



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Tuesday 23 September 2014

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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 23 September 2014

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): We return to this Parliament in a Scotland that has changed for ever. The vote last Thursday on our nation's future was an extraordinary expression of civic democracy the like of which we have never seen, with a turnout of 85 per cent on a registered vote of 97 per cent.

More than 3.6 million people in Scotland made their mark on a piece of paper and, in so doing, ensured that their voice was heard. Scotland has demonstrated once more our commitment to ensuring that constitutional change comes through the democratic process.

The referendum campaign has been remarkable. It has been inspirational not just for us in Scotland but for people throughout the world, who have fixed their eyes on us.

Like you, I have been truly humbled by the clear wish of so many of our fellow Scots to be involved, many for the first time. How often have we heard people say that they would not bother voting because it would not make a difference? Not this time.

Let us be clear about the scale of this unprecedented level of involvement and what it means for all of us. There are challenges for politicians, for political parties and for the institutions in Scotland.

It is now for us to embrace and nurture the desire for political expression. It cannot and must not be business as usual. People have come off their settees and out of their homes to go into the streets and public meetings, and then into polling stations. They are not going back.

It is for the political parties to make their own decisions about how they involve young people, those who live in our most deprived communities and women in the future. However, like other institutions in Scotland, the Parliament must also respond, and I pledge to you and to our fellow citizens my determination to do so.

When you elected me as Presiding Officer, I made it clear that we needed to reform the Parliament. In July 2011, I said:

"We need to find new ways of working in this Chamber, in our committees and in all of our other activities".

Progress has been made. Our working week has changed, topical questions have been introduced and, for the past two years, I have been taking the Parliament to towns and cities throughout Scotland as part of our Parliament days. The Parliament's doors have been thrown wide open through the revamped festival of politics and the great tapestry and Andy Warhol exhibitions. Of the people who viewed the exhibitions, 55 per cent were visiting the Parliament for the first time.

However, we have more to do. I have plans already in place to hold a conference in the spring for young women of school age. Two weeks ago, I asked the Parliament's officials to draw up a programme to expand the Parliament days into our most deprived communities. Our committees also need to continue to assess their own programmes to consider when they meet, where they meet and who is invited to speak to them. I know that I can count on your support to do more.

As politicians, we have our own heroes—the people who inspired us to get involved in politics in the first place. My inspiration as a teenager was Senator Robert Kennedy, brother of President John F Kennedy. In 1966, Robert Kennedy travelled to South Africa, at the height of apartheid and when Nelson Mandela was in prison. He made a speech to young people that is often referred to as the ripples of hope speech. I return to that speech time and time again to remind myself why I am involved in politics. I will share a couple of paragraphs that strike me as particularly relevant to us, but it is a speech of its time, so the references to men naturally these days refer to all of us. He said:

"The first element of this individual liberty is the freedom of speech; the right to express and communicate ideas ... above all, the right to affirm one's membership and allegiance to the body politic—to society—to the men with whom we share our land, our heritage, and our children's future.

Hand-in-hand with freedom of speech goes the power to be heard—to share in the decisions of government which shape men's lives. Everything that makes men's lives worthwhile—family, work, education, a place to rear one's children and a place to rest one's head—all this depends on the decisions of government ... Therefore, the essential humanity of man can be protected and preserved only where the government must answer—not just to the wealthy; not just to those of a particular religion, not just to those of a particular race; but to all of the people."

Colleagues, it is now our duty to ensure that all those who have expressed their wish for the power to be heard are heard in this Parliament and by this Parliament. We now have a huge opportunity and many challenges. Let us face them together.

Referendum Statement

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a statement by the First Minister, Alex Salmond. The First Minister's statement will be followed by a debate so, of course, there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:06

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I am glad that you decided to do time for reflection today, because the burden of your remarks, which I very much support and agree with, chimes exactly with the first point that I want to make. You rightly identify that last week's referendum was the most extraordinary, empowering and exhilarating experience. Huge credit is due to both sides in the campaign.

