



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 27 November 2013

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Scottish Parliament

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[The Deputy Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 14:00]

Portfolio Question Time

Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): Good afternoon, everyone. The first item of business is portfolio questions. If we are to get as many members in as possible, I would be grateful for short questions and succinct answers, please.

Employment (Christmas Temporary Contracts)

1. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to provide permanent employment opportunities for people who will be on temporary contracts during the Christmas period. (S4O-02622)

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): The Scottish Government is helping businesses to create jobs all year round, through capital investment in infrastructure development, public procurement, business and export support services, and training and skills programmes. Scotland also offers the most competitive business tax regime in the United Kingdom, which frees resources to enable businesses to create permanent jobs.

Rhoda Grant: People who are employed on short-term contracts over Christmas tend to be low paid and to have unsociable hours. When the Government gives grant funding to businesses, will it make it a condition of funding that employees and staff who are employed by subcontractors are paid the living wage, are not placed on zero-hours contracts and have reasonable employment conditions?

Fergus Ewing: As we have made clear on several occasions, the economic development agencies in Scotland, which deal with grant funding such as regional selective assistance, take account of such matters. In particular, zero-hours contracts are not consistent with successful grant funding through RSA, so I think that the matter has already been taken into account.

On employment over the festive period, it is reasonable to expect some companies to need, first, to ask staff to work longer hours to reflect the greater volume of work that requires to be done, and secondly, to take on temporary staff. In other

words, that is part of the market, and we recognise that. At the same time, we must ensure, as far as it is within this Parliament's powers to do so, that all employees are properly and fairly remunerated for said work.

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): In the context of good employment practice, will the minister say what further steps the Scottish Government is taking to address the unacceptable and illegal practice of blacklisting?

Fergus Ewing: We and, I think, all parties in the Parliament view blacklisting as a totally unacceptable practice. The practice has received a great deal of attention recently, which is fortunate. As Mr Eadie knows, under the current constitutional arrangements employment law is reserved to the UK Government. I am confident that any Government of an independent Scotland will deal with blacklisting in a way that is as effective as Mr Eadie and the vast majority of members would want it to be.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Has the minister seen the recent research that shows that workers who are employed on zero-hours contracts are the happiest with their work-life balance of any workers? Does he think that zero-hours contracts are bad in every case?

Fergus Ewing: The answer to Mr Fraser is no, I have not seen that research. When I read it, I will apply a considerable degree of sceptical forensic analysis thereto. It seems a dubious proposition that people on zero-hours contracts, who by their nature tend to be on low pay, should somehow be the happiest people on the planet. That seems to be a somewhat dubious proposition, even—if I may say so—for a Conservative.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Will the minister ensure that there is an anti-blacklisting provision in the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill, rather than just in guidance that is provided outwith the bill?

Fergus Ewing: I am a lawyer, but I think that it is important that we in the Parliament should not be legalistic. The objective that Mr Findlay wants to achieve is one that we all share, as our broad approach. Whether the matter is in the bill—

Neil Findlay: So that is a no.

Fergus Ewing: I am giving Mr Findlay the answer; if he wants to hear it, he should listen.

Whether such issues are dealt with through primary legislation, subordinate legislation or guidance is a matter of judgment in each case. In this case, it is a matter for the minister who is handling the legislation. Mr Findlay should rest assured that we are determined to tackle blacklisting and that we will take all appropriate steps to do so.

Independence (Economy)

2. Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the claim by the Institute for Fiscal Studies that an independent Scotland would face a fiscal gap of 1.9 per cent of national income. (S4O-02623)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): The Institute for Fiscal Studies analysis confirms that Scotland is in a stronger fiscal position than the United Kingdom. It also shows that Scotland is no different from any other developed country in facing long-term fiscal challenges. The UK as a whole is projected to be in deficit in every one of the next 50 years. However, the IFS projections assume that we will continue to be locked into a future of low growth, population decline and the UK Government's failed economic policies. Under independence, we will have control of the economic levers that are required to increase productivity and exports and put our public finances on a long-term, sustainable footing.

Elaine Murray: Assuming for the purposes of my question that policies such as reducing corporation tax would grow the economy in an independent Scotland, growth would not happen overnight. How does the cabinet secretary propose to fill the gap in the short term? Will that be done through increased taxation, increased borrowing or reduced public spending?

John Swinney: There are two refreshing points to make about Dr Murray's question. The first is that she is engaging in the discussion about the possibilities that will arise when we have the powers of independence in Parliament. I welcome her to the argument.

Secondly—this is no surprise to me, given her position on many of these issues—Dr Murray is considering the arguments around the possibilities of delivering economic growth. She has moved away from the UK coalition's sterile argument, which has been replicated by her party's leadership in the Scottish Parliament, that the only opportunity to strengthen public finances will be through increased taxation or reduced public expenditure. We will have the opportunity to deliver economic growth. That is what this Government believes in, and it is why we think that the powers of independence will enable Scotland to grow the economy and repair the public finances that have been left in such a weakened position by the failures of UK Governments.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): Has the Scottish Government carried out financial projections for an independent Scotland post 2016-17?

John Swinney: The Scottish Government has openly published its projections to 2016-17 in the white paper. They show that the platform of the establishment of an independent Scotland will put Scotland in a stronger financial position than the rest of the UK. It will then be up to the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Government and the whole of the community of Scotland to create the strongest economic opportunities that we can as a consequence of the decisions that we take with the full economic levers of independence.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): After independence, how will Scotland be placed relative to other countries in terms of its wealth, and how will it compare to the rest of the UK?

John Swinney: If we take the analysis of wealth per capita, Scotland would be ranked as the eighth richest nation in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development grouping. That shows some of the financial and economic strengths of an independent Scotland. With those foundations, an independent Scotland would be able to take its own decisions about how to strengthen economic performance and create a country that has greater economic opportunities than exist in the rest of the UK.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): The 1.9 per cent figure in Dr Murray's first question refers to the IFS's most optimistic scenario, which assumes 2.2 per cent productivity growth and three times the expected net migration, and uses Mr Swinney's own best-case predictions for oil revenues.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question, please.

Iain Gray: However, the IFS still finds that we would have to make a choice between tax rises or cuts in public expenditure. Which would it be?

John Swinney: In a sense, I rest my case on my answer to Dr Murray. Members on Labour's front bench seem to be obsessed by the choice between increasing taxation or reducing public expenditure. This Government wants to use the economic levers of independence to strengthen our country's foundations and ensure that we create the opportunities that people in Scotland have a right to expect. I would have thought that that was the type of dynamic economic agenda that might have appealed to people of Mr Gray's political outlook. However, it seems that the coalition that he has established with his allies in the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative Party in the better together campaign is influencing all Labour thinking to the extent that all that Labour can think about is tax rises or cuts in public expenditure. It is time for Mr Gray to look more broadly at the debate and have some imagination about what is possible in this country.

Sustainable Development

3. Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Government what account the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth takes of sustainable development in his policy framework for sustainable growth. (S4O-02624)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): Sustainability is a central feature of our framework for economic growth, and has been since the Government came to power in 2007. As the Government's economic strategy sets out, sustainable economic growth centres on

"building a dynamic and growing economy that will provide prosperity and opportunities for all, while ensuring that future generations can enjoy a better quality of life too".

That drives policy priorities, including our annual budget process, with progress being monitored through Scotland performs and our national performance framework.

Claudia Beamish: In view of the aim of the national performance framework to have

"a flourishing and prosperous Scotland"

for all, can the cabinet secretary explain why the preferred term in the Scottish Government's finance policy is "sustainable economic growth" when the term "sustainable development", which encompasses social, economic and environmental strands and, in the view of many people, is a clearer definition that has a more robust legal status, better encapsulates our future direction and, indeed, the dynamic agenda that Scottish Labour is working towards?

John Swinney: My answer relates to the framework that we have established as part of Scotland performs. We have, which has been helpful, had a number of opportunities to discuss this question in the group that I have established to consider the review of the national performance framework, in which Claudia Beamish is a welcome participant.

Essentially, we have what would be described as a balanced scorecard, on which we bring together a range of indicators that reflect considerations of social, economic and environmental impact as a consequence of the policy interventions that we make. The Scotland performs framework is designed to give exactly the kind of balance in our policy choices that Claudia Beamish has raised in her question. That is an approach to which I am entirely committed, because it gives us an opportunity to consider, within our policy choices, the implications of different measures and steps and how they can contribute to improving outcomes for people in Scotland.

Public Service Reform (North East Scotland)

4. Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):

To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the impact of public service reforms on the north-east. (S4O-02625)

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): Public service reform is delivering improvements in outcomes for people across Scotland. In the north-east, community planning partnerships are bringing partners and communities together to deliver better outcomes. Their single outcome agreements provide a clear plan for place and a focus on prevention. For example, the Aberdeenshire Council single outcome agreement has identified £3 million that is being invested in the development of extended early years provision to provide early intervention in the lives of children and families who require additional support.

Another example is Dundee City Council and NHS Tayside's establishment of an early intervention team to offer preventative support for families who are on the edge of crisis. That is groundbreaking in that it brings Barnardo's, Children 1st, the Aberlour Child Care Trust and Action for Children together physically to deliver a joint service.

Nanette Milne: I thank the minister for his response, which does not quite answer what I am about to ask him.

There has been a growing concern that, under centralisation of services including the police, forensics and fire and rescue, Aberdeen and the north-east are experiencing the loss of a number of key public sector jobs. The minister will be aware that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is currently undertaking a review, with plans to close five of the existing eight control rooms in Scotland, and concerns have been expressed to me that, because of the buoyant north-east economy, a decision on the control room in Aberdeen might be influenced by the low unemployment rate in that city. Can the minister assure me that decision making around such public service reforms is independent of such factors? Does he believe that Aberdeen and the north-east should be given a fair share of public sector jobs?

Derek Mackay: I am glad that Nanette Milne refined that question somewhat from her opening question. I focused on the Government's preventative agenda, which we achieve in partnership, so we will turn to outcomes that matter in the north-east.

We have policing plans, fire plans and single outcome agreements that focus on outcomes that matter and which move away from inputs, such as numbers of staff, stations or control rooms. What matters is outcomes—the effectiveness and

efficiency of public services—around the four pillars of public service reform: prevention, integration, workforce development and improved performance with existing resources. The Government, its agencies and partners continue to work in partnership to focus on outcomes and to make the best use of resources. As part of that, we would welcome reduced crime, efficient responses to local issues and more fire prevention and community safety work. That is a proactive agenda.

I am sure that Nanette Milne will be reassured by the consultation on the restructuring of some individual services, which will leave a strong footprint throughout Scotland, particularly in the north-east.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Brief questions and answers would be appreciated, please.

Economic Development (Motherwell and Wishaw)

5. John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what recent action it has taken to encourage economic development in Motherwell and Wishaw. (S4O-02626)

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): The Scottish Government is committed to supporting and encouraging sustainable economic growth in North Lanarkshire, including Motherwell and Wishaw, and we are using all available levers to deliver that growth. Last Friday, we announced the 22 successful projects that are being funded by the regeneration capital grant fund, including the Cumbernauld community enterprise centre and the Forgewood community centre in north Motherwell, which will receive £5 million to develop new multifunctional community spaces, thereby kick-starting renewed physical regeneration that will benefit some of North Lanarkshire's most deprived communities.

John Pentland: More than 20 years on, Europe's largest brownfield site at Ravenscraig is making welcome, but slow, progress. A college, a sports facility and some housing have been developed, but huge untapped potential remains. What measures are being put in place to support the proposed national priority status for Ravenscraig in order to accelerate development and encourage potential investors when the third national planning framework is published?

Fergus Ewing: That is a fair question. We share the same objectives as Mr Pentland in that respect. We have made a commitment to the area and are working with North Lanarkshire Council. Phase 2 of the Ravenscraig tax increment financing project, which ministers provisionally

approved in March 2011, is one of four pilots that have been approved by the Scottish Government. It includes £73 million of public infrastructure investment, which should lever in £425 million of private investment and create more than 4,000 full-time equivalent jobs.

The regeneration of Ravenscraig continues apace. Recently, £2 million was invested in working up the technical design and costings of area planning briefs for phase 2 developments with 93,000m² of retail and leisure facilities and 10,500m² of commercial space.

In addition, there has been a great deal of activity by Scottish Enterprise in support of small businesses and larger businesses and a great deal of effort by the business gateway, as well. I will write to Mr Pentland on that.

We are agreed that we must do everything we can to help the regeneration of Ravenscraig and the surrounding area. We are making good progress towards that objective.

Independence (Demographic Projections)

6. Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the demographic projections in the recent Institute for Fiscal Studies report on the fiscal sustainability of an independent Scotland. (S4O-02627)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): Developed countries across the world face demographic pressures. Scotland is no different in that respect, but at present we lack the policy levers to respond to that challenge. With independence, we will be able to grow our working-age population by ensuring that young Scots have the opportunity to build a career in Scotland and by making it easier for the highly skilled students who come to study at our universities to work here.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies projections show the costs of remaining part of the United Kingdom. Those simply underline the urgent need for Scotland to achieve independence and have access to the full range of economic policy levers to boost economic growth.

Annabel Goldie: The Scottish Government was, of course, quick to criticise the IFS report, but one point seems to have hit home. In yesterday's white paper, the Scottish Government appeared to accept that Scotland has a relatively more challenging pensions situation than the UK as a whole. That turnaround has also affected policy, which has switched from talk of a reduction in the pension age to talk of potentially delaying the rise in the age threshold to 67 and leaving it all to a commission, which would report in 2018. Is it not

glaringly obvious that, when it comes to pensions in an independent Scotland, the Scottish Government does not know what it is doing, when it will do it and what it will cost?

John Swinney: That was a thoughtful contribution to the debate on the country's future. In marshalling that information, Ms Goldie inadvertently missed out in her research process the paper called "Pensions in an Independent Scotland", which the Scottish Government published over the summer. A vast amount of the detail that she talked and speculated about was in that policy paper, which informed the white paper. I am in no way certain about how she reached the conclusions that she has reached.

Pensions in an independent Scotland will be more affordable than those in the rest of the United Kingdom because we allocate a lower proportion of our public expenditure to social protection, as a share of gross domestic product, than the UK does. All that information is marshalled in the independence white paper, which I encourage Ms Goldie to look at again. That would inform her of the opportunities and benefits of independence in safeguarding pensions for people.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Is the cabinet secretary aware not only that the IFS is incapable of making accurate predictions 50 years into the future, as it admits, but that its report was out of date on the day it was published? It excluded the impact of the £4 billion investment in the Kraken field and the 20,000 skilled jobs that that will create by 2017, for example.

John Swinney: That is a fair observation about the report's timing. However, I will be fair to the IFS. Ms Goldie said that the Scottish Government had attacked the IFS; I encourage her to look at the press cuttings, because she will at no stage find me attacking the IFS. I indicated that, if the IFS projects that the UK's public finances will be in deficit for 50 years and it applies the same considerations to Scotland as part of the UK, the analysis that it comes up with will hardly be surprising.

The IFS report says—this is material to Mr Gibson's question—that many of the variables that are used in the projections

"are inherently uncertain and could ... evolve differently if Scotland were independent rather than part of the UK; in addition, they could be substantially affected by the policies chosen by the government of an independent Scotland."

My point is that an independent Scotland will have a range of options in determining what is the right set of economic measures to take on behalf of the people of Scotland. That opportunity will open up only if we vote yes in the referendum. The

IFS report sets out a position that is essentially a subset of the United Kingdom's failed direction of travel. Independence offers Scotland the chance to chart a new and more prosperous course.

Credit Unions

7. Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what additional support it can give to expand the provision of credit unions across the country. (S4O-02628)

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): We encourage credit unions to access our third sector business support and development programmes, including just enterprise and the enterprise ready fund.

Ken Macintosh: I thank the minister for his answer and his colleague Mr Swinney for his support for ethical finance more generally. Is the minister aware—not least from the attendance of Mr Swinney's officials at a recent round-table meeting on ethical finance—of the difficulties that many Scots still have in accessing a local credit union? Some Scots still have no credit union in their locality. Will he look at ways to expand credit union provision, perhaps through supporting rate relief, which Glasgow City Council offers, or through establishing a loan guarantee fund?

Fergus Ewing: Mr Macintosh and I and our respective parties share the objective that, irrespective of where they live, citizens throughout Scotland should have access to a local credit union. He is right to imply that the position is patchy. Some parts, such as Glasgow, have strong and active credit unions, but in other parts, access is not of the same degree. There are more than 100 credit unions in Scotland, but their sizes and capacities vary.

The question is perfectly fair. We are completely determined to ensure that more and more people should be able to access credit unions and proceed to exercise their finances on the principle of thrift, rather than resorting to payday loans, which are the source of such social misery in this country.

Although members such as Kezia Dugdale and John Wilson have been extremely active in campaigning for shared objectives, the tragedy is that we do not have the regulatory powers to introduce a cap on payday loans right now. However, I am pleased that, apparently, the UK Government has been persuaded towards that objective.

Community Councils

8. Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what evidence there is that the community councils short-life working group recommendation

“that there is continued drive aimed at the community and Community Councils for contested Community Council elections”

has been achieved in the recent community council elections. (S4O-02629)

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): In response to the recommendations, in collaboration with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, I have asked the Improvement Service to undertake a project to enhance the role of community councils, which includes a proposal to run pilot projects to increase the number of contested elections.

Colin Keir: Does the minister intend to take any further steps to encourage participation in community councils and, in doing so, increase the number of contested elections to community councils?

Derek Mackay: We will consider the findings of the project and continue to work in partnership with local authorities to support community councils, and we will work on the Government's empowerment agenda, not least through the proposed community empowerment bill, to give community councils an enhanced role. I hope that that will increase participation in those bodies.

Public Sector Pay (Aberdeen Weighting Allowance)

9. Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what representations it has received regarding a weighting allowance for public sector workers in the Aberdeen travel-to-work area. (S4O-02630)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): I am aware of the concerns of public and private sector workers in the Aberdeen area.

This Government has a range of policies to support those who are finding times difficult financially. Our pay policy focuses resources on the lower paid by promoting the Scottish living wage alongside distinctive measures to address low pay. The pay policy also provides employers with flexibility to address local issues though pay where necessary. This Government's policy of no compulsory redundancies provides support and reassurance to public sector workers. We are also delivering on our commitment to the social wage.

