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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 18 April 2013

Session 4

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Scottish Parliament

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

General Question Time

Child Abuse (Interaction Meeting)

1. Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made toward justice for victims of historical child abuse following the first interaction meeting. (S4O-02005)

The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Roseanna Cunningham): It is important to say that the interaction process is an initiative led by the Scottish Human Rights Commission in which the Scottish Government is one of several participants. The first interaction process took place on 28 February and was attended by a wide range of participants, including those from local authorities, charities, religious bodies and universities, as well as individuals. I understand that a further event will be held in June and that more events are likely. One of the purposes of the process is to develop an action plan. Along with others, we will be interested in receiving that in due course.

Neil Bibby: This is a serious issue that continues to have an impact on many people's lives, so we need to see progress made. The minister will be aware that, in pursuing the national confidential forum in isolation, Scotland is something of an anomaly internationally. Will the Government consider establishing additional measures that seek not just to understand the experience of survivors but to guarantee non-repetition and provide other forms of remedy? Can I also—

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Minister.

Roseanna Cunningham: The national confidential forum aspect of the debate is being pursued in the context of the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill, and the Minister for Public Health will give evidence to the Health and Sport Committee on 30 April on the relevant sections.

Neil Bibby may be aware that the Government has conducted a consultation on time bar, which is one of the issues about which victims of historical child abuse have expressed concern. That consultation closed only a couple of weeks ago and we are analysing the responses.

We are considering a number of other things, but we must wait for the interaction to produce specific proposals. Further negotiations that will take place have already been agreed at the event, and that is an on-going process. We are waiting for that to come to fruition.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Bibby, you got cut off a wee bit too soon.

Neil Bibby: I ask the minister to keep Parliament informed about any developments so that members can keep their constituents updated on the progress that is being made.

Roseanna Cunningham: Notification of consultation, such as that on time bar, is widely available on the Scottish Government website, and the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill is in the legislative process. I appreciate that not all members will be keeping tabs on that, but they can do so if they choose to. Parliament will be updated on other aspects by ministers as and when appropriate.

Local Bus Services

2. Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it will take to ensure that people have access to regular and reliable local bus services. (S4O-02006)

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): The Scottish Government continues to support the bus route network with £50 million of subsidy per year, by monitoring bus service delivery to promote reliability and by launching a new bus investment fund this year to encourage innovative projects.

Mark Griffin: The minister may be aware that, in Cumbernauld, the First Glasgow services X4, X80 and 36 are being cut. Those cuts mean that the bus depot in Cumbernauld is no longer viable and is to be shut down. What actions will the Government take to assist the people of Cumbernauld who will be affected by those cuts?

Keith Brown: The services are delivered by private sector entities, and it is for them to take such decisions. However, as I mentioned, we provide about £50 million of subsidy per year to help to sustain bus services. Through the local authority grant, we also provide money to local authorities, which alone—unlike the Scottish Government—can support individual bus routes. I suggest that the member speak to his local authority in relation to that.

The member should also recognise the £190 million-plus that we put into the concessionary travel scheme, which helps to sustain bus services. We will continue to support the concessionary scheme and oppose the abstention of his colleagues who failed to support the

concessionary scheme when a motion on it was moved in committee. The Government's support for the concessionary scheme will remain solid, and I hope that his colleagues will feel able to express their complete support for the scheme rather than the abstention that we have seen so far.

Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): What would be the likely impact on bus services in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and throughout Scotland if the concessionary travel scheme—which, as he said, seems to have lukewarm support from the Labour Party—was withdrawn?

Keith Brown: If the scheme was part of the Labour Party's cuts commission, that would have a serious effect on bus services. We understand that some passengers would not travel without the concessionary scheme. About 30 per cent of concessionary journeys are generated by the scheme, and some bus routes—particularly those with high proportions of generated concessionary passengers—would probably prove to be commercially unviable without it.

I do not understand why the Labour Party would want to undermine the concessionary scheme. We will continue to support it despite that opposition.

Flooding (North East Scotland)

3. Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support local authorities in the north-east to deal with the aftermath of recent flooding. (S4O-02007)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): Following the severe weather in December, potential claims for assistance under the Bellwin scheme were notified to the Scottish Government by several local authorities, including Aberdeenshire Council and Moray Council. Local authorities have four months from the date of an emergency incident to submit interim claims for assistance. We have received no claims from local authorities in the north-east at this stage.

In addition, we are helping to protect communities throughout Scotland from flooding by working with our partners to implement the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 and by providing funding through the local government settlement for local authorities to continue to invest in flood protection schemes.

Richard Baker: Aberdeenshire Council informed me that it has been in dialogue with the Scottish Government over a Bellwin scheme application for funding but, because of the claims threshold and the deadline for carrying out works, it is unlikely to receive any funds from the scheme.

Does the minister agree that the terms of the scheme should be reviewed to ensure that, in more instances, local authorities benefit from funds from it rather than bear all the costs themselves?

Paul Wheelhouse: The Bellwin scheme applies to a number of scenarios—not only flooding but other exceptional costs that local authorities face. It is therefore not in my portfolio, but I would be interested to meet Richard Baker to understand the evidence from Aberdeenshire Council. The scheme's terms would be a matter for the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth to address in due course.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): The minister will be well aware that there is a sense of urgency about certain areas in the north-east—particularly Stonehaven, where there has been a recurrent flood problem. Will he undertake to ensure that, whether negotiations are successful or not, adequate assistance is given—both financial assistance when appropriate and, otherwise, encouragement for Aberdeenshire Council to get on and deal with the problem before it happens again?

Paul Wheelhouse: I recognise the concerns that have been expressed about Stonehaven, as I have visited the area and heard at first hand the concerns that residents have about the perceived pace at which protection measures are being implemented.

Flood protection schemes are a matter for local authorities, as Alex Johnstone acknowledges. I understand that the local authority has had to reflect on the nature of the most recent flood, which was slightly different from the one that it modelled for its initial proposals. We have yet to see the impact of that.

The new process for flood protection scheme approval that the 2009 act introduced should reduce the time that it takes for local authorities to deliver such schemes. As the responsible minister, I will do everything that I can to ensure that, when proposals come before us, we proceed as quickly as possible.

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP): I appreciate the points that are being raised, but is the minister aware that Aberdeenshire Council is heading towards an underspend on its revenue budget over the past two years of some £53 million? Does he agree that the council should not need to apply to the Scottish Government for funding when it has such dramatic underspends and could fund capital projects from the current revenue underspend?

Paul Wheelhouse: Mark McDonald is clearly correct that, if local authorities have substantial available resources, it is within their ability to fund

schemes locally. The Bellwin scheme was set up to take account of expenditure above a particular threshold, as Richard Baker identified. That threshold is based on the local authority's turnover. In the case of the flooding in the north-east, the scheme has not been applied because the expenditure level falls below that threshold. If Aberdeenshire Council has access to capital and resource funding, I would look to see whether there is any way in which it can contribute to the flood protection scheme.

Planning Law Reform (Retail Units)

4. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to reform planning laws so that local authorities have the power to reject planning applications for certain retail units on the grounds of overprovision. (S4O-02008)

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): That is primarily an issue for local planning authorities. The Scottish ministers have no plans to introduce new legislation on the matter.

Planning authorities must determine planning applications on their merits and in accordance with the development plan for the area, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The level of provision of a particular retail use is generally a determining factor only when the development plan contains a relevant policy.

Kezia Dugdale: I am asking the minister to do something—anything—to deal with the explosion of predatory payday loan shops on our high streets. If he is unwilling to change the law, will he meet me to see what we can do to help credit unions to open up premises on high streets, in the place of such shops?

Derek Mackay: I am happy to meet the member to discuss the options that are available. I understand her concern, but the planning process is probably not the most relevant vehicle through which to address the issue. There are reserved issues to do with regulation.

The Scottish Government continues to support the promotion of credit unions. By working in partnership with others, we can provide constructive solutions on the matter that the member raised.

The Presiding Officer: Question 5, in the name of Ken Macintosh, has been withdrawn. The member provided an explanation.

Golden Eagles (Protection)

6. Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to protect golden eagles. (S4O-02010)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): All wild birds are protected in Scotland under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Golden eagles are listed in schedule 1 to the 1981 act, which provides further protection measures to prevent disturbance to nesting birds. Last month, we added golden eagles to schedules A1 and 1A to the 1981 act, to provide year-round protection for nest sites and protect birds from harassment.

Since 2008, we have broadened and developed the partnership for action against wildlife crime in Scotland—PAW Scotland; strengthened the legal framework by introducing vicarious liability; provided funding for the national wildlife crime unit; and supported initiatives to tag and satellite track golden eagles. Recent police reform has increased the number of specialist wildlife crime officers.

We have been active in the fight against raptor persecution, and poisoning has reduced significantly. However, we are in no way complacent and we are actively considering whether other methods of persecution are being deployed. Some of the new wildlife crime measures that we have put in place are yet to be tested, but we know that there is still a problem in some parts of Scotland, and I reiterate to people outside the Parliament that we stand ready to introduce further measures, should that be necessary.

Joan McAlpine: As the minister acknowledged, there have been a number of shocking incidents across Scotland during the past year. Earlier this month, a golden eagle was shot on the southern upland way. In light of that, will the minister reassure the Parliament that investigations into the illegal killing of eagles are carried out quickly and effectively? Is he willing to update the Parliament on the investigation into the killing of the golden eagle that was found on Deeside in May 2012?

Paul Wheelhouse: As I said, police reform has resulted in a revised structure for wildlife crime, which will improve co-ordination and support for wildlife crime officers. I have every confidence in Assistant Chief Constable Graham, who has been appointed to lead the work. We also have a specialist unit in the Crown Office, which ensures that there is greater understanding of the complexities of this area of the law, in and out of the courtroom. That is a major development, which should not be underestimated and which will increase the focus on wildlife crime.

I assure the member and the Parliament that such measures, along with robust working in the partnership for action against wildlife crime in Scotland, will ensure that investigations are carried out as quickly and effectively as possible. PAW Scotland is looking at making the evidential

trail on issues such as raptor persecution more robust, if it is possible to do so, which involves working closely with the Scottish raptor persecution priority delivery group.

I am not in a position to update the Parliament on the 2012 Deeside eagle case. There is an on-going police investigation and it would be entirely inappropriate for me to comment at this point.

Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab): I am sure that members welcome the drop in reported poisonings of birds of prey, but I am concerned that there has been no decline in other forms of raptor persecution. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 introduced vicarious liability, to combat raptor persecution. Will the minister indicate what the next steps will be? Now that Police Scotland has been established, what new approaches will be introduced?

Paul Wheelhouse: Graeme Pearson is right to say that vicarious liability is a significant development in the law on wildlife crime. The provisions came into force on 1 January 2012 and the legislation has not yet been tested in court, as he is aware. I believe, however, that the legislation has had the welcome effect of encouraging responsible land managers to examine the training of and procedures for their staff. I have no doubt that, if a land manager or owner is prosecuted under the provisions, it will have a salutary effect on others who have been content to turn a blind eye to unlawful practices that are carried out on their land.

More generally, the Government is doing everything that it can to encourage good practice. Recently, Scottish Land & Estates launched the wildlife estates Scotland initiative, which I hope will gather arms and legs and cover an ever-greater share of landowners. In theory, that will enable the promotion of the most proactive and progressive conservation measures by land managers. However, I reassure the member that, if the measures under vicarious liability prove to be ineffective, I will take further action.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The RSPB states that one of the key problems for the survival of golden eagles is the lack of live prey that is available to the species. Does the minister agree that a healthy supply of food species in golden eagle areas, such as rabbits and mountain hares, is a factor in the maintenance of healthy numbers of golden eagles? Is he, through the appropriate agencies, doing something about the decline of those species in some areas?

Paul Wheelhouse: The member raises an important point about the need for golden eagles to have adequate food supplies. It is not as simple

as saying that it is all about raptor persecution; we know that there are multiple influences on the sad decline in the populations of a number of our key, iconic species of birds. Clearly, mountain hares are a species that we want to protect. If there was any persecution of those animals by land managers, we would be concerned about it. If the member has constructive proposals that he would like me to consider, I would be happy to meet him to discuss the issues.

The Presiding Officer: Question 7, in the name of Richard Simpson, has been withdrawn. The member has provided me with a satisfactory explanation.

Pension and Social Welfare Costs (Affordability)

8. Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what recent analysis it has carried out on the affordability of pension and social welfare costs in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. (S4O-02012)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): The Scottish Government published a detailed assessment of Scotland's public finances in the "Scotland's Balance Sheet" report last week. The analysis demonstrates that spending on social protection, which includes pensions and welfare expenditure, has been consistently more affordable in Scotland than in the rest of the United Kingdom over the past five years. Indeed, the report shows that spending on social protection in Scotland as a share of gross domestic product is lower than it is in the UK as a whole and in the majority of the European Union 15 countries during 2011. Those figures clearly show that welfare and pensions would be more affordable in Scotland if we had full responsibility for our economy.

Christina McKelvie: The minister might be aware that the recent research that he referred to estimated that, in South Lanarkshire alone, welfare cuts will total £104 million a year by 2014-15. Given that social welfare is more affordable in Scotland than it is in the UK, does he think that this Parliament would take the same approach to welfare as Westminster?

John Swinney: It is hard to conceive that this Parliament would take the same approach to welfare reform as has been taken in the UK Parliament, given that on issues such as the bedroom tax, for example, an overwhelming majority of members of the UK Parliament who represent Scottish constituencies voted against the provisions that the UK Government is taking forward. As we consider the implications of the welfare reform agenda in Scotland, that is a strong

illustration of how democratic control of those issues in Scotland would lead to a better set of decisions being taken in the interests of the people of our country.

Oil Test Drilling (Ayrshire Coast)

9. Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the Ministry of Defence regarding test drilling for oil off the Ayrshire coast. (S4O-02013)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): The Scottish Government has had no discussions with the Ministry of Defence regarding test drilling for oil off the Ayrshire coast.

Chic Brodie: In the late 1970s and early 1980s, there were oil test drilling rigs between Ailsa Craig and Sanda island, off the tip of the Mull of Kintyre—a route through which Polaris submarines passed. It is believed that those wells could have been successful, but they were capped by the UK defence secretary at the time. Will the Scottish Government support efforts that are being made to determine whether those McCrone-like instructions curtailed the production of oil and gas and, therefore, the potential for significant economic development in south-west Scotland?

John Swinney: The Government is focused on taking forward our oil and gas strategy, which was formulated in partnership with the industry to ensure that the potential that we know exists in Scottish waters to recover oil and gas reserves, which are estimated to total more than half the value that has so far been extracted—up to 24 billion recoverable barrels of oil, with a wholesale potential value of £1.5 trillion—is realised for Scotland. We will concentrate our efforts on taking forward that approach in partnership with the oil and gas industry in Scotland.

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-01299)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Meetings to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

Johann Lamont: This afternoon, the Scottish Parliament will debate the legacy of Margaret Thatcher. Three months after Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister, I became a teacher. I was a schoolteacher throughout her time in office. As a teacher, I saw first-hand how our young people had their hopes and aspirations extinguished by the decisions that she made.

I remember the challenge of trying to motivate teenagers who thought that studying was a waste of time because there were no jobs for them anyway. No one in this chamber wants a return to those days. The First Minister pledged that every 16 to 19-year-old in Scotland would have a guaranteed place in education or training. Has he achieved that goal?

The First Minister: The policy for 16 to 19-year-olds has been implemented and is, I suspect, one of a number of reasons why youth unemployment in Scotland has declined in the past year by a third from 25 to 17 per cent. Although that is still far, far too many, it is a substantial achievement. The guarantee for 16 to 19-year-olds, along with the substantial increase in apprenticeships in Scotland, is part of the programme that has led to that success.

Johann Lamont: I am not sure whether that means that the First Minister has or has not achieved his goal, so I will ask him another question. The First Minister promised that no young person should be left behind—who could disagree with that? How many 16 to 19-year-olds who left school before March this year do not have a place in education or training?

The First Minister: The guarantee for 16 to 19-year-olds is to make the offer to 16 to 19-year-olds—[*Interruption.*] Labour MSPs should reflect on what is happening elsewhere, in terms of the United Kingdom Government—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Order.

The First Minister: What is happening elsewhere is that young people are being forced to work for no wages whatsoever. The guarantee for 16 to 19-year-olds, which is unparalleled across

these islands, is a significant part of the offer to young people, which is resulting in substantial success.

The reduction in youth unemployment and the increase in youth employment is a substantial success. Every member in this chamber should recognise it as such and take pride in the fact that the Parliament, through initiatives that we are taking, is making a real difference to one of the great corrosive issues—youth unemployment—that affect our society.

Members can say that there are far too many young people who are still unemployed—of course there are—but not to recognise that a reduction of that extent in a single year has something to do with the initiatives taken by this Parliament, the 60 or 70 per cent increase in apprenticeships in Scotland and the youth training guarantee for 16 to 19-year-olds, is to deny the reality that significant moves made by this Government and this Parliament are resulting in benefits to the young people of Scotland.

Johann Lamont: First, and depressingly, we know that if the figures had gone in the other direction, the First Minister would not have taken responsibility for bad news.

My second point, which is a serious one—I am thinking again about the young people whom I taught in the 1980s—is that long-term youth unemployment is disproportionately higher in Scotland than it is in the rest of the United Kingdom. That is why the issue of the offer—not the guarantee—to 16 to 19-year-olds is so important. The First Minister does not seem to know the answer to the question I asked. In private, though, he does know because, under freedom of information legislation, we have established that Skills Development Scotland has identified more than 7,000 school leavers who are known to be looking for a job or training but have yet to find a place. However, it is worse than that. SDS has also admitted that it has lost more than 17,000 school leavers: it does not know what 17,000 school leavers are doing or where they are. If we do not know where they are, how do we protect them and prevent them from becoming the long-term unemployed who we know have suffered over the past year?

In that context, what are the First Minister's pledges worth when a guarantee has now become an offer, and the offer has not been delivered?

The First Minister: The employment rate for 16 to 24-year-olds in Scotland is now 56.7 per cent. That compares with a UK level of 49.7 per cent. The unemployment rate is 16.1 per cent, which compares with the UK level of 20.6 per cent. The economic inactivity level is 32 per cent, compared with a UK level of 37 per cent. By any standard,

that is a substantial success in the most difficult economic climate.

Johann Lamont says that we take the credit for that. I think that, when the number of apprenticeships is hugely increased, and when that offer is made to 16 to 19-year-olds, this Parliament is entitled to take satisfaction in the substantial improvement in the situation that faces young people in Scotland.

I can tell Johann Lamont that, in terms of the destination of people leaving school, which we have measured exactly over the past few years, we know that, in 2011-12, 89.9 per cent of youngsters went to a positive destination. That compares with a figure in 2006-07—not during the recession times—of 86.6 per cent.

We should reflect for a second on what that means. Not only has there been, over the past year, a substantial improvement in young people getting jobs and apprenticeships and getting a good start in life after the recession, but the destinations of our school leavers are more positive for more youngsters than they were in the good times when the Labour Party was in charge in this Parliament, by any measure.

Can Johann Lamont not find it within herself to say, “Look—something really important is happening here. Perhaps we should follow the apprenticeship programme, which is proving to be such a success. Perhaps there is something to be said for this youth guarantee in helping young people who are getting the tough end of life”? Is there not something for this entire Parliament to welcome in the demonstration that, although effective action cannot solve every problem, it has resulted in a substantial improvement that is affecting the lives and welfare of tens of thousands of young people in Scotland?

Johann Lamont: It is interesting that, although the First Minister can find lots and lots of figures to trade with me, he cannot answer the question about the 7,000 young people without education or training and the 17,000 people whose whereabouts we do not even know.

One of the lessons that I learned in the 1980s as a schoolteacher was that, when politicians talk to one another and trade figures, they ignore the reality of what is happening to communities throughout Scotland. We cannot allow that to happen again. I ask the First Minister not to trade figures about the bits that he is happy with, but to listen and think about what his own agency is saying, and what is happening to some of our young people. We know that one in every six school leavers is either out of work or out of training, or we do not even know what their status is.