It is worth comparing that with our previous experience of constitutional referendums. The vote of 1979 was a botched job, where the side that gained the most votes was unable to have its wishes put into effect. The 1997 referendum was an altogether different experience. It was a great experience, but we should remember that, however successful the referendum was, the turnout was 60 per cent. Last week, as you correctly identified, Presiding Officer, turnout was 85 per cent—the highest for any vote of this scale that has ever been held on these islands.

In my estimation, with the exception of a handful of miscreants, both sides of the debate conducted themselves in an extraordinarily democratic, civilised and engaged manner. Therefore, to every single campaigner and voter, whatever their view and whatever their vote, I want to say thank you. This has been the greatest democratic experience in Scotland's history. It has brought us great credit both nationally and internationally. *[Applause.]*

That overwhelmingly positive side to the referendum is now generally recognised. It is a shame that a few—largely metropolitan—journalists concentrated on negative and minor elements, because the true story to emerge from the referendum is that Scotland has the most politically engaged population in western Europe. For both sides, that is a significant and positive fact to be reckoned with. We need to retain and encourage the people's engagement, vitality and spirit. Nothing is more important for the future than that.

I will add a couple of caveats to that point towards the end of my speech but, right now, I want to focus on the positive. Therefore, I will concentrate on two points in particular that arise from the referendum. The first is that there is not a shred of evidence now for arguing that 16 and 17-

year-olds should not be allowed to vote. Their engagement in this great constitutional debate was second to none. They proved themselves to be the serious, passionate, committed citizens we always believed they would be.

Everyone in this chamber should be proud of the chamber's decision to widen the franchise. There is an overwhelming, indeed unanswerable, case for giving 16 and 17-year-olds the vote in all future elections in Scotland and across the United Kingdom. All parties in this Parliament should make a vow to urge Westminster to make that happen in time for next year's general election.

The second point—the second question—has already been asked by many people: where do we move forward from here? From the moment the result of the referendum became clear, section 30 of the Edinburgh agreement came into effect. That means that both the UK Government and the Scottish Government are committed to accepting the outcome of the referendum and working together in the best interests of Scotland and the rest of the UK.

I believe strongly in section 30. I put it into the Edinburgh agreement. It was the red-line issue for the Scottish Government in the same way that the red-line issue for the UK Government was not to have devo max on the ballot paper. Therefore, the Scottish Government will stick to section 30, which it insisted on having in the agreement. That means that the Scottish Government will contribute fully to a process to empower the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish people. We will bring forward constructive proposals for doing exactly that. I relayed that intention to the Prime Minister within minutes of the result being confirmed, and that is how the Scottish Government intends to proceed.

I welcome the appointment of Lord Smith. He is a trusted person who, in recent months and, indeed, in recent years has given great service to Scotland and whose oversight of the Commonwealth games organising committee was outstanding, indeed exemplary.

David Cameron surprised me—and, I suspect, others in this chamber—with his statement on Friday morning, less than an hour after the outcome of the referendum was confirmed. He said in that statement that change in Scotland should be

“in tandem with and”—

in case we did not understand what that meant—

“at the same pace as”

change in England and the rest of the UK. As all of us know and recognise, that condition would risk throwing the entire process into delay and confusion. It would also directly contradict the

clear commitments that were made during the campaign.

The briefing from Downing Street yesterday afternoon was very different from the Friday morning statement. That suggests that the UK Government has started to understand the importance of meeting the commitments that it made during the campaign, and it is crucial that it has that understanding. This Parliament—all of us—now has a responsibility to hold Westminster's feet to the fire to ensure that the pledges are met. That is a job not just for the Scottish Government but for all parties in the Parliament. Indeed, we might well argue that there is a special obligation on the unionist parties. They promised further devolution; it is essential that they deliver.

Nevertheless, all parties should understand well that the true guardians of progress are not the political parties at Westminster, nor the political parties here at Holyrood, nor Lord Smith; they are the energised electorate of this nation—the community of Scotland, who will not brook or tolerate any equivocation or delay.