Maureen Watt: Given the immense pressure on the recruitment and retention of public sector employees, such as teacher and nurses, in the Aberdeen travel-to-work area, does the cabinet secretary think that there should be an allowance similar to the London weighting allowance for such workers?

John Swinney: I recognise the circumstances of public and private sector workers who live and work in the Aberdeen area and in my original answer I outlined a number of measures that the Government is taking to address the issue.

Although we have no current plans to introduce an Aberdeen weighting allowance along the lines that Maureen Watt suggests, some flexibilities exist in our pay policy and in pay arrangements for other public sector staff to address recruitment and labour market issues, whether by grade or locality. We will of course continue to monitor the situation.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): Does the cabinet secretary recognise that, in the national health service in particular, changes that were made some nine years ago to replace London weighting with high-cost supplements allow such a measure to be applied to other parts of the United Kingdom? It is open to the Scottish Government to use that model to recognise the exceptional costs that apply to NHS staff in and around Aberdeen and to look at funding and introducing such a system for staff in NHS Grampian.

John Swinney: Within our existing pay policy, there are flexibilities that employers can utilise when considering any particular challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff in individual employment spheres. The opportunity is available to NHS Grampian and other public sector bodies to consider those flexibilities, which are already inherent in our pay policy.

Scottish Enterprise Chief Executive (Meetings)

10. Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth last met the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise and what was discussed. (S4O-02631)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): I last met the chief executive and other members of the board of Scottish Enterprise on 11 November to discuss a range of issues that are important to the delivery of the Scottish Government's economic strategy.

Duncan McNeil: In August last year, the cabinet secretary kindly agreed to come to Inverclyde to hear about the opportunities for development in our area. At the time, he said that the Scottish Government would promote Inverclyde as an area for investment and he acknowledged that we look to be in a strong position to participate in the renewables industry. In January this year, he acknowledged the significant opportunities to expand cruise liner

activity at Inverclyde. What action have the Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise taken to promote Inverclyde as an area for investment?

John Swinney: Mr McNeil highlighted a number of examples. In relation to cruise liner developments, Scottish Enterprise has been working with local partners in Inverclyde to develop the cruise liner proposition at James Watt dock. Another example is that, in the dialogue that we have with a variety of inward investment organisations, Inverclyde is clearly marketed as one of the opportunities and sites for potential development. I am happy to provide Mr McNeil with further detail on our interaction and dialogue in that respect. I will update him on that following this meeting.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 11, in the name of Chic Brodie, has not been lodged, although an explanation has been provided.

University Graduates (Employment Outside Scotland)

12. Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what the impact on the economy is of university graduates seeking employment outside Scotland. (S4O-02633)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): The vast majority of Scotland-domiciled leavers from Scottish higher education institutions who go into work remain and work in Scotland, contributing to our economy and providing us with value for our investment. We support global mobility and encourage students and graduates to widen their horizons. The Scottish economy benefits from graduates with a cultural awareness, an international perspective, the confidence to work across boundaries and language skills. We welcome students and graduates from further afield, who also contribute to the Scottish economy. We have set out arguments why we should welcome more of those individuals to contribute to the Scottish economy, as well as proposals in that regard.

Nigel Don: I recently had a presentation from Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, which has hooked up with the oil and gas industry—naturally, as that industry is based around it—and is obviously doing an excellent job. Are there other opportunities for individual universities and perhaps departments to hook up with industries or individual firms to ensure that it is easier for graduates to move into employment in Scotland?

John Swinney: An important part of the dialogue on that is about ensuring that the higher education institution community is closely aligned

with the needs and aspirations of the business sector in Scotland and the Scottish economy. I am increasingly confident that we are seeing the fruits of that work, which is demonstrated by the way in which institutions are working closely with the business community and industry leadership groups. The joint skills committee of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council and Skills Development Scotland is an important forum in determining how we should shape the priorities and approaches of our higher education institutions to create the necessary educational opportunities that can be linked up with the business community. That work will continue, to ensure that we improve the connections between education institutions and the business community in Scotland.

Visitor Information Centres (Location Criteria)

13. Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government what criteria VisitScotland uses to determine whether a town is a suitable location for a visitor information centre. (S4O-02634)

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): The provision of VisitScotland information centres is an operational matter for VisitScotland. It categorises sites for visitor information centres according to a range of factors, including footfall, bookings, the footprint of international visitors, proximity to high tourist traffic routes and proximity to significant clusters of attractions and activities.

Jim Hume: Earlier this year, VisitScotland's director for the south of Scotland described the Borders railway as "a game-changer" and "an amazing opportunity". I absolutely agree but, despite the presence in the Borders of three visitor information centres, two seasonal information centres and two information points, none of them is located in Galashiels. Does the minister agree with me that, given that Galashiels will soon be the main destination for rail services from Edinburgh to the Borders, the lack of an information centre will be an anomaly? Can he assure me that Galashiels will be served by a visitor information centre to advise tourists on the many wonderful attractions that are available to them when they arrive in this beautiful corner of the Borders?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Well done.

Fergus Ewing: We agree that the Borders is a magnificent place to have a holiday. That is why we have promoted golfing in the Borders to more than 2 million consumers and invested £650,000 in capital works at Abbotsford, the home of Sir Walter Scott. Jim Hume is right to point out that the Scottish Government's policy of reopening the Borders railway will lead to many great opportunities. Many advantages will follow from

the policies that we implement. Therefore, I am perfectly happy to engage with the member in due course on considering the manifold opportunities, such as the one that he has posited today.

Zero-hours Contracts

14. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how it considers the use of so-called zero-hours contracts contributes to its strategy for sustainable economic growth. (S4O-02635)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): On 7 November, the Deputy First Minister made clear that the inappropriate use of zero-hours contracts is unacceptable. The Scottish Government's economic growth strategy is focused on ensuring that we create valuable and well-remunerated employment that will enable individuals to have fulfilling careers and to realise their economic potential within Scotland.

Kezia Dugdale: The cabinet secretary will be aware that 27,000 people across Scotland are on zero-hours contracts, 8,000 of whom are in the higher education sector. In the answer that the Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism gave to Alison Johnstone on 11 September, he said:

"We ... urge employers in all sectors who employ staff on zero hours contracts to consider carefully their use of such contracts."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 11 September 2013; S4W-17083.]

Can the cabinet secretary detail those urges? What is he actually doing to deter the use of those contracts?

John Swinney: A good example of that was reported to the First Minister and me just the other day at the biannual meeting of the Scottish Government and Scottish Trades Union Congress. The University and College Union reported that, as a consequence of my intervention with the University of Edinburgh, the University of Edinburgh is now actively exploring with the UCU the utilisation of zero-hours contracts. That initiative and the intervention that I made were positively embraced by the UCU.

Local Banking

15. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what role it sees for local banking in the future of the financial services sector. (S4O-02636)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): The Scottish Government's banking strategy, which was published earlier this year, makes clear that a responsible, sustainable banking sector that is responsive to the needs of its customers is a crucial part of the economy as

well as of Scottish society. Work is also under way to identify options for developing community banking further in Scotland.

Patrick Harvie: The cabinet secretary and I both hope that he will soon have the privilege of negotiating for Scotland's ownership of a share of the publicly owned financial services companies that are currently owned by UK Financial Investments. Does he agree with me that transforming large centralised banks into a network of small, locally owned and locally governed banks would have a far bigger benefit in removing the barriers for small businesses to access finance from publicly owned institutions?

John Swinney: I cannot agree with absolutely all of Patrick Harvie's points, but I agree with the purpose and the sentiment of his argument, which is to ensure that we have in Scotland a network of locally engaged, locally connected banking institutions. One issue that Scotland's small business sector is wrestling with today is the difficulty of making connections with larger banking institutions that are not in all circumstances acting in the best interests of individual small and medium-sized enterprises. The Scottish Government will continue to pursue that point about access to finance, which we will pursue with energy as part of our banking strategy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Many thanks. I apologise to those whose questions remain unanswered this afternoon.

Independence White Paper

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-08407, in the name of Alex Salmond, on the independence white paper.

I call the First Minister, Alex Salmond, to speak to and move the motion.

14:39

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): In next year's referendum, the people of Scotland will be asked to choose between two futures. The choice will be to take the future into our own hands or to continue to allow key aspects of Scottish life to be controlled by Westminster Governments that will often, as now, have been overwhelmingly and decisively rejected by voters in Scotland.

Yesterday, the Scottish Government published our vision of a better Scotland. Across 670 pages and 170,000 words, addressing 650 questions, "Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland" sets out how we can build a fairer, more prosperous and more democratic country. It is the most comprehensive blueprint for independence that has been published not just for Scotland, but for any country anywhere at any time.

A lot of the response to the white paper was sadly predictable.

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

Will the First Minister give way?

The First Minister: On the subject of being sadly predictable, I give way to Mr Rennie.

Willie Rennie: I thank the First Minister for that compliment.

The First Minister talks about other countries in the world. Can he tell me whether his Government, his ministers or his officials have received any feedback from any other European Union country about Scotland's membership of the EU? Have they indicated that that would be at all difficult? Can he tell me precisely whether he has had that feedback?

The First Minister: The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs is briefing the consular corps today. I will arrange for Fiona Hyslop to give Mr Rennie a full briefing to put his mind at rest.

There was some sadly predictable reaction from the better together camp. Within an hour of the white paper's publication, Alistair Darling described it as being totally ridiculous and not of any worth whatsoever, which amazed me. I congratulate that man on his speed reading, because by my estimation he had managed to

assimilate 3,000 words a minute before giving his carefully considered reaction to the white paper on Scotland's future. The reality for all the better together parties is that the ball is now firmly in the unionists' court. They now need to provide answers to fundamental questions about what will happen if Scotland remains in the union.

Yesterday's debate brought us to a very important issue regarding Scotland's future. This morning, Aileen Campbell and I visited the Cowgate under-fives centre, which is situated a few hundred metres up the road from here. It provides a fabulous service to more than 50 children of all ages from six weeks old to five years old.

The Cowgate under-fives centre was established in 2002 when all three and four-year-olds became entitled to pre-school education and care. At that time, the entitlement was 412 hours per year, but it increased to 475 hours in 2007, when the Scottish National Party Government came to office, and will rise to 600 hours next year. However, the Government's ambitions are much greater than that.

As was outlined in the white paper, in the first budget after independence we will commit an extra £100 million a year to extend that 600 hours to almost half of Scotland's two-year-olds. By the end of the first independent Parliament, we will invest a further £600 million, enabling all those two-year-olds, as well as all three and four-year-olds, to receive 1,140 hours of care and education each year.

In the longer term, our ambition as a country is to make those levels of care available to all children from the age of one. That step will benefit more than 200,000 families throughout Scotland, giving families a total saving of up to £4,600 per child per year.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): Will the First Minister give way?

The First Minister: I will give way because I want to discuss why that transformational policy, which is outlined in the white paper, is about independence for Scotland.

Gavin Brown: Given that the First Minister says that the price tag for phase 1 is £100 million, why has he not done that already?

The First Minister: Is the Conservative Party going to tell us where we are going to save £100 million and which budget that is going to come from? Of course, the budget for what I have just described is not £100 million but £700 million. The Conservative Party has already committed itself—I think—to a reduction in income tax that would blow another vast hole in the Scottish budget. I will say where we will get the

£700 million under independence, and I will then be delighted to hear from the unionist parties where they would get it under the current settlement.

Patrick Harvie made the point in the chamber yesterday that independence gives us the opportunity to make choices—to spend less on weapons of mass destruction and more on educating our children, for example. There are other ways to get £700 million. In the theme of the “something for nothing” explanation of society, £700 million could be gained by, if the Labour Party so wishes, cutting free personal care for the elderly, scrapping prescription charges and scrapping entirely the concessionary travel fare system, which is perhaps a matter that Johann Lamont’s cuts commission is studying. Those cuts could get the Labour Party £700 million, but those are not policies that this Government would make, as they would sacrifice the great gains of devolution.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

The First Minister: Later on.

The reality is that such an investment can come about from the economic growth and expansion in the economy brought about by a rise in female participation in the workforce. A six point rise in female participation in the workforce, giving Scotland rates up to Swedish levels, would bring more than 100,000 women back into the labour market.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

The First Minister: I give way to Johann Lamont.

Johann Lamont: Surely the point is that the Government needs to invest the money in order to let women work and then get the resources, which means that it has to put in the money up front. The investment should be made immediately—surely the First Minister could do that now.

The First Minister: I thought that we were going to get an explanation of whether it is concessionary travel or free personal care that is the target of Johann Lamont. That is exactly why we identify the savings from cutting weapons of mass destruction from the Scottish budget.

If we achieve that 6 per cent rise in female participation—which is entirely achievable given that, over the past year, under this Government there has been a 3 per cent rise in female employment—we would get huge increases in revenues.

Closing the percentage gap between ourselves and Sweden in female participation in the

workforce would increase Scotland’s economic output by £2.2 billion and raise taxation revenues across the range of taxation by £700 million. At present, those tax revenues and any savings from lower welfare payments go straight back to Westminster. An independent Scotland would retain and be able to invest those savings in the future of Scotland’s children. A childcare revolution is a transformation that would be impossible under devolution—it can only be imagined; with independence it is one that we can implement.

Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

The First Minister: In a second.

On last night’s “Scotland Tonight”, Alistair Darling said as employment in Scotland rises

“those taxes go to the Treasury, which in turn come back to Scotland because of the way the funding works.”

That man was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Does he not know that the Barnett formula concerns spending not revenue? If revenue rises in Scotland, it disappears into the maw of the London Treasury.

In case there is any dispute about that, the Institute for Public Policy Research—not a think tank associated with independence; indeed, it does not support independence—stated in its blog last night:

“The SNP is right, however, that many of the fiscal benefits would flow—in the form of increased tax revenues and lower benefit payments—to Her Majesty’s Treasury.”

That is the difference between controlling the balance sheet of an independent Scotland both in the revenue and spending side and being caught in the straitjacket of Westminster, which is where we are at present—a straitjacket that will get a lot tighter under the Conservative Party.

Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): I am interested that the First Minister mentioned the IPPR think tank. It also stated last night:

“The Scottish Government’s long awaited white paper is a piece of fantasy economics ... Other than a (contentious) assertion that the tax base north of the border is stronger than in the rest of the UK, it is unclear how any of this can be paid for.”

Does the First Minister endorse that quote, too?

The First Minister: That is exactly the point that I made about the IPPR not supporting independence. On the question of revenue, it says that the SNP is right. There has been an assumption by the unionist parties—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: The matter is at the heart of the debate. We have demonstrated that, through an expansion in childcare, a transformation in the

opportunities for children and an increase in the participation rates of women coming into the workforce, revenues would flow into the Scottish treasury under independence, which would enable that transformational plan to be funded.

What we want the unionist parties to tell us is how that will happen under devolution without the dramatic cuts in things such as free personal care—concessionary travel and student fees would undoubtedly also be in the target line—that Johann Lamont's cuts commission is considering.

So far, the assumption has been that, if we do not have independence, everything will continue much as it is, but I point out that we can see that that will not be the case. In the most recent United Kingdom general election campaign, Alistair Carmichael—who is now the Secretary of State for Scotland—said on STV:

"We do want to see Barnett scrapped."

Last weekend on "Sunday Politics", he went even further when he said:

"There will be no action taken on the Barnett Formula until the economy has stabilised again."

Given that George Osborne tells us that the economy is stabilising, we must think that that will happen sometime soon.

I will quote what Ruth Davidson told *The Sun*, not about the Daleks, Dr Who and the BBC but about Barnett. She said that it was

"only supposed to be temporary ... I do think that there will be a review of Barnett after 2014. The ground has shifted since devolution."

We know that Labour will not fight for the current funding levels for Scotland. Just two days ago, a report was published by the Westminster all-party parliamentary group on taxation, which recommended:

"In the case of a 'No' vote, the Barnett Formula must be replaced as a priority, with a needs-based formula ... the best alternative, using the seven indicators of relative need identified by the Holtham Commission".

We now know exactly what the all-party group that is supported by all the Westminster parties has in mind, because we know exactly what the Holtham commission recommendations would mean for Scottish spending, as it published that in an article in the *Financial Times* in July 2010. It would mean a cut in Scottish spending of up to £4,000 million a year.

Of course, we could say that that is just one proposal. The Scottish Trades Union Congress, for example, estimates that the cut might be £2,000 million a year. The UK Government will not give any commitments or indications about what will happen to the Barnett formula if we remain in the UK, but that stance of keeping it quiet until

after the referendum is unsustainable. The Government has set out our case for an independent Scotland. What we want to hear from the unionist parties—the better together campaign—is how big the better together raid will be on the Scottish budget if Scotland votes no. That is reality.

There are certain things that we agree on. We agree and we know that, over the past 30 years, Scotland has contributed far more, in relative terms, to the UK budget than we have received back. We know that, in the past five years, that has amounted to £12,000 million, which is more than £2,000 a head for every man, woman and child in the country. We know that Scotland contributes 9.9 per cent of the UK's taxation and gets back 9.3 per cent of the spending, but the reality is that that 9.3 per cent will be targeted by the better together campaign. It will cut Scotland's budget without reflecting on or understanding the massive contribution that Scotland has made and will continue to make to UK finances.

When we have the debate about the vision of Scottish society that is laid out in the white paper, it will no longer be contrasted against a silence from the better together campaign. It will be contrasted against a future in which it sees low growth in the population and in the economy, and in which Scotland will be subjected to the severest cuts in political history, over and above the retrenchment of the past few years.

Willie Rennie rose—

Ruth Davidson rose—

The First Minister: Alternatively, we can go forward to a growing economy and a growing society. We can transform childcare for our children. We can benefit from the revenues and strength of Scotland's natural resources. We can combine those resources with the population's intelligence and ingenuity and create a new society.

Politics is about choices, and the choice next year will be between that new society and the future that is offered by better together, which for many Scots will be no future at all.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Scottish Government's comprehensive guide to an independent Scotland; agrees that it is better for everyone in Scotland if decisions about the country's future are taken by the people who care most about Scotland, the people who live and work here; recognises the detailed analysis of the opportunities, benefits and practicalities of independence set out in the white paper, and its comprehensive answers to questions about independence, and looks forward to a positive national debate on independence for Scotland, with contributions from all perspectives and from all sectors of Scottish society, before the historic vote on 18 September 2014.