The problem for this Government is that it starts with a slogan, but it cuts careers officers and college places and then denies the truth. The First Minister thinks that politics is about process and good news stories, but it is not. It is about taking hard choices and changing people's lives. He talks, to bolster his argument, about 25,000 apprenticeships, but he gets to that figure by calling 10,000 people who are already in work for six months apprentices. He cuts college funding—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Johann Lamont: I am asking the First Minister to think about doing the hard stuff. He cuts college funding, but tells the Parliament that it is going up. Now we know what he knew: that 17,000 school leavers have simply disappeared—and that is according to the Government. Please, in this week of all weeks, will the First Minister learn that lesson, put down the slogans and start doing his job?

The First Minister: I know that Johann Lamont does not like the figures, but she should perhaps reflect on the fact that I just gave her the figure for school leavers reaching positive destinations—something that we have now identified exactly. That shows not just a recovery since the recession, but a situation that is better than when Labour was in power.

During that question, Johann Lamont said something particularly interesting. She tried to suggest that the number of apprenticeships—16,000 to almost 26,000—is not a real figure, because the percentage of people in work for six months is high. The percentage of apprenticeships going to people in work for six months is lower than it was when the Labour Party was in office. In other words, there are more people not in work among the 26,000 now than there were, as a percentage, when the Labour Party was in office. How on earth can that be presented as anything with a semblance of an argument?

It is important to learn lessons. The key lesson that I would learn from the years of Margaret Thatcher is that political parties that go into coalition with the Conservatives in campaigns in Scotland will have exactly the same fate as the Conservative Party. Johann Lamont, in believing that she can campaign hand in glove with better together but that people in Scotland will not draw the obvious conclusion about the direction of her politics, is living in a fantasy land. She and her party will pay the highest price for their joint cabal and campaign with the Conservative Party. That is a certain conclusion that the people of Scotland will draw.

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-01298)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Later today, I will have meetings to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

Ruth Davidson: A few days ago, Sean McLaughlin was sentenced to 10 years for culpable homicide. A career criminal with more than 50 convictions, McLaughlin should have been in jail, rather than being free to stab Robert Brown repeatedly in Mr Brown's girlfriend's house. McLaughlin had more than a year of his most recent sentence still to serve, but he had been released early under the Government's automatic early release scheme.

In both his 2007 and 2011 manifestos, the First Minister promised to end automatic early release, yet no proposed legislation has come before the chamber, and there is no hint that any is due. He could have put such a measure in his Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill, which was published two months ago, but there is still no sign of an end to automatic early release. If the First Minister had acted much earlier, Robert Brown could still be alive. Why is the First Minister refusing to fulfil the promises that he made to protect Scottish communities?

The First Minister: I point out, in terms of fact, that when we revoke automatic early release, which was introduced by the Conservative Party, the policy cannot and will not apply to retrospective cases. I do not think that anybody has ever suggested that it should. The question that I have just been asked by Ruth Davidson is factually wrong—unless that she is arguing that the policy should be introduced for retrospective cases. If that is what she is arguing, perhaps she should say that to the Parliament.

A party that introduced the provision that Ruth Davidson is complaining about and which does not recognise the extraordinary achievement of Scotland having the lowest level of recorded crime in more than 30 years is very poorly placed to talk about individual tragic examples when the implication of the policy that she is suggesting is that it would not apply retrospectively.

Ruth Davidson: I fully accept that it was the Conservative Government that introduced automatic early release, but it was that same Conservative Government that legislated to end it. The Scottish Government has had six years but has done nothing. That is not good enough. The First Minister promised the people of Scotland—not once, but twice—that, if the Scottish National Party were put into government, it would end automatic early release. He has a clear majority in

the chamber and he has cross-party support, so why not act?

So far, the Government has found time in the parliamentary schedule for a debate on a war that happened 10 years ago, for which the Parliament has no responsibility, and for countless debates without any vote.

This matters, because also this month Reece Fleming was tried for raping a teenage girl at knifepoint in front of her wheelchair-bound mother, forcing the mother to watch. If the current policy is not changed, he will be out in just over two years. That is not the kind of Scotland that anyone wants. The First Minister has promised us twice that he will get this done, so will he bring forward the necessary legislation now?

The First Minister: I noticed that Ruth Davidson did not challenge my correction of her original question, in which I pointed out that the policy could not apply retrospectively, so the premise of her original question was entirely wrong. When she introduces such subjects, perhaps she should rethink and look carefully at how her question would or would not apply.

We have made our position very clear: we intend to revoke the provisions on early release. We are doing that on a timescale that is consistent with the McLeish review, which instructed us on how it should best be done. However, the idea that we should not proclaim from this Parliament a criminal justice record of having achieved the lowest level of recorded crime in over 30 years is very strange. Perhaps the Conservative Party would find something to learn from the Police Service of Scotland's confidence in this Government's policies, compared with the lack of confidence that the police service in England has in the policies being invoked from London at present.

Finally, it is remarkable to suggest—for what reason, I do not know—that a debate on Iraq was not a sensible and proper one for this Parliament to have, given the impact that Iraq has had on tens of thousands of people across this country and hundreds of thousands of people elsewhere. Of course Parliament should debate such subjects—that is right and proper. Given the mistakes of the past, many of which were committed by Conservative Governments, perhaps this Parliament, when it has the proper powers, will not repeat them in future.

The Presiding Officer: I have a constituency question from Gordon MacDonald.

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): A number of companies in the Edinburgh area are involved in the production of computer games, and the question of tax relief is an important consideration in retaining and attracting

companies. Is the First Minister aware of the European Commission's proposals to investigate the tax reliefs offered to the games industry by the United Kingdom Government? Does the First Minister agree that those reliefs are vital support for this dynamic sector? Will the Scottish Government make representations to both the UK Government and the Commission to ensure that the reliefs are not threatened?

The First Minister: The member makes a very important point. I am aware of the decision announced by the European Commission on Tuesday to investigate the proposed tax base for the computer games sector. It is an important sector that employs some 600 people in Scotland. That is why, alongside the industry, the Scottish Government pressed the UK Government for some years to introduce the tax breaks. Now that the UK Government has finally accepted that they are a good thing, we will certainly work with it and the industry to put a compelling and convincing case to the Commission. The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs is writing to the UK's Minister for Culture, Communication and the Creative Industries on exactly that subject.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S4F-01302)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Issues of importance to the people of Scotland.

Willie Rennie: I was pleased to see that the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill, which was published today, proposes expanded provision for nursery education for three and four-year-olds so that provision here will roughly match provision in England. However, I was disappointed to see that two-year-olds in Scotland will still be left behind. At this late stage, will the First Minister see sense and provide nursery education for 24,000 two-year-olds in Scotland?

The First Minister: I welcome Willie Rennie's welcome for the bill. I also welcome what I think was a recognition of the importance of the 600-hour commitment, having inherited in 2007—I think that I remember this correctly—412 hours. The 600-hour commitment is hugely important to families across Scotland.

As gently as I could, I have chided Willie Rennie before about the reality of what is happening in England and Wales. I have a range of quotes from experts in the field that suggest that there are serious questions to answer. It is important that, as we move forward to the proposed level of nursery and childcare provision, we do so on a quality basis that makes a real difference to the

lives of young people. I fully accept that this is only the start of a process and a direction that I think are hugely important to the future of this country. However, I hope that Willie Rennie will accept that the assurance that we are giving on statutory, binding quality in Scotland has many things to be said for it in comparison with the lack of standards and the drop in quality elsewhere.

Willie Rennie: An investigation of the First Minister's claims about ratios from his own documentation that was published this morning shows that he has omitted to tell us that ratios in Scotland have been poorer than ratios in England for the whole time for which he has been First Minister, so he should not lecture anyone any more about that.

The reality is that, this week, thousands of parents across England are queueing up for 15 hours of nursery education for their two-year-olds. Scottish parents and children are being denied that opportunity by this Government. Rather than settling for the timid Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill, will he be bold and match England on two-year-olds?

The First Minister: I am afraid that Willie Rennie is being incomplete in his question. The Scottish ratio for one year and under is 1:3. That is the same as it was in England, which is moving to 1:4, as Willie Rennie should know. Our other ratio has been 1:5, with the English ratio moving to 1:6. That is why Willie Rennie was incomplete in his question.

I thought that the Parliament would like to hear the whole picture, as indeed it will want to hear the views of Professor Cathy Nutbrown, who carried out the review of the UK Government's strategy on the matter and is now a leading critic of that strategy. She said:

"Watering down ratios will threaten quality. Childcare may be cheaper, but children will be footing the bill."

Willie Rennie might want to listen to what Naomi Eisenstadt, former director of the sure start unit, said in the past few months:

"I do not think that we have the quality in place to offer those that will make a difference. What we know from the evidence of the evaluation of the two year old pilot was, unless it was high quality, it did not make a difference."

I could give him a range of other quotations. The chief executive of the Pre-school Learning Alliance, Neil Leitch, said:

"Relaxing childcare ratios will be a recipe for disaster for children. The quality of provision will be lowered, there will be less one-to-one care and it will introduce additional child safety and child protection implications."

All that I am saying to Willie Rennie is that, as we look at comparisons elsewhere, let us be aware of the deficiencies that are being identified and examined in the system that he is proclaiming

by the experts in the field, including the lady who was in charge of the original proposal and suggestion to the UK Government in the first place. Let us see that there is sense in some of the actions that we are taking in Scotland. We are giving the statutory, binding guarantee of ensuring quality and seeing childcare and nursery provision as one of a range of measures, including the nurse planning partnerships and the family centres, which are designed to ensure that our early intervention is as good as we can possibly make it to ensure the future of our young people.

Public Finances (Assessment)

4. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):

To ask the First Minister what assessment the Scottish Government has made of Scotland's public finances. (S4F-01311)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Last week, "Scotland's Balance Sheet" was published. It provides analysis of public spending and tax receipts in Scotland since 1980 and it shows Scotland in a relatively stronger financial position than the United Kingdom. To take just one example, tax receipts per person have been higher in Scotland than the UK average for each and every one of the past 30 years.

John Mason: I thank the First Minister for that answer. Yesterday's figures also showed that Scotland has higher employment and lower unemployment than the rest of the UK. Does he agree that the misguided economic policies of the UK Government are the greatest threat to that progress, and that having the fiscal levers of independence would allow us to build further on it?

The First Minister: Earlier, it was suggested that we talk about things such as youth employment and unemployment only when there are reasons to see success in the initiatives that are being taken. The only time I get asked about general employment and unemployment by the UK parties is when the Scottish figures are worse than those of the UK. It was a substantial bet that I would not be asked about the general level of employment and unemployment given the substantial success that is indicated by the figures this week. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: Although recovery from recession is, of course, a substantial and exacting process, we have had the largest rise in employment for 12 years. That will perhaps not be regarded as a success by the unionist parties and coalition in this Parliament, but the people of Scotland will see it as part of the process of Scottish recovery, and I know that a lot of people will see it as part of the argument for seeing all the levers of economic control under the aegis of this

Parliament so that we can turn that improvement into a real and lasting recovery.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): The First Minister published “Scotland’s Balance Sheet” at the weekend. It states that the analysis

“does not consider wider ... liabilities.”

Which wider liabilities have been ignored, and can the First Minister quantify them?

The First Minister: Or assets, for that matter, because it is a balance sheet as opposed to a stock of assets and liabilities. They are two things: one is the flow and one is the stock of assets and liabilities. I hope that that is an answer to the question.

Edinburgh to Glasgow Improvement Programme

5. Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what progress has been made on changes to the Edinburgh to Glasgow improvement programme. (S4F-01312)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): As I am sure that Elaine Murray knows, the Government is making record levels of investment in rail, and the Edinburgh to Glasgow improvement programme is a key part of that record investment.

We have already delivered new services on the Edinburgh to Glasgow via Shotts line, the new hourly Edinburgh to Glasgow via Carstairs service and the Haymarket north tunnel electrification. Network Rail has recently confirmed—this is a very important point—that it remains confident that the route will be electrified by December 2016 as planned.

Elaine Murray: The First Minister refers to Network Rail’s claims. However, industry sources stated in *Scotland on Sunday* on 31 March that the first phase of EGIP

“may not be finished until 2019”,

which is three years later than he claims. Which estimate does the First Minister agree with? That of his transport ministers or that of the industry experts?

The First Minister: Elaine Murray referred to the front-page article of 31 March 2013. David Simpson, the Network Rail route managing director, wrote to *Scotland on Sunday* and his letter was published on 14 April, which is later than the first article. Mr Simpson rejected the asserted delays and said:

“That is not the view of Network Rail ... We remain confident of completing the necessary electrification works, and other related infrastructure projects, between the two cities by 2016 as planned.”

Given that the gentleman took the trouble and time to write to *Scotland on Sunday* to make that correction, Elaine Murray could have had the courtesy to read his letter—that would have been an improvement.

I know that some Labour sources seem to think that Network Rail’s regulated asset base borrowing somehow comes out of the sky and has nothing to do with the Scottish Government. I point out that we finance the regulated asset base borrowing.

Elaine Murray: I know that.

The First Minister: Elaine Murray says that she knows that, but the Labour spokesman did not seem to know it in the budget debate, just a few weeks ago.

It is significant that, per capita, our investment is almost double the equivalent investment committed for 2014 to 2019 for England and Wales by the United Kingdom Government: £632 per capita compared with £326. That investment is in not just the improvements to the Edinburgh to Glasgow line and its electrification, but the substantial improvements that have taken place and are taking place across the country. That seems a great investment in the future rail of Scotland.

Third Sector Early Intervention Fund

6. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government will take to address the delay in implementing the third sector early intervention fund. (S4F-01301)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): This morning, the Minister for Children and Young People announced the recipients of our £20 million investment in the third sector early intervention fund. In addition, I confirm that it will invest a further £10 million in strategic funding partnerships, making a total investment of £30 million over two years for 140 organisations that provide crucial support for Scotland’s children and families.

I can see Liz Smith smiling at that and no doubt in her press release she will take the credit for forcing the Government to make that announcement. I know that she will also reflect on the fact that that represents an increase of £3 million on the value of previous funds. Given the financial strictures and rigours being imposed by her party colleagues in Westminster, that strikes me as a big success for our third sector early intervention fund.

Liz Smith: I am glad that the First Minister knows that I will try to take the credit for it. Notwithstanding today’s very welcome

announcement, the Scottish Government will be aware that more than 400 children's charities and groups, such as the Boys Brigade, the scouts and the guides, have submitted bids that total £73 million and that that large, oversubscribed demand has forced a delay in the allocation of funding. Does the First Minister acknowledge that the delay causes unacceptable uncertainty for those bodies' financial and strategic planning and, indeed, may jeopardise the future of some of the smaller charities?

The First Minister: Elizabeth Smith should welcome today's announcements and the increase in funding and perhaps reflect on why there is such a huge demand for these services at the moment and why so many third sector organisations are feeling it necessary to introduce services and intervene in the areas of social welfare that the Government with responsibility for these matters seems to be deserting.

However, let us try to end this question time on a note of consensus. It is good that the £20 million has been announced; it is excellent that the further £10 million has been announced; and it is fantastic that that represents an increase in funding in a budgetary position that I am sure that Elizabeth Smith will agree for all sorts of reasons is highly constrained at the moment. On that note of consensus, let us end this question time.

The Presiding Officer: That ends First Minister's question time.

Scotland's Butchers

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-05696, in the name of Nigel Don, on Scotland's butchers lead the way with quality produce. The debate will be concluded without any questions being put. I ask members and members of the public who are leaving please to do so quietly.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament congratulates farmers' markets and food purveyors in Angus North and Mearns and across the country on what it sees as their contribution to Scotland's economy and environment and the communities that they serve; understands that the horsemeat scandal has resulted in butchers seeing an increase in sales as customers seek out the highest quality produce sourced from their area, and believes that butchers provide a great benefit to their customers and the public by supplying locally sourced meats.

12:32

Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): I am delighted to bring the motion to Parliament in the context of the event that I was able to host in the members' restaurant on Tuesday and which I know many people enjoyed. It was an opportunity to celebrate our farmers markets and I think that, in considering each of the businesses that were represented, I shall be able to draw some lessons from the event.

I will start with the butchers. As many members will know, my motion was lodged in the wake of the horsemeat scandal and the observation that our local butchers were benefiting substantially from the loss of trust in our supermarkets. I think that all butchers saw an increase in trade; indeed, I understand that some have seen a significant and sustained rise in turnover.

Among those who were in Parliament in Tuesday, Hebbie Fowlie from Bert Fowlie Butchers in Strichen recognised that having seen new customers in his shop he had to keep them coming back. There is no doubt—and no doubt in his mind—that in time the supermarkets will fight back.

Adam and Dawn Marshall from Reiver Country Farm Foods Ltd breed, fatten and butcher their own pigs and then cure and smoke the bacon and ham. Their business demonstrates the benefits not only of minimising transport but of retaining all that added value in their operation—a theme to which I will return.

Community farms were represented at Tuesday's event. Gorgie City Farm in Edinburgh, which is as much an educational experience as it is a working farm, has inspired young and old for

the past 30 years. I must admit that I found its collection of chicken and duck eggs most interesting, not least because they vary enormously in size and colour. I have to say that its sausages are also very good and are to be recommended.

Whitmuir Community Farm Ltd is an organic farm in East Lothian that is run by Robert Cruise and Heather Anderson and which is in the process of becoming a community benefits society in order to preserve it as a place of research and education in sustainable farming. I believe that the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment is already aware of that enterprise, which is another example of the kind of thing that we need to be promoting across Scotland. The approach clearly has benefits.

On education, I note the work of Iain Spink from Arbroath who produces organic smokies and can be seen at agricultural shows demonstrating the smoking process. I have to say that there are few things better than a fresh smokie, certainly as far as fish is concerned.

Two bakers were with us on Tuesday. Allan Brodie from Saltire Patisserie Ltd found that his cakes were very much appreciated and his haggis-flavoured bread, which is perhaps something of an acquired taste, is apparently in demand as a novelty. His magnificent saltire cake, which I believe is still in one piece, will be enjoyed later this afternoon.

Karine Hay and Katia Lebart from The Wee Boulangerie Ltd in Edinburgh demonstrated with their range of breads that, even in these difficult times, it is possible to run a successful small business if quality products are produced. Those who sampled their bread will know well the quality of the products that they produce.

The St Andrews Farmhouse Cheese Company Ltd was represented by Jane Stewart. It has expanded from simply producing milk—which we know is not a particularly profitable activity—into cheese making, and it supplies a number of local outlets. That allows it to generate and retain the added value within the business, and to reduce food miles, which is a subject to which I will return.

Tanny Gill, who is a fromager affineur, is clearly passionate about Scottish cheeses. His message is that we should eat our own cheese rather than import cheese. How could one disagree with that? However, in order to do that, we will need to raise awareness of our local products. I suggest that that is one task that the Government can help with because it is difficult for a small business to do that nationally.

Isla Gillon represented Cairn o' Mhor Ltd fruit wines. It uses local fruit from the Carse of Gowrie.

Its winery also has a restaurant, which made the visit a doubly pleasurable experience.

Paul and Victoria Miller came from the St Andrews Brewery Company Ltd and gave us samples of some very acceptable beers. It is a great pity that the event was held at lunch time. If it had been in the evening, I might have enjoyed rather more of the beer, albeit that it may not have been safe to do so. I certainly enjoyed it.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I did not realise that we were going to cover local alcohol products in addition to the contribution that is made by butchers, but it is good to do so.

Does Nigel Don share my disappointment that when people come to receptions in Parliament—whether at lunchtime or in the evening—they do not get Scottish wine or beer?

Nigel Don: I share John Mason's disappointment. There are lessons to be learned from what has happened this week. The event begs a few questions to which people might want to come up with answers.

The most interesting part of the story that St Andrews Brewery had to tell was that its whole process is local. It uses locally grown and malted grain. The spent is returned to local farms either as fertiliser or feed for pigs, which finish up on the table of the restaurant or pub where people drink the local beer.

That is an example that sums up what farmers' markets potentially have to teach us. A couple of centuries ago, what I have just said would have been wholly unremarkable. In fact, people would have wondered how anything could be done differently. However, in the past century, we have been through a process of intensifying farming and of cheap transport, and we have moved an awful lot of stuff around for reasons that we well understand. We are beginning to understand that there are significant disadvantages to that approach. We are recognising that we cannot afford to move food around and, indeed, that we do not need to. That is one of the overwhelming messages from the event; I am sure that that issue will come out further in the debate. We should be going back to a time when we think about what can be produced and consumed locally because that ticks all the right boxes.