I was struck by the statement yesterday by Grahame Smith of the Scottish Trades Union Congress. I suspect that, in that statement, he captured the feelings of many people in Scotland. He said:

"The vast civic movement for meaningful and progressive change that has built up in the last two years is impatient for change and will not accept minimalist proposals developed in a pre-referendum context handed down on a take them or leave them basis ... They are not going to be passive participants in the process or tolerate political obfuscation or compromise. The sooner the politicians recognise this and get down to working with civil society and the communities and people of Scotland to deliver a comprehensive new devolution settlement the better."

What Grahame Smith said is absolutely correct. The referendum debate engaged people in every community of our country; its final outcome cannot be a last-minute deal between a small group of Westminster politicians.

Lord Smith has already recognised the need to capture the energy of the referendum debate. All of us should support his commitment to genuine consultation. After all, one thing we now know is that proper consultation and debate energise people, rather than distracting them.

It is worth remembering that since the Edinburgh agreement was signed in 2012, the number of people who are unemployed in Scotland has reduced by 40,000. We now have record employment in Scotland—the highest in Scottish history. We have record female employment in Scotland—we have the fastest rising female employment ever in Scotland. The

economy has come out of the great recession ahead of the economy in the rest of the UK. Scotland has outperformed every part of the UK outside London and the south-east for foreign investment; visitor spending in Scotland has increased; exports have grown; the Scottish Government has introduced 30 new bills in Parliament; and we have delivered the most successful Commonwealth games in the history of the Commonwealth games. I mention those in passing because in the last parliamentary debate before the referendum, Johann Lamont expressed concern about

"the way in which Scotland has been on pause on the big decisions facing our country."—[*Official Report*, 21 August 2014; c 33815.]

Scotland was not on pause for the referendum; it was on fast-forward on the economy, as every statistic indicates.

Of course, this Parliament has also rightly focused its attention on introducing measures to alleviate the effects of Westminster legislation—measures such as the council tax reduction scheme to help 500,000 of our fellow citizens, or the bedroom tax alleviation to mitigate the impact of the bedroom tax.

Asking ourselves as a country what sort of nation we want to be is not something that is separate from good government; it is part of good government. Political confidence and economic confidence gang together. All of us have a responsibility to maintain that political confidence and self-belief to enable our empowered and engaged electorate in delivering meaningful changes to devolution.

Any improvement of the devolution settlement will require a legislative consent motion here in this Parliament, so there is a clear role for this Parliament in considering what new powers should be delivered. There will doubtless be a range of views and proposals. The Scottish Government's view is that an enhanced devolution settlement should pass three key tests.

It should enable us to make Scotland a more prosperous country—the jobs test. In particular, genuine job-creating powers are important. It should allow us to build a fairer society—we need to address the deep-lying causes of inequality in Scottish society. It should also enable Scotland to have a stronger and more clearly articulated voice on the international stage.

The Labour Party, less than two weeks before the referendum, promised home rule for Scotland inside the United Kingdom. We need to ensure that the powers delivered to this Parliament match not just that rhetoric, but the ambitions of the people of Scotland.

It is also vital that new economic powers do not in any way disadvantage Scotland. The vow made by unionist party leaders was absolutely clear that

“Because of the continuation of the Barnett allocation for resources and the powers of the Scottish parliament to raise revenue, we can state categorically that the final say on how much is spent on the NHS will be a matter for the Scottish parliament.”

However, the delayed Westminster parliamentary motion on further devolution that was released over the weekend failed to repeat that promise on Barnett. The Barnett formula is essential, as the unionists’ vow acknowledged, until or unless Scotland has control of all our own resources. We need clarity that the UK parties will stay true to their promises and vow about Barnett.

We also need to ensure that the Scottish Parliament is entrenched in legislation so that it can never be abolished or diminished by Westminster. That was clearly promised before the referendum, but again is missing from the parliamentary motion at Westminster. Also, while making that important change, the UK Government should finally give a statutory basis to the Sewel convention on legislative consent motions.