14:54

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): If that is the First Minister being positive, heaven help us when he decides to turn negative. His speech was entirely in tune with his world view, which is rooted entirely in negativity and grievance. All of his political life, he has wanted to free Scotland from the United Kingdom, and that is his view of what the United Kingdom wants to do to Scotland.

I understand that the First Minister has started quoting Nehru on national identity. I wish that before he published the white paper he had taken on another quote from Nehru:

“a theory must be tempered with reality.”

Without that, his paper becomes more of a wish list and he appears more like Nero.

There is a case for independence that, although I do not believe in it, can at least claim to be coherent. It has been put by the First Minister's former deputy, Jim Sillars, and involves Scotland having its own currency and not being a member of the European Union. Anyone who truly believes the First Minister's mantra that the best people to govern Scotland are those who live and work here would follow that view, and Alex Salmond certainly used to when he called sterling a “millstone round Scotland's neck.” Now he is claiming ownership of that millstone and demanding the right to wear it still.

The First Minister claims that his white paper is full of detail, but I have to tell him that there is an enormous difference between a lot of detail and a lot of words. Far from being “tempered with reality”, the white paper is assertion-rich. On the pound, for example, it says on page 85:

“Scotland will continue to use the pound.”

Members: Hear, hear. [*Interruption.*]

Johann Lamont: I did not realise that SNP members would be quite so true to form at every opportunity.

Let us imagine that that were true. We would then have an independent Scotland that relied on a foreign bank and foreign taxpayers for our currency and a foreign Parliament, from which we had withdrawn Scottish representation, would draw up the rules. [*Interruption.*] I do not know whether members have realised this but that independent Scotland would have its interest rates, tax policy, spending policy and borrowing limits set by a foreign country. It would be the greatest loss of sovereignty for Scotland since Edward invaded in 1296.

That is, of course, if we could cut a deal to keep the pound. Yesterday, Prime Minister David Cameron said that such a deal was “highly

unlikely”. [*Interruption.*] Well, I expect that he is entitled to his opinion in these negotiations. In saying that, he echoed the words of George Osborne, Ed Balls and of course Carwyn Jones, the First Minister of Wales, who equally has an interest in these matters.

Even if they agree to it, the likelihood is that the people in the rest of the United Kingdom would require a referendum to join a currency union, just as they would if they were to join the euro. Imagine Scotland's future currency depending on a referendum in which no Scots would have a vote.

How would a politician persuade the people of England, Wales and Northern Ireland that the Scots who had just left them should keep the pound, especially as the Scottish Government's case for leaving is based on the view that the rest of the United Kingdom has held us back ever since the union was created? If they needed evidence of that view, they had only to listen to the First Minister's speech. The idea that we would abuse the rest of the United Kingdom for doing us down and then go back to it saying, “Could you do us a favour and let us share our currency?” simply beggars belief.

We would also need people to agree to the lender of last resort, which would mean that, if a Scottish bank needed a bailout, English, Welsh and Northern Irish taxpayers would foot the bill. The Bank of England is funded by taxpayers, but because Scotland would not pay tax to the rest of the United Kingdom it would not pay a penny itself.

How can the First Minister think that anyone north or south of the border believes that that deal could be done? Even his former economic adviser John Kay says that a deal for a separate Scotland to keep the pound would be incredibly difficult to reach. He says that the whip hand would be with the rest of the United Kingdom. Professor Kay, whom the First Minister trusted to give him advice on the economy, says that the conditions that the rest of the UK would impose are likely to be too restrictive to be desirable.

Alex Salmond's economic adviser says that there would need to be a plan B—a separate Scottish currency—but in the white paper we have a plan A that is not tempered with reality and no plan B at all.

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): We are almost six minutes through Johann Lamont's speech, and I have not heard a single thing that she happens to believe. Does she believe that pernicious taxes, illegal wars and regressive immigration policies are a price worth paying to stay in her beloved union?

Johann Lamont: That is just completely ludicrous. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Order.

Johann Lamont: On that most basic part of the plan, for all its 670 pages and 170,000 words, the white paper cannot say what currency a separate Scotland would have.

Let us remember what Professor Kay said about the fundamental argument that runs through the whole white paper:

"I think people who talk about what independence would be like in economic terms need to get beyond vague aspirational statements of a rather ludicrous kind: 'In an independent Scotland we would have the powers to tackle poverty in Scotland'".

He went on:

"Nor should we devote much time to arguments for independence which are of the kind that an independent Scotland would have lots more money from some unexplained source and would therefore be able to avoid making choices about taxation and spending and debt, which rather unfortunately have to be made in the framework of the United Kingdom or indeed in any framework other than that which characterises cloud cuckoo land."

The First Minister: We have set out a plan for a transformational change in childcare in Scotland. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: That will cost £700 million a year over the session of the Parliament, and we have explained how that transformation can be paid for through increased revenues for the Scottish exchequer. Can Johann Lamont tell me how such a transformational change in childcare, with all its benefits for Scotland's children, could be afforded under devolution?

Johann Lamont: If that were transformational and the First Minister believed that it was that important, he would start now. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Johann Lamont: I think that the First Minister has discovered the issue of childcare only very recently. Let me tell him that it is something that I have understood all my working and personal life. That is why—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Johann Lamont: That is why I offered to work with the First Minister to establish a childcare commission to look at exactly how we would fund childcare right now. I offer that to him in good faith again now: I will work with him on his budget to ensure that childcare is properly funded. Let us meet and we will discuss that. He is the man with the budget. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order. Let us hear Ms Lamont.

Johann Lamont: I will take his nodding as an agreement that he will meet me and we will look at the budget and how we fund childcare.

The First Minister: Will the member give way?

Johann Lamont: Yes.

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

The First Minister: We have met already, and Johann Lamont came forward with no proposals on how to fund anything. How will a transformation in childcare be paid for under devolution?

Johann Lamont: We have a £30 billion budget. I am happy to work with the First Minister—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Johann Lamont: I have said that the First Minister has a budget. We across the parties will work with him to deliver childcare changes now. It is clear that he thinks that that is a killer point. I am very committed on childcare, and he should be, too. He should put his money where his mouth is and make a difference right now. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Johann Lamont: If this debate were not so serious, it would be entirely laughable. We have a white paper that does not answer fundamental questions about the currency and the European Union but manages to answer questions about what my home telephone number will be and what we will call this country after independence.

The First Minister mistakes words for answers, and the people of Scotland will understand that. On better childcare, reform of the council tax and relieving the victims of the bedroom tax, the reality is that we could do all those things now if he were serious about making this Parliament work.

A can-do attitude does not sit with this Government, because its case relies on saying what it cannot do. It is a theory of a nation that is not tempered by reality. This is a Government that promises better childcare if we vote for independence but which in six years has not been able to deliver an extra hour of physical education for our children.

It has been argued that the white paper is all pros and no cons. I disagree. The white paper is littered with con tricks. Scotland deserves better and Scotland will see through it.

I move amendment S4M-08407.1, to leave out from "welcomes" to end and insert:

"believes that Scotland enjoys the best of both worlds, a strong Scottish Parliament in a strong UK; notes the

publication of the Scottish Government's guide to an independent Scotland, and looks forward to a debate over the next year that reflects the priorities of the people and strengthens the position of Scotland as a partner in the UK rather than as a separate state."

15:06

Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): Much has been made of the size of yesterday's white paper. It is 650 pages and has been said to be a weighty tome and the unionists' secret weapon. Joan McAlpine even said that it made America's Declaration of Independence look like a post-it note. It really is a case of never mind the quality, just feel the width.

It is not just a vast unionist conspiracy that says so. The think tank, the IPPR, called the white paper "fantasy economics" and the Institute of Chartered Accountants slammed it for shining no light on pension problems. No doubt, Shona Robison was straight on the phone to the cartoonist at *The Independent* this morning.

In fact, for all the trees that perished in the making of the document, there is very little in there that is actually new. Yes, it refers to childcare—I spoke about that yesterday—but the other new piece of information is the Scottish Government's cunning plan for a route into Europe, which was followed up with a 100-page document today. Never mind that the European Commission president, José Manuel Barroso, stated categorically last September that

"if a country becomes independent it is a new state"

and that

"if there is a new state, of course, that state has to apply for membership and negotiate the conditions with other member states."

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Can the member confirm whether under her Government at Westminster the UK will definitely be in Europe in 10 years' time?

Ruth Davidson: I can absolutely and categorically state that we will give the people of Scotland a choice, which is something that the First Minister is not happy to do because he does not trust the people of this country. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order. Let us hear the member.

Ruth Davidson: He likes referenda on everything apart from the European Union.

José Manuel Barroso's categoric statement last September, with the head of the club saying that there are no shortcuts, has been backed by the foreign ministers of Spain, Ireland, Latvia and the Czech Republic. Despite that, the Scottish Government, in its plucky little wisdom, thinks that it has found a way round that. Application through

article 49 is not for the Scottish Government—oh, no, not that long queuing system and the tortuous negotiation that can begin only after the Government's self-appointed independence day. The Government boldly states on page 221 of the white paper that article 48 is now the mechanism for it.

That would be article 48 that has never been used as the basis for accession; article 48 that would require every single member state to agree to open that treaty and other treaties up in order to make accession happen; and article 48 under which the Scottish Government has no way of triggering a treaty change because only member states, the European Parliament or the Commission have the power to do that, so the Scottish Government would have to ask someone else to do it for it.

The Scottish Government does have the good grace to acknowledge that

"it will be for the EU member states, meeting under the auspices of the Council, to take forward the most appropriate procedure under which an independent Scotland will become a signatory to the EU Treaties".

Therefore, although it wants to change the rules of the club before it becomes a member in order to jump the queue for membership, it recognises that it does not get to decide the route that it wants to take and that it is up to the other club members to decide that for it.

Let us look at what the club has been saying overnight. The official response from the Commission spokesman was:

"I can specify that the treaty provides some clear articles when it comes to the need for a new, third country to apply to the EU if they want to join."

He then added:

"Any process of a particular region of a member state leaving this member state ... will have treaty implications."

He said that Brussels's "well-known position" on that has not changed, and we are right back to Barroso's statement of last September.

But it was not just the Commission spokesman who responded—no, no. The BBC's Europe editor, Gavin Hewitt, has been a pretty busy man. He has been speaking to all sorts of officials in Brussels. Let me read out his report this morning:

"European officials have made clear that any new country would have to reapply for EU membership. In the case of Scotland, it would first have to complete financial negotiations with the UK, only then would Scotland be able to approach Brussels and formally apply for membership."

European officials are stating that Scotland would not even get to approach the EU for membership until after it has finished all its negotiations with the UK over the currency, the regulator, the lender of

last resort, the Bank of England and a hundred other issues.

This is where we get to my favourite part of the Scottish Government's European plan—the fact that all of this will be done in just 18 months. Negotiations with the UK will be completed in time to start a formal membership application, which would require each of the institutions of the EU and every one of the 28 other member states, each one holding a veto, to agree to change the founding treaty, to open up and amend a number of other treaties, to agree all the opt-outs that Britain has secured that the SNP wants to keep, to add to the commissioners and to add to the voting. All of that will be done in a matter of mere months, when from application to accession it takes states, on average, eight years to join.

This comes from a Scottish Government that has spent 18 months trying and failing to get EU agreement on alcohol minimum pricing.

The First Minister: Will the member give way?

Ruth Davidson: I am sorry. I am in my final minute, First Minister.

The Presiding Officer: The member is in her final minute.

Ruth Davidson: If the Scottish Government cannot get through one policy from one portfolio in 18 months, what chance does it have of negotiating membership in its entirety on the same timescale?

The Scottish Government is desperate to prove that it does not have to come out of Europe before it gets to go back in. Ministers are now contorting themselves in every possible way to find any straw to grasp on the issue, but the weight of the evidence just does not stack up. The Commission president says that an independent Scotland would have to reapply. Officials say that that application cannot happen until financial negotiations with the UK Government about a separate state are complete. The foreign ministers of Spain, Ireland, Latvia and the Czech Republic say that Scotland cannot jump the queue. In history, 22 countries have joined Europe's club and the average joining time has been eight years and four months. It could be pretty lonely for a newly independent Scotland starting life on Europe's northern fringe.

I support the amendment to the motion.

The Presiding Officer: We move on to the open debate. Time is tight, so I ask members to confine their remarks to their allotted time.

15:13

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): This debate is about vision and the delivery of that

vision. Yesterday, the Scottish Government outlined how independence will be delivered and how the powers of independence will be used by a Scottish Government that is led by the Scottish National Party.

It is worth while to reflect on the journey to this point, not just since May 2011, but over many decades. Many committed activists worked exceptionally hard in times when the establishment of a devolved Parliament, let alone an independence referendum, was but a distant hope. They include people who had doors slammed in their faces during the days when the Scottish National Party did not command strong electoral support. This moment in history belongs to those on whose shoulders we stand, many of whom did not live to see this day.

Johann Lamont: Will the member give way?

Mark McDonald: I give way to the member on that point.

Johann Lamont: One of those activists is, of course, Jim Sillars, who said that to be a separate, independent Scotland, we would need a separate currency. What is his legacy to the member?

Mark McDonald: I will learn from my mistake and not give way again to the Labour leader when I am trying to make a serious point about the hard work of many people that has led us to this point. However, it is worth noting that Jim Sillars intends to vote yes in the referendum next year—unless I have picked him up wrongly—irrespective of the points that the Labour leader has made.

From the moment that I became politically aware, I have thought that Scotland should be independent. My reasoning has evolved as I have grown older, and now that I am the parent of a disabled child I see the world through different eyes. I look to the two futures that are available to my son and to others like him. In the future that the union offers, he is regarded as a burden on the taxpayer and parties compete about who can subject vulnerable people to the harshest welfare regime. Indeed, only recently there was a headline in *The Observer*, which quoted Rachel Reeves, the Department for Work and Pensions spokesperson for the Labour Party, promising a welfare system that would be tougher than the one that the Tories are currently administering. I do not want a tough welfare system; I want a fair welfare system for the people of Scotland. The future that is on offer in the union is not the one that I want for my son or for any vulnerable citizen in Scotland.

When I heard Johann Lamont speak on Radio 4's "Any Questions?", which was broadcast from Bearsden, something that she said struck a chord with me. She said that it was great that the Scottish Parliament had been delivered and was able to protect the national health service in

Scotland from the reforms that are taking place south of the border. Was it not great, she said, that the NHS in Scotland was controlled in Scotland? However, when vulnerable people leave our hospitals and general practitioners' surgeries and enter the clutches of Westminster welfare reform, Johann Lamont thinks that that is all right. She cannot make the logical step from having this Parliament protect health to having it control other forms of social protection.

We can do better by our vulnerable citizens. The white paper says:

"welfare is a 'social investment' ... designed ... to promote equality, fairness and social cohesion."

It goes on to say that welfare should be seen not just as a safety net but as

"an opportunity for positive investment in people",

and sets out clear policy goals that the Government would pursue were the SNP to be elected, such as the abolition of the bedroom tax and the cancellation of universal credit and personal independence payments.

Those are real choices that we can make if we have the powers that independence will afford us, to ensure that the same protection that is afforded to our vulnerable citizens through our Scotland-controlled health service is afforded to them through a Scotland-controlled welfare system. We will have an opportunity to recognise the value of all our people, through a system that values all our people and which truly delivers, from cradle to grave.

The same can be said for our childcare policy. A point with which other parties seem to be having difficulty is that if we are to invest the sums that will be required to deliver transformational change, we need control of Scotland's revenues. We do not require the system that Westminster currently operates, whereby we have an ever-diminishing block grant, which is subject to the whims of austerity-mad politicians at Westminster; we need the full power of Scotland's resources if we are to deliver on a full range of powers for the people of Scotland.

That is the essence of independence. It is about Scotland's people controlling Scotland's future, and Scotland's Government delivering for Scotland's people. It is about investment in bairns, not bombs. It is about attracting talented people to Scotland, not booting them out of Scotland. It is about protecting the vulnerable, not humiliating and degrading them. That is what independence is about. It is the step that we take as we say to the Scottish people, "We trust you", and they in turn trust the people whom they elect to govern to take decisions for them. It is not a system in which decisions are taken on Scotland's behalf by

people who did not ask what Scotland wanted them to do.

We need only look at the common agricultural policy decision to see in operation a system in which Government ministers and officials at Westminster take decisions on behalf of Scotland with nary a care for the impact on Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: Can you bring your speech to a close, Mr McDonald?

Mark McDonald: I absolutely can, Presiding Officer.

With the powers that come with independence, we can, on behalf of the people of Scotland, take decisions that reflect the values of the people of Scotland. That is the society that I want for my children.

15:19

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Scotland's finances and the economy are central to this debate, and we have heard a lot about them in the opening remarks. The white paper makes much of figures that show that tax receipts in Scotland are higher than they are in the UK as a whole, which is true. However, rather less is made of the equally important fact that public spending is also higher. Last week, the Institute for Fiscal Studies showed that those figures mean that an independent Scotland would face higher tax increases or greater cuts in public spending than the UK. Even in the SNP's most heroically optimistic case, using its lowest estimate of our share of UK debt and its highest oil projections, the calculation shows that the cost would still be £1,000 for every Scottish taxpayer. The white paper has the numbers but it refuses to face the arithmetic of independence.

I understand that the Scottish Government dismisses the figures because it argues that a separate Scotland will suddenly grow stratospherically, and the First Minister asserted that again today. However, the white paper is disturbingly vague on why that should happen. It suggests a corporation tax that no one but the SNP believes in, a small business national insurance scheme that already exists and has not worked, and a childcare pledge that the SNP could deliver today if it really cared. The First Minister had to take 10 minutes today to justify and apologise for his failure to do so.

The First Minister: As Johann Lamont did not answer my question, can Iain Gray answer it now? We will require £700 million to bring about the transformation of childcare prospects in Scotland, and we have identified that that will happen through increased revenues from increased female participation in the labour force. That will happen under independence. How could it happen

under devolution? How would Iain Gray find the £700 million that is required?