Although he was not able to attend the event, I must mention Bruce Brymer, my local butcher in Brechin, simply because he produces such excellent stuff.

I thank everyone who came to the event and all those who produce local food in Scotland. I recognise that the Government has been supportive of our food industry—my aim is not to criticise the Government. I am sure that the

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment will tell us all about that. I look forward to hearing other members' contributions to the debate.

12:38

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I am pleased to be speaking in this lunchtime debate, and congratulate Nigel Don on securing the slot.

In many ways this is a timely debate, not least because Nigel Don hosted a successful farmers market in Parliament this week. It was an excellent example of what Scotland's local producers have to offer, and a good opportunity for MSPs to talk to stall holders about their businesses and their passion for their produce.

As well as welcoming the two stalls that are based in Fife—the Eden Brewery Ltd and the St Andrews Farmhouse Cheese Company—I spoke to farm owners who had diversified into running shops and selling their own produce direct to their customers. I also spoke to the people running the butcher stall. They had a fantastic model. They are supplied by a local farm, they butcher on the shop premises and they can tell customers exactly where the product is from and how it has been produced. They have complete traceability and quality.

For the modern shopper, a butcher's shop or farmers market can be intimidating. If customers are used to prepackaged produce, they can be wary of the mental arithmetic that is involved in calculating pounds and kilos, particularly if they are price conscious. The butchers whom I spoke to recognise that and they work to price the produce as clearly as possible and to be accessible and provide friendly service. I remember going into a butcher's shop with my mother when I was a little girl, but like many of my generation, my shopping experience has been much more supermarket focused. This point might not seem to be relevant to those who have always shopped at butcher's shops, but for people who have only ever experienced off-the-shelf shopping, it can be intimidating to go into a shop and ask for a pound of sausages without knowing what that actually looks like.

There are opportunities for butchers. Although the number of high street butchers has reduced, in recent weeks there have been reports of increased footfall and many shops are now also promoting online sales, which is a smart move in today's market.

My granddad was a butcher. It was the trade that he learnt on leaving school and his profession until he retired. At the time, it was an essential skill. That meant that during the war he was at

home and his contribution was made in a different way. Butchery was a highly regarded skill and a lot of pride was taken in the work. In the move to much bigger-scale production over the years, there have been concerns that some of that skill is at risk of being lost. There is now a greater commitment from many small and big retailers to recognise and nurture the skill of butchers, which is to be welcomed.

The motion also mentions the horsemeat scandal. The shocking revelations that we have heard could be the catalyst for a national debate about our culture's relationship with food, which could include how we eat, what we eat, how decisions on that are made at individual and corporate level, and the impact that those decisions have on our local and national economies, our nation's health and our environment.

Last year I held a members' business debate on the Fife diet food manifesto. Given what we now know about the impact of the supply chain stretching across Europe, the scale and potential for food fraud and the treatment of the consumer, this is a good time to have a wider debate.

In preparing for today's debate I did a bit of research. It is undoubtedly true that the quality of meat is higher in many butchers' shops, that the supply chain is shorter and that there are potential environmental benefits to more local shopping. However, what challenges does price present? A pound of pork sausages—roughly 400g—at my local farmers market cost me £3.24. At a high street butcher's in my region, a similar weight of sausages cost me £3.18. Although the big supermarket that I went to offers a range of differently priced sausages, a pound of its own-brand pork sausages cost £1.38.

Many families across Scotland are facing economic challenges. If people are on low incomes, they have to make choices. I know that compared to other European countries we spend less of our household income on food. An argument can justifiably be made that people should buy less meat, but should buy meat of a higher quality—although that argument tends to be made by commentators who do not have to make that kind of choice. I fully accept that there is evidence to suggest that a cultural shift would be a good thing as it would support local businesses, improve our environment and lead to people being able to eat better-quality produce. However, part of the debate must be about how we ensure that low-income families are not excluded as we meet that challenge.

12:43

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I thank Nigel Don for bringing the debate to the chamber.

The recent horsemeat scandal has resulted in one of the biggest changes in consumer habits for many years. A Quality Meat Scotland survey revealed that in February this year alone 92 per cent of craft butcher shops experienced increased footfall following media coverage of the horsemeat issue. In the week ending 9 February, many butchers reported sales uplifts of between 10 and 25 per cent. Many customers are visiting their local butcher for the first time, and are seeking reassurance about the supply chain and the quality of their meat. Craft butchers are, of course, in a position to provide such reassurance.

In Auchtertool, which is in the Kirkcaldy constituency, one butcher has been going from strength to strength. Puddledub Pork and Fifeshire Bacon Company Ltd is a family business situated at Clentrie farm at the east of the village. Run by Tom Mitchell and his sister Camilla, whose grandfather Harry came to the farm in 1905, Puddledub Pork was established in 1999. As the name suggests, the company is predominantly about pig farming. The Mitchells take care to ensure that the pigs enjoy the happiest of lives. The animals are allowed to grow slowly and are given the care and attention that they need. A pig consultant makes regular visits to ensure that welfare is at the highest level at every stage. The pigs are fed home-grown grain and the Mitchells themselves transport the animals on the short journey to the abattoir, which means that stress is kept to a minimum.

Clentrie farm is also home to Puddledub buffalo from the Buffalo Farm Ltd, which is run by Steve Mitchell, who is the nephew of Tom and Camilla. Steve runs his herds of water buffalo and Aberdeen Angus cattle and a flock of Jacob sheep on the grassland. There is also a freshwater loch that is designated as a site of special scientific interest. The Mitchells' philosophy is quite simple: they believe that produce with low food miles that has not been shipped halfway around the world is tastier than produce that has been. It is hard to argue with that, especially as a longer food supply chain can result in scandals such as the horsemeat issue.

The Mitchells and many other local butchers regularly sell their food at farmers markets throughout Scotland, including the one in Kirkcaldy on the last Saturday of every month, which has been running for 12 years. It sets up in the centre of the town in the square outside the town house, which makes it easy for locals and visitors to access it. Farmers markets are a great way for producers and consumers to cut out the middleman, and the farmers market in Kirkcaldy is

no exception to that. The range of suppliers typically includes suppliers of meat, fish and dairy produce, fruit and vegetables, preservatives and beverages. Many local butchers have stalls at the market. The likes of Hilton Wild Boar, Dalachy Beef & Lamb and Seriously Good Venison set up alongside Puddledub Pork. Fife's food ambassador, Christopher Trotter, regularly visits to provide cooking demonstrations.

A year ago, Kirkcaldy farmers market was in danger of closing due to a lack of business, but an appeal for more people to use it resulted in an increase in footfall and extended support from Fife Council. By July, new stalls had been added to give customers more variety, and 12 months on, the market is stronger than ever. That is a clear indication that it is valued by both customers and traders. Fife Council's confirmation of support is a further welcome boost.

The obvious benefit of farmers markets is that farmers can produce and sell directly to customers. There is an abundance of farmers in Fife, which makes markets such as that in Kirkcaldy the shortest and easiest route possible from producer to consumer. By responding to the appeal for more business, customers displayed the fact that they value the reassurance of knowing where and how food has been produced. That can be provided only by speaking to farmers themselves. The further benefits of farmers markets include the reduction of carbon footprints and the ability to keep local economies healthy, both of which are vital measures of success in a modern Scotland.

I applaud the work of Puddledub Pork and its fellow butchers, and encourage customers everywhere to visit farmers markets and local butchers as often as possible.

12:47

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): As other members have done, I congratulate Nigel Don on securing the debate. I am delighted to take part in it, because I come from very close to Castle Douglas, which is a small market town that still maintains four butchers' shops on its High Street.

In typical Scottish fashion, a great deal of humour emanated from the horsemeat scandal. I particularly liked the campaign that Dumfries and Galloway's Savour the Flavours initiated. It produced a logo that stated "Neigh horse meat here" to promote the fantastic butchers in my home region. I also understand that an enterprising Edinburgh entrepreneur started to sell horsemeat burgers with the absolute guarantee that they contained no trace of beef whatever. The Scots cannot be beaten when it comes to raising a

smile in the face of a serious situation. That was all the more acceptable in this case, as the one certainty that existed throughout the horsemeat debacle was that there was no danger to human health.

Nonetheless, the scandal blew a gaping hole in many previously held convictions. It blew a gaping hole in the conviction that the meat—in particular, the processed meat—that we buy from the shelves of our retail outlets is exactly what it says on the label; the conviction that the traceability of our food is foolproof; and the conviction that we have a trustworthy and robust regulatory regime. All those fundamental convictions in respect of consumer confidence have been blown out of the water by the scandal.

One of the saddest aspects is that it has left many of our primary producers—our farmers—wondering why they have had to spend fortunes as the first link in the food chain in order to conform to a traceability scheme that they believe to be robust in order that the consumer can have complete faith in the product that he or she purchases. The farmer, as much as the consumer, has been badly let down by the shambles.

One of the most amusing results of recent events was the unseemly rush by the major supermarkets to source their meat and meat products locally in the wake of the horsemeat scandal. For years and years, everybody from the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment through to many others who are involved in the industry had been encouraging the supermarkets to support local producers and, through them, to support the local economy. For years and years, those pleas had largely fallen on deaf ears. However, after one scandal—almost certainly caused by the supermarkets' constant downward pressure on the profit margins of their suppliers—suddenly the supermarkets could not get enough local produce. It was almost laughable.

As the motion highlights, throughout the horsemeat scandal and the many other previous food-related scandals, our local butchers have provided a continuing comforting and reassuring high street presence, and there has been a steady expansion of the farmers market network, both of which were superbly represented in the event in the members' restaurant that Nigel Don hosted yesterday, and have maintained and promoted the superb quality of Scottish produce and kept it available to the consumer.

As many others have said, this is about food miles, traceability, sustainability and quality, but it is also, if I may suggest it, about trustworthiness and faith in our local produce. I am delighted to support the motion.

12:51

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): This lunch-time debate certainly makes me feel that it is lunch time—all this talk of food is encouraging my appetite.

I, too, congratulate Nigel Don on behalf of the people who attended the event on Tuesday. Unfortunately, I was unable to sample the locally brewed beers because of the queue at the time. I was moved on to sample the bread instead, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

We have much to be proud of in Scotland in our butchers. In my Aberdeenshire West constituency, we have some of the best butchers in Scotland. To give some flavour of why I say that, I might point to A & G Collie of Kemnay, which won this year's Scottish Countryside Alliance butcher award. Collie won the award against all adversity: his shop was burned down, so he got a portakabin and continued trading, but was burgled just before Christmas. Despite all the tragedy that had befallen him, he ensured that every customer's Christmas order was delivered on time. He is a worthy person for the Scottish Countryside Alliance award.

We also have Gary Raeburn of Huntly, who was young butcher of the year last year. Along with butcher Andrew Peter from Inverurie, he will represent Aberdeenshire at the meat skills Scotland competition in Perth in May. I wish them both well.

My constituency also has the privilege of having H M Sheridan Ltd as butcher in Ballater. For years, Sheridan has provided meats and produce for the royal family at Balmoral and continues to do so. As well as having the royal warrant for that, Sheridan also takes his meats and produce out to various farmers markets. He is certainly appreciated in Westhill, where there is no butcher for a population of more than 11,000. Mr Sheridan takes the meats from Ballater to Westhill, and they are enjoyed by the people there and from the surrounding area.

Not every town and village has a butcher, so we have become overreliant on our supermarkets. For months, since being returned to Parliament, I have been campaigning to ensure that local produce is available in our supermarkets. What is grown locally and produced locally should be sold locally. That would take into account the animal welfare aspects, given the fact that we would not need to transport our animals so far.

It is disappointing that Scottish produce is not the major product on our supermarket shelves. I recently wrote to Tesco to complain that only 28 per cent of its lamb was Scottish, with the rest coming from New Zealand. That is a scandal because we have some of the best meat

products—lamb, poultry and fish—here in Scotland. As Alex Fergusson suggested, we should put more pressure on our supermarkets to ensure that they sell local produce to the people in our communities.

I congratulate Nigel Don on securing the debate on his motion. I certainly support it.

12:55

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I, too, congratulate Nigel Don. Unfortunately, the entirely less digestible Advisory Audit Board meeting yesterday prevented my attending the lunch-time event, but I am delighted to participate in the debate. As Nigel Don explained, the motion was lodged in the midst of the horsemeat scandal and, as Alex Fergusson suggested, there was among all the seriousness a great deal of gallows humour. On that note, I look forward to putting a couple of quid on Findus Crispy Pancake in the Sands Hotel handicap chase during the Burray Football Club race night on Saturday.

If there is a silver lining to the scandal, it is the resultant strong demand that local butchers have seen in their businesses. In Orkney, that has been very much the case. Supermarkets will and must look again at their supply chains, which will present challenges. However, I take some comfort from the remarks of Patrick Wall, the former chief executive of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, who said:

“If there is a review of the supply chain management there is a huge opportunity for Orkney.”

He added that

“Orkney is the role model for the rest of Europe to aspire to”.

In the islands, we are fortunate to have a range of good local butchers such as E R & T Craigie, W Lobban & Son, Williamson's, Flett Butchers, Donaldson's of Orkney, D A Sinclair and the Dounby Butcher. Doubtless, I have missed one or two. However, they have had to cope not just with the consequences of the horsemeat scandal but, as the cabinet secretary will be aware, with the demise of Orkney Meat Ltd as well. The difficulties of Orkney Meat were fairly long lasting and resulted from the cost of disposing of waste off the island as well as from what was happening with the beef market generally and from the problems that were being experienced by independent butchers further south, many of which were customers of Orkney Meat. It is inconceivable that Orkney be left without a killing facility; therefore, I welcome the efforts that were made—which were helped by Richard Lochhead—to pull together a co-operative of local butchers who are maintaining the facility despite the competition between them. They recognise the need to safeguard the Orkney

brand and to maintain supplies not just to the local market but beyond. I am delighted that that work has continued apace.

There are opportunities flowing from that, but there are issues to be faced in relation to capacity. Thorfinn Craigie from E R & T Craigie has suggested:

“It would be impossible to kill the beasts and process them with the current capacity ... I wouldn't like to say we could never do it, but it would need a fresh look at how we meet the capacity”.

So, with the opportunities come challenges.

In this place, we often rail against red tape and bureaucracy—not without good reason, on occasion—but the horsemeat scandal has offered a telling insight into the other side of the equation. We must always be balanced and proportionate in how we apply the rules, but no one can be in any doubt about the benefits of rigorous traceability. As Thorfinn Craigie testifies, the paperwork load may be massive but

“We have full traceability and that is crucial.”

As Alex Fergusson suggested, the problem arises in the lack of a level playing field. There is huge frustration among the local butchers in Orkney because they are under many requirements—and the implication for local farmers of even minor non-compliance can be the loss of the single farm payment—yet the horsemeat scandal has illustrated that the same rigour has not been applied at the cheaper end of the market. That must change. Professor Wall suggests that major retailers wanted the consumer recognition that comes with quality assurance schemes but were less prepared to pay suppliers the extra money to cover the costs of that. He hopes that they

“have learned a lesson that by forcing prices down, they only incentivise criminal activity.”

It is right that Parliament has had an opportunity to highlight the high-quality service that is provided by local butchers not just in Orkney or in Angus and the Mearns, but right across the country. I congratulate Nigel Don on securing the debate and commend him for his other activities this week. These have been difficult times, but I hope that there is cause for optimism looking ahead.

12:59

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): I commend the member for Angus North and Mearns, Nigel Don, for organising the debate and Tuesday's farmers market event, which was held in the members' restaurant and which many of us attended. It was an enjoyable event. Many people turned out to it and it showcased a wide variety of

products that Scotland's producers and processors have to offer. I was at the event and purchased some burgers and sausages. I even had a couple of the pork sausages from Gorgie City Farm, which is not too far from the Parliament, for breakfast this morning. They were absolutely fantastic. That sums up the quality that we get from our local producers.

I noted John Mason's comments about the food at receptions in the Scottish Parliament. Perhaps there is a case for making it more local. I am sure that the Deputy Presiding Officer is paying close attention to that point because it is a responsibility of the Presiding Officers. I am sure that he will take that point away.

Each farmers market has a unique character. However, Nigel Don has previously made a valid point about the need for such events to be held indoors. We all know that the weather in Scotland is not always the best, and holding our farmers markets indoors may be a way to encourage the people of Scotland to buy even more local food directly from the producers.

We will be keen to consider that as part of the new think local initiative that the Scottish Government is funding to encourage more local produce to be made available to consumers throughout Scotland, and to help to fund any local initiatives that come about with that aim in mind.

Just over a month ago, we debated the achievements of our first ever national food and drink policy. In that debate, I was struck by the great pride that members from across the political spectrum took in highlighting the many success stories in their constituencies' local food and drink sectors.

I have visited many of the butchers throughout the country that have been mentioned in today's debate. In the debate on the national food and drink policy, members were right to express pride in what businesses of all sizes the length and breadth of Scotland have achieved over the past few years. We all hope that the success story of promoting local food in Scotland—not only selling it locally but exporting it to other markets—continues in the future.

The demand for local food and drink increases year on year, despite some of the myths and the economic climate. That is really good news and is a big vote of confidence in the quality and reputation of Scottish food. However, that trend, which has been established over the past several years, has been given fresh impetus on the back of the horsemeat scandal, as members rightly said.

Since that scandal broke, the Scottish Government has been working hard in partnership with industry organisations to highlight the

message that shoppers can have confidence in the "Scotch" label, for which provenance, traceability and quality are clear. I believe that that is why so many more people are now going to local butchers compared with only last year. A boom is taking place in local butcher sales in Scotland, as many of the anecdotes from members illustrate. Some butchers report that sales have gone up by more than a fifth since January. Others say that they have increased by 30 per cent. I have heard even higher percentages. That is really good news and reflects the fact that local butchers have a long-established relationship with farmers and know every step that their meat takes before it reaches their customers' plates.

Dennis Robertson: The cabinet secretary acknowledged that many of our farmers are diversifying in how they sell their produce. However, they are opening their doors to non-meat eaters as well. I am aware of butchers who are producing cheese and leek pasties and other such goods for vegetarians. We must congratulate our butchers on producing non-meat products too.

Richard Lochhead: Many of our local butchers are certainly innovative. It is also encouraging that so many local butchers, as members said, continue to populate our high streets. That is certainly the case in my constituency—I visit all my local butchers regularly—as it is elsewhere in the country. Of course, one reason why butchers are still on our high streets despite some of the trends of recent years is that they innovate. They explain the story behind their produce to customers and take other steps, so they deserve their success.

The supply of meat to butchers is important. That is why our livestock sector is so important in Scotland. Given the impact of the recent weather on some sheep farmers, I hope that we can use the debate to encourage Scottish consumers to get even more behind our sheep farmers and livestock farmers and to support them in their hour of need by purchasing even more Scotch lamb and Scotch beef.

The uplift in demand for their produce is leading to an increase in demand for skilled butchers. Skills Development Scotland is turning its attention to the issue and is working in tandem with the Meat Training Council to deliver modern apprenticeships in meat processing skills. Let us not forget that the industry needs specific skills, so we must encourage our young people to take up training and opportunities in their local butchers' shops. We are supporting 252 modern apprenticeship posts throughout Scotland, from Stranraer to Shetland and everywhere in between. That is good news. Other initiatives are being taken, too.

The horsemeat scandal is not yet behind us, as cases of contamination continue to be uncovered by the extensive testing regime that we introduced. The Scottish Government is looking for further action at European level in that regard. I hope that consumers throughout Scotland will continue to support their local butchers. In a recent survey by Kantar, 46 per cent of consumers said that they would change their purchasing behaviour as a result of the horsemeat scandal.

I hope that people will continue to give more support to their local producers. As food minister, I will continue to do what I can do to support the local food agenda. We are investing £1 million in the think local campaign. We have set up a community food fund, to help to promote Scotland's rich larder throughout the country. We are making available £1 million in the next three years to provide targeted assistance to local food networks and communities, to give people the opportunity to show their wares to a wider audience and to build on the reputation that we have been celebrating in this debate.

There is much more that I could say. I congratulate all our local butchers on their success. I will continue to send the message to consumers in Scotland that they should look for the "Scotch" label, and that by visiting their local butcher they can be assured of good quality produce, integrity on provenance, and food that tastes absolutely fantastic, as was clear from the food that was on show at the farmers market in the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday—of which I hope we see more in the future. I congratulate Nigel Don on securing this important debate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I share the cabinet secretary's view that the Scottish Parliament should use and showcase Scottish food, but, on a point of information, I should say that the food that is available in the Parliament is a matter for the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body and not for the Presiding Officers.