Overall, there is a great opportunity for this Parliament. We can work together to help the UK Government deliver its promise of significant extra powers for this chamber, and we can do so in a way that deserves, sustains and encourages the interest and engagement of the Scottish people.

I said earlier that there were two caveats that I wanted to add to the hugely positive nature of the referendum process. Both involve the criminal law, and therefore they are worth including in this statement.

First, there is the outstanding matter of the Treasury briefing of the evening of 10 September, 45 minutes before a Royal Bank of Scotland board meeting finished. We need to establish the full circumstances of and justification for that briefing and how it can be anything other than contrary to section 52 of the Criminal Justice Act 1993.

Secondly, the scenes that we saw in Glasgow around George Square on Friday night cannot be tolerated. We expect and know that Police Scotland will take proper and necessary action against those who indulged in pre-arranged thuggery against a peaceful demonstration. The full force of the law will be enabled and expected to make sure that we eradicate such behaviour from Scottish life. *[Applause.]*

When the late Donald Dewar, in what I believe to be the finest speech of his life, spoke at the opening of this Parliament in 1999, he reflected at one point on the discourse of the Scottish enlightenment as an echo from the past that has

helped to shape modern Scotland. What we have seen in these last two years is a new discourse of democratic enlightenment. Scotland now has the most politically engaged population in western Europe and one of the most engaged of any country anywhere in the democratic world. This land has been a hub of peaceful, passionate discussion, in the workplace, at home, in cafes and pubs and on the streets of Scotland. Across Scotland people have been energised and enthused by politics in a way that has never happened before, certainly not in my experience and, I suspect, not in the experience of anyone in this chamber.

We have seen a generational change in attitudes towards independence and greater self-government and how politics should be carried forward. We have a totally new body politic, a new spirit abroad in the land, and one that is speaking loud and clear. All of us must realise that things will never be the same again.

Wherever we are travelling together, we are a better nation today than we were at the start of this process. We are more informed, more enabled and more empowered. As a result of that, our great national debate, in my estimation, will help us make a fairer, more prosperous and more democratic country. In all of that, all of Scotland will emerge as the winner. *[Applause.]*

Referendum Debate

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Thank you. I call Johann Lamont. Ms Lamont, you have 18 minutes.

14:22

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): Thank you very much, Presiding Officer. Perhaps in our reflections on how we do business, we might want to reflect on whether it is a good idea to give me 18 minutes on a regular basis, but that is for another day.

I say first to the First Minister that I reflect on the fact that we will have the opportunity at some later stage to speak about his contribution to Scotland as First Minister. We recognise that today is a very significant day for him, too, but we will have the opportunity properly to talk about the massive contribution that Alex Salmond has made to the life of Scotland. I look forward to that opportunity, but I also recognise today that this is a very significant time in his career, and we should reflect on that. *[Applause.]*

There can be no doubt that last Thursday was a big moment in Scotland's story. All of us in here have been passionate in the position that we have taken. Whether it has been for yes or for no, we have argued it long and hard, but the reality is now that the people of Scotland have decided. They have decided that they wish to remain inside the United Kingdom, and that means that politics will never go back to what it was before.

We know that the debate over Scotland's future provoked lots of energy and passion and that people were genuinely weighing up the arguments, testing the facts and coming to the conclusions that they felt were best for their families. The huge turnout, the arguments and debate that we overheard all around us and the activism from young people proved that politics is still relevant to people's lives at a time when many feel disconnected from the democratic process.

I am immensely proud of the young people in my party who carried themselves with dignity, argued their case with passion and commitment and made their arguments for staying inside the United Kingdom, and I know that on the other side people feel the same way about the young people who were engaged in that argument.

On the day of the referendum, I was immensely proud and emotional to travel with my family—in particular my son, at 17—to vote on shaping Scotland's future. It was a momentous occasion for my son. I certainly agree with the First Minister that we should embrace the idea of votes at 16. We in the Labour Party are committed to votes at

16. It has been our policy for years and we want it to happen, and I do not believe that there is any good reason why it should not happen right now.