Iain Gray: Let us start by finding the resources to deliver the 2007 childcare pledge that the First Minister has not managed to deliver in six years.

The document is clear about the platform that our future requires. It says that we will retain the pound, and the Bank of England will be our “lender of last resort” if the banks fail again. On the financial sector, which is still so important to Scotland’s economy, the white paper says that we will

“retain a broadly integrated market”.

On energy, the white paper says that

“Scotland will continue to participate in the GB-wide market for electricity and gas”,

which is just as well because we succeed in attracting a third of the subsidies that are paid for by consumers across the UK. We will also have a single transmission operator, which will be paid for by consumers across the UK, and, for good measure, the Green Investment Bank will continue.

Scotland’s universities are engines of economic growth. They win up to 15 per cent of available research funding, which is way above our share, so it is just as well that the white paper says that those UK-wide funding arrangements will continue after independence. Why? Just because it says so in the white paper.

A modern workforce needs the ability to move freely across borders, so of course we will continue with the common travel area. However, all the evidence says that even when borders remain open, cross-border flows of people and trade plummet when countries separate. They fell by as much as two thirds in the case of Czechoslovakia.

Last week, we debated the importance of UK defence contracts, not least to shipbuilding. It is no surprise that the white paper says that those contracts will continue, but we know that the workers whose jobs depend on them say clearly that they will not.

The white paper offers no evidence that those things will continue after independence; it asserts that simply because the SNP argument needs it, and it wishes it to be so. Indeed, if wishes were horses, the First Minister would be riding at the head of a cavalry regiment in the new Scottish defence force. There is no reason to believe and no guarantee that the rest of the UK will tailor its currency to our needs, subsidise our renewables industry, or fund our research rather than its own, far less that it will build warships in a separate country for the first time in the navy’s peacetime

history just because it suits us. To pretend otherwise is simply dishonest.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Iain Gray: I am sorry, but the First Minister took about a minute with his intervention.

The SNP says that those who reject separatism should describe our vision for Scotland’s future. However, the argument that we are better together runs through its own white paper: a single currency; risk shared; free trade; free movement; an energy market of £60 million for our renewables; access to 10 times the research contract funding that we could command; and defence contracts that run into billions of pounds.

Those are the foundation of our prosperity, and what happens if we vote no? We keep those things—not maybe, not perhaps, not subject to negotiation, but guaranteed. The white paper is the better together case.

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

Iain Gray: No.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Gray is winding up.

Iain Gray: It is the SNP that thinks that we are too small, too weak and too oppressed to seize the opportunities of the United Kingdom and the world beyond in order to thrive. However, the truth is that Scotland has always been smart enough, skilled enough, imaginative enough and brave enough to stand tall in the UK—not just to survive but to lead and to prosper, as we do today in renewables, defence, universities and much more.

If all the UK markets and institutions in the white paper are vital to our prosperity, is it not just common sense to stay in the United Kingdom and seize the opportunity that they give us?

15:26

Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): True to form, it is day two of the happy clappy sect, with starry-eyed optimism worshipping the god of positivity, and Alex Salmond the patron saint of blind optimism.

I have to say that I loved the optimism on childcare. It is what I have been asking the First Minister to endorse week after week after week—I do not know how many weeks it went on for, but only when it aids his campaign for independence does he start to listen. The SNP is letting down a generation of young people if it does not act now, with the powers of devolution that it once trumpeted but now derides.

The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell): Will the member give way?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

The childcare package is one part of a wider offer that insisted that there would be no downsides to independence. In the white paper, there was not one example of anything that might be even slightly difficult under independence. That omission is quite striking. It makes one wonder why all the states of the world are not immediately deciding to break themselves up, based on the compelling case that was put forward yesterday. Perhaps now the white paper for independence revolution will engulf the world. However, I cannot think of any examples of modern, successful countries that have broken themselves up. The former Soviet bloc nations or war-torn countries of Africa were hardly modern, successful countries with much to lose. They are hardly examples for a modern, successful Scotland to follow.

Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Kevin Stewart: Will the member give way?

Mark McDonald: Will the member give way?

The Presiding Officer: I do not think that the member wishes to give way. Please resume your seats.

Willie Rennie: Scottish independence is not normal. It is not the normal thing. The stakes are high, and yesterday's white paper did not move us on. It did not reduce the risk. It did not help us to answer the serious questions that are being raised about this colossal step.

The First Minister said that Scotland is better prepared for independence than any other country in the world. I was surprised that he was so modest; I thought that he was going to go on to say "the universe". However, being prepared normally means being prepared for all eventualities. Let us, therefore, consider some of those possibilities.

The First Minister: Will the member give way?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

The First Minister: Will the member give way?

The Presiding Officer: The member has said that he is not giving way, Mr Salmond.

Willie Rennie: I want to establish whether the SNP has even considered what happens if its assertions about what will happen do not come to pass.

The First Minister: Will the member give way?

Willie Rennie: I will let the First Minister in in a second. Perhaps he can answer the questions that he has failed to answer in his white paper, which I am about to read out. What if the remainder of the UK says that we cannot use the pound as part of a

currency union? Is there a backup plan? What happens if we form a fiscal pact with the UK but it insists that we cannot borrow or spend any more? What happens to the Clyde if the Ministry of Defence orders go elsewhere? What happens to funding for our universities if the UK funding dries up? What happens if the UK does not want to buy our energy? Is the First Minister going to, for once, answer any of those questions?

The First Minister: What would happen is that the lights would go out in England, and nobody would want that—certainly, I would not advocate it.

Can Mr Rennie answer one simple question? We have set out how the transformation in childcare can be funded with independence by revenues coming into the Scottish exchequer. Can Mr Rennie explain to the chamber how such a transformation—which requires £700 million—could be funded under devolution?

Willie Rennie: I say this very gently to the First Minister: if he cannot even be trusted to match England on childcare now, why should I believe a single word that he says about it in 10 years' time? How can I believe a word that he says?

I notice that, yet again, the First Minister failed to answer the rest of the five questions that I asked. I am happy to take another intervention if he wants to answer the questions about the Clyde, the universities, the fiscal pact and the currency. He has no answers for those because he has not thought about the eventualities. They are serious and reasonable questions that most people hoped that the SNP would answer in the white paper, but none of those reasonable questions has even been considered, and the SNP is certainly not sharing the answers with us.

The SNP believes that it has a right and that it is right on everything and everyone else is wrong. The white paper is based on an assumption that the UK will agree to every single demand from a newly independent country. The SNP believes that people in the UK will take orders from a First Minister who has spent three years—probably 80 years—condemning them before declaring that we want to be independent from them. If we slam the door in their face, they may just lock it from the other side.

However, that is just the UK. The SNP expects that the other countries of the EU and NATO will take our instructions as well. The First Minister dodged my question when I intervened on his speech. Has he received any communications from any other country in the European Union about Scotland's membership of the EU and have such communications indicated at any stage that it might be difficult? Perhaps he does not want to give me the answer to that question, just like the many other questions that I have posed.

If it seriously expects any shift in the opinion polls, the SNP needs to start answering the questions that have been posed. There is little point in talking about anything else until it addresses the fundamental problems of an independent Scotland.

15:32

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): This is the day. It is our day, Scotland's day, the day that we can cradle in our arms "Scotland's Future" and hear the infant cries of a new country. On 18 September 2014, we will dispatch our child off to a new kind of school—one that recognises the worth of every infant and gives her wings to fly.

"The greatest gifts you can give your children are the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence",

says Denis Waitely in "The Psychology of Winning: Ten Qualities of a Total Winner". Perhaps some of my colleagues should read it. In an independent Scotland, with 1,140 hours of free childcare, we will not be clipping any wings. We will be giving children the power to fly with confidence.

In the white paper, we have set down the structures to make it work. We are shining a torch on our ambitions and showing everyone what a prosperous, fair and equal society would look like. That prospect excites me. It represents the values that I hold dearest and tells me not only that an independent Scotland can work, but that it will work. That is no vague concept or woolly notion. The 670 pages of the white paper are of intricate detail. Perhaps some people should read them. "Scotland's Future" is not a quick bedtime read; it is a blueprint for a future and every one of us should study it. Now we can see in concrete, verified terms what we can do as an independent nation, and I am immensely proud to see it projected out to every citizen in Scotland.

We can have a space at the world's tables of power. We can be heard in Europe, at the United Nations and on international matters. We can build a successful economy out of our own resources. We can be a caring and compassionate country. We can be exemplars to the rest of the world. With the power to make all our own decisions, we can prove that we are innovative, thoughtful and strategic long-term thinkers. Above all, we will be able genuinely to reflect the electorate's demands. They will give us the power to succeed. No longer will the people of Scotland be ruled by Governments in Westminster that they did not elect.

Never has the future of our country been so well considered and carefully planned. The white paper is a piece of history. There is a strong argument

that it is the most important political document to be produced since our country's nobles appealed to the Pope in the declaration of Arbroath in 1320. All of us here are included in that history and in making that history, and each of us is honoured to play a part in building the new and liberated Scotland. Is that not an incredible feeling?

At this landmark on our journey, we are joined together not only by a common purpose but by a common surge of hope and anticipation. We will bring about the birth of a new heritage of our new Scotland. "Scotland's Future" is a modern, hard-headed and realistic blueprint of our nation that is ready and waiting to be put into action.

In every way, the white paper reflects our values as people and the growing confidence that we have in ourselves. It points us to the new Scotland, which will be built on compassion, equality, tolerance, prosperity and innovation. It is a Scotland that offers every person in this land respect and dignity; which prizes free education and the right to improve ourselves; which generates wealth; and which encourages economic growth. It is a Scotland that treats immigrants with respect, which will close Dungavel and which will end the practice of dawn raids—I am immensely proud that we will do that. We will end the inhumane treatment of those who have exercised their legitimate right to seek asylum.

Westminster has diminished many such rights. It has also diminished key aspects of workers' rights. On independence, we will restore the 90-day consultation period for redundancies that affect 100 or more employees. The right to that was taken away by the Tories, backed by that lot over there—Labour.

What will that add up to? A Scotland that is free of the stifling hand of a Westminster Government that says that it wants us on the one hand but ignores our needs on the other. We will be able to dump the policies that have been inflicted on us and which do not reflect our priorities. We will be in charge of our own destiny.

We will have a future with our own place in Europe—with at least 11 MEPs instead of the current six, a commissioner and a greater voice in Brussels and Strasbourg to protect and grow our interests there. Europe has been good for smaller member nations. I cannot stand the people in this Parliament who think that it is okay to slag off smaller nations. We have proof that Europe has been good for smaller nations from Ireland, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Lithuania—which currently holds the EU presidency—and Croatia, which joined us only this summer. They are young, independent nations that prove that playing an active part in a global bloc of more than 550 million people is working. I do not notice any of

those countries seeking to go back to the old days of being part of a larger big brother.

I spoke at the radical independence conference at the weekend. That group has a declaration that sums up the position perfectly. It says that yes

“is a hope fashioned from knowledge. We know a better economy is possible because we have seen it in other nations.”

Johann Lamont: Will the member take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer: Christina McKelvie is in her last minute.

Christina McKelvie: “We know greater equality among citizens is possible because we have seen that in other nations. We know that ending poverty, reviving democracy and respecting our environment are possible because we have seen these things too.

And we know how to bring these things to Scotland. We must abandon 30 years of the”

Thatcherite

“politics of exploitation, the damning, corrosive exploitation that makes a few rich”

and

“the many lose. We must replace it with the politics of sharing, where we all gain from the riches of our land and the fruits of our labour.”

[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order. Let us hear the member, please.

Christina McKelvie: “It is a fine Scottish tradition; to find what works, to find out how it works and to make it work better. For centuries Scotland’s ingenuity has been a gift to the world. Now let it be a gift ... to ourselves.

Let us gift ourselves an economy ...

Look at the forces that stand behind NO. Look at the forces that stand behind YES.”

I tell people today to

“Choose your side.”

We have a solid case. We have the self-belief and the confidence, now let us make it happen.

15:38

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate and to examine the white paper. There is no doubt that we must look at the hype of the 670 pages against the reality. The reality is that the document lacks detail. It is full of assertions and riddled with inconsistencies.

We need just look at the transport section, which contains little on buses—maybe we will not do buses in an independent Scotland. It tells us that high-speed rail will be a priority, but there is nothing about how that will be funded. Where will

the billions of pounds for high-speed rail come from in an independent Scotland? It tells us that the road networks will be dualled by 2030 but that road travel will be decarbonised by 2050. Maybe we will have knocked down all the dualled roads by 2050.

The document puts off the difficult questions to another day. It acknowledges that fuel poverty is a “very real problem”. Indeed, with 29 per cent of Scottish households in fuel poverty, that is right—it is a very real problem. It is very unfortunate that out of the 670 pages, we have only three quarters of a page on fuel poverty.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): Will the member give way?

James Kelly: No thank you.

On that issue, the answer is, “We’ll set up an expert commission”. That is what will examine the issue and give us the answers on fuel poverty in an independent Scotland.

Let us look in a bit more detail at one issue that affects every constituency and every MSP: housing. The reality of housing in Scotland is that we have 155,000 on housing waiting lists. On current trends, we are 160,000 houses short of the 465,000 that are required by 2035. We built only 14,881 houses last year, which is the lowest number since world war two. We have a “housing crisis” and those are not my words—they are the words of Homes for Scotland.

Kevin Stewart: How many council houses did the Labour-Liberal Democrat Administrations build between 1999 and 2007? [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Order, please.

James Kelly: Perhaps we would be better to bring the Minister for Housing and Welfare to the Parliament to discuss Scotland’s housing crisis. I see that the housing minister is shaking her head.

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess): Does the member accept that more houses have been built under this SNP Administration than under previous Administrations, which had the budget to build more? Our budget has been cut, yet we are still building more houses at every level.

James Kelly: That is not the point. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. Order!

James Kelly: We are in the midst of a housing crisis and the housing minister has never come to the chamber to front a debate on housing. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. Mr Kelly, can you sit down for a moment?

James Kelly: The reality is—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Kelly! Can you sit down for a moment, please?

Could we please have some order in the chamber? This is a serious debate and all members should be heard. It is a serious matter.

Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP): We should have some serious questions.

James Kelly: It is a serious question.

Let us look at the Government's contribution on housing in the white paper. Out of 670 pages, how many did we get on housing? We got two and a half pages, which included a half-page colour picture of some houses.

Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

James Kelly: I am not taking an intervention.

All we have is fluff. We have had no detail; we have had no facts. The Government tells us that the housing crisis will be solved by fully flexible budgets. What does that say to constituents of mine who have been on the waiting list for a year?

It strikes me that this Government is shutting its eyes and hoping for the best under independence. The real question for someone who is living in overcrowded accommodation is: what is this Government doing? The Government is living in suspended animation. It does not have the answers currently and it does not have the answers in the white paper. It is insulting to bring forward a document that lacks the answers and is flimsy on the real issues.

It is a falsehood to pretend that the white paper's assertions can be delivered without cutting public spending and without raising taxes, while we face a multimillion-pound deficit. The people of Scotland will see through the farce of the white paper come 18 September next year.

15:44

Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP): Yesterday, the people of Scotland were presented with the most detailed independence blueprint imaginable that sets out the opportunities, the process and the reality of what a yes vote will look like. We already know the why. For the past 50 years, Scotland's views as expressed at the ballot box have diverged from those of the UK as a whole. David Cameron—supposedly our Prime Minister, too—can stand up in the House of Commons, turn round and look behind to 300 cheering Conservative members of Parliament. Just one of them was elected in Scotland. As the

white paper sets out so starkly, for 34 of the 68 years since 1945, we have been ruled by Governments that had no majority in Scotland. That is not democracy; it is tossing a coin, and Scotland deserves better.

Instead of that uncertainty every four or five years at election time when Scotland has to call heads or tails, let us have the certainty that every Government of this country must have the support of the voters of this country. That is more than a question for pundits on election night broadcasts in studios or constitutional theorists scratching their heads in seminar rooms—it matters, not least because the two main parties at Westminster are so close these days that it is often a case of heads they win, tails we lose. Today, we see the horror of £100 billion being wasted on upgrading Trident, the on-going victimisation of disabled people in welfare reform and the privatisation of Royal Mail, all of which are being done to us rather than by us.

Or we could look ahead. In the white paper, we see a signpost to another way on the economy, pensions, childcare and the minimum wage—you name it. There is no argument that explains why Scotland can make our own decisions on the health service but must leave the rest of the welfare state to Westminster; why we can manage justice but not security; and why we can be trusted with council tax but almost no other tax that we might name. On what Scotland is entrusted with now and what has had to be set out in the white paper for 2016, we toss a coin and health is devolved; we toss a coin again, and welfare is reserved.

The no side lacks any justification, philosophical consistency or clarity. However, it has a long list of uncertainties whose shadow hangs over the referendum, even if they have not yet properly been appreciated by the voters. In 10 years, will the UK still be a member of the European Union or, in the case of a no vote, will Scotland's exporters have been gutted by being wrenched out of that free-trade zone? When the UK Government has pandered to its back benchers and ended the Barnett formula, by how much more will the Scottish budget be cut? Will the UK still have anything resembling the welfare state and will people be working until they are 70? Perhaps most crucial of all for those of us who remember the Iraq war so clearly, will we have been dragged into another Iraq-style war for oil or even just for US Government hubris?

Endless broadcasts about the meaning of a yes vote dominate the television news in living rooms up and down the country, but where is the same scrutiny being giving to the consequences of voting no? The people of Scotland deserve answers, but we will not get them, because we cannot get them. The central hypocrisy of those in

the no campaign is to hold the yes campaign to standards that they themselves fail to meet. Is there any amount of detail that would have been sufficient for the no parties? Alistair Darling could have been presented with the 10 commandments on the slopes of Mount Sinai and he would have dismissed them, asking whether the commandment to “Honour thy father and mother” includes adoptive parents and saying that we should be told.

The real purpose is obfuscation and distraction from the central point of principle, which is that Scotland's future should be in Scotland's hands. Certainty lies in one place—when Scotland's Government is answerable to Scotland's people for its decisions and we can be certain that we get the Governments that we elect and the society that we vote for.