13:07

Meeting suspended.

14:31

On resuming—

Society

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

Good afternoon. The first item of business is a debate, in the name of the Scottish Green Party and Independent group, on "There is still such a thing as society." This is a debate without motion.

14:31

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I say at the outset how pleased we all are that there is such a strong turnout from all parties.

Over the past 10 days, the reaction to the death of Margaret Thatcher has, perhaps predictably, divided between hero worship on the one hand and demonisation on the other. This debate is intended to involve neither. Members will certainly not hear any hero worship from this part of the chamber, but they will not hear me demonise Margaret Thatcher either. I urge all members to move beyond that polarity of debate.

It is important to debate Margaret Thatcher's political legacy. She has, of course, been out of office for more than 20 years, but the ideas that she embodied remain regrettably dominant in our politics. The debate is intended to provoke some meaningful reflection on that political legacy, and I am glad that a compromise on timing was possible to ensure that all are able to participate.

In proposing a debate without a motion and with a title that I regard as every bit as open to interpretation as the quote to which it refers, we hope that Parliament will focus on the ideas more than the person and that the approach will allow all sides to contribute to the debate as they see fit.

So, what of that legacy, the ideas that Margaret Thatcher embodied and the impact that they have had? Members across the chamber may pick on many particular aspects, such as the direct economic damage of deindustrialisation, the requirement to support the communities most directly affected that was given little more than lip service, or the economic and social impact of those changes that still, even now, echo through the generations.

I have received correspondence to suggest that, as a Green politician, I should welcome the closing down of polluting energy intensive industries. In reality, of course, they were not closed down but offshored, often to countries with greatly inferior social and environmental standards.

Some members might reflect on the homophobic policy of the Government of that day. In her 1987 conference speech, Margaret Thatcher complained that children were being

taught that they even had a right to be gay. A year later, section 28 was introduced, which was the first homophobic legislation for many generations.

Some may focus on the disgraceful stance taken in relation to many international issues—for example, the treating of General Pinochet as a friend and the describing of Nelson Mandela as a terrorist.

Others, I am sure, will focus on the implacable opposition of the Thatcher Government to permitting Scottish self-government of any kind, even if some people think that that opposition ultimately helped galvanise the movement to create this Parliament. There are no doubt other aspects of her treatment of Scotland, from her using it as a test bed for the poll tax to her commitment to stationing Trident here against the popular will, that will be addressed.

Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind): I regret putting this myth to rest, but I really must do so in all conscience. Mrs Thatcher did not dream up the poll tax and foist it on Scotland. It was the Tory MPs of the time in Scotland who, following a disastrous rates revaluation, demanded that it be put in place. I can tell the member later how I know that from personal experience.

Patrick Harvie: I thank Margo MacDonald. I think that I used the phrase “the Thatcher Government”, but I will check the *Official Report* later today.

All those aspects might come up in the debate today, but it is on the economic policies and what they did to society that the greatest critics and defenders of Thatcherism will most often focus. The relentless focus on individualism to the exclusion of every collective solution to problems; the privatisation of public assets; and the market fundamentalism all strike me now—as they did then—as characteristic of a Government that knew the price of everything and the value of nothing.

The quote to which our debate title refers is:

“There is no such thing as society”.

There are those who complain that it is quoted out of context and that it is in fact justified by its context. I have the whole 27-odd pages of the original interview in front of me. We do need to understand what was meant. Mrs Thatcher said:

“I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand ‘I have a problem, it is the Government’s job to cope with it!’ or ‘I have a problem, I will go and get a grant to cope with it!’ ‘I am homeless, the Government must house me!’ and so they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first.”

The implication of the quotation, even in context, is profound. The implication is that the Government should not accept a responsibility to provide housing for the homeless and that it should not provide grants. In today’s context, we have just seen the Government here provide a grant—taxpayers’ money—to KPMG, a very profitable company, to enable it to make more profits from helping other companies pay less tax. I venture to suggest that Margaret Thatcher might have been proud of such a grant rather than condemning it.

To say that there is no such thing as society is justified only if we are reductive to the level of being metaphysical, at which point there is no such thing as the market either, only the individual spending decisions of people; no such thing as culture; and no acceptance of any collective aspect of human existence. This is what the debate comes down to: the tension between, on one hand, the common good and, on the other, the ideological obsession with private interest and the culture of selfishness and greed that grew up because of it.

Much of the economic legacy was based on the theft of past and future generations’ assets, such as the selling off of the social housing built up by previous generations; the promoting of a consumer spending boom funded by the release of private housing assets through equity release; and the burning away of finite fossil fuels regardless of the consequences for other generations.

The statement that “there are only individuals”, which implies that there are only those who are here right now spending money and casting votes, is utterly opposed to the idea of intergenerational equity that I hope that people today value.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): At the start of his speech, Mr Harvie said that he hoped that the chamber could move beyond the polarity of hero worship and demonisation. Does that not apply to him too?

Patrick Harvie: Absolutely. I have been making an effort to ensure that I am talking about the ideas, not the person, and I will continue to do so.

Just as mainstream economic policy recognises only the part of the economy that is captured by financial transactions and gross domestic product, and the rest of the economy—the core economy, as it used to be called—is ignored, so it seemed at the time that the only people who mattered were those who could spend money in the here and now. Intergenerational equity, or equity between and within generations, was lacking. That undermines the collective nature of ourselves as human beings.

I have been told by others that I should congratulate Margaret Thatcher and her Government on an understanding of climate change. To be sure, that Government was among the first Governments in this country to even speak that term. To avoid demonisation and give credit where it is due, I point out that Margaret Thatcher as an individual was a trained scientist, and I am sure that she understood the scientific principles involved. However, the Government at the time continued its commitment to an economic model that drove the problem.

That economic model says that private ownership of everything must take precedence and that common ownership and public ownership are burdens to be jettisoned in society. The model promotes a continual dependence on a level of economic growth that outstrips the ecological resources that are available to us, whether they are finite energy resources or the planet's carrying capacity. The resource depletion and the economic and social injustice that arise because of it can be traced absolutely to the economic model that was pursued, which turned every resource not into something to be cherished or nurtured but into a pure financial value to spend now, regardless of unfair distribution. The model ignored the externalised costs on society and the environment.

That analysis might strike some as overly partisan—a Green analysis—but even on its own terms the record of the Thatcherite economic model fails. It is certainly nowhere near the economic success story that some would have us believe. The Government enjoyed a windfall boost to the economy of some £70 billion from North Sea oil and a fire sale of public assets, from major industries to the housing stock. Those privatisations were, of course, extremely profitable for the City of London and represented a vast transfer of wealth from public to private hands. The Government did not so much flog off the family silver as flog off the family home and then rent it back.

What did that achieve? Unlike what happened in countries that invested resources for the long term and now share the benefit for the common good, resources were frittered away. There was barely 2 per cent annual growth, even in GDP terms, over the period of Mrs Thatcher's time in office, unemployment reached 3 million, and there were deficits in all but two of her 11 years in office. Even in conventional right-wing terms, that does not sound like a legacy of unrivalled and unparalleled success.

John Lamont (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): The member referred to United Kingdom figures. Does he think that the electorate were wrong to elect Mrs Thatcher on

three occasions? Despite what he has just described, the voters still had great confidence in Mrs Thatcher, thought that she was doing the right thing, and re-elected her twice.

Patrick Harvie: I hope that I will not at all surprise the member by saying that I think that the electorate were wrong to elect Mrs Thatcher repeatedly.

The rest of the economic agenda at the time included the deregulation of the City of London and the promotion of consumer spending fuelled by debt or equity release, which I mentioned earlier. Both trends began under Mrs Thatcher's Government and continued under new Labour, and we can trace fundamental aspects of our current economic crisis back to those actions. The deregulated free market model has failed us, but it has not died—it remains undead. For far too many people, economic recovery means little more than the reanimation of the corpse of that economic model.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Does the member advocate that we should return to the economies of the 1970s?

Patrick Harvie: I am afraid that in my last minute I do not have time to set out the Green approach to economic recovery, so perhaps we can save that for another time. I might send the member links to my previous speeches. *[Interruption.]* She might have nothing better to do with her time.

The deregulated free market model continues to dominate UK political parties far too much. The danger that we allow that model also to dominate Scotland's political landscape must be avoided. New Labour did not overturn that model but entrenched it while adding divisive language that undermines the ethos of the welfare state—so much so that Mr Cameron was able to keep a straight face when claiming that we are all Thatcherites now. To quote the lady, "No, no, no"—we are not. The failure of that model is abundantly clear.

In the context of Scotland today, when we are on the verge of making a crucial decision on either moving to independence or remaining inside the UK, there are on both sides of that debate those who seek to challenge the legacy of Thatcherism and to overturn the ideas that it represents. We all have our positions on independence, but there is common ground despite that divide.

For those who share an opposition to that centre-right consensus, shifting the political language and landscape must be at least as important as achieving our desired outcome in the referendum. The referendum debate must be about the kind of society that we wish to become rather than just about the geographic location of

power. For me, just as for many on the left of the no side, that must mean restoring to our political debate the importance of collective solutions to problems, the values of the core parts of the economy that markets can never capture but only undermine and, fundamentally, a recognition that there is such a thing as society.

Finally—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Briefly, please.

Patrick Harvie: Finally, one thing that I will say about Mrs Thatcher's personality and characteristics is that she was clearly someone who knew what she wanted to achieve and set about it with great determination. I need such determination, as do we all if we are to prove ourselves capable of overturning the failed values of the past, building a better society and creating a more equal and sustainable economy. We all need to find greater determination than we may think ourselves capable of.

There is no motion to move, but I welcome the contributions of all members to the debate.

14:47

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): The Scottish Government believes that there is such a thing as society, that there is such a thing as Scottish society and that there is such a thing as global society. However, our society is not an equal one, and we know that the UK is becoming less equal.

Jimmy Reid argued that the worth of a society should be judged

“not by the affluence of the strong or the greedy, but by how it cared for the most defenceless sections of the community, the very young, the very old, the physically or mentally handicapped.”

He described a Scottish tradition of compassion, egalitarianism and empathy and the sense of community that binds us together.

We do not enter this world as equals. Disadvantage even pre-birth sets children up with barriers and immense challenges. That is why the Government is undertaking a bold early years strategy and preventative approach:

“Early action—acting before problems arise rather than waiting to deal with the consequences—is common sense across the world but not yet common practice. Scotland is doing more than other countries to overcome this, in attempting to turn a strong Government commitment to early action into changes in public service delivery that don't just tackle the stubborn social challenges Scotland faces but prevent them.”

Those are not my words or the words of the Scottish Government but the words of Will Horwitz, who is policy adviser to the UK's early action task force.

Margo MacDonald: I appreciate the quotation, but I hope that the minister does not set his store entirely by that. He sounded very much like what Labour used to sound like when it said, “Oh, the Scottish Parliament is the Scottish solution to Scottish problems.” It is nothing of the kind. It is the opportunity to make us bigger and better and to think more adventurously and more creatively. That is what we have a Parliament for.

Derek Mackay: I agree with the member. We do not believe that our Scottish society is better, but we are no worse than any other society in the world. We just want to be equal and to share that compassionate egalitarianism, given the powers that we could have with independence.

We have charted a different course on social policies that more closely reflect Scottish values. Free education, a national health service that is free at the point of use and progressive taxation and welfare policies that protect rather than demonise the most vulnerable are just some of those values.

Sustainable economic growth is the objective of the Scottish Government. However, our national wellbeing will be judged not solely on economic growth, measures of GDP or economic value, but, through our national performance framework, on a range of measures assessing whether we are making Scotland fairer, healthier, stronger, greener and safer.

This week, the Parliament debated universal services. I did not hear a critique of why the policies that the Government has continued with—the council tax freeze, free education, free prescriptions and free personal care—are misguided. They were described as popular. Is that not because they connect with the Scottish people's sense of fairness?

Liz Smith: One of Mrs Thatcher's principles was always to spend within one's means. The Scottish Government has said clearly that there is to be a widespread universalism when it comes to public services. How will that be paid for?

Derek Mackay: If the member has studied closely Scotland's fiscal position as published by John Swinney, she will be aware of Scotland's fiscal strength and of how we could have more opportunities to build a fairer society by maintaining universal services with full access to Scotland's resources.

That helpfully brings us to the affordability of those prizes of devolution. Apparently, the criticism in the debate was around affordability—those policies must be surrendered in the straitjacket of being within the United Kingdom. With the resources available to us, we have been able to protect the national health service—resisting the dismantling and privatisation of the

NHS that is taking place south of the border—and to protect, relatively speaking, local government to ensure that our front-line services are protected. The UK cuts are biting hard, but this country could do so much more with access to our own resources.

Over the period 1980-81 to 2011-12, Scotland is estimated to have run an average annual net fiscal surplus equivalent to 0.2 per cent of GDP while the UK is estimated to have run an average annual net fiscal deficit worth 3.2 per cent of GDP. We could afford to be a fairer, more compassionate country with access to our own resources. On the most recent analysis, compared with the equivalent UK figures, Scotland's public spending and spending on social protection are lower as a share of GDP, the total tax receipts in Scotland are higher per head and the net fiscal debt is lower. Scotland is ranked eighth in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development league table of developed nations in terms of GDP. Scotland pays her way and her hard-working people do not expect and have not asked for something for nothing; they ask that we use the wealth to build a strong and fairer society.

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): How does Mr Mackay respond to the recent "Government Expenditure & Revenue Scotland" figures, which show that we spend £7.7 billion more than we take in in taxes? Those are the facts.

Derek Mackay: The figures show that Scotland, like most developed nations, has an issue with debt. However, our debt position is much stronger than the position of the United Kingdom. It is not a choice between austerity and debt. The fiscal position that Scotland could be in gives us a better way—it gives us choices of increased spending, reduced debt and an independence dividend from Scotland's being able to tailor its economic and social policies to its own circumstances.

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): We could have predicted that this would turn into a constitutional debate, although not in quite such a blatant way as we are seeing. However, that seems to be the way that the minister wants to have it. Did not the Institute for Fiscal Studies, in its December report, say that spending per head on social protection is more than £4,000 in Scotland whereas it is £3,700 in England? Is not the real thing to consider the ratio of the spending per head to the revenue per head? Since 1990, that has been higher in Scotland than in England.

Derek Mackay: Absolutely. Tax revenue per head of population is higher in Scotland than the equivalent UK figure, which allows us to invest in our people and presents us with the ability to make choices about the kind of society that we want to build.

On choices, for other Governments, unemployment has been a price worth paying whereas, for this Government, it is a call to action. The spending decisions and dedication of ministers such as Angela Constance, as well as an all-Government and all-Scotland approach, have produced lower unemployment, higher employment and lower youth unemployment compared to the situation in the United Kingdom as a whole.

For many, the UK big society has meant, "You're on your own." The Scottish Government has mitigated the impact of welfare changes through the council tax reduction scheme to protect the recipients of council tax benefit, the Scottish welfare fund and increased advice support. However, mitigation can go only so far.

The UK Government has chosen to reduce personal taxation for the richest and it is desperate to reduce inheritance tax, while its pernicious bedroom tax and other welfare changes leave us with the impression that it cares more about the dead rich than it does about the living poor. The society that Jimmy Reid spoke of is made up of the very people whom the UK Government is targeting. They are being demonised as a burden by a Government that Scotland did not elect. Nine out of 10 of Scotland's members of Parliament at Westminster voted against the coalition approach. That is not the Scotland that we seek and it is not our society.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity, through a yes vote, to create a constitution for Scotland that is based on consensus and engagement through a constitutional convention. Our ideas include rights on education and housing, a ban on nuclear weapons and setting of parameters of conflict, as well as constitutional protection for local government.

What of global society and issues such as climate justice, trade, peace and international development? This year, Scotland achieved fair trade nation status. We have set the most ambitious climate change targets in the world and reinforced our links with developing nations. We share an enduring partnership and friendship with Malawi.

Through the tough consequences of the economic downturn, Scotland has showed pay restraint. Tough as that is as the cost of living rises, it has helped to sustain many jobs in the public sector. The implementation and promotion of the living wage, allied to our pay strategy, has supported those who were previously affected by low pay.

Just as we believe that the people of Scotland are best placed to make decisions about their future, we believe that the same is true of our local

communities. We are blessed with immense natural resources but, as Jimmy Reid said,

"The untapped resources of the North Sea are as nothing compared to the untapped resources of our people."

That is why the Government has been consulting on and will deliver a community empowerment and renewal bill. Communities must have a greater say in how their destinies are shaped. Just as we seek the powers to transform Scotland from Westminster Government, we can further transfer powers to local communities.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should be drawing to a close, please.

Derek Mackay: Those are not powers for their own sake, but a means to create the society and the Scotland that we seek. Social progress has been made with devolution, and the status quo has been challenged, with Scotland's political parties across the Parliament pioneering ambitious legislation.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I would be grateful if you could close, minister.

Derek Mackay: With a yes vote, progressive voices would be able to do as they say rather than simply say what they would do if only we had the power. With a yes vote, there will be nothing to stop us building the society that we seek.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. I point out that we are extremely short of time. I call James Kelly, who has up to seven minutes.

14:58

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): I want to reflect on Margaret Thatcher's leadership, the policies of the Conservative Party in her time in power, the impact that they had and the legacy that we have been left with. At the outset, I offer my condolences to the members of the Conservative family, who have suffered the loss of someone who for them was a revered past leader.

I want to go back to 4 May 1979 and the declaration that Margaret Thatcher made in Downing Street, when she echoed the words of St Francis of Assisi. Never can the words of a saint have been so misconstrued. On that day, Margaret Thatcher declared:

"Where there is discord, may we bring harmony."

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the member give way?

James Kelly: I want to develop my point before I let the member in.

The declaration rang hollow in Cambuslang, where I grew up and which I have the honour to represent as the constituency MSP, because there was much disharmony when the local steelworks

closed and many people were thrown on to the scrapheap. There were men of only 50 who lost their jobs and never worked again, and there were younger men whose lives fell into disrepair—they could not find a job and they went to an early grave. There was much discord and very little harmony.

Alex Johnstone: I presume that, once again, the Labour Party is taking the year zero approach. I remind James Kelly that 4 May 1979 was not year zero but the result of the experience of the 1970s, which had broken this country. As a result of the behaviour of the unions, in particular, the election of Margaret Thatcher was an inevitability in the United Kingdom by 1979.

James Kelly: On that day, Margaret Thatcher went on to say:

"Where there is doubt, may we bring faith."

If Mr Johnstone is telling us that the 1970s were a bad example, then we should have had much faith in the 1980s. However, the reality is that factories closed, we were told that there was no alternative, and people's faith was destroyed.

Last week I spoke to a retired schoolteacher in Blantyre, in my constituency. He told me that he still sees pupils whom he taught in the 1980s, who have led lives of desolation because of the impact of the Conservative Party's policies in the 1980s—broken spirits and loss of opportunity.

Margaret Thatcher also said:

"where there is despair, may we bring hope".

We did not see much hope and we saw too much despair in the 1984 miners' strike, when communities were brought to their knees. Margaret Thatcher was a class warrior, who respected no borders or boundaries. Whether they came from Bilston Glen, Durham, Polkemmet or Orgeave, Margaret Thatcher regarded the miners as "the enemy within".

When the miners returned to work after a year, in 1985, they marched behind their vans and banners, along with their supporters. What dignity. What strength. What resolve. Let us contrast that with the spirit that the Conservatives promoted in the 1980s, when the greed-is-good share sharks were earning a quick buck.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank James Kelly for his opening remarks, which were very much welcomed by Conservatives.

I remind the member that Harold Wilson closed more than 100 more mines than Mrs Thatcher did during her reign. If Mrs Thatcher's economic and trade union policies were so bad, why did not the Labour Party reverse any of them in 13 years in government?

James Kelly: It was obvious that there would be changes as industrial policy developed. I recognise that. However, the Conservative approach differed from that of previous Governments in that no alternative employment for people was sought. That demonstrates the emptiness and cynicism of the approach of the 1980s, when the Tories simply adopted a policy that resulted in the destruction of manufacturing industry, including mines and steelworks. As far as the Conservatives were concerned, that was the policy to pursue; they did not care that there were no alternatives for people in the communities that were affected. That is the difference between the 1980s and the period before that.