The First Minister referred to the question of Sewel motions and the entrenchment of the Parliament. Again, I am happy to agree with him, because those guarantees lock in change that is better, faster, fairer and safer and which the Scottish people demand. I welcome his statement on a statutory basis for the Sewel convention on legislative consent motions. Of course, that was first mentioned by Labour in our devolution commission proposals. Our devolution commission report stated:

"we recommend that 'the Sewel convention' should be given a statutory basis. To reflect the reality of the Scottish Parliament's permanence and irreversibility, we are of the opinion that responsibility for administration of Scottish Parliamentary elections ... be devolved to the Scottish Parliament."

Therefore, I think that we agree on those questions.

The debate has not been without its consequences. The energy and passion were sometimes misplaced and became aggressive. I have to say to the First Minister that I do not think that we can describe the situation as simply the behaviour of a few "miscreants". On both sides, we should reflect on behaviour that was intimidating and was aimed at silencing people. For my part, I will do all that I can to make sure that anybody on my side of the debate is left in no doubt that such behaviour was entirely unacceptable. I simply ask the First Minister to do the same. We cannot believe that laying siege to the BBC for over four hours and insulting staff as they were going about their business was the behaviour of a few miscreants. I do not believe that anybody in the Parliament really thinks that that was appropriate behaviour, and I think that members should distance themselves from that.

The debate, by its nature, was divisive. With so many people putting so much effort and energy into the respective campaigns, there were always going to be a lot of disappointed Scots. We all have a responsibility to heal that divide rather than to foment any lingering grievance or bitterness. Much has been made by the yes side of the 1.6 million Scots who supported its case. In a country of this size, it is an amazing achievement to get that many people to vote for any proposition. However, we should recognise the achievements of the no side, which gained 2 million votes of support from our fellow Scots who believe that we are stronger as part of the United Kingdom. We did not presume a single vote.

That clear endorsement for the United Kingdom has changed Scottish politics for ever. The constitutional question has hung over this country

all of my life. I give absolute credit to the First Minister for giving the people of Scotland the opportunity to answer it. He might not have got the result that he was looking for, but we can all agree that the United Kingdom is now the settled will of the Scottish people. No longer will our United Kingdom be the consequence of a deal struck by the privileged few—it is now the choice of the many, expressed in a fair and democratic way in which we can all have confidence. It should mark a new phase in Scottish politics, now that the issue has been firmly settled. I do not speak for the 45 per cent or for the 55 per cent; I speak for 100 per cent of the people in this country, who want politics to be about their lives, concerns, families and future.

I have been advised on many occasions that it is not a good look to give the electorate a row when they disagree with you, and I think that we should reflect on that now. We cannot allow the idea that people were somehow robbed or tricked or the thinking that, “If only the over-55s could have been persuaded, we would have won.” That language continues the division that we saw too often in the period before the referendum.

Those figures on the over-55s are in themselves simply not true, but the main point is this: before the Parliament rose, we had a number of impassioned debates from the yes side, saying that only by voting yes could we do certain things. We cannot spend the next two years, having moved from “If you vote yes, this will happen”, saying “If you had voted yes, that would have happened”. We cannot leave the politics of the place in that shape—we need to move on.

Although the referendum was divisive, a consensus emerged among all the key figures on a number of areas. We do not need anybody to hold our feet to the fire to make this Parliament work or to get the powers for this Parliament that will make it stronger still inside the United Kingdom. I give my commitment that we will bring powers over taxation and welfare and ally them with the powers that are already here to create jobs and enterprise and give people skills, and we will use our procurement policies to give people a living wage. We will bring both of those lots of powers together to ensure that we have a Parliament that delivers for the people of Scotland.