If we become two equally sovereign nations, the relationship between Edinburgh and London will transform overnight. It is strange that some people argue that the UK would seek to cut off its nose to spite its face the day after a yes vote. If it would do so, what does that say about how we are seen and suffered as part of the union? Instead of relying on the meagre influence of 59 beleaguered and, let us face it, these days usually outvoted MPs, Scotland could depend on the UK's national interest—that base interest of maintaining stability, continuity and business—and all would come to the table with minds set on a speedy and effective resolution.

With a yes vote, Scotland's voice at Westminster will be drowned out no more. Scotland will be free to govern all our own affairs as we see fit, but we can work together with our partners on our own terms where those interests align—whether that is on currency, energy, mutual defence or any of the rest of the white paper's vision of friendly co-operation. Frankly, that vision is more sympathetic towards the attitudes of the post-independence UK Government than those parties that wish us to continue to be ruled by that Government.

That is what I see as the best of both worlds, and it is far better than continuing to be governed by the toss of a coin.

15:50

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): We are told that we have before us the most impressive blueprint ever imaginable—there is truly no end to the modesty of this Scottish Government. On page 581 at the end of the document, the white paper even helpfully asks “How can I ask more questions?”, but it tells us:

“We expect you to find the answers to your questions here.”

The white paper manages to go through 650 questions, but somehow it escapes answering all the central questions, all the meaningful questions and all the questions that people actually asked in advance of its publication.

The First Minister began today by telling us that he was disappointed in Alistair Darling because, within an hour of its release, Alistair Darling was already giving interviews rubbishing the white paper. I, too, was disappointed in Alistair Darling because it took him an hour before he gave interviews rubbishing the white paper.

Let us look at some serious issues that the white paper does not properly address. Central to the debate are the public finances that Scotland would not only inherit but have to deal with over the first five, 10, 15 or 20 years of a separate Scotland. In a report published just over a week ago, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which is a heavily respected independent organisation, said:

“the main conclusion of our analysis is that a significant further fiscal tightening would be required in Scotland, on top of that already announced by the UK government”.

That was the IFS's central conclusion, which no amount of obfuscation or cherry picking from later sections of the IFS report will hide. In a separate Scotland, we would have to undergo further fiscal tightening in order to manage the public finances and in order to balance the books.

Therefore, it is disappointing to see that the white paper gives only a single year's figures looking forward. As we all know, page 75 looks only at what the position would be in 2016-17. There is nothing about 2017-18, nothing about 2018-19 and nothing at all for any year after that. How is it possible to produce such a document without giving anything on future years? Even compared to the annual budget document that is produced for this devolved Parliament, the information in the white paper is extremely thin—a single page.

When, just a couple of hours ago at question time, I asked the cabinet secretary whether the Scottish Government has done any projections for post 2016-17, he was unable to give a straight answer. Therefore, I ask the Government ministers now—I do not know which of them will sum up today's debate—whether they have done projections that go beyond the first year of separation. If so, why have those projections not been published? If not, how on earth can they argue that they are taking a long-term positive view about Scotland when they have not even done any of the sums?

We know from the cabinet secretary's paper that was released accidentally that separation would involve additional costs. At paragraph 43 of his

report to the Cabinet just over a year ago, he accepts:

“Undoubtedly, there will be a cost associated with setting up and running the necessary institutions and in some cases these are likely to be significant.”

The finance secretary accepts in private that there will be significant costs, but the white paper says nothing about the costs that would be incurred in the first year of separation.

At paragraph 45 of that same report, the finance secretary says:

“Corresponding annual costs of tax administration in Scotland would on this basis be expected to be in the region of £575m to £625m.”

That is the cost of setting up a revenue Scotland that is capable of dealing with all the taxes with which it would have to deal, but there is nothing about that in the white paper. If the Scottish Government wants to be taken seriously, it must tell us what all the costs will be and what the downsides and disadvantages will be, too.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are in your final minute.

Gavin Brown: That is nowhere more the case than in the discussion of currency, which gets about two and a half pages of treatment in this 650-page document that asserts, once again, that we would form a currency union and keep the pound. The First Minister did everything that he could to avoid answering questions on the television last night when the matter was put to him. When asked whether he could say with certainty that we would definitely get the pound, he gave every answer under the sun while trying to avoid saying whether we would. He even struggled to accept that, ultimately, the rest of the United Kingdom would have the right to say no, should it wish to do so. We have nothing but assertion. More important, there is absolutely nothing in the white paper about what the Scottish Government would do if there was no currency union.

I challenge any speaker from the Government or the yes side to tell us what they would do if the rest of the United Kingdom decided not to enter into a currency union. That is a possibility. They point out some advantages to the UK of entering into a currency union, but there are many downsides that they seem unable to acknowledge. In that eventuality, what would they do? Scotland deserves an answer to that question today.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There is no extra time at all in the debate.

15:56

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Last week in the chamber, we

had some excellent personal and emotional speeches about individual freedoms and equalities during the stage 1 debate on the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill. Today, a similar emotion flows on the SNP benches in relation to the freedom and equality that we seek for our country, Scotland, and its citizens.

In a few months, it will be 40 years since I joined the Scottish National Party. Getting to the point at which we have a white paper on Scotland's future has been a long, hard slog for not only many on these benches but, more important, as Mark McDonald said, the thousands of members and supporters of the SNP for many decades. Some of us have been more closely involved than others in that individual struggle and sacrifice. It is entirely due to the opportunity that I had to observe Westminster and how it works at close quarters that I came to realise that the legislators and their advisers knew nothing and cared less about Scotland and its needs and that full self-government is the best way for Scotland's citizens to be served by their legislators and for the country as a whole to reach its full potential.

That belief was further reinforced during my 14 years working in the oil and gas industry, when I saw those resources squandered by the Westminster Government. For successive UK Governments to swallow up the revenue from those finite resources was a scandal. We are the only country bar Iran not to have an oil fund—I will come back to that. Fortunately, voting yes can stop that and begin to leave a legacy for future generations.

In an independent Scotland, we would have full responsibility for oil and gas reserves and would maximise the safe production of those reserves. I welcome Sir Ian Wood's interim report on the review of maximising recovery from the UK continental shelf, in which he comments that fiscal instability is a significant factor in underperformance in the UK basin. Over the past decade, there have been 16 subsequent changes to the fiscal regime. Those frequent changes—which have often been made without prior consultation with the industry—have earned the UK a reputation for fiscal instability, inhibiting new investment and, more important, decreasing the lifespan of some fields and damaging the Scottish economy.

There is no doubt that operators place a big premium on working under a stable and predictable tax regime, so that tax returns from investments can be appropriately evaluated. That stability is also important to underpin Aberdeen's position as the oil and gas capital of Europe, a position that has built up over many decades. It is recognised as a centre of excellence in the field.

In 2012, oil and gas production is estimated to have contributed around £22 billion to the Scottish gross domestic product. In 2013, oil and gas was the largest single sector in the FTSE 100 index of leading companies. It is a sector in which Scottish firms are leading and global players.

Scotland has the vast bulk of the UK's oil and gas reserves, which has an estimated wholesale value of £1.5 trillion. As well as in the North Sea, there are substantial reserves west of Scotland including, as Chic Brodie has discovered, in the Clyde. It is estimated that we have the largest conventional oil reserve in the EU and around 60 per cent of the EU's total reserves. We also have the second largest volume of proven gas reserves after the Netherlands. Despite that, Ruth Davidson says that we would not be in the EU.

Ruth Davidson: What would the member say to Tony Mackay of Mackay Consultants—an oil and gas consultancy firm—who said it is unrealistic to have an oil fund for

“two main reasons: the declining oil revenues; and the SNP's commitments to a high level of public spending. There would therefore be little or no money left to invest in an oil fund.”

Maureen Watt: I am so fed up with hearing that Scotland is too poor and stupid to look after its reserves.

On 18 September next year, Scotland will have the opportunity to gain the stewardship of the oil and gas assets for the benefit of the nation. We can introduce a stable and predictable fiscal regime, with an expert commission established to consider appropriate fiscal and regulatory regimes. We can use our position as a major hydrocarbon producer to drive the most ambitious low-carbon economy transformation in our country.

Scotland has many natural competitive advantages for the development of carbon capture and storage, for example, yet Westminster drags its feet on that. Of course we can establish an oil fund; of course we can look after ourselves. I support the motion with the whole of my being.

16:02

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): The white paper was meant to show how the goose would lay the golden egg or how, on 19 September 2014, we would all be sitting at the bottom of the rainbow luxuriating in free pots of gold. However, like all fairy tales, we were soon returned to reality, this time by the thud of a white paper that is a cross between a fantasy novel and an SNP manifesto—two things that, incidentally, are not entirely unrelated.

Yesterday, the First Minister, accompanied by the Deputy First Minister in her new designer

threads, took to the catwalk at the science centre to launch the most detailed blueprint for independence ever produced. We know that the First Minister is never one to undersell himself—he is a man who cannot point to a molehill without comparing it to Ben Nevis—but even for him, yesterday's launch was a bragging session too far. The “blueprint” or “vision statement”—what it is called depends on which interview one listened to—comes with all the detail and credibility of the Government's EU legal advice.

The First Minister claims that the currency in an independent Scotland would be sterling. The currency of the white paper is assertion, flannel and wishful thinking. It promotes a vision of a country where everything that is bad miraculously disappears and everything that is good in life just gets better—all with a simple cross on a ballot paper. It is a place with its economy based on oil that will never run out; where everything is green, but we scrap air passenger duty and build dual carriageways; where the bank of a foreign country controls the currency but, at the same time, we have independence; and where a currency once a millstone round our neck becomes the option of common sense.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Will the member take an intervention?

Neil Findlay: No, thank you, Mr Harvie.

The white paper promotes a vision of a country where business competition increases but so does the minimum wage; where childcare is expanded but just not now; where Royal Mail is renationalised but someone else pays for it; where we become a progressive beacon but where bankers and big businesses get a corporation tax cut of £350 million a year—a policy that even Blair Jenkins disowns—

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Neil Findlay: No, thank you.

It is a land where an oil fund will magically appear from the oil fund tree and where everything will be better, yet it will cost us nothing. That is the mirage, the charade, the fantasy that the SNP expects the people of Scotland to swallow.

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): Will the member take an intervention?

Neil Findlay: No, thank you.

If we apply that principle to our lives, our families and our communities, it is like saying that our family income will rise and our lives will be better in every way, that we can have free childcare, a better pension and increased benefits,

and that we will pay less tax into the bargain. It is just not credible.

The one thing that is certain from the white paper is that we will see a race to the bottom on taxation. The highly respected economist and assistant secretary of the STUC, Stephen Boyd, said that the Scottish Government's corporation tax paper was

"an excruciatingly awful piece of work",

in which

"every argument presented is easily debunked".

That sentiment was echoed by the director of the Jimmy Reid Foundation, Robin McAlpine, who is no friend of ours—he is an independence supporter.

Jim Eadie: Will the member give way on that point?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member has indicated that he is not giving way.

Neil Findlay: Robin McAlpine revealed that Salmond's faith in the ability of reduced business rates to increase output

"comes from a complex computer model ... built on a series of assumptions ... one of which is that tax cuts always create growth".

The frustrations that Boyd and McAlpine expressed are understandable. The SNP has yet to produce any evidence to back up its corporation tax claims, as is acknowledged by Joseph Stiglitz, who is one of the First Minister's economic advisers.

I reject that approach in its entirety. I would like to see a different Scotland: one that fully finances public services, that redistributes our wealth through progressive taxation, that tackles wealth and health inequality and poverty—

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Neil Findlay: No, thank you.

I would like to see a Scotland that lifts living standards, that democratises local government and that puts employment at the centre of a national crusade. That requires real political change and a challenge to the neo-liberal orthodoxy, which, incredibly, even after its utter and abject failure—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Doris.

Neil Findlay: Even after its utter and abject failure, that orthodoxy is at the economic core of the white paper. Mike Russell—wherever he is; I think that he has been locked in a cupboard till after the referendum—must be delighted.

I believe that we will be much more able to challenge that orthodoxy if we work with progressive movements across the UK. Progressive reforms occur not by accident but through unity, solidarity and the action of working people across the UK. I want to see enhanced devolution, which is a position that the majority of Scots favour. Enhanced devolution would see us retaining our links with our friends and relatives across the UK, while maintaining the ability to move money around the country to areas of most need. That is a good thing.

I give way to no one in my love for my country, but I love my community, its people and my friends and relatives across the UK, too. It is because of that and because of where I come from and the values that my community has instilled in me—values of solidarity, co-operation and justice—that I am a socialist, not a nationalist. It is for those reasons that I will be voting no—a no for change—and I recommend that other people do so, too.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Stuart McMillan to be followed by Patrick Harvie.

We are running out of time in the debate.

16:09

Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP): I will try to lighten the mood after Neil Findlay's contribution.

I am delighted to speak in the debate. The publication of the independence white paper and the debate that is taking place on it mark an historic moment for everyone who lives in Scotland. The white paper provides us with a comprehensive outline of the opportunities that await an independent Scottish nation. We need an honest, open and public debate on the referendum and on independence, and I believe that the public are up for that debate. Are the politicians from the no side up for that debate?

A number of issues have already been raised, and many more will be raised. It is up to the politicians on the other side to put forward their case. Now that we have the Scottish Government's white paper on the proposals for an independent Scotland, it is time for the other side to put up its proposals for staying part of the UK. When will that document be published?

That very issue arose during the stage 3 debate on the Scottish Independence Referendum Bill on 14 November. In that debate, Tavish Scott, who I notice is not in the chamber, said:

"I believe that the onus is on those of us who represent the best of both worlds—the continuance of Scotland within the United Kingdom—to make a strong case for more powers for this Parliament, as I have always done. ... I entirely concede to Bruce Crawford the point, which he has made to me on many occasions, that the onus is on those

of us who make that case to come up with a plan. Personally, I am happy to accept that challenge.”—[*Official Report*, 14 November 2013; c 24527.]

So far this afternoon we have heard no plan whatsoever from the no side.

Iain Gray: Will the member give way?

Stuart McMillan: I am sorry—the member did not let me in last week so I am not going to bother letting him in now.

As far as this side of the chamber and the debate are concerned, we have delivered with the publication of the white paper, “Scotland’s Future”. The public deserve the same respect from the no campaign.

Independence is the natural choice for Scotland and I cannot for the life of me think how a positive case for remaining in the union can be made given that, within that very structure, one in four children grows up in poverty and we have the bedroom tax and a rise in food banks. The benefits of independence are clear for all to see. We will be able to access our own resources; we will have an oil fund for future generations—which, I say to Mr Gray, will be paid for from oil and gas revenues; public services will be kept in public hands; we will get the Government that we vote for; and we will be able to remove Trident from Scotland’s waters. Those are just a few of the many many gains that independence will bring; we have already heard about others this afternoon and there will be more to come.

As for Trident and defence, this is an issue on which Scotland can make huge gains and strides forward. The white paper makes it abundantly clear that Faslane will be kept open and will become the main naval base and joint forces headquarters in an independent Scotland. There will be no more weapons of mass destruction on the Clyde because Trident will be removed.

Drew Smith: Will the member give way?

Stuart McMillan: I am sorry, but no.

Unlike the UK Government, whose short-lived Faslane annexation policy was decimated within hours and from which it was forced to backtrack, this Scottish Government provides a long and clear future for Faslane and its workforce.

I accept that removing Trident alone will not be enough for some people to vote yes—although it might be enough for many—but the white paper is more detailed than that. Maintaining Faslane’s future is also a strong selling point for a yes vote next year. After all, one of the five key defence priorities is to reconfigure the defence estate inherited at the point of independence to meet Scotland’s needs. Retaining Faslane as a fully operational naval base and the addition of a joint

forces HQ will sustain existing military personnel numbers at the base; moreover, civilian posts will be needed to support these operations and construction work will be required to reshape Faslane to the needs of a conventional Scottish defence force.

As for another aspect of defence capabilities, the recent events on the Clyde involving BAE Systems indicate the importance of shipbuilding to not only the Scottish economy but the Scottish psyche. Scots still have a huge admiration for the industry and know that Clyde-built ships are still world-class ships; in fact, any nation would be proud to have the kind of ships that are still built on the Clyde. Page 248 of the white paper mentions the “procurement of ... new frigates”, while page 249 also talks about the procurement of “offshore patrol vessels”. Working where appropriate with other nations on joint procurement is an area where defence opportunities will assist the Scottish defence industry but the important point is that Scotland will actually have the choice of whether we want to do that or not.

Moreover, page 243 of the white paper sets out a vision for

“Defence capabilities after 10 years”

of

“15,000 regular and 5,000 reserve personnel across land, air and maritime forces”.

That is the position that we will work towards after independence, and the transitional arrangements over the 10-year period offer a sensible phased approach to providing an appropriate defence force.

Scotland has had to take more than its fair share of defence cuts. Defence employment has fallen from 24,680 in 2000 to 15,340 in 2013; defence spending in Scotland is £1.4 billion less than the £3.3 billion that we contribute; and I find it incredible that there are no maritime patrol aircraft or major surface ships based in Scotland, despite its being a maritime nation. This white paper is a blueprint for a nation reborn, a blueprint for an appropriately sized defence force and a blueprint for ridding Scotland of Trident once and for all. As Donald Dewar once said:

“I like the sound of that.”

16:14

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I do not believe that most voters—certainly most undecided voters—regard independence as a utopia or a disaster, and I do not think that they will be convinced by many speeches over the next 10 months that try to portray it in those terms. I agree with Neil Findlay that we should not present

the argument for independence in terms of the best possible world that we could achieve or the answer to every problem. As a supporter of a yes vote, I try not to do so, and I hope that Neil Findlay and other supporters of a no vote will not present independence as a different kind of fairy story, with villains and tangled woods full of fears and trepidation. We are talking not about utopia or disaster but about a balance of risks and opportunities, and we should be honest about both. I will try to be honest about why I think that there are more opportunities than risks in the debate.

Neil Findlay: I certainly appreciate the sentiments that Patrick Harvie has expressed, but will he also appeal for the debate to be held respectfully? When people express an opposing view, the diatribes and vile stuff that are expressed online against them are unacceptable.

Patrick Harvie: I take the point. We all need to try not to pay too much attention to the small number on both sides who behave in that way. If we want to change the tone, we need to try to rise above that.