I agree with Margaret Thatcher that politics should be about the clash of political ideas. Values should be central to that. It should be about a sense of community and society, and it should be about how we treat people. Back in the 1980s, the Conservative Party pursued policies that broke people's hearts and destroyed their dignity. Politicians must resolve that that must never be allowed to happen again.

15:04

Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): I begin by paying tribute, on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives, to the late Baroness Thatcher, who died last Monday morning and whose passing was mourned yesterday at her funeral in St Paul's cathedral. She was a remarkable, ground-breaking woman and a true Conservative revolutionary. I also offer, on my party's behalf, our profound condolences to Margaret Thatcher's family at this time.

I express my gratitude to the Parliamentary Bureau for allowing this debate to be moved from yesterday. As my colleague, John Lamont, explained, it was not the subject but the timing to which we objected. Even in conflict, one is given leave to bury one's dead, and so it should be in politics, too. Conservatives wanted to mark the passing of a former leader and Prime Minister yesterday. It was right for us to do so, and I thank everyone in the chamber for allowing it to happen.

I never knew Margaret Thatcher. She left office years before I was even eligible to vote. However, she—more than any other politician or public figure—shaped the Scotland and the Europe that I grew up in and in which we live today. The corruption of the quote on which today's debate is based is often used to try to portray Margaret Thatcher as an anti-society individualist who did not care about communities. Patrick Harvie quoted what came before, but not what came after, and, as the Bishop of London pointed out so eloquently in his funeral address, even a cursory glance at her words makes clear that the opposite is true.

Speaking in the right-wing publication of choice for capitalist running dogs everywhere—the *Woman's Own*—Margaret Thatcher completed her thought with these words:

"There is a living tapestry of men and women and people, and the beauty of that tapestry and the quality of our lives will depend upon how much each of us is prepared to take responsibility for ourselves and each of us prepared to turn round and help by our own efforts those who are unfortunate."

Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): Is that, therefore, how the member would define society?

Ruth Davidson: I would say that Margaret Thatcher's interpretation was that society is not the same as the state. She did not believe that it was about Government departments or faceless bureaucracies. She believed in people, and she believed that the tapestry that she spoke of was woven house by house, street by street and town by town. I believe that, too. I believe that all our lives are improved by the contributions of men and women who decide to take responsibility for their community and who contribute to the wellbeing of their fellow citizens.

Indeed, large parts of that interview—which I believe that Patrick Harvie said was 27 pages long—were devoted to Margaret Thatcher's anxiety that too much government had weakened the social institutions that best foster self-respect and respect for others: families, churches, schools and voluntary associations.

Margaret Thatcher expanded on that during her sermon on the Mound, when she addressed the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. She said:

"We are all responsible for our own actions. We can't blame society if we disobey the law. We simply can't delegate the exercise of mercy and generosity to others."

However much her detractors attempt to distort her words, it is clear that her belief in human decency was at the heart of her view of society.

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): Is the member aware that the proper assessment of Margaret Thatcher's legacy by her biographer, John Campbell, is that

"her words were not a misquotation or taken out of context"?

His assessment is that she was taking the view that there was no such thing as society, and that she expressed that view in many interviews.

Ruth Davidson: I read out that portion of the interview, and I believe that an explanation is given there.

I do not believe that Margaret Thatcher's determination during her premiership was driven only by her values. She was motivated by the

state that the country was in when she came to office in 1979. For those who argue that her reforms were harmful or unnecessary, it is worth looking briefly at the state of Britain when she came to power. The Government controlled prices, dividends, wages and even how much money people could take abroad on their holidays. Our economy was hopelessly uncompetitive—that was certainly the view of the Soviet Union, which indicated in 1979 a reluctance to buy from Britain because of the poor quality of goods and the unreliability of deliveries. The General Post Office could take two years to issue a phone line. State-owned utilities were losing hundreds of millions of pounds each year. British Steel took twice as many man hours to make one tonne of steel as its European competitors.

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Ruth Davidson: No. I want to make progress.

With the dead left unburied, rubbish piling up in the streets and union militants standing guard outside hospitals deciding which patients could be admitted, it was clear that Labour's failure was costing Britain dear. That failure was clearly recognised by the SNP, which supported Margaret Thatcher's motion of no confidence in the Government, which led to the election and propelled her into power.

Let me deal in hard facts instead of myths. Scotland's economy grew by an average of 2.5 per cent a year between 1979 and 1990, going from a position in which the economy lagged behind the rest of the UK to one in which Scottish GDP per capita was higher. Even the First Minister has grudgingly recognised those achievements, saying of Baroness Thatcher's policies in an interview that he

"didn't mind the economic side".

Why would he, with living standards increasing and employment going up during her premiership? However uncomfortable, the facts show that when Baroness Thatcher left office, there was a new prosperity in Scotland as a result of the difficult decisions that she took.

Margaret Thatcher was also a global figure, saying loudly and clearly that Mikhail Gorbachev was a man with whom she could do business. She was the first western leader to meet Solidarity's Lech Wałęsa. The Berlin wall fell the night before my 10th birthday, changing the established world order. She played her part in that through her efforts to spread democracy.

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

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in her last minute.

Ruth Davidson: That is why President Obama described her as

"one of the great champions of freedom and liberty".

Margaret Thatcher's opponents' deliberate distortion of her achievements is, in many ways, a tribute to her. The only line of attack is to bend the truth out of all recognition. Did she want to impose the community charge on Scotland as an experiment? No. As Margo MacDonald said, she wanted gradual, UK-wide introduction but Scottish ministers pleaded for early change because of the rates review. Did she shut Ravenscraig? No. It worked for another two years, until she left power. Did the miners' strike wipe out the mining industry? No. In 1983, there were 174 working pits; the strike was over the closure of 20 uneconomic mines.

Margaret Thatcher's achievements speak for themselves. She allowed thousands of people to take control of their lives through home ownership. She freed up inefficient, loss-making, state-owned monopolies to become profitable businesses. She turned Britain from a strike-bound and demoralised nation into a country of ambition that rewarded hard work. She laid the foundations of London and Edinburgh as global financial centres. She played a pivotal role in the fall of communism, and she gave Britain back its pride by standing firm against a fascist dictatorship.

Margaret Thatcher was a Prime Minister who believed in Britain and one who believed in people. She knew that the beautiful tapestry of our nation is woven family by family, house by house, street by street and town by town, and thousands of Scots believe that, too.

15:12

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): Margaret Thatcher was a politician of world renown who achieved a great deal. The country's longest serving peacetime Prime Minister, she won three consecutive elections. People often ignore that she had that clear democratic mandate. She was courageous in the face of great difficulties—the Falklands war, the Irish Republican Army bombing in Brighton and the murders of her colleagues Airey Neave and Ian Gow. She was a conviction politician who demonstrated remarkable resolve, but she could also be strident and self-righteous.

I recently came across an assessment of Margaret Roberts from 1948 that said:

"This woman is headstrong, obstinate and dangerously self-opinionated."

Well, of course she was. How else could she possibly have become the first female leader of the Conservative Party?

I said that Margaret Thatcher achieved a great deal but was any of it great? Some of her objectives were good. Britain needed a shake-up. We needed lower inflation, more competitive industry and a prospect of industrial growth. Let us not forget that her trade union reforms survived. New Labour left them unchallenged. However, the way she went about those reforms was so divisive and corrosive that many communities still bear the scars.

David Steel and Roy Jenkins argued in the 1983 Liberal-Social Democratic Party alliance programme for government that

"The Conservative and Labour parties between them have made an industrial wasteland out of a country which was once the workshop of the world."

They went on to say:

"Mrs Thatcher's government stands idly by, hoping that the blind forces of the marketplace will restore the jobs and factories that its indifference has destroyed. The Labour Party's response is massive further nationalisation, a centralised state socialist economy and rigid controls over enterprise."

They argued:

"The choice which Tories and Socialists offer at this election is one between neglect and interference."

The alliance offered an alternative to the politics of confrontation. It recognised that it was only by working together in the companies and communities of Britain that we could overcome the economic problems. It offered the chance to reduce unemployment by 1 million in two years by providing jobs for the long-term unemployed through a programme of housing and environmental improvement; extending youth training schemes for all 16 and 17-year-olds; and creating more jobs and labour-intensive social services. It would be pointless to wonder how different things might have been with a fair voting system.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Alison McInnes: I want to make progress.

The 1980s were a time of immense upheaval, but it is simplistic to attribute all the wrongs of that time to one individual. It is always dangerous to demonise individuals and I do not believe that Margaret Thatcher's Government would have been able to wreak such damage if it were not for that other most divisive figure that she pitted herself against: Arthur Scargill, whose militant rhetoric gave her stance a kind of popular legitimacy.

Instead of asking whether there was a sustainable role for our manufacturing industry in an overdeveloped industrial economy, and instead of looking to other countries such as Germany for models of efficiency, improved management

structures and better industrial relations, Margaret Thatcher sacrificed whole industries and the communities that depended on them in an appalling face-off with militant trade unionists. She did not care about the impact on individuals in that battle, and the collateral damage was certainly immense. What compounded it all was that once those industries closed, her Government offered no coherent strategy to support those damaged communities by bringing new work or new hope.

The reservoir of damage is deep in the communities that once hosted shipyards, mines, car factories or steelworks. At the time, the desperation that was caused by high unemployment was memorably captured by Alan Bleasdale in "Boys from the Blackstuff".

More recently, I was reminded of just how deep the damage goes when I attended a lecture by Sir Harry Burns. He talked about the links between alienation and ill health; about how a sense of purpose and community is essential to human wellbeing; and about the importance to people of feeling that their environment is predictable and understandable. He argued that it is the chronic stress bred by despair and hopelessness that has led to Scotland's high rates of early mortality from alcoholism, violence and suicide.

Margaret Thatcher liked to portray herself as a canny housewife, but she was not prudent with the country's assets. Selling off council houses—a popular and populist policy—was not wrong in itself; the policy was flawed because it had no strategy for replacement houses. Privatisation of state-owned business was not necessarily wrong in principle; it was wrong because she used the money to cut taxes rather than diversify the economy or improve services—that is, she used it to buy votes rather than lay the money down for the future.

In 1979, I was just a year out of university. Like many others, I was on a job creation scheme. When I secured a proper job with the Science and Engineering Research Council I witnessed at first hand her attack on scientific research. There was a dramatic reduction in research activity—surely a strange contradiction from someone who was herself a scientist.

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Alison McInnes: I am nearly finished.

Margaret Thatcher's approach to the apartheid regime in South Africa deeply angered me. There is much more to lament: her attacks on Europe; section 28; the poll tax; and her failure to recognise the value of arts and social sciences. Despite being the first female Prime Minister, she did nothing to champion women or to help their struggle for equality.

For many of us, Thatcherism will forever be defined by the generations of hopes dashed and of potential unrealised. Of course there is such a thing as society, but ours here in Scotland is not as healthy as it should be, or as it could have been. This week, a melancholic piece of music—one bit in particular—has been running through my head, a leitmotif of the time. The song is “Shipbuilding”, sung by Robert Wyatt:

“Diving for dear life
When we could be diving for pearls.”

15:18

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): Unlike Ruth Davidson, I grew up in the 60s and 70s, and I do not recognise the picture that she paints of this country as a Dantesque vision of hell. I grew up in a council house—a nice council house with a garden—and I went to a modern, well-equipped school. Then I went to university without having to worry about how I was going to pay for it.

My father was born in a single end and had to leave school to become a boy labourer at 14. It was not Margaret Thatcher who liberated his daughters to do better than he did; it was the post-war consensus, which was fashioned by Clement Attlee, and the struggles of generations of working people.

We in Scotland never took to Thatcherism. The sermon on the Mound that Ms Davidson mentioned earlier was greeted with a stony silence from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. When Mrs Thatcher had finished lecturing the churchmen about theology, the Moderator of the General Assembly on that occasion handed her two works that the Church of Scotland had done on housing and poverty. He did not have to say anything—everybody knew what it meant.

When considering the assertion “there is no such thing as society” it is important to understand what motivated Mrs Thatcher ideologically. The main influence on her thinking was the Austrian economist, Friedrich von Hayek and, in particular, his 1944 book, “The Road to Serfdom”, which she read as an undergraduate at Oxford. According to the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, the central message of “The Road to Serfdom” is

“that you cannot compromise with socialism, even in ... social democratic forms, because ... socialism tends always to totalitarian outcomes”.

By “socialism”, however, Hayek and Thatcher meant any approach underlined by collective responsibility, social purpose and action. They believed that the politics of consensus would lead to Stalinism.

Alex Johnstone: Yes, obviously.

Joan McAlpine: It is very interesting to hear the member chuckling at that.

According to the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, “consensus itself was always a concept that disturbed her”.

That sounds completely potty now. Does anyone seriously think that President Obama stepping in to rescue the United States car industry will inevitably lead to the collectivisation of farms in Kansas? That is what Margaret Thatcher and her followers believed.

Ruth Davidson: It is interesting to hear the member talk about Hayek and his economic policies, and about how the expansion of the state creates the possibility for serfdom among people who live within that state. Writing recently in a national newspaper, Jim Sillars, who will not be unknown to the member, said:

“Hayek was right and the left wrong.”

Does the member agree?

Joan McAlpine: I do not speak for Jim Sillars.

Members: Margo does.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Order.

Joan McAlpine: When Mrs Thatcher said that there was no such thing as society, it caused a storm not because it was said out of context, but because it was such a clear articulation of what she had done in office. Her approach to government was described by Professor Stuart Hall, who first coined the term “Thatcherism”, as “authoritarian populism”. She quite deliberately used the forces of the state to destroy the institutions of the post-war consensus, which she considered a threat.

Alex Johnstone: Will the member take an intervention?

Joan McAlpine: No, I would like to make progress.

Margaret Thatcher did not stop at the trade unions.

Alex Johnstone rose—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Johnstone, the member is not taking an intervention.

Joan McAlpine: Her politics were designed to reposition the country on the right in order to destroy anything that could be viewed as a vehicle for consensus and social democracy. The Thatcherites set out to destroy large manufacturing concerns and national utilities because labour was organised in those industries. They wished to break areas of potential opposition, whether in English local authorities or in anti-Thatcher Scotland. The main purpose of

the poll tax, for example, was to encourage a rightward shift in local authorities. It did not work, but that was the main purpose.

This past week, we have been told that the UK in 1979 was the sick man of Europe and that Thatcherism was the shock therapy, but Thatcherism was all shock and no therapy. Interest rates were 12 per cent when Mrs Thatcher took office in 1979, and they rose under her premiership. At one point they reached 17 per cent, which immediately made industry uncompetitive and destroyed huge swathes of our manufacturing base. Countries such as Germany, the United States and Japan all increased their manufacturing production substantially over that period, but it contracted sharply in Britain.

Ruth Davidson: Does the member recognise that Scotland exported more manufactured goods than Japan by 1990, reaching the highest levels ever, and that manufacturing increased by 26 per cent in real terms between 1979 and 1990?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms McAlpine, you are now in your last minute.

Joan McAlpine: The Office for National Statistics figures are clear that manufacturing accounted for 20 per cent of UK GDP in 1979 but that the figure went down to 9 per cent by the eve of the banking collapse in 2008.

In Scotland, Mrs Thatcher opposed devolution for the same reasons that she tried to smash trade unions, the manufacturing industry and local authorities. She thought that Scotland, left to itself, would become socialist. Scotland had to be put back in its box, like the steel and engineering industries and the Greater London Council. She opposed the African National Congress in South Africa for probably the same reason—she believed that black majority rule, too, would lead to socialism. She was wrong in her assumptions about Scotland, but she was correct in her suspicion that a Scottish Parliament would be a bastion of social democratic values, which her followers considered abhorrent.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must conclude.

Joan McAlpine: This is the only place in the UK that has set about dismantling some of Margaret Thatcher's key policies, most notably the right to buy social housing and the creeping privatisation of the NHS and higher education. However, the only way in which we will be able to roll back for good the damage that she has done is by getting all the powers that we need for this Parliament, and we will get that only through the full powers of independence.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I must impress on members that time is very short in the debate

and that interventions really have to be taken within members' own time.

15:25

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate, headed "There is Still Such a Thing as Society". I want to refer to Margaret Thatcher's statement to *Woman's Own* magazine in 1987. I want to look at what she said, then I will discuss what she did later. She said:

"I think we've been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it's the government's job to cope with. 'I have a problem, I'll get a grant.' 'I'm homeless, the government must house me.' They're casting their problem on society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first. It's our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbour. People have got the entitlements too much in mind, without the obligations. There's no such thing as entitlement, unless someone has first met an obligation."

I respect the Thatcher family's loss of a mother and grandmother and I offer my condolences at this time. However, I cannot agree with her policies; we will not rewrite history because she has died. Under the Thatcher Government, poverty and inequality increased and unemployment hit levels that the UK had not seen since the great depression. Her belief in a small state and in the deregulation of the financial markets amounted to selective prosperity. It left many, including mining and steel industry communities and working families at large, feeling misled and ignored.

Margaret Thatcher may have died but, unfortunately, Thatcherism lives on. It will take decades to recover from its impact on Scotland and on the people of Scotland: unemployment rose by 16 per cent; interest rates rose in November 1990 to 13.88 per cent; poverty increased by 13.4 per cent; and inequality increased from a ratio of 0.25 to 0.34—and we are supposed to wonder whether there is such a thing as society.

Societies are built by love, care and guidance, not by destroying communities and their livelihoods. What was done by the Thatcher Government to the people of Scotland was nothing less than criminal. Destroying our fruitful steel industry and growing mining industry was unforgivable. It led to devastated communities, and we recognise that we need to rebuild our society as we know it.

So, what is society? What are society's responsibilities and who is responsible for building societies? That responsibility lies on our shoulders—on all of us collectively. Governments will come and go, but the responsibility for building

a society ultimately lies on the shoulders of individuals and communities. More important, people say, "I didn't vote for the Thatcher Government," but we all voted; we may not have voted for her, but we all had a democratic vote. We all then suffered or succeeded, depending on where we were.

The vast majority of people in Scotland did not benefit from the Thatcher Government, so there is a lot of ill feeling towards it. We lost a booming industry. I remember the time when I was doing my degree, when the steel industry at Ravenscraig was closed down.

John Lamont: Does the member accept and recognise that Ravenscraig was shut in 1992, two years after Mrs Thatcher left office?

Hanzala Malik: Yes, I do, but we need to look at why it was closed down. What was the root cause? [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Hanzala Malik: The root cause was quite clear. The European Union had told the British Government at the time that it needed to rationalise the steel industry, and the rationalisation was sought by the Conservative Government. There were three factories in the UK and the only one that was making money was Ravenscraig. What did the Government do? It closed Ravenscraig. The member should not try to lay the blame on somebody else's shoulders. That was a direct result of Margaret Thatcher's Government negotiating badly for us.

There was no replacement for the jobs that were lost in the industry. The community was devastated at Ravenscraig—and not only there, because right across Scotland the jobs of many highly skilled workers were allowed to disappear without any compensation or reskilling.

Alex Johnstone: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member must conclude.

Hanzala Malik: Scotland did not benefit from the policies that were implemented and we are still trying to recover from them. Now that the responsibility lies on our shoulders, we have to ensure that we do not make the same mistakes. I therefore ask the current Administration to do its best to ensure that we do not make the same mistakes with the cuts that are being introduced.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Once again, I reiterate—and say that I am going to be more strict about—the fact that members have only six minutes, and I am afraid that interventions must be contained within that time.

15:31

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): On Tuesday morning, I attended two events in my constituency. One was at a local charity in Sighthill called Little Steps Baby and Toddler Group, which is a playgroup for the under-fives that is in the running for an international award hosted by What's On 4 Ltd. The other involved the national charity Marie Curie Cancer Care, which operates a hospice at Fairmilehead that has just undergone a £2.6 million refurbishment. The link between the two charities is that each depends for its survival on volunteers to provide staff, funding or both.

That reminded me of the other organisations in my constituency that depend on volunteers to help them provide a service to their community. There is Dads Rock, which is Scotland's only playgroup for fathers and their children—I have to declare an interest here, as I am an unpaid trustee of that new charity. Then there are the many uniformed organisations, such as the scouts and the guides, that help youngsters to reach their full potential and play a hugely constructive role in the development of our young people. There are the coaches who manage youth football teams most of the year round and give teenagers an opportunity to take part in a competitive sport and use up some of the excess energy that they have.