One side of the argument over the last period has been about strengthening the Scottish Parliament with greater commitments on powers, and the people of this country will hold us to that commitment. However, the other side of the argument, which was prosecuted by both yes and no, is about the issues that were coming to us on the doorsteps and people’s concerns about their children’s future, about care, about job security and about rights in the workplace. Those issues

are the other side of the bargain, and we all—together—need to deliver on them in the next two years.

We all know that childcare is a problem for many families and that we have a responsibility to help them, and we will work with the Government where we can build a consensus on delivering those policies. We all agree that our national health service should be free at the point of need and protected from private profit, and we will work with the Government if it wants to do those things. However, we need honesty from the Scottish Government about what it is currently planning for the NHS and other areas so that we can help with work in that process.

If I might be forgiven, I think that one area on which people can agree is land reform, which is part of a radical agenda for Labour. If we are to see social change in our communities, land reform can deliver it. There is a will in this Parliament to change the concentrated pattern of land ownership across Scotland. We have received the recommendations of the land reform review group and between now and 2016 we can and must look at how we enact them. We must show boldness in introducing radical changes, and we must address the fact that 423 people own 50 per cent of privately owned land in Scotland. Devolution has taken us far down the road of land reform, but it is a journey that is not yet complete. This is about political will, and I will work with people right across the chamber who are willing to do that work.

I mention land reform to highlight areas where we can come together over the next period to make a radical difference to people’s lives. Less than two years of this Parliament are left before we go again to the Scottish people in May 2016. As the First Minister has highlighted, I previously described Scotland as being on pause as we debated the referendum, and everyone must agree that the enormity of the referendum debate has resulted in less of a focus on other areas, such as education and health.

Indeed, the long list of things that the First Minister has highlighted as being successes of the Scottish Government is, for me, proof that devolution inside the United Kingdom has worked for the people of Scotland. However, I want to work more with it on these big questions: how do we give people a living wage? How do we protect our health service? How do we address the needs of young people who do not make it to university but who need to get skills through college places that will give them the opportunity to take up jobs, if they are being created by the Scottish Government? Perhaps now, with the constitutional question settled, we can go back to debating such issues, and Thursday’s legacy can be that our

Parliament starts to discuss what it can do rather than what it cannot.

I so agree with the Presiding Officer that we need to open up our Parliament. I agree with Grahame Smith that we must again see our parliamentary process, and the walls of the Parliament, breached by civic Scotland, the trade unions and the campaigning groups. Our committees must listen to them, and each and every one of us must go out and listen to what people in our communities are saying. We must let this place again be a lively and energised place, where we do not presume that we know the answers but have the confidence to listen to the people who do.

I believe that, despite being on opposing sides, the 2 million no voters and the 1.6 million yes voters have much in common. It struck me that many on both sides were asking the same questions but coming up with different ways of getting to the answer that we all want. I have already begun the process of meeting, speaking to, phoning and contacting people who I know voted yes. I have done so because I respect the fact that, although they may have come to a different conclusion to me, they were driven by the very same things that brought me and many other people into politics.

I do not fear engaging and working with anyone who has the interests of Scotland at heart, who genuinely wants to wrestle with the issue of equality and who is as troubled as anyone in here by the existence of food banks and the fact that the life chances of too many of our young people are determined by the time that they are three.

This is the time for all of us, on all sides of the debate, to look at and search for the things that we share in common so that we can address the cry of the people of Scotland that they want real change. We know that they all, whether yes or no, shared a desire for change and the belief that we can do better than this. They all displayed a renewed confidence in this Parliament, so let us now use that to deliver the change that we need.

No one believes that Scottish politics can go back to business as usual, and nor should we let it. Although I enjoy shouting at people as much as anybody, that cannot be the default position of any of us. If we want to respond to the awakening that the First Minister describes, it cannot be that any of us goes back to business as usual. We know what the people of Scotland said, and we know that the message that drove the debate was that what is happening in our communities is not good enough.

Let us find a way, together, of responding to that challenge, because the eyes of the world have moved on. Scotland seemed like the centre of the

universe as the world's media descended on us and our debate was discussed all over the globe. I do not think that any of us realised the extent to which the debate would open up and would prompt interest across the world.