The Equality Network debate on independence a few months ago in Glasgow was an example of how the debate can be conducted in a spirit of not only respect but friendship. I hope that we all aspire to that.

In reality, most people—including many on the no side—will find things in the white paper that they can agree with as well as things that they disagree with. As a supporter of a yes vote, I can find things in it that I strongly agree with and things that I disagree with. If I had in my other hand the no campaign's prospectus for staying in the union, I would be able to compare and contrast the documents, but I have nothing in that hand. Actually, that is not quite right; I now have in it the better together campaign's little newsletter, which was, I think, published on the same day. It has given me a very nice crossword and a recipe for raspberry brownies. At least the better together campaign is not telling us that there will be no raspberry brownies in an independent Scotland. I might give the recipe a try.

My party is very comfortable in encompassing all shades of opinion in the debate. We have had a clear majority in favour of Scottish independence for longer than I have been a party member, but we have entirely failed to fall out about the matter because we are defined by a different agenda. All of us, whatever our opinion on the independence question, want to use the debate to ask the fundamental question: what kind of society do we want to live in? If both sides could manage the debate at that level, Scotland would be in a much better position to move forward, whatever result the Scottish people choose.

I feel passionately enthusiastic about many of the principles that the Scottish Government has set out in its white paper, such as the principles on welfare, including childcare, whatever people think that we should or could do about that under devolution. The principles that the Scottish Government has set out on welfare are extremely impressive and go a huge distance towards challenging the Westminster welfare agenda. However, there should be greater recognition of unpaid economic activity as part of the welfare system. I see that Jim Eadie will shortly host a discussion on the citizens income. Some of that agenda will be spelled out in that discussion, I think.

There is a humane and compassionate approach to asylum and immigration, and a commitment to the removal of Trident. The Scottish Government needs to firm up its language on the timescale of that commitment and rule out any possibility that it will allow nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered vessels from other countries to operate in Scottish waters.

The desire to offer global leadership on climate change is fundamentally important. We can do that with credibility only if we act more radically and urgently to meet our domestic commitments.

There are also areas on which I will offer an alternative viewpoint. Gavin Brown called for someone to talk about an alternative currency agenda. I think that he knows that many of us accept the possibility that continued use of the pound might be a reasonable transition step, but we see it as a transition to deeper independence. In response to Gavin Brown's question about the Bank of England and the Scottish Government's proposition, we must remember that the whole UK nationalised the Bank of England, that the whole of the UK's resources went into that act and that the whole UK owns the Bank of England. Anyone who suggests that the UK Government and even Scottish representatives in the UK Government parties should oppose the Scottish Government's proposed plan need to answer this question: why is it that Scotland would not be entitled to a share of shared assets?

Gavin Brown: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): The member is in his last minute.

Patrick Harvie: There is not time to go into the issues of policy on corporation tax, aviation tax, the oil industry and transport, but I have done that before on many occasions. However, there are questions of detail on the transition that deserve scrutiny, which will not be achieved in depth in a chamber debate. I repeat my call for a process of parliamentary scrutiny by both sides in public and on the record on those questions of detail.

16:21

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): In today's Aberdeen *Evening Express*, the comment section is headed "Take part in debate on future" and states:

"The release of the Scottish Government's White Paper on independence is a major step on the road that leads our nation to September 18 next year. This is the SNP setting out its stall on its vision of the future for Scotland if the people say yes in the referendum. No doubt it will set off a firestorm of debate—one that cannot be restricted to the political classes."

Thank God that it will not be restricted only to the political classes, given some of the nonsense that has been spoken here today—and some of the personalisation, which I think needs to be taken out of the debate.

The article continues:

"Everyone in the country needs to be involved. We must all look closely at what is being offered by both sides. We must not only listen to the debate, but also ask questions about what it means for each of us. Let's make sure when we get to the ballot box we know what we are voting for and why."

I think that the white paper that was published yesterday will help folk to form a view in the debate.

"Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland" is a comprehensive blueprint for the future of this country. Patrick Harvie is right: like him, I can hold the document in one hand, but I have nothing from the better together side in the other. I think that it is unlikely that we will ever see such a document; if we did, in my opinion, it would be an agenda for austerity, decline and decimation of the welfare state that we all know and love.

I was quite appalled by some of the things that were said yesterday about some of the white paper's proposals. Today, many folk have already talked about the ambitious, transformational change that can be made to childcare. As far as I am concerned, the childcare proposals in the white paper will benefit the nation and future generations.

We have heard today from members of Opposition parties a claim that all of that could be done now under devolution, but no one from those parties—not one person—has said where the money could come from. In order to gain that transformational change, we need control of the taxation system, which currently lies with Westminster. I would have given some of our unionist opponents some credit today if they had stood up and said, "You know what? You're absolutely right. We should negotiate with Westminster to try and ensure that any taxation raised through that policy comes back to Scotland to further fund it." However, they have not got the

gumption to put forward a proposal on that, never mind anything else. I think the reason for that is that they are all stuck in the Westminster rut. The reality is that our near neighbours do not fear such changes.

Iain Gray: The member makes an interesting point. The principle that, where we increase tax receipts, we should get the benefit of that was one of the fundamental principles behind the Calman proposals, which we had the guts to propose and which are being legislated for. I think that Mr Stewart opposed them up to the last.

Kevin Stewart: Calman was a joke as far as I am concerned.

Let us look at what others have said about the proposals from Labour's devolution commission. In response to the devolution commission's report, John Downie, the director of public affairs at the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations said:

"it looks as if Scottish Labour is only prepared to make a few tweaks around the edges of the system rather than the radical changes which are desperately needed to meet the aspirations of the Scottish people."

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

Kevin Stewart: Some folks here want to tinker at the edges and do not want to see transformational change. In my opinion, that is not good enough for Scotland. That is why I will vote yes today, and I urge people to vote yes next September.

16:26

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I really hoped for a bold and ambitious white paper yesterday, because I came into politics to look for and debate bold and ambitious ideas to improve our country. However, within a short time yesterday morning, I knew that the document was not the compelling, bold and ambitious vision for Scotland that people had hoped for. It was clear to me on opening the white paper that it is a mix of manifesto commitments, presumably from the SNP, and assertions of what the yes campaign would like its negotiating position to be after a yes vote.

It is a political document, and there was carte blanche for a vision of a new, thriving Scotland: a new health service to keep people healthy and slash obesity, smoking, heart disease, cancer and dementia; better education for every child; new industries; a cultural and sporting nation. But no—it is a strange mix of a few election promises in response to Labour and Liberal calls for action on childcare and Ed Miliband's commitment on energy prices, intermingled with an outline of the

ideal negotiating position within the UK and the ideal outcome of negotiations with the EU.

On the EU, Nicola Sturgeon said yesterday that she does not want

“special arrangements to apply to Scotland”,

just

“the arrangements that apply to us now”.—[*Official Report*, 26 November 2013; c 24868.]

It may have escaped her attention, but the UK has special arrangements within the EU. It has the opt-out and the rebate. Leave the UK and we would leave those special arrangements behind. José Manuel Barroso has said so, stating:

“A new state, if it wants to join the EU, has to apply to become a member of the EU”.

We heard this morning on Radio Scotland that the Commission has said that, as a new country, Scotland would have to join the euro. I say to the First Minister that there would be no special arrangements and no current arrangements. At best, the white paper glosses over those facts.

On employment, there is plenty of detail in the white paper that outlines what powers a new Scottish Government would have, but that is a given. We know that reserved powers would transfer over in a new state. The manifesto bit, or the vision bit, falls way short. I do not see any particular ideas to address the persistent position whereby, in Scotland, one young person in four is out of work.

There are no commitments or ideas on employee or women's representation on company boards, just lots about consultations. Why not commit? Every day, we hear the SNP say that it believes that Scotland will be better under independence, and every day it says, “We will take action when we have those powers.” This was its chance. Shona Robison has said that she will introduce gender quotas for public boards when she gets the power. What does the white paper say?

“The Scottish Government will consult on a target for female representation on ... public boards ... and, if necessary, we will legislate as appropriate.”

There are four caveats and no commitment. Why not commit?

The Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport (Shona Robison): I think that that is a pretty strong commitment. Can the member say what the Labour commitment is, or is it all talk and no action from the Opposition benches?

Jenny Marra: I am glad that the minister said that there is a strong commitment. Maybe she can amend the white paper, so that it gives that commitment—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Jenny Marra: Members should let me explain. We have debated the issue in the Parliament. The Equality Act 2010, which Harriet Harman took through the House of Commons, gives the Government the power to have gender quotas on public boards now, but the Government cannot even commit to doing that when it gets the powers that are promised in its white paper.

The white paper ducks an honest debate on pensions. In it, the SNP continues to assert that it will pay a higher pension to more people, without any indication of how much that will cost and how it will be paid for. The SNP has ignored the questions of experts such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, the IFS and others, who urged the Scottish Government to tell us exactly how much pension liability it would have, how that would be paid for and how the Government would work cross-border with the UK Government to meet EU rules on pensions. Instead, we have no indication of costs and how they will be met. Pensions are such an important issue for everyone in this country, and we need more detail.

Linda Fabiani: Will the member give way?

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

Jenny Marra: The truth is that our pension system works because it is built on the strength of our larger workforce across the whole United Kingdom. It is one of those larger shared risks and opportunities. That is why Labour has been able to commit to eradicating the bedroom tax in 2015—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please let Ms Marra finish, so that she can draw to a close.

Jenny Marra: Can I have some more time?

By redistributing money in our pension system from the highest earners to those who need it most—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close now.

Jenny Marra: The white paper falls short of all our expectations for a better Scotland. Maybe we should put our heads together on new ideas and talk about the powers to match the aspirations.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Sandra White, who has four minutes.

16:31

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I will do as much as I can.

Pensions are a major issue. If Ms Marra reads the fantastic document that is the white paper, she will see—oh, I see that she has it. Great—maybe she will read it; if she does, she will find that there are many pages on pensions.

We have heard constantly from members of all the unionist parties—let us remember, they are better together—that they cannot see this or that in the fantastic document that has been given to the Scottish people and is about not just my future but the Scottish people's future. However, I do not see anything from a unionist party, apart from perhaps that recipe that Patrick Harvie mentioned.

It is rather condescending of Opposition members to come to the Parliament, look at the white paper and then present nothing whatever of their own. I would like someone to tell me when they will produce a paper that says what is best about staying in the union. Maybe then we could have a proper debate—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can we have a little courtesy for Sandra White, please?

Sandra White: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I do not think that it is necessarily just about me—it is just the Opposition benches.

I echo what my SNP colleagues said about the significance of this debate and indeed this week, which has seen the publication of “Scotland's Future”, of which I am enormously proud. It is a privilege for me to be able to take part in the debate, when others could have stood here—I wish that they could have been here to see this day.

As many members have said, the white paper sets out a vision for Scotland and a choice for Scotland, made in Scotland, for the people of Scotland. We will have no more Westminster Governments for which we have not voted. We will have no more iniquitous policies, such as the bedroom tax—I remind Jenny Marra that the Labour Party brought the bedroom tax in first; let us not forget about that. The people of Scotland will be able to get the Government that they vote for, as Marco Biagi said.

There are many issues that I would like to talk about. An issue that is very often raised in my constituency and in other members' constituencies is care for the elderly. Free personal care is fantastic and came from this Parliament, but many people seem to forget that £40 million has been taken away from the elderly by the Westminster Government through attendance allowance cuts. I wonder whether we can get that back. I just want to say to my constituents and the people of Scotland that free personal care will continue in an independent Scotland.

The concessionary fares policy is a fantastic offer for elderly people because it allows them to get out and about and keep fit and healthy. We must remember that it is under threat from Labour's cuts, but it will continue in an independent Scotland.

Jenny Marra talked about pensions.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are in your last 40 seconds.

Sandra White: I wanted more time to talk about pensions, which will continue in an independent Scotland, but at a better rate of £160 a week. What chance do pensioners in Scotland have with a Westminster Government? They get less money and more fuel poverty. It is time that we stood up for our country and our people—pensioners and others.

16:35

Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con): Nothing could be more important than the future of Scotland. We care about that for ourselves, for our families, for our friends and for our fellow countrymen and women. The debate has illustrated the depth of feeling and passion that the issue inspires.

However, there is a paradox, in that the white paper, “Scotland's Future”, is not a blueprint for the future of Scotland. There is an irony in the fact that that much-vaunted guide for the journey to independence is an extraordinary brew of aspiration, fantasy, fiction, wish-lists, pledges with no price tags, and some cop-outs. It is actually a do-it-yourself constitutional map with scattered destinations, enticing resort descriptions and some roads under construction; the rest is blank, with an invitation to people to colour it in for themselves.

When we separate out what the document presents as absolute, unconditional fact, on analysis, we find that it is nothing of the sort. Let us take Europe. Page 206 of the document says:

“We will continue to be a member of the EU and will have a seat at the top table”.

What does the first part of that sentence actually mean? Membership of the EU is not within Alex Salmond's control, but if, under article 48, all the member states of the EU agree to vary EU treaties, Scotland may be allowed to join as an accession state, subject to conditions that we do not know. The only precedent that I have been able to find for a state joining the EU by that route is Croatia, which used articles 48 and 49, and the process took 10 years. It would probably be simpler to proceed under article 49 as a new member state, which is what every accepted current authority anticipates—

Mark McDonald: I appreciate that the member is entitled to her view on the issue, but does she accept that her views on Scotland's place in the EU are rendered somewhat awkward because of the fact that her party is planning to hold a referendum on whether Scotland, as part of the UK, continues as a member of the EU?

Annabel Goldie: That is another remarkable paradox: my party is prepared to give voters a say but the member's party is prepared to keep schtum and give voters no say in whatever conditions it negotiates for an independent Scotland in the EU. How bizarre is that?

The second part of the sentence says that we "will have a seat at the top table".

However much the SNP might dislike this, the three powerhouses in the EU are currently Germany, France and the UK—that is universally acknowledged. *[Interruption.]* SNP members should not ask me; they should ask the other member states in the EU. If we become a member state, we will probably be number 29 or 30. However, the three powerhouses will still be Germany, France and the rest of the UK, so where is that top table?

On border controls—

Dr Allan: Will the member give way?

Annabel Goldie: I want to make progress.

Page 489 in the "Q&A" section asks whether we will be in the common travel area with the rest of the UK, and the answer is yes. In an ideal world, we would like that, but if it is a condition of joining the EU, we will have to accept the Schengen agreement, from which the rest of the UK has opted out, and we will not be able to prevent the rest of the UK from installing border controls to control entry to the rest of the UK. Those are another two central issues that will be beyond Alex Salmond's control.

Surprisingly, on finance and the economy, the white paper contains one absolute statement that is true. Page 72 says:

"Scotland is currently running an estimated fiscal deficit".

Yes, it is. In fact, for 20 of the past 21 years, Scotland has run a fiscal deficit.

However, the real magnitude of this inconvenient truth for Alex Salmond is highlighted by two sources. Surprisingly, one is in his own document, the white paper itself. Only one of its pages is devoted to the issue. We are given tax and spending figures for one year only—2016-17, the first year of independence. The question arises: why are there not further projections? The conclusion can only be that to make further projections would be dangerous because they

would be either so guarded and canny that they would raise justifiable fears about the deficit, or so rosy as to be utterly incredible.

The second source is the IFS report, to which various members have referred. That report lays bare the fiscal gap and the likelihood of increased taxes, which Gavin Brown covered incisively. When that alarming analysis is set against the white paper's range of spending commitments, with no price tag attached, the complete uncertainty of our future finances is there for all to see.

However, there is one certainty in the white paper. It is not a certainty that gets much attention, which is, in itself, surprising, given the paucity of certainties in the other 649 pages, but it is there. I refer to job losses in defence, whether directly, in Faslane and our naval shipyards, or in the many excellent and highly skilled Scottish companies that support defence technology. Their core activity depends on a United Kingdom strategic defence facility, and an independent Scotland can neither equal nor replicate that. Alex Salmond can argue it broadways, sideways and longways, but everybody working in that arena knows that job losses will follow independence.

In conclusion, the white paper does not address why I have to be made a foreigner to my family and friends in the rest of the UK.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in her last 15 seconds.

Annabel Goldie: Why is the natural connection that I feel to so many people throughout the UK to be severed?

For the future of Scotland—my country—I reject the motion, and for the future of my country, I support the amendment.

16:42

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab): This has been an important and long-awaited debate. For months, dozens of questions about the implications of independence have received holding replies promising that all the answers will be in this one document. Therefore, as far as the Scottish Parliament is concerned, this debate should be the start of a process, not the end. The Parliament may not have been the venue for the launch of the white paper, but it must now be allowed to do its job of—as Patrick Harvie said—scrutinising the claims that have been made.

The vote next September has been described as the most important decision that Scotland will ever make. It has been made clear by all sides

that the result of the vote should be considered to be definitive, at least for a generation. Arguments must be tested and assertion must be subject to a challenge. A parallel has been drawn with the Labour Government's white paper that set out its proposals for this Parliament and informed the debate around it. However, this white paper attempts to be two things at once: a manual setting out the facts of an independent Scotland; and, as Jenny Marra said, a manifesto for the SNP. I believe that it falls down on both points but particularly as a manifesto, because a manifesto should set out a vision for fulfilling a mandate, but the referendum next September cannot provide a mandate for actions that are beyond the power of a Scottish Government alone, independent or not. A yes vote would not mean that the EU had to accept Scotland into its membership on Scotland's terms alone. The rest of the UK cannot be forced to agree a currency union just because it might suit the interests of an independent Scotland. To put such proposals, which are negotiating positions, to the Scottish people as a prospectus is to deny the very meaning of that word.

Just a few short weeks ago, Parliament agreed unanimously that this referendum should be held, and I have said many times that I respect the right of nationalists in that regard.

Patrick Harvie: I accept some aspects of Mr Smith's description of the negotiation regarding Europe in the event of a yes vote. Does he accept that, in the event of a no vote, those who offer the mirage of some other form of devolution in the future have exactly the same problem on their hands, which is that it would be politicians outwith Scotland, who do not have much interest in spending their political capital on Scotland after a no vote, who would make that decision for us?