Apart from those who are involved in youth activities, there are others who give their time freely to stand as community councillors, organise gala days, operate food banks and so on, and they are motivated at least in part by a desire to help those in our communities who are less fortunate. People join together to organise litter picking in the Pentland hills or to establish environmental groups, because they are concerned about their local area. Balerno village screen even organises a community cinema so that families get a night out for free.

The common thread between all the individuals who are involved in those diverse groups is that they give their time free of charge to make our communities better places to live in. Of course there is such a thing as society, and the people who are involved in the range of activities that I have mentioned prove it every day.

Alex Johnstone: Will the member take an intervention?

Gordon MacDonald: No, thank you. I only have six minutes.

However there is one issue, perhaps more than any other, that we all know destroys communities, and that is unemployment. Britain's unemployment rate hit a record 12 per cent in February 1984 and the result was that whole communities were devastated. People, especially those whose towns

and villages had grown up around a single employer, lost their income, their sense of purpose and even their self-respect.

Throughout that period, Scotland voted Labour in large numbers, but that did nothing to stop the devastation as our heavy industries disappeared one by one. Even with the election of 50 Labour MPs in 1987, who were dubbed “the feeble 50”, Ravenscraig still closed, Caterpillar closed and the Scott Lithgow shipyard closed, as did numerous pits.

Jump forward to the present day, and we can see from the latest unemployment figures that, thanks to the policies of this Scottish Government, unemployment—although still too high—is heading in the right direction. Over the three months to February, youth unemployment in Scotland fell to 16.1 per cent, while the UK rate hovers at around 20.6 per cent. Total unemployment in Scotland fell by 11,000 to 7.3 per cent, while the UK rate rose to 7.9 per cent. I will put that in perspective: the average UK unemployment rate for the past 40 years is 7.26 per cent, and Scotland is reaching that level at a time when the rest of the UK is heading for a triple-dip recession.

That is being achieved despite not having the full powers of an independent country and the full use of our own resources to tackle the problems of poor health, damp housing and poverty that still exist in some of our communities. Over the past 30 years, official figures show that, at today's prices, Scotland has contributed £222 billion more in tax revenues than we would have done had we just matched the per capita contributions of the UK. We could have used that money to make Scotland a fairer and more equal society, but instead we are tied to a union—the UK—which is the fourth most unequal country in the developed world, and is on track to becoming the most unequal.

We are part of a union in which income inequality has increased over decades, including during the 13 years of the most recent Labour Government at Westminster, unlike small independent countries such as Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the Czech Republic, which are repeatedly in the top 10 of most-equal countries. We are part of a union in which the Con-Dem Government's most recent welfare cuts will take a further £210 million out of the pockets of hard working Scottish families.

An International Monetary Fund working paper on labour market regulations explained why welfare cuts are economically damaging. It stated:

“In times of crisis, the ability of workers who lose their jobs to retain their purchasing power has important social and economic implications. A high replacement rate ensures that the negative effects of rising unemployment

on aggregate demand are mitigated. It also prevents workers from falling into poverty when they lose their jobs.”

Of the 51 countries who supplied benefit data for the study, the UK was in 46th place, behind Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden, which took the top three places.

Scotland is a wealthy country: we have the resources, we have a well-educated population and we are of such a size that we can match the standards of other high-performing, small European countries. We have an opportunity to make Scotland a fairer, more prosperous and more equal country for our children and our grandchildren

I look forward to the yes vote in September 2014, which will give the people of Scotland the opportunity to elect Governments that they vote for.

15:37

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab):

However fundamentally I disagree with Margaret Thatcher's political philosophy and however angry I feel about the effects that her Government's policies had and, indeed, are still having on many of my constituents, I begin by recognising that this debate has been prompted by a person's death: a woman who had family, friends, followers and party colleagues who mourn her passing. Those of us who recall the passing of John Smith and Donald Dewar understand the pain that Conservative Party members are going through, and I offer them my condolences, as do my colleagues. I am pleased that the timing of the debate has changed, as to have had it on the same day as Mrs Thatcher's funeral would have been distasteful.

Former MSP Lord James Douglas-Hamilton used to like to tease me by pointing out similarities between Mrs Thatcher and me, including an appreciation of whisky. She was, like me, originally trained as a physical chemist. I have always been perplexed not only by her dislike of scientists once she got into power, but that she did not use a more scientific approach in politics and was such an avid proponent of assertion trumping evidence. Some people call that conviction politics, others the inability to accept that you might possibly sometimes be wrong, and others might describe it as a narcissistic personality disorder—if it is that, it is probably quite common among successful politicians. However it is described, it is very much at odds with scientific training.

Many words have been spoken about Mrs Thatcher's legacy. Those who journey up the A76 from Dumfries through Sanquhar and Kirkconnell into the former East Ayrshire coal-mining areas such as New Cumnock will see part of that legacy.

Communities had arisen because of the deep-mining industry; they were situated there because that is where the pits were, and those communities are still struggling to find an alternative economic role. Moreover, the housing waiting lists for councils or housing associations are the legacy of her housing policy, with dozens—in some areas, hundreds—of applicants waiting for properties in areas where the annual turnover is perhaps in single figures.

Because her Government and ministers inflicted the poll tax on Scotland a year ahead of the rest of the UK and because the manufacturing industries that their policies decimated were essential parts of many Scottish communities, Mrs Thatcher and her Government are often perceived as being particularly anti-Scottish. However, I think that that is a mistake.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Elaine Murray: I am sorry, but no. I am pushed for time.

I lived for all but the last two years of Mrs Thatcher's reign in the south of England and married a miner's son from the north of England who was the first person in his family ever to attend university and came from a community that is very similar to those on the A76 and which is still suffering from the same consequences. People up and down the UK, including in the south of England, were affected; trade unionists, north or south, were the enemy within; and manufacturing throughout the UK was abandoned in favour of financial and other service industries—and we all know where that brought us. Although I will never blame any tenant who bought their council house under the right to buy, the aversion to replacing those houses made social housing rarer and rarer and turned it into the housing of last resort rather than the mainstay of many communities and the first home for young people setting up on their own.

The perception that everyone in the south of England was well off and benefited from the Tory Government's actions in the 1980s at Scotland's expense was as untrue then as it is now. Sections of the population there were also affected by poverty, unemployment and poor housing. Entire communities might not have been written off in the manner that they were in the northern parts of the UK, but many individuals still suffered the same deprivations.

One of the most frequently used adjectives applied to Mrs Thatcher has been "divisive". However, that should be no surprise, given that division is fundamental to right-wing ideology. We cannot understand how Mrs Thatcher's Government operated if we fail to accept that it involved that old-fashioned concept—class. While

serving the interests of financiers and big business, her Government sought to appeal to the middle class and those who aspired to be middle class. Right-wing politics succeeds through division by saying to the majority that outsiders and the less deserving, whether they be working-class trade unionists in Mrs Thatcher's time, current recipients of welfare, the unemployed, single mothers and—as far as the UK Independence Party is concerned—foreigners, are somehow benefiting at their expense. We need only look at the right-wing press. We delude ourselves if we think that no one in Scotland is susceptible to those siren voices; I have certainly heard those views expressed on the doorsteps in my very own constituency.

Margo MacDonald: Surely as a scientist who understands the importance of proof the member cannot be suggesting that because he was a socialist Arthur Scargill was a healer and a consensus-maker. What she is talking about can happen on the left as well.

Elaine Murray: That is doubtless the case, but I am arguing that division is fundamental to right-wing ideology and that we need to understand that if we are to combat it.

Despite the many good things that happened to me during the 1980s, the most important of which was the birth of my children, I look back at that decade with a feeling of distaste. It epitomised greed, selfishness and a lack of social conscience. Those who had paraded their wealth in the faces of those who had not; the view was that anyone could succeed and that if someone did not it was their own fault.

Mrs Thatcher's political children in the present UK Government have embarked on a savage attack on the poor in Britain. Mr Cameron has said that she "saved Britain", but what did she save it from? From having a manufacturing base? From the scourge of available social housing? From the social chapter and the minimum wage? From having a social conscience? From being tolerant towards sexual diversity? From believing that poverty and unemployment are stains on society that reflect badly on us all? No, she did not save Britain.

15:44

Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): At the outset, I want to say that I believe that there is such a thing as society. As members will be aware, Margaret Thatcher was elected on 3 May 1979; 18 days later happened to be the day of my birth. I mention this not to demonstrate my comparative youthfulness but to suggest that if anyone could be described as a child of the Thatcher age, it is me. Of course, I use that term

very carefully; I am not a child of Thatcher, which I think has a rather different meaning.

Clearly, I was not immediately aware of her existence, but I became so. Growing up in Glasgow in the 1980s and 1990s, I was aware of a general disdain for her politics and those of her successors and I became aware that that was the view held by my own family.

My mother was a public sector worker at the time—she was a teacher in Drumchapel. She saw first hand the damage done to the confidence of young people in one of the poorest parts of Scotland. She also saw the attacks on teachers undermining the profession. I remember the teachers' strike of the mid-1980s. Although, I was probably not aware that it was a strike, I remember being taken to the rallies. The damaging effect of that undermining of the teaching profession was felt in Scottish society for a long time.

I also remember the concerns about the poll tax being discussed at home and in wider society. Clearly, I would not have understood its implications at the time, but it was an absolutely outrageous form of taxation and one that bore no relation to the ability to pay.

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): Does the member not agree that the community tax was a much fairer tax for people such as my mother, who was widowed when I was 19 and was living on an unsupplemented widow's pension? Before that tax was introduced, she was paying the same rates as a neighbouring family who had five incomes coming in.

Jamie Hepburn: I do not accept that the poll tax was a fair form of taxation. As was mentioned, it was defended on the basis that it was Scottish Tories who argued for its early implementation in Scotland. To argue that it was Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party, as represented by the Scottish rump, that demanded its early implementation is a poor form of defence.

I am also aware of Thatcher's negative impact on wider society. I represent a former mining area. I must be fair and acknowledge that the closures of the pits in my constituency were long ago and pre-dated Margaret Thatcher's Government. However, there is a clear sense of community in those former mining areas. That sense of community—which is strong in my constituency—is a vital component of our sense of society. Not long ago, Clare Adamson secured a debate on the steelworkers' memorial fund, and the strong sense of community in those former steel working areas was made clear in that debate.

The deindustrialisation process of the Thatcher Government gave no thought to that sense of community. Undoubtedly, the nationalised industries needed reform—they were centralised

and allowed the industrial conflict that has been mentioned to take place. I suggest, though, that they needed to be reformed, not killed off. I do not always agree with James Kelly, but I absolutely agreed with his point that the industries were being closed when no alternative forms of employment were being created in those same communities. That process, although it is wholly consistent with Margaret Thatcher's unseen hand approach to the economy, could be described as not being consistent with a view that there is no such a thing as a society.

Let me turn to Margaret Thatcher's quote that is the subject of the debate. As has been mentioned, she remarked to *Woman's Own*:

"there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families."

Clearly, there are individual men, women and families. There are also neighbours, friends, work colleagues and clubs and organisations that bring together like-minded people, which was a point made by Gordon MacDonald. There are communities in villages, towns and cities across our country. There is such a thing as society.

What type of society should we seek here in Scotland? That was an issue mentioned by the Minister for Local Government and Planning. I believe in a society in which access to education for our pupils is based on their ability to learn, not pay; in which the 600,000 people in Scotland who earn under £16,000 a year who used to have to pay for their medication no longer have to worry about doing so; and in which single parents who have their children at the weekend are not financially penalised by a bedroom tax. I believe in a Scottish society that is underpinned by cohesion and solidarity and in which the markets are servants of people, not their masters. I believe in a Scotland where we need not suffer a Government that hammers our people and that we did not elect. I believe that there is still such a thing as society.

15:49

John Lamont (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): To paraphrase John Donne, any man's or woman's death diminishes us. It diminishes us because we are all involved in mankind. When the death is that of a woman as towering in stature as Margaret Thatcher, the loss to many, as well as to society, is all the greater.

The loss to our society with the death of Margaret Thatcher is pertinent to us in the chamber today as the debate asks us to consider whether there is such a thing as society. As we have heard, Margaret Thatcher had a lot to say about society. We have already heard that she apparently declared that there was "no such

thing". However, her point was more nuanced than the soundbite would suggest. Her point was that there is such a thing as society; it is just not the same as the state.

Margaret Thatcher believed in a strong society. She believed in a great Britain and she was convinced that that required strong individuals—self-reliant citizens who wanted to get on in life, who did not want the state to interfere with their projects and who did not want to have to fill out a form for Government approval to own a telephone.

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

John Lamont: I will give way later, but I want to make some progress if I may.

The state was of course rightly there for those who were less fortunate, but those who could get on with their lives were expected to do just that. There was no entitlement without first an obligation.

We have already heard old myths peddled and Margaret Thatcher's society demonised by those who frankly ought to know better. What kind of society was it in reality? It was a society in which the state gave back to the people power over their own lives and livelihoods and over the decisions that mattered most to them and their family, from which school was right for their children to which doctor they wanted to look after their health. It was a society in which government was by democratically elected representatives, not by the consent of unelected trade unionists. It was a society in which our Government's right-to-buy initiative spread the benefit of home ownership to nearly half a million Scottish families.

Margo MacDonald: It is important to make this point. Much of what has been said about Mrs Thatcher's legacy in housing is true. I was the director of Shelter when the policies were introduced. However, she did not realise that she was trapping some people, such as in East and South Ayrshire. People were trapped because they did not have houses that they could go to. Even if they managed to go to houses, there was no job there for them.

John Lamont: One of the great myths about Mrs Thatcher's premiership is that she did not build social housing. Official Government figures show that, during her premiership, on average 5,316 new social houses were built each year. Compare that to what Labour and the Liberals achieved, which was fewer than 4,000 each year, and what the SNP has been able to achieve, which is fewer than 5,000 each year. Mrs Thatcher has a very proud record not just in giving people the right to own their own house.

Margaret Thatcher's society was one in which more people than ever before also owned a stake in the company for which they worked. The number of people who owned shares nearly quadrupled from 3 million to more than 11 million.

Margaret Thatcher's society was a more prosperous one, too. Between 1979 and 1990, the Scottish economy grew at an average rate of 2.5 per cent. GDP per capita increased by more than 150 per cent and the disposable incomes of hard-working Scots more than doubled as a result of her policies. Indeed, all levels of income in all income groups increased under her Conservative Government.

It was a society in which workers got to keep more of what they earned, with the basic rate of income tax falling from 33 to 25 per cent and the personal allowance increasing by nearly £1,000.

It was a more enterprising society, too. Service sector employment grew by 147,000 jobs between 1983 and 1990 and the number of companies registered in Scotland increased by 62 per cent during the 1980s.

Scots not only had more freedom, more choice, more prosperity and more wealth under Margaret Thatcher's Government; they also produced more than ever before. Far from there being a decline in manufacturing, under Margaret Thatcher's premiership it boomed. As we have already heard from Ruth Davidson, Scotland's manufactured exports increased by 26 per cent in real terms over that decade. By 1990, Scotland was exporting more goods than even Japan—that is a fact.

When Margaret Thatcher left office in November 1990, that was the society that she left. That was the Scotland that she had created and it is a Scotland of which we can rightly be proud.

Of course, the process of change was painful at times—I do not deny that—but profound and far-reaching reform is rarely accomplished without pain. Margaret Thatcher had the courage of her convictions to revolutionise our country and our society, and there was a new prosperity in Scotland as a result when she left office. Indeed, her politics have endured far beyond her premiership, and we continue to live in a society that has in many respects been shaped by her legacy. We are all the better for that. We have heard much rhetoric from other members, but surely they would not want to return to 1970s socialism and the sickness that we all had to deal with then.

Margaret Thatcher was a revolutionary Prime Minister who smashed the class as well as the glass ceiling. She taught people like me who grew up under her premiership that it does not matter what they are or where they come from; life is

really about who they want to become and where they are going.

Margaret Thatcher changed the face of our country and the face of our politics as we knew them. She found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble.

15:55

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): Not surprisingly, my speech will be somewhat different from John Lamont's.

I am pleased that the debate was moved from the day of Margaret Thatcher's funeral, because I think that, if it had taken place then, the emphasis would have been not on what we said but on why we were having the debate on that day. I want us to consider what we are saying.

What does the word "society" mean? The definition in the "Oxford English Dictionary" is:

"the community of people living in a particular country or region and having shared customs, laws and organizations".

I thank Joan McAlpine for her earlier exposé of Margaret Thatcher's political philosophy. Mrs Thatcher always lauded her political philosophy as being the result of an ordinary upbringing living above the grocer's shop. In my book, that is challengeable. I come from a council estate and a family with five children, and she was distinctly middle class to me. She thrived on division—she was pleased to be divisive—and that self-reliance, for want of a better word, translated, whether or not she knew it at the time, into a culture of selfishness and greed. In the end, by her ruthless destruction of manufacturing and the communities that had grown up around it, as Elaine Murray said, she almost destroyed the communities themselves. I say to Ruth Davidson that, if there was a tapestry, Mrs Thatcher set about ripping it to shreds.

The proposition that we should all be house-owning and share-owning citizens has sown the seeds of property inflation. It denuded councils of rented properties, bred a series of champagne Charlies who toasted their bonuses on the streets of London, and rewarded self, not society. The rich became richer and the poor became poorer, and poverty ghettos were created that remain to this day. I recall broadcast images of pinstriped and manicured traders juxtaposed with images of police horses charging their way through miners who were desperate to save their pits, not just for themselves, but for their neighbours and communities. Throughout Scotland, a slash-and-burn economic policy destroyed our manufacturing industries—our coal, steel and textile industries—

and all but destroyed the communities that serviced them.

There was no investment of precious North Sea oil revenues in modernisation in the same way that, in Germany, for example, there was investment. It is no wonder that in Newtongrange, Gorebridge and mining communities elsewhere in my constituency, Mrs Thatcher's death has not been met by the establishment's policed deference and a deal of hypocrisy but by celebrations. To be frank, splendid though the Scottish mining museum in Newtongrange is, the key word is "museum". We have far too many industrial museums. Despite Thatcherism's ravages of Scotland's manufacturing and the squandering of oil and gas revenues on the millions condemned to unemployment during Mrs Thatcher's reign—it was a reign—communities such as Newtongrange, Gorebridge and Galashiels remain as proud of their identity and defend their communities as never before.

Across Scotland, the injustice of the poll tax galvanised not just those who could not pay but those who could. The bedroom tax, which is a recasting of the poll tax, will do the same.

We cannot help ourselves in Scotland. We are a community—the community of Scotland and of our cities, towns, villages and streets. That is reflected in our mainstream political parties, despite our differences—and those differences are not always large. That is why our NHS remains our NHS and has closed its doors to privatisation; why our elderly have free personal care and concessionary bus passes; why people who are sick do not pay prescription charges; and why people do not pay to go to university. We pay tax so that we have a health service and universities not just for ourselves or our children or our grandchildren but for our neighbours near and far.

The irony of the better together campaign is that that is the opposite of the reality. How can Labour activists and politicians sit beside Tory activists and claim that they are better together? Indeed, how can they sit with the Liberals, who have provided a bouquet of fig-leaves for a Tory chancellor who is one of the many Westminster Cabinet millionaires? Of those who can attend the coalition Cabinet meeting, 23 out of 29 are millionaires, yet we are grandly told by these people what is good for us and for the benefits system. They are not one of us. The coalition sets the deserving poor against the undeserving poor. Live on £53 a week? That will be cold baked beans all round, breakfast, noon and night.

Give me the people of Newtongrange, Gorebridge, Gala, Peebles, Melrose, Walkerburn, Innerleithen, Broughton, Auchendinny and all any day. They know the meaning of community. Give me an independent Scotland and with it a Labour

Party—and even a Liberal party—that is at last free to practise what it preaches.

16:01

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): I would like to start by repeating the condolences that I expressed last Monday to Margaret Thatcher's family and to all who loved her. I always think that it is important in politics to oppose and attack ideas, policies and, if necessary, ideologies but not individuals. That is why I regret some of the responses to the death of Margaret Thatcher.