We know that we were interesting for a time, but we recognise that things move on. However, the eyes of Scotland are still trained on us now, and people look to us to bring about the change that they need: a change in our politics and a change in their lives. Let us not lapse into the old debates of the past and be found wanting. Let us now, together, take on the challenge that the Scottish people have laid down to see this strong Scottish Parliament standing strong inside the United Kingdom.

14:38

Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): I thank the First Minister for advance sight of his statement; I will add a few words of my own on his service in the chamber and in wider Scottish politics. I was eight years old when Alex Salmond was first elected a member of Parliament, and 11 when he first led his party, so he has been a dominant force in Scottish politics for the entirety of my political awareness. He has changed Scotland through his time in Parliament and in government, and I think that every member in the chamber recognises that—so there we go. *[Applause.]*

Scotland has just had the biggest, broadest conversation about the future of our country. It was a conversation that saw schoolchildren line up with grandparents, and half the world want to join in. It saw David Bowie, Stephen Hawking and Kermit the Frog declare for one side, with Billy Bragg, Brian Cox and Groundskeeper Willie on the other. It made us find common cause with the unlikeliest of people, and it was a conversation that, as a nation, we needed to have—a conversation that energised Scotland like no other, and one that engaged us, too.

I agree with the First Minister that the story of this referendum was participation—the number of people who turned out to vote; the number who turned out to help and got involved, having never previously posted a leaflet or knocked on a door; the number who thought that the discussion and decision were too important for them to sit this one out; and the number of young people having their first taste of front-line politics. I have met on both sides teenagers who were passionate, informed and articulate and who will, without doubt, be our next generation of MPs, MSPs and ministers. There is no doubt in my mind that those 16 and 17-year-olds added to the debate and have proven by their intelligence and their conduct that we must now look at the franchise across the whole of the UK.

The conversation has been, in large part, a credit to our nation, and it was one that the nation needed to open up. It has energised Scotland, but it has, by its very nature, divided Scotland, too. Now, after every vote has been cast and every ballot paper has been counted, it is time for the country to come back together and to accept that the majority has spoken and that more than 2 million people came together to back one proposition against the other. It is time for the country to move forward with common cause.

That will require leadership and an acknowledgement from those at the top that this was a free, fair, open and decisive ballot. It was the Scottish Government that set the question, the Scottish Government that set the date, the Scottish Government that set the franchise, and the elected leadership of the Scottish Government who put taxpayers' money and the machinery of this Government's civil service behind trying to secure a yes vote.

I am glad that the First Minister mentioned the Edinburgh agreement in his statement, as both Alex Salmond's and Nicola Sturgeon's signatures sit at its base, under a text that lays out the following, which I think is worth quoting:

"The two governments ... look forward to a referendum that is legal and fair producing a decisive and respected outcome. The two governments are committed to continue to work together constructively in the light of the outcome, whatever it is, in the best interests of the people of Scotland".

That is what they signed up to, and Scotland demands no less. I am glad that the First Minister says that he will honour that commitment.

I know that it is hard. Before we broke up for the final campaign period, we had a debate in the chamber in which I laid out how I would feel if the upcoming ballot did not go my way. I said that I would grieve for what I would feel I had lost. I understand that that is how many who voted for independence are feeling. There is hurt, grief and loss. However, that pain is not healed by people crying foul, and that grief is not ministered to by talk of a conspiracy.

To truly come back together and to move on, we need an acknowledgement that the process was not flawed—not just the mechanics of that process, but the process itself: the act of asking all citizens who are of age to decide which constitutional future they choose. That direct democracy, with all votes weighted the same, is the correct way in which to decide our nation's future form. Since Friday, we have had three senior nationalists, including the First Minister, saying that there are other ways to unilaterally declare independence. We need those at the top to respect and accept the result because, without

such acceptance, we cannot move on—and move on we must.