Drew Smith: The fact is that the First Minister said that the Scottish Labour Party could not deliver a pizza, never mind a Parliament, but we are sitting in a Parliament that was delivered by the United Kingdom Parliament. We will come forward with our proposals in advance of the referendum.

The white paper is an important contribution to the debate. Sandra White said that she thought that it was fantastic and that she was disappointed that unionists were not prepared to say that it was fantastic, too.

Christina McKelvie told us that, at the weekend, she was at a conference of radical nationalists, who made the case—

Christina McKelvie: It was full of socialists—none of you lot was there.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Ms McKelvie!

Drew Smith: She was at a socialist conference where, as I understood, the case was made for a very different vision of an independent Scotland, because those people oppose the low-tax regime that the SNP favours.

Linda Fabiani: Will Drew Smith give way?

Drew Smith: I am sorry, but Mr Harvie took a little bit of my time and I would like to make some progress. If I have time, I will come back to Ms Fabiani.

Those radical nationalists oppose the constitutional monarchy and NATO membership, which the SNP supports.

On the currency, the chair of the yes campaign supports joining the euro, while the chief executive of the campaign and others within it think that an independent Scotland should consider a Scots pound. They will say anything. We are told that the white paper is the prospectus for independence and that we will negotiate not only to use the British pound but to have a sterling union with a say in the institutions that we will just have left and with the Bank of England as our lender of last resort.

People in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have the right to a say in all that. They may not want a currency union with a Scotland that has just broken the existing political, social and economic union. People in the rest of the UK might look to the eurozone, pause and consider whether they want a currency arrangement with a foreign country. I am sure that they will listen to Nicola Sturgeon telling them that it is in their best interests to agree with her, but the decision will be outwith Scotland's control.

The test for the white paper was to provide certainty on the currency, but it has not done so. Why should Scots take a risk on an independent Scotland if they do not even know what currency their wages will be paid in?

Those inconsistencies undermine the document and it is incumbent on those of us who do not support independence to point them out again and again.

Kevin Stewart: Will Mr Smith take an intervention?

Drew Smith: No, thank you.

We have heard a wide range of speeches in the debate—speeches on pensions, the pound, employment rights, public services and taxation. James Kelly told us that Scotland faces a housing crisis now and that the Parliament already has the powers to act, but the white paper has nothing to say about what the SNP will do, or even what it would do if it got all the powers that it wants.

Yesterday's announcement on childcare quickly fell flat because many of Scotland's children will have completed their primary school education before the SNP gets round to delivering its previous commitment. That, too, is in a policy area that is already entirely devolved. There can be no better example of Scotland being put on pause for the referendum than the SNP's failure to deliver the childcare promises that it made before. It will not be enough for the SNP simply to make new ones now.

The motion that we debated refers to an idea that we have debated before: that the best decisions are made not on the issues, nor by people of differing views and experiences, but on the basis of where people live and come from. That is where I disagree with the nationalist case most fundamentally.

There is nothing inherently progressive about Scotland, just as there is nothing inherently regressive in the people of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is not a partnership to suggest that we should just walk away from our collective achievements or our collective problems.

That is not to deny patriotism; it is to put it in its proper place as part of the shared human experience that influences us all. That includes proximity to one another, shared heritage, shared values and shared vision. Our nationality shapes and influences those things; it does not need to define it.

I have a friend who is the product of two social workers—one English and one Welsh. He is a Scot and a progressive. His values are not Scottish values, distinct because of our border. Our values are based on our experiences, the ideas instilled in us and the judgments that we make for good or ill as individual human beings and as collectives of people who form relationships with one another for a myriad of reasons, of which nationality is just one facet.

It is a fiction to say that everything will be better after independence and that everything that Scots like about Britain will simply stay the same. The 90-year nationalists now tell us that they like everything about Britain that they think the people of Scotland might like about Britain.

The amendment that was moved earlier says that Scotland could enjoy the best of both worlds: a strong Scottish Parliament—which could provide more childcare now—and, in the United Kingdom, the backing of one of the world's biggest economies, with the strength to bail out our banks. That is a union of partnership, co-operation, redistribution, solidarity, sharing risk and pooling resources. It is my unionism, and that is why I urge members to support the amendment in the name of Johann Lamont.

We all look forward to the debate beyond today and recognise that the people of Scotland will have the final say on the arguments in the white paper and on the question next year.

16:50

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): Mr Harvie commented on the tone of the debate. As we discuss Scotland's constitutional future, it is important to handle the debate courteously and effectively. The only cheap jibe that I will make is that it was a bit rich to hear that from Neil Findlay, but we all live in hope for the years to come.

Neil Findlay: Who was I discourteous to today?

John Swinney: Let us just say that there is form, Mr Findlay.

In the past few weeks, I have had debates with Iain Gray in Dundee and with Murdo Fraser—who I do not think is in the chamber—in Cupar. Later this evening, I will have a debate with Gavin Brown, which will be followed by another with Ms Lamont. I intend to go through the debate on the basis of a courteous tone in exploring the issues that are faithfully set out in the white paper that is before the people of Scotland.

The debate is not enhanced by the kind of remark that Annabel Goldie made. She said that the debate forces her to consider her relations south of the border as becoming foreigners. That does not reflect the experience that we all have of having friends and relations who live north and south of the border. Under the arrangements that will prevail as a consequence of independence, we will be able to maintain all those contacts, all that communication and all those relationships unimpaired by what happens because of our constitutional choice.

I will pick up on a couple of remarks that Drew Smith made. He criticised the diversity of opinion on the yes side of the argument. He made points about what Mr Harvie's party believes, what the socialists believe and what Scottish National Party members believe. I can only assume that his point is that, on one side of the argument, we must all be absolutely and completely united and cohesive in what we believe. If that is good enough for us, it must be good enough for the other side of the argument. That means that I assume that Mr Smith is comfortable with being alongside the Conservatives and the Liberals on the welfare reform agenda, the bedroom tax agenda, the austerity agenda and all that goes with that. He cannot expect a level of cohesion on the yes side of the argument without his side being tarred with the same brush.

Drew Smith: I was struck when Kevin Stewart said that people who are voting in the referendum should know what they are voting for. It is pretty fundamental that people know what currency we will have in an independent Scotland. I do not need Better Together to issue a report that explains to me that we have the pound in Britain; I have a pound in my pocket.

John Swinney: “Scotland’s Future” is the proposition that people will vote for, and it proposes that the currency of an independent Scotland will be the pound sterling, as it is today. We will argue for that as part of the referendum process.

Willie Rennie: Will the finance secretary give way?

Gavin Brown: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

John Swinney: After I make progress, I will give way.

Drew Smith said that there is nothing inherently progressive about Scotland. I will explore that point, because it gets to the nub of some of the difficulties that the Labour Party in particular has. He said that we are all a product of our judgments and our experiences, and he is absolutely right. However, we also have our choices to think about. The choices that we make in politics are fundamentally important.

If we stripped away the constitutional argument, there would be an awful lot of similarity in the SNP and Labour Party perspectives on the economic and social interventions that Scotland requires. However, the Labour Party has chosen to put in place an obstacle to enabling that progressive coalition to change Scotland for the better by becoming an adherent of the better together campaign, which is linked with the Conservatives and the Liberals.

Johann Lamont: John Swinney pretends that everybody in the rest of the United Kingdom is a Conservative, which is not true. He denies the radical voices across the United Kingdom that believe the same things as Labour does. The issue is not about being Scottish or English but about being progressive or not progressive.

John Swinney: We have a progressive view on these benches. That is what our policy intention is all about and that is what we take forward. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

John Swinney: The problem is not that I believe that everybody outside Scotland is a Conservative; the problem is that the Conservatives currently form the United Kingdom Government and are imposing policies on

Scotland that this country does not want. The problem for the Labour Party is that, for all that they huff and puff about the necessity of maintaining the arrangements of the United Kingdom, by doing that they enable the prospect of the re-election of the Conservative Government and its Liberal Democrat allies to impose further measures that will undermine the quality of life of citizens in Scotland. I ask Mr Smith what is progressive about that.

Drew Smith: The problem is that the SNP argued for independence for Scotland long before the advent of this Conservative Government. To say that this is a debate about this Government is completely untrue. Mr Swinney believed in independence before the First Minister made his announcement about childcare yesterday, he believed in independence when there was a Labour Government, and the SNP believed in independence when the Labour Government of 1945 was creating the welfare state.

John Swinney: Could I pick up on one of Drew Smith’s other themes? *[Laughter.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

John Swinney: Members should not worry; they will not be disappointed by this one.

Mr Smith advanced another theme in his speech, which was that the Labour Party had been the genesis of the Scottish Parliament—it delivered it—so we should follow that to its logical conclusion. The Labour Party in Scotland believed that there was a need for democratic self-government in Scotland to control the health service, education, local government, transport, rural affairs and justice and to ensure that control of those things was in the hands of the people of Scotland at a time when there was a Labour Government in the United Kingdom. I simply put the proposition that if the Labour Party believed that in Scotland there was a need for democratic self-government over those things, why on earth is there not a need for democratic self-government over welfare, the economy and all the other things that can deliver a progressive agenda in Scotland?

In the course of today’s discussion, we have heard a lot of arguments about childcare provisions. The level of childcare provision that this Government inherited was 412 hours, which we increased to 475 hours. We have a budget in front of Parliament that will put that up to 600 hours in 2014-15, so we are making progress on the delivery of childcare in Scotland. On not one occasion in the six and a half years for which I have been the finance minister has the Labour Party ever come to me and argued for one more farthing to be spent on childcare than the Government was planning to spend, so forgive me for being a bit cynical about the sudden

conversion to childcare on the Labour Party benches. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

John Swinney: I notice that nobody got up to intervene on me on that point, which shows that the Labour Party knows it to be absolutely factually correct.

Willie Rennie: Will the finance secretary give way on that point?

John Swinney: I will give way on the issue of childcare.

Willie Rennie: The finance secretary will know that in every budget I have argued that he should allocate more for childcare. On every opportunity, he has rejected that. Will I get a different response on this budget?

John Swinney: If Mr Rennie could come up with a scintilla of an idea of where the money will come from, then yes, he might get a different response on the budget.

James Kelly made a speech about housing and the fact that there was a need for us to do more on housing and all the rest of it. Let me give Mr Kelly a couple of facts: 3,724 new council houses were completed by the SNP Government up until 2013. How many were completed by the Labour Party?

Members: Six!

John Swinney: Mr Kelly's Administration completed 23,326 housing association homes. We have completed 27,023 over a period of the same length. I put it to Mr Kelly that one of the things that have inhibited our making more progress on housing is that the Tory Government in London has slashed our capital budget by £1 billion each year. The purpose of independence is to give us control over our capital budgets and not have them axed by the Tory Government that that lot on the Labour benches are associated with.

Business Motion

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-08409, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 3 December 2013

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Women and Work

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scotland's Census

followed by Financial Resolution: Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 4 December 2013

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Portfolio Questions
Rural Affairs and the Environment;
Justice and the Law Officers

followed by Scottish Labour Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 5 December 2013

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

12.30 pm Members' Business

2.15 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.15 pm Members' Business

followed by Education and Culture Committee
Debate: Report on decision making on
whether to take children into care

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 10 December 2013

2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 11 December 2013

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
 Health and Wellbeing
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 12 December 2013

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
 12.30 pm Members' Business
 2.15 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.15 pm Members' Business
followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Victims and
 Witnesses (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of a Parliamentary Bureau motion. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motion S4M-08411, on the designation of a lead committee.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health and Sport Committee be designated as the lead committee and that the Justice Committee be designated as secondary committee in consideration of the Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

The Presiding Officer: The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are three questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S4M-08407.1, in the name of Johann Lamont, which seeks to amend motion S4M-08407, in the name of Alex Salmond, on the independence white paper, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)

White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 54, Against 67, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-08407, in the name of Alex Salmond, on the independence white paper, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)

Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGregor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Point of Order

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 67, Against 54, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Scottish Government's comprehensive guide to an independent Scotland; agrees that it is better for everyone in Scotland if decisions about the country's future are taken by the people who care most about Scotland, the people who live and work here; recognises the detailed analysis of the opportunities, benefits and practicalities of independence set out in the white paper, and its comprehensive answers to questions about independence, and looks forward to a positive national debate on independence for Scotland, with contributions from all perspectives and from all sectors of Scottish society, before the historic vote on 18 September 2014.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-08411, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health and Sport Committee be designated as the lead committee and that the Justice Committee be designated as secondary committee in consideration of the Assisted Suicide (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

17:03

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): Presiding Officer, I would like to raise a point of order under standing order 7.3.1. In this afternoon's debate on the white paper, Johann Lamont stated:

"This is a Government that promises better childcare if we vote for independence but which in six years has not been able to deliver an extra hour of physical education for our children."

I have had the opportunity to check that and the reality is that the number of hours of physical education being delivered in Scottish schools has increased substantially under this Government. Figures show that, in 2004-05, less than 10 per cent of schools were meeting the PE target but, under this Government, by June 2013, the figure had risen to 89 per cent. Presiding Officer, given that, should Ms Lamont now be given the opportunity to correct the record, as she has so often called on others to do, either now or in section K of the Scottish Parliament's *Business Bulletin*? Alternatively, should we take it as more evidence that it is difficult to believe a single word that Labour says?

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): I say to Mr Dornan, as I have said on numerous occasions, that the Presiding Officer has never been, is not and cannot be responsible for the veracity of what is said in the chamber—that is entirely the responsibility of members in their speeches.

“First Aid? Count Me In”

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S4M-08144, in the name of James Dornan, on St Andrew's First Aid's "First aid? Count me in" campaign. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament congratulates St Andrew's First Aid on its Count Me In Campaign; notes that it is seeking 34,000 signatories to its pledge, which it understands is the equivalent of the number of household accidents reported on a yearly basis that are taken to hospital where basic first aid would have sufficed; understands that the campaign seeks to educate the almost three-quarters of people in Scotland, including in Glasgow Cathcart, who do not have basic first aid skills, and considers that these skills are crucial in saving lives and removing unnecessary strain on emergency services.

17:06

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):

I start by welcoming Stuart Callison and Helen Forrest of St Andrew's First Aid to the gallery, and by thanking the charity for the essential work that it does throughout Scotland to raise awareness of first aid.

St Andrew's First Aid has provided access to the highest standards in first aid training and services in Scotland for more than 100 years. From its creation in 1882, St Andrew's has been a principal figure in championing first aid and is without doubt Scotland's leading first aid charity. St Andrew's achievements include providing Scotland with its first ambulance service in April 1882; publishing Dr George T Beaton's "Ambulance Hand-Book" in 1891 to make first aid teaching more uniform; establishing permanent headquarters in Glasgow in 1929, due to the growth of the organisation; and playing an active role in the war efforts during both world wars. I should put on record that all those things are history for me, as I was not there for any of them. During the first world war, St Andrew's staffed all Scotland's military hospitals and during the second world war it provided staff for the civil nursing reserve, transportation services for air-raised casualties and first aid training for school children.

Currently, St Andrew's provides first aid training to more than 20,000 people per year in Scotland's workplaces and communities, where it offers a range of courses for every need. Its volunteers deliver first aid services at numerous events throughout Scotland, from local community gatherings to Scottish Premier League and Scottish Football League—now the Scottish Professional Football League—matches as well as at T in the park. Additionally, St Andrew's emphasises youth development through its

badgers and cadets programmes, which encourage interest in first aid and provide Scotland's youth with the opportunity to develop skills in first aid and related subjects.

The organisation's successes can be seen in the stories of its volunteers who have been able to save lives, as well as those who have gained valuable life skills. For example, when St Andrew's first aid volunteer Tracy Jones was on holiday with her three children, she saved the life of a 19-month old baby who had gone missing and was found floating face down in a pond. The baby had stopped breathing and her parents did not know what to do, but Tracy successfully administered cardiopulmonary resuscitation and saved the wee girl's life. In such emergencies, people tend to panic or freeze when they are unaware of what to do, so having even basic first aid skills can become a matter of life or death. Tracy was able to keep a level head as she used the skills that she had learned during her first aid course. Her heroic actions deserve the utmost praise. The training that St Andrew's offers allows individuals to acquire not only the skills that can potentially save a life but the confidence that is needed to take charge of the situation, as Tracy did admirably.

During last year's St Andrew's First Aid debate, I mentioned that I wanted to gain first aid skills myself. I had the opportunity to do so in a basic tester class at the campaign launch for Scottish first aid week. There I had the pleasure to train alongside Clyde 1 disc jockey Knoxy—clearly, from his smile and nodding head, Bob Doris knows who Knoxy is—and several St Andrew's volunteers. The volunteers included Emma Nicholson, who was winner of the youth first aider of the year competition in 2012, and Callum Derrick, who has been nominated for this year's award. Even with the short amount of training that I received, I now feel much more prepared to address any emergency situation that I might face.

I was extremely delighted to see the level of support for the campaign as well as to hear of Emma's and Callum's achievements with St Andrew's First Aid. Callum, who is now 17, has been involved with first aid since he was 10 and he encourages whomever he can—especially young children—also to gain the skills. He plans to continue volunteering with St. Andrew's First Aid as he pursues his ultimate goal of joining the Royal Air Force.

Emma has been associated with St. Andrew's since she was 14 and has completed both the cadet program and the standard first aid course. She has volunteered at events in Glasgow and has recruited other cadets. She plans to apply the skills that she is learning in her future career—she plans to be a teacher. It was inspiring and a

pleasure to meet those young volunteers and to see how they are gaining valuable life skills from being involved with first aid. The courses and opportunities provide Scotland with dedicated individuals like Emma and Callum, who are equipped to respond to any crisis or emergency in their communities.

The skills can be learned at any age, by young children or adults, as I proved at that taster session. Therefore, it is concerning that, in spite of the high-quality training that is available throughout Scotland, fewer than one in four Scots has basic first aid skills. Even more worrying are the facts that 45 per cent of parents would not know what to do if their child was choking and that only 8 per cent of adult Scots have completed a child-related first aid course in the past three years. YouGov research that was commissioned by St Andrew's First Aid found that parents' greatest fear is of their child sustaining a head injury, followed by choking then drowning then burns. First aid intervention, even while waiting for emergency services, would be invaluable should any of those things occur. As a father and grandfather, I understand how helpless a parent would feel in an emergency if they were unable to deliver potentially life-saving first aid to their own child and how imperative it is to learn the techniques. The statistics are reason enough to do so.

