that, I am genuinely disappointed with the SNP position. Back bencher after back bencher glibly fell back on the usual constitutional argument that, with independence, everything will be okay, there will be no deficit or other problems and the sun will always shine each and every day. However, the issue of child poverty is serious. It is a complete abdication of responsibility for the SNP not to strain every sinew to alleviate the problem not at some point in the distant future but to take action now.

Poverty is not simply about a lack of income.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Jackie Baillie:** No, thank you.

Before coming to the Parliament, I worked in many of the most disadvantaged communities in Glasgow and the west of Scotland. There I saw that poverty is shaped by poor health, poor educational attainment, the lack of a job and low self-esteem—people in communities locked into a cycle of despair. There I saw that the way out of poverty is through having access to opportunity and support to access employment.

The SNP Government has the power to deal with that. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report to which Drew Smith, Neil Bibby and Jayne Baxter all rightly drew attention was clear on that point.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Will the member take an intervention on that point?

**Jackie Baillie:** Tom MacInnes, the author of the report, said:

"with political debate dominated by the referendum on independence, it's important to point out that issues that are central to tackling poverty, such as health, childcare, schools and housing fall within the current legislative powers of the Scottish Government. The problems highlighted in this report cannot wait; action can and should be taken now."

**Jamie Hepburn:** Will the member take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I do not think that the member is taking interventions, Mr Hepburn.

**Jackie Baillie:** I believe fundamentally that the SNP knows that it can do something. I remind the SNP that, under Labour, the percentage of children in absolute poverty in Scotland fell from 28 per cent in 1998-99 to 12 per cent in 2005-06. I am very proud that that was the highest fall across the United Kingdom, where a Labour Government lifted half a million children out of poverty. The SNP should please not tell me that it lacks the power. We more than halved child poverty. Where is the SNP's ambition?

Of course, we can judge the SNP Government on its actions not its rhetoric. Under this SNP Government, the housing budget has been cut by £40 million and the college budget has been cut by £35 million.

**Kevin Stewart:** Will the member give way?

**Jackie Baillie:** Absolutely not. The member should listen.

Under this SNP Government, the health budget has been cut in real terms, 2,500 nurses have been cut from the health service and we are now seeing trolley waits at accident and emergency departments. Under this SNP Government, no progress has been made on reducing child poverty, as the figures have flatlined, and the average Scottish household has been around £1,200 a year worse off than in the previous year—that is from the Government's own figures.

The SNP promises much but delivers little. Nowhere was that better illustrated than in Neil Bibby's speech. The SNP promised 600 hours of nursery provision for each child in 2007. That was welcome, but it was not delivered by 2011. In fact, if I recall, it was promised three times. Now it has been put on pause until 2014 or beyond. Will we ever see it?

The SNP might talk the talk—in fact, there is a lot of talk in the chamber at the moment—but the evidence suggests that it does not walk the walk. Everything that the SNP does is viewed through a constitutional prism. As the motion demonstrates, even tackling child poverty is put on pause. In effect, the SNP is telling the poor people of Scotland, "Wait four years and then we will get round to you." What happens if the SNP loses the independence vote? There will be no answer for the children and families currently in poverty. *[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Jackie Baillie:** Despite the noise, I regret the fact that, regardless of what SNP members say, their agenda is based on the politics of identity. That is not socially progressive. We on the Labour benches believe in fairness and social justice. The fundamental difference between us and the SNP is that we do something about it. While the SNP

continues to care only about independence, the children of Scotland are left waiting.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Margaret Burgess to wind up the debate on behalf of the Government. Minister, you have 10 minutes or thereabouts—until 5 o'clock.

16:49

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** I am not sure whether, in 10 minutes, I will be able to respond to everything that has been said, but I will certainly try to cover the major points.

The debate has been about child benefit but, more importantly for me, it is about child poverty. Jackie Baillie just paid a disservice to that. Child poverty matters. We are tackling it, and it is a priority for the Scottish Government. We are doing what we can within the powers that we have—I know that Jackie Baillie does not like us saying that.

The Labour Party has been open and candid today about its solution: sit back and wait until we get a Labour Government in the UK. That is what Labour members said earlier in the debate. Labour can sit on the Opposition benches with that as its policy, but we are doing something about child poverty.

I say categorically that children matter to me and child poverty matters to me. Drew Smith indicated that we care only about children in Scotland. I care about children who are in poverty or disadvantaged anywhere in the world, but the only place where we can do something about it and lead the way is here in Scotland. That is what we will do.

I will get round to Alex Johnstone's comments later.

A lot is going on in Scotland, and we are doing what we can within our powers to tackle poverty. We have heard how the Labour Party would deal with poverty: spend money. It says that we are not spending enough on education, childcare and housing. It says that we are not spending enough on every single thing that has been talked about, but it has come up with no ideas and has not told us where we are spending too much money. We are on a fixed budget, so the Labour Party is basically saying that we are spending too much on something but has not yet told us what. That is what I want to know. I will wait for the answer.

Willie Rennie asked what the SNP would do when it has to work on a budget. The SNP is working on a budget in the Scottish Parliament. We are balancing the budget and will do the same when we have powers to raise our own finances.



**Willie Rennie:** Does that mean that Margaret Burgess will immediately restore the £2.5 billion to the welfare budget?

**Margaret Burgess:** At the moment, Scotland pays that £2.5 billion into the UK economy. It is not gone yet; the UK Government is cutting it.

As a number of members have mentioned, taking £2.5 billion out of the economy affects not only people on benefits, low-income earners or even high-income earners. When we take money out of the economy, it goes out of the pockets of those who spend it in their local shops and businesses. In all our constituencies throughout Scotland, local shops and businesses will lose that money as well.