Over the past few days, the article that has most impressed me was Tony Benn's piece in last Tuesday's edition of *The Guardian*. In that article, Tony Benn of course attacked quite a lot of what Mrs Thatcher did, but he finished by saying that it is important that we show respect. He told the story of how at Eric Heffer's funeral—as members may recall, Eric Heffer had been a hard-left MP—Mrs Thatcher came up to him and, Tony Benn says, she was in tears. She was showing respect to someone whose views she profoundly disagreed with.

People will take different views about the role of individuals and of social forces within history—over the past few days, many historians have tended to emphasise the latter—but, whichever way we look at it, 1979 was a decisive year in the history of the 20th century because it was the year in which the post-war consensus was broken. Viewed from the perspective of 2013, it is interesting that 1979 is now 34 years ago, and 34 years before that was the election of a Labour Government and of a Prime Minister whom, with all due respect to Conservative colleagues, I regard as the greatest peacetime Prime Minister of the 20th century. His Government established a post-war consensus that was broken in 1979.

In a sense, that was what brought me into party politics. Although I had been interested in politics in the broad sense throughout the 1960s and 1970s, it was only after the election of Margaret Thatcher that I joined the Labour Party. With that divergence of views in 1979, there was a sense in which one had to take sides in that fundamental argument. The two issues that first brought me in were the state of the economy in the early years of the Thatcher Government and the issue of nuclear weapons.

It is still worth looking at the economic record of the Thatcher Government. I thought at the time, and still think today, that the obsession with monetarist policy, particularly in the early years of her Government, was very odd. Younger members will not recall this, but there was an obsession with what was called M3. There was an attempt to

target the money supply and, if that was wrong, the Government had to put up interest rates. Of course, if interest rates went up, the exchange rate went up and industry was slaughtered as a result. To me, it was strange that there was such an obsession with monetarism and with the public sector borrowing requirement, which resulted in big cuts to public expenditure.

If we look at the economic record of the Conservatives for that whole decade, as the figures that have been quoted today show, we see that growth was 2.4 per cent per year, which—guess what—is exactly the same as the figure for what the Conservatives would describe as the disastrous 1970s. There were lots of problems in the 1970s and I accept that those had to be dealt with, but that is an important comparison.

Liz Smith: I congratulate Malcolm Chisholm on making what I think is a very eloquent speech. One reason behind the change from Keynesian to monetarist economics was to try to stimulate the supply side, which had suffered very badly in the 1970s. Does he acknowledge that Mrs Thatcher tried to address that concern?

Malcolm Chisholm: I am sure that Mrs Thatcher tried to address that, but the growth figures went down further in the early 1990s as well. I do not think that the record justifies her policy, but I accept that she was trying to do that. No doubt, others would say that she was trying to increase the profits of those who owned industries as well.

The other two great institutions that Margaret Thatcher attacked—they were not the only two, but my time is running out fast—were local government and the trade unions. Members will certainly say that something had to be done about the powers of the trade unions, but surely nobody can justify the behaviour of the Conservative Government of the time in relation to the miners. One of the worst things that Mrs Thatcher said at the time was that the miners were “the enemy within”. That contrasts significantly to what her predecessor, Harold Macmillan, then Lord Stockton, said in the House of Lords in 1984 at the age of 90. He said that the miners were

“the best men in the world.”

For me, that encapsulates the difference between Mrs Thatcher and the old one-nation Conservatives of the post-war consensus.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Malcolm Chisholm: I have not got time to give way, I am afraid. I might have, but I do not think that I do.

I also want to mention the attack on local government. It is ironic that, historically, Conservatives have often criticised the idea of a

centralised state yet, through the controls on local government, culminating in the poll tax, they created the most centralised state in western Europe.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member take an intervention?

Malcolm Chisholm: I do not think that I have time to take an intervention, because I want to finish—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): No, you do not. You are now in your last minute.

Malcolm Chisholm: I will take a very brief one.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Oh, well.

Margo MacDonald: Arthur Scargill was the leader of the miners only because Mick McGahey, who would not have led the same strike, was diddled out of the leadership. Diddling went on on both sides.

Malcolm Chisholm: I have no time to comment on that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have 45 seconds.

Malcolm Chisholm: I will end with two ironies. Margaret Thatcher famously inspired a generation of Eurosceptics, which may be one of the main reasons why she fell, yet she was the Prime Minister who signed the Single European Act, which Conservatives now rail against, and who took the Conservatives into the exchange rate mechanism, the precursor of the euro. Ironically, it was leaving the exchange rate mechanism that destroyed the Conservatives' reputation—such as it was—for economic competence and led to a Labour Government.

The final irony, which has been mentioned by several members here as well as in the past few days, is that Margaret Thatcher was one of the principal architects of the Scottish Parliament. It is no wonder, therefore, that Andrew Rawnley, writing in *The Observer* on Sunday, said that she was not just the "Iron Lady" but the "Iron Lady".

16:07

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP): I, too, grew up during the Margaret Thatcher era. I was born in 1980, one year after Jamie Hepburn and two years after the leader of the Scottish Conservatives—a point of mathematics that makes me think that she might want to check how old she actually was when the Berlin wall came down. I am sure that she was not 10—I think that she will find that it was her 11th birthday rather than her 10th birthday.

Mr Lamont's point that we surely would not want to go back to what life was like before Thatcher

brought to mind the book "Animal Farm" by George Orwell, in which the animals are constantly told by the pigs that, although things might be bad right now, they would not want Farmer Jones back and to go back to the way that it was before. The idea is that things might be bad now, but they were a whole lot worse before. John Lamont also told us about the Conservative Party's bid to tackle the culture of entitlement. When I am being lectured on the culture of entitlement, I always think of those silver-spoon inherited millionaires in the Tory Cabinet.

A number of Conservative members mentioned the quote on which the debate is founded and said that Margaret Thatcher's comments were about individuals' reliance on the state for support. Why she did not just say that, instead of saying that there is no such thing as society, only she would have known. However, people can often require the support of the state as a result of the policies of the state. When the state's economic policies have led to individuals becoming unemployed and, as a consequence of that unemployment, losing the roof over their head, it is perfectly acceptable for those people to feel that the state has some duty to house them.

The notion that the state has a role—nay, a duty—to provide support is absolutely one of the bedrocks. The state's duty to protect its citizens extends beyond defence of the realm and is as much about social and economic policy as it is about defence policy. Nobody is born into our society owing it a thing, and we should never think that that is the case; however, it does not mean that the state does not have duties towards people even if they have not yet made any contribution to society.

I take a different view on the right to buy from that articulated by some members. I consider that the right to buy was absolutely the wrong policy, not just because its mechanics did not allow for the replacement of the social housing that was sold off but because, by its creation, it established a stigma around the concept of home ownership, rental and social housing in general—a stigma that persists to this day.

Although the Scottish Government has taken the not only welcome but necessary step of ending the right to buy, that stigma around home ownership and rental is being entrenched as a result of the introduction of the vile bedroom tax by the Government south of the border. I accept that the bedroom tax applies not only to those in housing association or council homes but to those in the private rented sector, but we should accept that the measure is part of the overall stigmatisation of those who do not own their home because of their personal economic circumstances or simply because they choose not to do so. We

should never forget that choosing not to own a property is a valid choice.

One consequence of the bedroom tax has been highlighted in my area of Aberdeen by a constituent, Tracy Mahoney, who came to me following the publicising of her case. She has a son who is autistic and who requires his own bedroom because his sleeping patterns are disrupted. He and his brother need to have separate bedrooms so that they can both get a good night's sleep and so that their lives can have some form of normality. Tracy has been affected by the bedroom tax and the policies that the Government down south is pursuing. That flies very much in the face of the notion of the state supporting individuals and ensuring that those who require help receive it.

The debate is on the concept that there is such a thing as society. Therefore, having done a little deconstruction of some of the Thatcherite myths that are often perpetuated, I will end on an uplifting note that I think underlines the fact that, here in Scotland, we have a strong society. I will tell the story of a little boy in Aberdeen called Baxter Dick, who is 18 months old and who has spina bifida and hydrocephalus. He requires a buggy with supportive seating to help with his positioning, but it costs about £3,000, which his parents cannot pay. They have therefore taken a novel approach and set up a website called "Baxter Needs A Buggy!", which they highlighted through Facebook and their friends and family.

So far, 134 people have contributed through the website to raise the £3,000 necessary to buy Baxter his buggy and ensure that he can get around and enjoy the most fulfilling life. His mother made it clear when she spoke to the Aberdeen *Evening Express* that she and Baxter's father could not have done that without the help of other people, some of whom did not even know them and who had no connection to them whatsoever. To me, that is what society is about—it is about individuals looking out for one another.

Mary Scanlon: That is exactly what Mrs Thatcher said.

Mark McDonald: No—it is about individuals looking out for one another, not for themselves. That is what society is; it is not what Mrs Thatcher said in her interview.

16:13

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): George Osborne was not the only man to shed a tear yesterday. It was certainly an emotional day for me, too, as we have lost Margaret Thatcher, the woman whom I would without hesitation describe as the greatest peacetime Prime Minister that this country has ever seen. I was not old

enough to vote for her in 1979—I missed it by a couple of months. I was close to my 18th birthday but had not quite made it. However, that meant that I was old enough to have lived all the way through the 1970s, so I know what happened to Britain and Scotland in those years.

Last week, I read with interest a piece by left-wing commentator Gerry Hassan in which he talked about the memory of Thatcher in Scotland and coined the phrase "Scotland's collective false memory syndrome". During the debate, we have seen Scotland's collective false memory syndrome wheeled out on a large scale.

What Margaret Thatcher proposed was that people should take responsibility for themselves. She knew that not everyone was able to do that. She was a firm supporter of the welfare state and the national health service, but she did not think that those facilities were put in place so that everyone could simply choose to give up their responsibilities and take advantage of those facilities.

Margaret Thatcher expected people to go out and do their best to create wealth, and then to pay tax, to pay for public services. That is how a country works. It always amazes me that in Scotland today far too many people want to talk about how we redistribute wealth without realising that it might be useful if we created a bit of wealth at the same time.

Derek Mackay: Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Johnstone: No, I will not take an intervention.

I will talk about the few years before Margaret Thatcher was elected, because it cannot be anything other than the case that she was a product of her time. I will not blame the Labour Party for everything, because I have to say that, in the 1970s, the Conservatives were at least as guilty. At the start of the 1970s, there was a Conservative Government that seemed just as determined to nationalise everything and close down the means of production. It made the grave error of backing down before the trade unions—something that the Labour Party went on to do on a huge scale. The failure of industrial relations in the 1970s set us apart from our colleagues in Germany, for example, where people managed to get through the period without having the problems that we had.

The lowest point of the 1970s—the deepest trough—came without a doubt in 1976, when a morally bankrupt Labour Government went on to become a fiscally bankrupt Labour Government. The Labour chancellor had to go to the International Monetary Fund and beg for money to bail out the Government. The newly appointed

Opposition leader, a young Margaret Thatcher, took the opportunity to make the point that the problem with socialism is that, eventually, socialists run out of other people's money. That was the problem that she had to address.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Johnstone: No, thank you.

So many accusations are levelled at Margaret Thatcher. The key accusation is that she somehow shut down Scotland's industry. That is simply not the case. I will return to industrial relations to explain why that was very much not her responsibility.

During the 1980s, change was necessary. It had become necessary because of what had happened in the previous decade. For people who rose to the challenge, there were opportunities. Let us never forget that it was not the whole mining industry that challenged Margaret Thatcher in 1984; it was Arthur Scargill's National Union of Mineworkers that did so—and perhaps it was more Arthur Scargill than the NUM. The Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire coalfields worked on—they negotiated with the Government of the day and were rewarded for the hard work that they put in.

Derek Mackay: Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Johnstone: No, thank you.

In fact, the closure of Scotland's mines, which had become an economic necessity, was only the end of a process that the Labour Party began in government in 1964. It is ironic that Margaret Thatcher has been blamed today for a series of events that started as early as 1964 and did not finish until 2008. That collective false memory syndrome is coming back into play.

There is the accusation about Ravenscraig. During the 1980s, British Steel was a nationalised industry, and the Conservative Government decided to reinvest in the steel industry. The target for reinvestment was steel plants throughout the United Kingdom and, at the end of the process, Britain's steel industry was better than it had ever been. However, the determination of Scottish Conservative politicians to ensure that Ravenscraig was included in the investment was unfortunately undermined by the same old problem of industrial relations.

It is important that we remember what Margaret Thatcher contributed to this country. Scotland's culture of collective false memory syndrome does it no justice whatever.

16:19

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): An old Chinese proverb says that, if someone gets to the end of their life without having made an enemy, they have not lived. Margaret Thatcher lived.

That being said, I associate myself with the condolences to Margaret Thatcher's family and friends. As a humanitarian to whom all life is precious, I take no pleasure in her passing. However, I will celebrate and take pleasure on the day that my nation is raised from the shadow of Thatcherism by becoming independent and able to elect a Government that reflects my nation's values and my society's values of egalitarianism and social justice.

I am a child of Thatcher's era. When I reflect on growing up in Lanarkshire, it is the slogans of the time that still resonate with me. The first political slogan that I was aware of was, "Thatcher Thatcher, milk snatcher." It was dispiriting to learn the meaning of the word "scab", as my immediate society at that time was made up of my friends and my comrades in the community, and when I sat in classes with compatriots whose fathers were miners, steelworkers and policemen, our friendship and camaraderie were strained by the knowledge that picket lines outside Ravenscraig were battle zones, where workers were pitted against one another and against the police. That is when I began to ask myself, "Is this the society that I want?"

I was also aware of the playground banter and of the phrase, "Gizza job," which was on the lips of many of my friends. There has been much comment about the country's response to Thatcherism. My conviction is that our writers and artists hold the social conscience of our nation in the way that—as Alison McInnes has said—Alan Bleasdale's "Boys from the Blackstuff" did. I vividly remember Bernard Hill's portrayal of a man driven to the edge by poverty and unemployment. "Brassed Off" represented the plight of former mining communities in a similar manner.

Alison McInnes referred to Mrs Thatcher being a scientist. The editorial in this month's *New Scientist* gives a not-too-favourable view of what she did for science. It says:

"Thatcher's hard-nosed policies on privatisation and manufacturing led to a dramatic reduction in research activity in the UK ... In general, however, Thatcher's policies were driven by free-market ideology, not science. Spending on R&D has never fully recovered; meaningful action on climate change was long deferred."

Another slogan of the time was, "Can't pay, won't pay." That was a cry from Scotland that fell on deaf ears. It took riots in London to reverse the perverse and socially unfair poll tax, which had been imposed on the Scottish people.

I respect the view of people who have said that Margaret Thatcher put the great in Great Britain. However, for me, she is the person who put the con in Conservative. She perpetrated the con of selling the assets of our country back to the people who already owned them. The selling-off of our utilities has created crippling fuel poverty.

If I am ever going to quote the *Daily Mail* in the chamber, today is the day to do it. In 2012, Alex Brummer said in that paper that

“with so much of our vital utility companies in foreign hands, we are now at the mercy of conglomerates that could bring Britain Plc to a shuddering halt.”

In an article in *Utility Week* entitled, “Does it matter who owns the UK’s utilities?”, Roger Barnard, a barrister who was head of regulatory law at EDF Energy, says:

“We urgently need a robust process with more appropriate assessment criteria for ensuring that any government is able to safeguard the nation’s energy security interests against the potential for political intervention under a commercial guise”.

If we were to call Sid today, we would need an international dialling code.

Ruth Davidson: Will the member give way?

Clare Adamson: No, I do not have time.

Much has been made of the supposed success of the right-to-buy policy, which, again, sold what was already ours. Shamefully—and unforgivably—it broke the social housing contract in doing so. By preventing the revenue from council house sales from being reinvested, it led to the housing crisis today, to which the new Thatcherite solution is the pernicious bedroom tax. Despite the opportunity that Labour had, it took an SNP cabinet secretary, Nicola Sturgeon, to reforge that social contract when she exempted new-build housing from the right to buy.

Thatcherism brought me to my belief that the only protection from Thatcherite right-wing ideology is an independent Scotland. I despair that Labour reversed none of the anti-trade union laws imposed by Thatcher in the six bills that were passed. I also regret that it sold what remained of our assets in the gold reserves at rock-bottom prices, at an estimated cost of £7 billion to the taxpayer.

I cannot laud any ideology when I measure its success against Gowkthrapple in Wishaw, in my constituency. Following the closure of Ravenscraig, Gowkthrapple had the highest male unemployment rate in Europe. Despite a period of Labour control at all levels of government, it remains one of the poorest places in Britain.

We have another choice in Scotland. We have the choice to reject right-wing Governments, whether they be Tory, Labour or UKIP, for a

choice of social justice and universal services. We have the opportunity to choose education over nuclear weapons. We have the opportunity that independence gives us.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): I call Margo MacDonald, who has up to two minutes.

16:26

Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I appreciate the gesture.

I wonder whether I can put something straight on Ravenscraig. The reason why Ravenscraig was closed, as opposed to the other three steel plants that might have been closed, was that the European Union changed the steel quotas, so it was very nice and tidy to get rid of one steel plant, and Scotland’s was the steel plant without representation in Europe. I was told that by Irish politicians who, at the time, managed to hold on to their teensy-weensy Irish industry, because they were in Europe and we were not. Even then, the consequence of not being independent was showing through.

It is wrong to pick up the housing issue simplistically. Although I was up to my neck, I could see why Mrs Thatcher wanted to do what she did. She wanted to make people feel more responsible, adventurous and so on. Had she allowed councils to use their receipts to rebuild what they needed to rebuild, we would all have been applauding her today. However, she was short-sighted, and she was like a mule when she could not see something herself.

On the mining communities, the minute that Arthur Scargill was elected president of the NUM, it was “Ta-ta” to mining. He was a dreadful leader: he took the miners out on strike when the coal stocks were high and the summer was coming in. Had Mick McGahey not been diddled out of the presidency when Joe Gormley stayed on for a few more weeks, which meant that Mick was age barred, I am sure that there would not have been the strike that there was and that it would have been an entirely different story.

There are a lot of myths about Mrs Thatcher. She certainly brought about a social revolution in which some people became more adventurous and creative; some people became obscenely rich. However, my objection to Mrs Thatcher is that she divided society between those who have and those who have not. The Labour Party has done very little to correct that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now move to the closing speeches.

16:28

Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con): I begin by placing on record my gratitude for the attendance of the Presiding Officer and the First Minister at the funeral of Lady Thatcher in St Paul's cathedral yesterday afternoon. I was also charmed to see that Jim Murphy and other senior figures from Scottish Labour were at the funeral to commemorate Lady Thatcher and to pay their respects.

This afternoon's debate has included two types of contribution. Some I regard as being the typical polemic that I expected from opponents whom I do not expect to convince otherwise this afternoon. There were some really heartfelt and sincere speeches in opposition to the record of Margaret Thatcher. I do not agree with that opposition, but I respect it and understand what underpinned it and I respect the ways in which those expressions were given.

I was, 13 years ago, sitting on a beach in the north of Majorca on holiday, in one of those little huts. I was at a hotel at which one was allocated one's space for the week. A gentleman arrived at the hotel, and they thought they had better find him someone who was interested in politics to sit beside. I was reading a biography of Margaret Thatcher at the time. The gentleman came up to me immediately and we continued to speak for the rest of the week. That man was Mikhail Gorbachev. He said, "I want you to know that Margaret Thatcher, together with me and Ronald Reagan, was equally responsible for the great changes that came about in Europe. Those changes came about as a result of the efforts that we made. Each one of us was responsible for that, and don't let anybody ever tell you otherwise." So, yes—there is such a thing as society. It is free and at peace in countries across the whole of eastern Europe that were previously part of the Soviet bloc.

I say to the mover of the motion, Mr Harvie, that he owes everything to Margaret Thatcher, because it was Margaret Thatcher who was the first statesman of any international repute to put climate change on the agenda. I often wonder whether there is any unforeseen consequence of Margaret Thatcher's time in office that I regret, and I think of Mr Harvie.

What was this land of milk and honey that people talk about prior to Margaret Thatcher? Was it the one where Governments routinely gave in to terrorism and negotiated with terrorists?

Patrick Harvie: Will Jackson Carlaw give way?

Jackson Carlaw: No. The Thatcherite in my spine tells me not to give way in the short time that I have.