It is extremely important that we each, individually, take the initiative to gain first aid skills and that we encourage others to do so. I recognise the vital work that St Andrew's First Aid does to ensure that more Scots gain first aid knowledge. Scottish first aid week, which started on 24 November and runs until Saturday, is dedicated to promoting first aid awareness. This year, the charity is focusing on a Scotland-wide campaign called "First aid? Count me in". The campaign will target the public, voluntary and private sectors and aims to increase awareness of the fact that basic first aid skills save lives.

The count me in pledge states:

"No one should die because they needed First Aid and didn't get it."

The campaign's objective is to receive at least 34,000 signatures, which is a significant goal; it is equivalent to the number of Scots who are admitted to hospital each year as a result of burns, falls and choking. That number is even more serious given that 77 per cent of Scots lack the knowledge and confidence to administer basic first aid, so they immediately call 999. That high number of yearly accidents creates an excessive strain on national health service hospital and emergency services. That strain could be prevented because they are injuries to which first aid can make all the difference. Even a few

minutes of administering first aid before paramedics arrive can have a significant impact, from decreasing the extent of the injury to ensuring that the injured person does not require any further medical attention or hospital admission. I am determined to help St Andrew's First Aid to raise awareness of the campaign in order to make certain that more people throughout Scotland become better equipped to address such emergencies.

I take the chance, during first aid week, to stress how important it is for Scots to take the various opportunities that they have to gain basic training. First aid is not a skill that will go to waste and it can be called on when one least expects it. I strongly encourage folk to do as much as they can during and after first aid week to increase their knowledge of the subject, from signing the St Andrew's count me in campaign or accessing online resources about first aid facts to signing up for and participating in a training course.

First aid week concludes on Saturday with the Scottish first aid awards—one of the highlights of the week—which will be held in Edinburgh. The awards will recognize and celebrate individuals, volunteers and businesses who have played an active role in championing first aid. It is important to celebrate those role models, because they create awareness and provide our society with examples of how everyday people can make a difference and save lives, encouraging each of us to be more proactive in learning and improving our first aid skills. As I mentioned, the count me in pledge states:

"No one should die because they needed First Aid and didn't get it."

I emphasise how valuable it is for our society to have individuals who can administer basic first aid and prevent the latter half of that statement from becoming a reality.

I thank St Andrew's First Aid for the high-quality services, training and opportunities that it is providing throughout Scotland as it pursues its goal to promote first aid. I am pleased to have brought the debate to the Scottish Parliament and hope that Scottish first aid week continues to be a success and encourages more Scots to learn life-saving skills that create safer schools, workplaces and communities.

17:13

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I congratulate James Dornan on securing the debate on an important issue and I echo his thanks to St Andrew's First Aid for the work that it does. He has gone into detail about the count me in campaign, which sends out the important

message that no one should die because they needed first aid and did not get it.

It is important to raise awareness of how first aid can save lives. People can show their support for that by signing the pledge online, reading first aid information, organising a first aid training event in their local area or volunteering with St Andrew's First Aid in their community. As James Dornan said, volunteers work at loads of different events, from sporting events to music festivals and the like.

It is very easy to become a volunteer; being a volunteer means that a person gets the opportunity to learn those vital lifesaving skills. However, if people do not want to be on the front line—perhaps they are afraid that they might panic—they can volunteer to take on other jobs including administration, youth leadership, fund raising and public relations. Those jobs are vital to the voluntary organisation: it is important that its staff are free to train people to be first aiders.

Some years ago, I undertook—with some nervousness, because one never knows what situations one might be confronted with—St Andrew's first aid training. I kept asking the trainer difficult questions on what would happen if such-and-such were to happen. The eventual answer—the trainer spoke with a slight tone of exasperation—was that if someone is dead, a person cannot kill them anymore, so there is nothing that a person can do in a situation in which help is needed apart from do their very best. That put the matter in context for me; everybody needs to take that message on board and learn the skills.

The first and foremost skill that everyone should learn is to dial 999, because no matter how honed one's CPR skills are, a person can continue that only for a short time before assistance is needed. We need to get those very basic messages through to people.

Young people who are leaving care are sometimes taught those skills. Although that is important, it is equally important to teach the skills to all our young people, so that they know the basics, know to phone 999 and know to get involved. They should also be braver at picking up some of the information that comes to us through public campaigns.

We are all aware of the British Heart Foundation's "Stayin' Alive" campaign on hands-on CPR. However, people get confused and wonder what they should be doing during an incident. We therefore should have clear messages that join up all first aid training and public health information, so that people know what to do.

Another very useful campaign was the National Advisory Committee on Stroke's FAST—"Face.

Arms. Speech. Time"—campaign about helping people identify strokes. People often see people who are suffering a stroke and think that they are drunk or tired. The FAST campaign showed people how to check for the signs of a stroke and sought to give them the right tools, so that they would feel a bit braver about intervening, and to make them aware of the need to get help, because getting help quickly is vital to everybody in a first aid situation.

There are also community resilience campaigns; for example, the Scottish Ambulance Service is installing defibrillators in the community. I am also aware that local general practitioners are helping communities to raise funds and are training people how to use the defibrillators, which can save lives.

I welcome the debate for those reasons. I very much hope that St Andrew's achieves its target of 34,000 signatures. I hope that its campaign will also raise awareness and that more people will be encouraged to take on the skills and save lives as a result.

17:18

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I thank James Dornan for bringing to the chamber the motion to congratulate St Andrew's First Aid on its count me in campaign. As a lifelong scout, I know the importance of the phrase, "Be prepared." That simple motto can serve as a life lesson for us all—to be prepared for good times, victories and triumphs, but also to be prepared for defeat, sickness and injury. In times of personal injury—of any sort—being prepared can mean the difference between life and death.

When a household accident occurs, many Scots' first instinct is to call 999, as it should be in the event of a true emergency. However, it is important to know the difference between what is and is not an emergency. Every year, 34,000 Scots are admitted to hospitals after falls, choking, burns and other common accidents. Although they can result in serious injuries, many such cases could have been sorted out or received initial care with basic first aid. Those 34,000 patients are being treated instead of the victims of more serious accidents or medical conditions.

Unfortunately, most Scots just do not know that many accidents are treatable at home, in part because only 23 per cent of Scots are trained in basic first aid procedures. If awareness is raised of the importance and value of first aid training, Scots can become more self-reliant and can take a serious burden off hospitals.

That is where St Andrew's First Aid comes in. In the lead-up to first aid week, St Andrew's First Aid has launched its count me in campaign, which, according to the organisation's website,

"is aimed at building awareness that First Aid saves lives."

The centrepiece of the campaign is:

"No one should die because they needed First Aid and didn't get it."

In its pursuit of that goal, St Andrew's First Aid is seeking 34,000 signatures—one for each of the Scots who are admitted to hospital each year for common injuries that require emergency attention, but who could have initially received first aid assistance. Furthermore, the campaign seeks to educate the 77 per cent of Scots who are not trained in basic first aid procedures on how crucial it is to learn such skills.

As the leading provider of work-related first aid training in Scotland, St Andrew's First Aid provides a wide variety of services that relate to first aid accreditation. It has a series of downloadable materials for small business owners, hospitality managers, employees and other members of any business to help guide people towards enrolment in first aid training.

St Andrew's First Aid is particularly concerned with the Scottish hospitality industry, in which last year more than 500 workers received an injury that kept them off work for at least three days. In restaurants alone, 205 cooking and serving-related accidents were recorded last year. One in 10 Scots say that they have witnessed a medical emergency in a hotel, restaurant or other entertainment venue, and one in 16 have needed medical assistance for injuries that they themselves have sustained. St Andrew's First Aid seeks to create a more resilient Scotland—one in which hospitality workers and people in their homes do not have to fear for their safety in the event of an accident and do not unnecessarily burden the emergency medical services.

I know first hand the importance of first aid training. As a scout leader and a lifelong scout, I teach my scouts to be prepared for anything. I have been first aid certified since I was 18 years old, and I often help young scouts to acquire their first aid badges. When we go on camping trips in the summer, it is important to have someone who can respond to such unfortunate situations. I am proud to be one of the few who can, but I wish that it were not such an exclusive group.

I urge Scots everywhere to get first aid certified. As someone who has experienced the positive benefits of first aid training up close in various situations in which I have had to take action to help my family and friends, I can assure members that it is worth the time that it takes to do. I congratulate St Andrew's First Aid on its efforts in its everyday work and its count me in campaign, and I hope that the organisation knows that I am a huge supporter of its work.

17:22

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I apologise for the fact that I will have to leave the chamber before the end of the debate, because I have to convene another meeting elsewhere in the building.

I congratulate James Dornan on securing what I understand is his fifth members' business debate since he was elected two and a half years ago. That in itself is some achievement in comparison with the 10 members' business debates that I have secured in 10 years—perhaps the whips in his party look more favourably on him than those in mine do on me.

To be serious, James Dornan has again secured recognition of St Andrew's first aid week. We marked the event last year and we are doing so again this evening. I make no criticism of that—indeed, I believe that such an important issue as first aid should be championed each year—but I apologise if I reiterate some of the points that I made in a previous debate.

This year's debate focuses on the count me in campaign, which is a great initiative to raise the profile of first aid by recruiting 34,000 signatories to match the 34,000 people who are admitted to hospital each year as a result of household injuries or accidents who would not have required hospital treatment had others been around who had basic first aid training.

The point that is made in the motion is acutely relevant when we consider the pressure on our emergency services and the fact that the NHS constantly has to examine ways of making financial savings. If more individuals undertook training in first aid, that would alleviate some of the strains that are put on our front-line services.

The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body offers first aid training and has an impressive record of providing first aid supplies on every floor and in every department in the Parliament building, as well as trained staff.

Last year, I spoke about an episode that happened when my son was a small boy—he almost choked on a golf tee. Fortunately, through my medical background as an anaesthetist, I recognised the symptoms of a blocked airway and knew exactly how to dislodge the object. I think that all people—particularly parents—should be aware of how to deal with situations such as the one that I have described. A knowledge of basic first aid procedures, such as how to stop bleeding, how to maintain an airway and how to position someone who is unconscious to ensure that they do not inhale vomit, can be life saving.

First aid is a vital skill. People can save lives by performing simple procedures, following certain

guidelines and giving basic treatment until professional medical help arrives. Time and again we read and hear about people who have survived cardiac arrest because someone with the appropriate knowledge was present and able to maintain circulation and a clear airway until professional help arrived.

There is also an argument for extending basic first aid training to include conditions such as epilepsy so that people can deal with seizures, and simple advice such as not to restrain the person who is having the seizure, to remain calm and to encourage everyone around to do the same should be taught to many more people than it is at present. Although we should never be prescriptive, more widespread teaching of first aid in our schools would benefit all and act as a positive influence on young people throughout Scotland.

As we know, the culmination of St Andrew's first aid week is the now annual Scottish first aid awards. Last year I said that one of my constituents, Phil Glennie from Braemar mountain rescue team, had been shortlisted for the private sector business award for his enthusiastic delivery of quality first aid instruction to a number of groups including the scouts and the girl guides and young people in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. In case members did not know, I am pleased to report that Phil Glennie won the award.

I wish all those who have been nominated for this year's award the very best of luck and hope that, whether they win or not, they enjoy the awards event at the Sheraton hotel. I commend them and all first aiders for their tremendous work across Scotland and hope that the recognition of their achievements will encourage many more people to follow in their footsteps.

17:26

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in this members' business debate and congratulate James Dornan on securing it. St Andrew's First Aid's campaign is really important and, if members do not mind, I will read the entire pledge into the Parliament's *Official Report*. It says:

"No one should die because they needed First Aid and didn't get it. I pledge to support St Andrew's First Aid and the First Aid Count Me In campaign. I am supporting the campaign because I believe in the value of First Aid and acknowledge that it is a vital life-saving skill. It is really important to have champions of First Aid in local communities and by signing this campaign I am demonstrating my support for First Aid. Together we can save lives."

That is such an interesting and indeed beautifully put together pledge that everyone should be willing to support it. I certainly have pledged my support for the campaign.

It is worth mentioning that GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals, Clyde 1 radio, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and Young Scot are partners in the campaign. I am particularly keen about the involvement of Young Scot because, as James Dornan has made clear, St Andrew's First Aid is very much about its volunteers, who play a vital role in disseminating information to young people and supporting young volunteers. Both Nanette Milne and David Torrance mentioned the scouts; indeed, I received my first-ever first aid training as a member of one of the uniformed youth organisations, and the young people in the scouts or in voluntary award schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme who are getting first aid skills are doing a great service to each other, their friends and our country.

Interestingly, the 34,000 target for signatures equates to the number of people who are admitted to hospital as a result of household accidents. Perhaps I can give the chamber a little bit of a breakdown of that 34,000 figure by highlighting the 2011 figures for two ends of the spectrum. In the under-5s group, there were 3,182 admissions to hospital, the majority of which were for accidents that happened in their homes, while in the over-65s, there were 21,196 admissions to hospital, many of which were, again, the result of accidents in their own homes. In the latter group, there were very few admissions as a result of road traffic accidents; most were the result of trips and falls, which we know to be a significant problem in our ageing population.

These figures, however, are just the tip of the iceberg, because they show only those who were admitted to hospital. Far more people who are injured have to attend their general practitioner or other types of emergency services and are not admitted to accident and emergency departments. Perhaps their injuries are not as serious, but they will certainly have experienced significant discomfort and upset from them.

At lunch time today, I chaired a meeting of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on accident prevention and safety awareness. Obviously, we look at issues relating to preventing accidents, and that is partly about educating people. We know that, when people are educated about the risks and dangers around them, their risk-taking behaviour reduces. If we are undertaking to improve people's knowledge of first aid and to get them to understand the dangers around them in their homes and as they go about their daily business, that education alone will let us as a society understand better the dangers that we face and, I hope, improve the outcomes for our young and elderly people.

17:30

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson): I, too, congratulate James Dornan on securing time for this debate, which gives us an opportunity to congratulate St Andrew's First Aid on the work that it does in general and, in particular, its latest campaign during first aid week this year.

I got my first first aid certificate with St Andrew's First Aid when I was in the scouts, as David Torrance did. The scouts and other uniformed organisations do a fantastic job in helping to support young people to recognise the value of first aid. Over the years when I was involved in mountain rescue, I completed various mountain first aid courses, which usually had to be reassessed every three years, and I have witnessed first hand how good-quality first aid can save lives. It can also help to reduce further injury to someone who is already injured. Its value cannot be overestimated.

As Nanette Milne mentioned in her contribution, there was a debate to celebrate the 2012 campaign this time last year. Then, there was a focus on whether loved ones, whether or not they know much about first aid, would be able to give someone the kiss of life should circumstances arise in which that would be appropriate.

It is good to be able to recognise the work of St Andrew's First Aid and to help it to promote its message on helping to save lives. I also recognise the valuable contribution that it, with other organisations, will make in 2014, which will be a significant year. In that year, which will be a hugely exciting time for Scotland, the eyes of the whole world will be watching us, with the Commonwealth games taking place in Glasgow, the Ryder cup and the year of homecoming. I have absolutely no doubt that the organisers of those events will work with a range of first aid organisations to ensure that they are effectively covered with first aid support.

From the Scottish Government's perspective, the Scottish Ambulance Service is clearly at the heart of the issue in providing immediate emergency care. It works closely with a whole range of partners to support wider community provision, including voluntary organisations such as St Andrew's First Aid.

In last year's debate, which celebrated first aid week 2012, I mentioned some of the important work that goes on in local communities, including that by community first responders, who can provide vital early support prior to an ambulance arriving in the course of an emergency—that is particularly important in some of our more remote areas—and the community resuscitation development officers, who recruit and train

community members to provide such care. I also mentioned the public access defibrillators in a range of locations, which Rhoda Grant referred to, supported by local training and awareness of how they can be used and where they are located, and the first aid training that takes place in schools and community groups.

All of those things support the bigger objective of delivering better outcomes and experiences for those who require support from first aid at a particular time. They can also help to reduce the need for someone to be admitted to hospital and help to support and create greater resilience in communities, particularly some of our more rural and dispersed communities. First aid training is hugely important to supporting our communities.

As an organisation, the Scottish Government has a range of first aiders within the workplace. There is a network of first aiders across all the Government's offices and they are usually trained by St Andrew's First Aid. To date, the Scottish Government has 251 trained volunteers in its offices.

Members might recall the campaign that was run last year by the British Heart Foundation that had a television advert featuring Vinnie Jones. When someone suddenly collapses and is not breathing normally and is unresponsive, they might have suffered a cardiac arrest. The advert advised members of the public not to worry about giving the kiss of life during CPR but to concentrate on giving good, fast chest compressions to the tune of the Bee Gees "Stayin' Alive". That was an innovative and fun way of getting across a serious message about helping to ensure that someone who has experienced cardiac arrest gets the necessary swift care.

Turning to the specific focus of the St Andrew's First Aid week, I was interested to see the online pledge that is the focal point of this year's campaign. The pledge seeks 34,000 signatures, one for each of the people each year who are taken to hospital for treatment in Scotland. We would like to see that number reduce dramatically. That can be achieved by awareness raising and accident prevention in the home, the garden and the community as a whole.

The Scottish Government and a range of partners that we work with recognise the importance of encouraging young people to have fun and explore without wrapping them up in cotton wool. However, it is important that we ensure that parents, friends and carers are confident about dealing with the scrapes and bumps that can happen when children get involved in different activities. That is why the Scottish Government works with a range of organisations, such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, Barnardo's and Volunteer

Development Scotland, which all have different initiatives to help to support young people, parents and carers to have the right skills to deal with those who have accidents.

I offer the Government's and my personal thanks for the work that first aiders across Scotland do day in, day out. Their dedication and efforts should, rightly, be recognised because they provide an extremely important service in our society. I also offer my congratulations to all those who will be recognised at the first aid awards this Saturday.

I finish with a challenge: we should all go home tonight and suggest to someone we know, someone who lives with us or a friend that, if they do not have basic first aid skills, they might want to look into getting them, because we never know when they might be required.

Meeting closed at 17:38.

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