I see Alex Johnstone nodding his head in agreement with that as a good idea. I do not think that it is a good idea. He is keen to promote the number of people who are being taken out of tax. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has said that, taking the tax and benefits measures into account, there is still a regressive tax and the low-income groups are losing out more.

A bigger gap is being created between the poor and those who are not poor. We are trying to close that gap, but all the efforts that we are making are being undermined by what is happening in other measures. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report on poverty and social inclusion said that we are unlikely to make progress because of the damaging welfare reforms.

We cannot get away from the problem with welfare reform. We take it in context. Liz Smith has given her view on it. Our view is that we should start with the kind of society in which we want to live—a society that cares about people, in which people look out for one another, that protects our poorest and most vulnerable and that, most importantly, puts children at its heart because children are our future.

I regret a bit that the debate has gone the way that it has, because we should be talking about children and the future.

I find it difficult to come to terms with the figures that have been given about the additional children who are going into poverty. They are figures from the UK coalition Government. It tells us that that will happen, but it still goes ahead with the changes to child benefit. I ask it how much it cares about children. It knows that it will put more children into poverty, and yet it is still ploughing ahead with its measures. I cannot agree with that; I think that that is a disgraceful position.

**Liz Smith:** Does the minister accept that the child benefit policy targets those who are most able to afford it to carry most of the burden?

**Margaret Burgess:** I think that someone described the Welfare Reform Act 2012 as a shambles. Even the Tories and the Liberal Democrats would have to agree. It is an absolute pig's breakfast of a piece of legislation. It makes no sense whatever. The Conservatives have said that those with the broadest shoulders will carry the burden, but the way in which the act is being implemented means that those with the broadest shoulders are not carrying the burden. A family in which one person earns £60,000 a year gets no child benefit, whereas a family in which both partners earn £49,000—which will have a household income of almost £100,000—gets child benefit. Those with the broadest shoulders are not carrying the burden. The Conservatives are missing that point.

I would prefer it if the UK Government just said, "We got it wrong." It tried to fix things and David Cameron tried to sort out the situation, but it made things worse. The Conservatives should admit that they got it badly wrong, but they are ploughing ahead, and the Liberals are supporting them.

I think it was Mark McDonald who mentioned the number of things that the Scottish Government is doing. He mentioned the social wage. Jayne Baxter asked what we are doing to help people to deal with welfare reform. We are doing quite a lot. *[Interruption.]* What are we doing? We are setting up the Scottish welfare fund, as has been mentioned. The council tax freeze is helping every family in Scotland. The social wage is an example of how we, as a Government, are helping people.

We are mitigating the effects of welfare reform through the Scottish welfare fund. Along with local authorities, we are making up the 10 per cent cut in council tax benefit to ensure that the most vulnerable do not lose out to an even greater extent. We have put money into the Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland to provide training and information.

**Jackie Baillie:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Margaret Burgess:** No. I have taken several interventions and I will not give way to members who would not take interventions. Jackie Baillie said that she would not take an intervention and told us to listen. I will do the same: I am not taking an intervention; the member should listen.

We are mitigating the effects of welfare reform. We have introduced the social wage, which is helping every family in Scotland.

I want to talk about the effect that some of the welfare reform changes are having on people in the housing sector. Kevin Stewart said that we should talk about what things are like for people in our constituencies. This week, I spoke to someone—not from my constituency—who had a

mental health problem and who had regained the confidence to go to work through volunteering. She got a temporary job and then another temporary job before her health went backwards and she lost the job. She will now be subject to the bedroom tax because her grown-up son has left the house, which is in the area where she got all her support. That is what Alex Johnstone and his Liberal colleagues are doing to people. It is not incentivising them into work; it is acting as a disincentive to work. The Conservatives and Liberals should think about that.

I think that I am running out of time.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You have 45 seconds left.

**Margaret Burgess:** I know that members of the other parties will not like this, but the Scottish Government is looking to have a system that is about fairness and which is a mark of a just society. Like the Scottish Government, I believe that to fully achieve that, the Parliament must have control over the powers that are needed to deliver it, which will come only with independence.

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):**

There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S4M-05521.1, in the name of Drew Smith, which seeks to amend motion S4M-05521, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on child benefit, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)  
 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)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (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, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 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)

**Against**

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) (Ind)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (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)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)  
 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**

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 51, Against 63, Abstentions 2.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I remind members that in relation to the debate on child benefit, if the amendment in the name of Alex Johnstone is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Willie Rennie will fall.

The second question is, that amendment S4M-05521.3, in the name of Alex Johnstone, which seeks to amend motion S4M-05521, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on child benefit, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

**Against**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)

Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 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, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)  
 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)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 16, Against 100, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The third question is, that amendment S4M-05521.2, in the name of Willie Rennie, which seeks to amend motion S4M-05521, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on child benefit, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### For

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

#### Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)

Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 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, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)  
 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)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 16, Against 100, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S4M-05521, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on child benefit, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### 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) (Ind)  
 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)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 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)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (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)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)

Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)  
 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)

#### Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)  
 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)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (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, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 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 Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 65, Against 51, Abstentions 0.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament notes with concern the changes to child benefit announced by the UK Government and the impact that these will have in Scotland; considers the decision to remove or reduce this universal benefit for over 90,000 Scottish families to be unfair to those families and children; particularly notes the impact of the three-year freeze from 2011-12 to 2013-14 and the 1% uprating cap for child benefit in both 2014-15 and 2015-16, which means that a family with two children will lose £1,100; regrets that cuts to child benefit will directly impact on the wellbeing of children across Scotland and notes that the Department for Work and Pensions acknowledges that the UK Government's welfare cuts will lead to an increase in child poverty, and recognises that it is only through the full powers of independence that it can properly protect the universal benefits that produce fair and equitable outcomes.

*Meeting closed at 17:05.*

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