Was it the land where Governments frequently surrendered to terrorism? Mrs Thatcher took a different approach during the 1981 embassy siege in London, which became the example around the world. If there are societies at peace today in Northern Ireland, it is because the IRA came to understand that it could not bomb its way to its objectives, but had to renounce violence and seek what it wanted through peaceful means. That allowed John Major and then Tony Blair to achieve their subsequent success.

Was it this great society where there was a stampede for industrial candles and small camping stoves to allow us to see and eat during the three-day week of 1974? Was it the land where the Labour Party of all parties, the only party in the history of this country to do so, cut nurses' pay—it did not just peg it; it cut it—in 1976? Was it the land where 29 million days were lost through industrial disputes, but where, by the time Mrs Thatcher left office, the number had declined to just 1 million days? Was it the land where there was a two-year wait for a telephone and where one had to apply for one? Was it the country where the Government owned Pickfords the removal company and the Gleneagles, Turnberry and Glasgow Central hotels?

By the end of the 1970s, Britain was at the end of the road. As one former Prime Minister put it:

"The rest of the world is very sorry, but the rest of the world regrets it is unable to oblige any longer",

so Margaret Thatcher was elected.

As Tony Blair subsequently said,

"To decide is to divide,"

and on so many of the big issues, Mrs Thatcher realised that Britain needed to take decisions. They were divisive because there was no consensus as to how we should go forward. Somebody had to act; she acted and I believe that the country is the better for it.

More homes are now owned in Scotland and more social houses were built by Margaret Thatcher—64,000—than in the entire period subsequent to that, almost. There were more share owners, more cars—giving people personal mobility—and more people in further education. Here in Scotland, in each of the three elections that Margaret Thatcher fought, she fought the SNP into a cocked hat. She returned more members of the Conservative Party in Scotland by a ratio of 10:1 than there were SNP members.

The Labour Party mounted a greater defence, but let us just check the record, because in each of the elections that Margaret Thatcher fought as leader, the share of the vote that the Labour Party obtained in Scotland was less than the share of the vote that Margaret Thatcher obtained

throughout the rest of the United Kingdom in total. Yes, there was a coalition against Margaret Thatcher, but there was no coalition in Scotland in favour of any other political party, so she was able to proceed and to change things in Scotland—I believe for the better.

I knew Margaret Thatcher; it was the great privilege of my life. I met and talked to her maybe only 100 times—clearly I know less about her than the many members who have spoken who never met her at all. I admired her courage. I was at Brighton in front of the Grand hotel when it was bombed—when the bomb went off in the bedroom of my friends Donald and Muriel Maclean. Muriel Maclean died a month later from the injuries that she received. I remember Mrs Thatcher's resolution the next day when she stood and spoke for the country in the face of that tyranny and terrorism.

I admired Margaret Thatcher's conviction and, contrary to what Elaine Murray said, Margaret Thatcher began every argument that I ever had with her by saying, "Now, Jackson, what are the facts?" It was the facts on which she wanted to argue, and by God you had to know them.

Derek Mackay: Will Jackson Carlaw take an intervention?

Jackson Carlaw: I will not, on this occasion.

I admired her tenacity, I admired her truth and integrity and I admired her sheer capacity for leadership. I have to say that the equal of that has yet to be found in this devolved Parliament in all the years that it has been here so far.

Margaret Thatcher taught me that one should stand up for one's beliefs and not follow the crowd, and that one should not necessarily court popularity—if you believe something, you stand up and fight for it. I believe that Margaret Thatcher was good for Scotland, for the United Kingdom and for the world. Until my dying day in politics, I will stand up and defend the record of Margaret Thatcher, and the lady herself.

16:35

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): This has been a good debate, which has on the whole presented a more accurate view of Margaret Thatcher's legacy in the UK than has been presented elsewhere, including in parts of the press. I cannot help but admire some of the personal attributes of Mrs Thatcher that Mr Carlaw mentioned, but I will concentrate more on the political impact of her legacy.

I was born when Thatcherism was at its peak. The impact of the 1984-85 miners' strike was felt across the UK. Despair was rife throughout once thriving industrial communities, many of which

would become derelict wastelands within 10 years. Coming from an area that is steeped in mining tradition, I know the impact that Thatcherism had on hard-working men and women. An article that I read in *The Guardian* earlier in the week about one miner's struggle brought back memories of the tales that are told so often in places such as Croy Miners Welfare Charitable Society. That miner said of the Thatcher Government's policies at the time:

"She said we were the enemy within. We weren't. We were just looking after our lives, our families, our kids and our properties, everything that we ever had."

From the start, the self-centred, individualistic nature of Thatcherism did not play well in industrial towns in Scotland or in much of England and Wales, and it ultimately led to a less equal and more conflict-ridden Britain.

Derek Mackay: We all understand the expression of Thatcherism and conservatism around wealth creation, but over that period starting in 1979 and through the 1980s, inequality increased, unemployment spiked to record levels, child poverty increased, pensioner poverty increased and income inequality rose. That is the reality of Thatcherism's wealth creation, right across these islands.

Mark Griffin: I am not arguing with that. That is why I am proud of the Labour Government, which introduced the minimum wage when it came into power and helped to reduce that income inequality.

It quickly became clear that the Thatcher Government was intent on destroying trade unions. Believing that they had brought down the Governments of Ted Heath and James Callaghan, Margaret Thatcher was ultimately victorious in curbing union power, and she used her victory to follow an unrelenting path that would lead to the destruction of our manufacturing and heavy industries in favour of financial sector and service sector growth, as was pointed out by Ruth Davidson. The result of that was that the rich got richer and working-class men and women in Scotland, in Yorkshire, in the north-east, in Wales and beyond were forced into poverty and hardship.

As a Lanarkshire MSP, it would be remiss of me not to talk about Ravenscraig and the ripping apart of Scotland's steel industry. Only now, 20 years after the policies of Thatcherism brought it down, are moves being made to redevelop the site. At one time home to 13,000 workers and taking on hundreds of apprentices a year, Ravenscraig closed in 1992. Similarly, with the closure of Gartcosh in 1986, the impact was felt not just by the workers at the plants who lost their jobs, but by the tens of thousands of other workers from

elsewhere in Scotland who supplied materials to the plants and who lost their jobs, too.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Mark Griffin: I am sorry, but I am struggling for time.

The fall-out from those closures dealt a blow to Lanarkshire towns that had the heart and soul ripped out of them and would struggle to recover. For those who were forced from Ravenscraig, from Gartcosh, from shipyards in Glasgow, from car plants in Renfrewshire and from mines in Ayrshire, Fife and Lanarkshire—as well as people in the areas that Christine Grahame mentioned, in what I thought was an excellent speech, for the most part—what hope did Thatcherism give? This point has been made by James Kelly and Jamie Hepburn: Thatcherism gave no opportunities to those who lost their jobs with little chance of getting a new one. Many of them were blacklisted through their involvement in trade unions and were simply left on the dole. Apparently, that was a price worth paying.

By the late 1980s, not only had Scotland borne much of the hardship of Thatcher's ideological direction, but its people were set to endure further pain from the roll-out of the poll tax by Conservative MPs a year before its introduction in England and Wales. That added to the anger of Scots, and non-payment was widespread. The stubbornness of Margaret Thatcher on the poll tax, as on other issues, including Europe, ultimately led to her downfall. Unfortunately, it was not at the hands of the electorate but at the hands of her own colleagues.

Many have gone on record over the past few days to say that she saved Britain. The experience of people in my home town of Kilsyth and across Lanarkshire and Scotland counters that myth. She did not save the country; she almost destroyed it. She wrecked whole communities, ruined lives and polarized the very society that, as today's debate highlights, she did not believe existed.

My condolences go out to Margaret Thatcher's family, who have lost a mother and grandmother. However, in terms of today's debate, we do not need to remember the legacy of Thatcher or Thatcherism, because we still see its effects today. It lives on in David Cameron, George Osborne and Iain Duncan Smith. The horrors were felt—and are still being felt in some cases—in towns and villages across Scotland and the rest of the UK. When we look out over the barren landscapes that were once home to hundreds and thousands of workers, we will always remember the ever-present stain of the Thatcher Government on our society.

16:41

The Minister for Youth Employment (Angela Constance): I start by expressing my condolences to members of the Conservative Party, because at the end of the day Margaret Thatcher was a mother and grandmother and a colleague and friend to many on the Conservative side of the chamber. The passing of anyone is always a deeply difficult time.

It is of course heartening to hear from Jackson Carlaw that Mrs Thatcher was less interested in popularity and more interested in the issues. I will do my best to focus my contribution on the issues. However, I am not going to pretend to be unbiased.

Like James Kelly, I have the privilege of representing the constituency in which I grew up, so my contribution to the debate will be very much shaped by the fact that I grew up in West Lothian in the 1980s. All that I can say to Malcolm Chisholm is that I will mention the constitution at some point, because it was my experience in the 1980s that drove me to join the SNP—it was probably the single most important reason.

I have long been of the view that, in response to the social and economic strife of the 1980s, there arose an overwhelming need and desire to establish a Parliament—this Parliament—for Scotland and her people: a Parliament that could express a different concept of society; a Parliament and society that recognise that everyone makes a contribution and that therefore everyone should receive something in return. To put it another way, it is a something for something society, a concept that was so passionately articulated by Christine Grahame earlier.

This Parliament has, largely, used its powers progressively. This Scottish Government has sought to build on the good work of others and on previous progress, and to articulate, develop and entrench the social contract and, in particular, the social wage. Others have mentioned that the distinctive approach of this Parliament and—I believe—the distinctive aspirations of the people of Scotland are seen in policies such as free personal care for the elderly, no tuition fees for students and increasing hours for the early years, and the fact that 1.2 million older and disabled people receive concessionary travel and that everyone benefits from free prescriptions.

I believe that our society is aspiring to a building-up rather than a stripping-down of the progressive platform of social policy. However, that progressive platform is, of course, increasingly under threat. For example, our colleagues in the Labour Party are doing a bit of backsliding; the UK Government is undertaking practices that are in some ways reminiscent of the

1980s; and there is a mismatch, I believe, in outlook, values and priorities between Scotland and the UK Government.

There exists once again, as in the 1980s, a democratic deficit, and the most obvious topical example is the bedroom tax. Nine out of 10 Scottish MPs voted against it, and Dennis Canavan commented on television last night that he considers it to be as bad as, if not worse than, the poll tax. I have to ask whether this Parliament would have introduced the bedroom tax, and I feel that I can say with confidence that the answer is absolutely not.

Alison McInnes made a thoughtful speech. She spoke of the failure in the Thatcher years to lay down for the future and of the lost opportunities.

Hanzala Malik: Will the minister take an intervention?

Angela Constance: In a moment.

She is right, because income inequality has increased more quickly in the UK than in any other OECD country. Scotland is a resource-rich country, but we are a much poorer society than we could and should be.

Hanzala Malik: The minister mentioned the bedroom tax. The Scottish Government can change that and intervene to stop the Scottish community suffering from it. Why is it not taking steps to do so?

Angela Constance: Of course, welfare powers are reserved to the United Kingdom. I would have hoped that our colleagues in the Labour Party would join with the Scottish Government and others, and with the Scottish population, all of whom want welfare powers to be devolved to Scotland. I hope that the other side will recognise that we will act when we can mitigate the effects—for example, this Government has invested £40 million in relation to the cuts to council tax benefit. However, is the extent of our aspiration only to mitigate the bad decisions of a bad Government? Our aspirations and our ambition have to be far greater than that.

Alex Johnstone: Will the minister take an intervention?

Angela Constance: No, thank you. I do not want to be churlish or unkind, but I noticed that Mr Johnstone did not take any interventions.

We heard a lot of statistics from Mr Johnstone and indeed Mr Lamont. We will study those later at our leisure, but the statistics that they omitted and never once quoted are the statistics on unemployment and poverty.

Ruth Davidson: Will the minister take an intervention on that point?

Angela Constance: Not just now, because I am trying to develop a point.

The statistic that no one on the Conservative benches quoted is that, from 1979 to 1990, poverty in the UK rose from 13 to 22 per cent. That increase represents 5 million more people in poverty. The relative poverty rate in Scotland today is 15 per cent, which is of course far too high. Poverty is most certainly not inevitable. Derek Mackay was right to say in his opening speech that children are born unequal in Scotland, but we cannot let poverty be inevitable—and neither is unemployment inevitable.

My memories and view of the 1980s are scarred by unemployment because my father—

Ruth Davidson: Will the minister take an intervention?

Angela Constance: No. I am concluding.

My father—this is a personal point—was unemployed between 1982 and 1984, and that had a huge impact on my family. I am fortunate in the sense that I grew up in a loving, caring and stable family, but for me tackling unemployment is not just political—it is absolutely personal. We talk about the claimant count but, as we all now know, it underestimates the true unemployment rate. Nevertheless, the claimant count in Scotland peaked at 13 per cent in January 1987, which represented 334,000 Scots. The claimant count today is 4.9 per cent, which represents 136,000 Scots. That is still far too high.

As for youth unemployment, the claimant count, which I repeat underrepresents true unemployment, peaked at nearly 116,000 in 1985. The comparable figure today is 38,200. That is still too high, even though we can point to progress and the move in the right direction in the most recent youth unemployment figures.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should be drawing to a close, minister.

Angela Constance: My lesson from the 1980s is that we need the economic powers of any other normal, progressive, modern society to ensure that we are not blown off course with the good progress that we are making in tackling youth unemployment and other social issues.

16:50

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): This debate was meant to be a meaningful reflection on a political legacy and I hope that has been achieved. The tone that was set initially by Patrick Harvie, when he said that the debate was about ideas and not persons, was largely followed.

The ideas continue 20 years on and are regrettably very dominant, as has been said by a

number of people. There was a lot of talk in the debate about economic damage, not least to our mining and steel communities. Patrick Harvie also mentioned homophobic policies, which are perhaps one instance where there has been progress and some cross-party consensus and where we have moved on.

There were reflections on Pinochet versus Mandela. Who would want to associate with one and vilify the other? That is not a legacy that people would be proud of.

Patrick Harvie's speech was a critique of individualism. There was some dubiety about who was responsible for the imposition of the poll tax in Scotland and its timing, but to the Scottish population that is entirely academic. They felt the full effects of it, and that is what has mattered to them.

Privatisation of public assets has been mentioned by a number of members. Patrick Harvie referred to it as a transfer of wealth, which is an accurate reflection of what it was.

Ruth Davidson: It is worth recognising that Margaret Thatcher left office 23 years ago and since then there has been no significant push by anybody in any party to renationalise anything. Is that something that anybody, including John Finnie, would ask for?

John Finnie: Yes, I certainly would be fully in support of nationalising, which I will come to later. Take, for instance, energy supplies: rather than the public being served, international shareholders are being served with vile and obscene profits. I will come back to that.

Market fundamentalism—the price of everything and value of nothing—was touched on. Patrick Harvie talked about dependence on growth and the resource depletion, economic injustice and environmental crisis that that gives rise to. There was also mention of the £70 billion of North Sea oil reserves.

The reality is that successive London Governments have continued Thatcher's approach. The other day, the UK Prime Minister made the bizarre assertion that "we are all Thatcherites". I do not think that that phrase has much resonance in Scotland. We will have an opportunity to change that approach.

The next speaker in the debate was the Minister for Local Government and Planning, who touched on society, internationalism and equality. If I noted down correctly what he said, it was that we should "use the wealth to build a strong and fairer society."

I think that we would all agree with that. The references that I heard seemed to reflect Oxfam's humankind index.

Margo MacDonald intervened to encourage us all to think creatively, and thereafter the minister talked about Jimmy Reid. The debate would have been greatly enhanced had Mr Reid been here to contribute to it. Although he would share a lot of the views expressed, the present Government's policy on corporation tax, for instance, would not enjoy his support—nor does it enjoy mine.

James Kelly gave an excellent speech—one of the best that we heard today. It was very much from the heart. He spoke about the implications for his neighbours and friends and talked about desolate lives. Hanzala Malik and Malcolm Chisholm also touched on the implications for the steel community.

Thereafter, Ruth Davidson talked about the living tapestry. I do not know whether that tapestry was intended to include the mining villages or the steelworkers—Christine Grahame alluded to that. If there was a tapestry, it was ripped apart in many communities.

I warmed to the speech that Alison McInnes gave. Thereafter we had Joan McAlpine, very much speaking for herself and no other man or woman. It was an excellent critique, in which she used the phrase

"all shock and no therapy",

with which we can all readily identify.

A number of members, including Gordon MacDonald and Jamie Hepburn, spoke about communities, which clearly are societies. Elaine Murray made another excellent speech, in which she said that Mrs Thatcher believed that assertion trumped evidence. Certainly, Mrs Thatcher's strident style lent itself to that.

John Lamont talked about pain, which was a very gracious acknowledgement. Mark McDonald picked up on that point when he talked about the analogy of "Animal Farm" and the role of the state as being the bedrock in many instances. The story of Baxter Dick's buggy was important and salutary, because I would look for Baxter to be provided with a buggy by the state rather than by the generosity of others through social media.

In the time that is left I will touch on a number of areas in which the legacy lives on, one of which is the banking industry, where unregulated greed has led us to the crisis we are in at the moment and obscene private profit has seen us all become bank owners. We did not use to, but we own two banks now—not that small businesses would be aware of that, because there is still a reluctance to lend to them.

Recently, the UK Prime Minister referred to equality impact assessments as "nonsense" and he takes a similar approach to health and safety, which is another example of the legacy living on.

In the area of health and safety, reduced inspections, investigations and prosecutions can only make our workers and our workplaces more vulnerable.

There was a lot of discussion on housing and the sell-off of housing and Margo MacDonald's point about the receipts, which others picked up on, is very relevant. With 11,000 folk on the waiting list in Highland, the overcrowding of properties, the absence of sufficient three-bedroom properties and a significant dearth of one-bedroom properties have all been compounded by the bedroom tax. I am sure that Mrs Thatcher would have been very proud of the bedroom tax. I for one am delighted that that is being addressed by an increase in social housing.

Ruth Davidson talked about nationalisation. We have fuel poverty in the energy-rich country of Scotland and a 10-year inquiry into SSE, which has refused to accept blame for ripping off customers despite the fact that it was fined £10.5 million that has gone straight to the Treasury. That is an insignificant sum given the £1.3 billion profit that it has made. That was a racket that was revealed by the regulator, the Office of the Gas and Electricity Markets.

If we look at transport, the east coast service was being run very well by the state after two failed attempts by the private sector. After three years and £600 million in premiums and profits, the plan is to return it to the private sector that failed on two occasions. I should say that that was without any reference to Scotland's Minister for Transport and Veterans.

The greatest legacy of Mrs Thatcher's era is probably in welfare. Most of us believe that there is a requirement to assess need and then put in place mechanisms to meet that need. Those mechanisms—I welcome the discussions that we have had on universalism—include progressive taxation to meet those needs. That would clearly rule out the recent reduction in the top rate of income tax from 50p to 45p and it would also rule out cuts in corporation tax for multinationals.

Policing is another area in which we have a very clear assurance from the Cabinet Secretary for Justice in Scotland that there will be no privatisation. The police workforce terms and conditions have been protected. It is quite the reverse in England where we see a greater intrusion by the private sector into a very important public service, which is to be regretted.

We also have Virgin healthcare in the health service south of the border, where there will be an absence of public scrutiny because we will be told that it is a commercial and confidential deal. Similarly, the fact that Mid Staffordshire NHS

Foundation Trust was declared bankrupt this week shows that the legacy is very much alive.

I turn to the question of attitudes and, unusually, find myself quoting Boris Johnson who said:

“Thatcherism was not about exalting the rich and grinding the faces of the poor. It was the exact opposite.”

My assertion is that successive London Governments have serviced Britain's elites—the bankers, the public schools, the military and the arms dealers. There is an opportunity next year and, in the meantime, there is an opportunity for debate—as in Iceland—about a written constitution to enshrine and respect human rights, education and housing, and to ensure that our country is nuclear free and committed to no wars of aggression and that we have an elected head of state.

We all have a choice: the continuing mindless pursuit of self and wealth or the chance to prioritise the common good—because there is such a thing as society.

Decision Time

16:59

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): The final item of business is decision time. However, as there are no questions to be put as a result of today's business—[*Laughter.*—] I close this meeting of Parliament.

Meeting closed at 17:00.

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