This Parliament and the members in it need to get back to the job that we were elected to do. We need to have a broad discussion about educational reform. We need to know the impact of cutting 140,000 college places on the skills base of our future workforce. We need to have a full review of our health service. We need to know why the Institute for Fiscal Studies says that health spending has been going up in England but falling here. We need to know about the £450 million-worth of further cuts to the health service that this Government is planning—cuts that it wanted to keep from the public and which an NHS whistleblower felt so strongly about that they risked their job to let the public know.

We need an update on our new single police service—a police service that routinely stops and searches children and sees officers armed and on the street without the public's consent to that change in the nature of our policing.

We also need to know that, with independence taken off the table for a political lifetime, this Government is going to stop the politics of grievance and try to make devolution work. I have five pages of quotations from members of the Government party in which they say "only with independence".

In February 2014, Keith Brown said:

"Only"

with

"independence can ... we ... boost business".

In March 2013, Annabelle Ewing said that only with independence will we

"see the interests of Scotland's farmers placed automatically at the top of the agenda".—[*Official Report*, 13 March 2013; c 17708.]

In 2014, Nicola Sturgeon said that only with independence

"can we ... help women back into work."

In May 2014, Michael Russell said that only with independence will the Government deliver "transformative childcare". [*Interruption*.]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Ruth Davidson: Presiding Officer—[*Interruption*.]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Ruth Davidson: Presiding Officer—[*Interruption*.]

The Presiding Officer: Wheesh!

Ruth Davidson: The Government has spent seven years telling the country all the things that it

cannot do, and now it has only 18 months in which to tell us the things that it can do. One of the things that it can do is help to deliver more powers for the Scottish Parliament. The referendum was never about no change. Change is coming. It is about whether that change should happen within or outwith the United Kingdom.

For months, Scottish National Party members have attacked the three unionist parties' proposals for further devolution—ways to make the Parliament more responsible, work better and deliver more for the people of Scotland—but we are committed. The three pro-UK party leaders came together in June at the top of Calton Hill to make that commitment to further powers. We added to it in August under the watchful gaze of Donald Dewar in Buchanan Street. We endorsed a timetable this month in front of the world's media at Our Dynamic Earth. I want the Parliament to have to look Scotland's taxpayers in the eye and I am intent on making that happen.

The chair of the process, Lord Smith of Kelvin, was announced by the Prime Minister on Friday. I and others met him this morning. A command paper will be ready by the end of next month and engagement with the people of Scotland will start thereafter. Draft legislation will be prepared by the start of the year.

That process is real, it is happening, and it will change the powers of the Parliament. The SNP needs to make a decision: is it going to continue sniping from the sidelines or is it going to get on board and work in good faith to develop our democracy in Scotland?

The referendum was held. Millions voted. The outcome was decisive, and it must be respected. We need to get back to the job that we were elected to do: making this devolved Parliament work for the people of Scotland.

14:47

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

The First Minister and I spent only one year together in the Westminster Parliament, but even in that one short year I could see that he had tremendous political skills. I can recognise political opponents' tremendous political skills even if I do not agree with their political beliefs; that is no more the case than with the First Minister. I am sure that we will, at a later stage, get another opportunity to wax a wee bit more lyrical about his achievements.

The referendum campaign has been the democratic experience of my lifetime. Never in my 30 years in politics have I seen anything quite like it. When was the last time that voters marched up to us in the middle of the high street and demanded a 20-page document from us so that

they could read it? My window cleaner argued about the technical aspects of European Union membership and Panama's currency arrangements. The referendum was even the hot topic among German tourists in Fort William.

However, the most inspiring aspect was that the 16-year-old voters who voted for the first time ever did so with great pride, confidence and knowledge. I agree with the First Minister that all 16 and 17-year-olds should get the vote. They have carried themselves extremely well in the referendum and have given opportunities to 16 and 17-year-olds throughout the UK. We should endorse that.

The people of Scotland deserve the widest and highest praise for rising to the occasion. They made Scotland shine last week, so we must treat that pride with care. We have a responsibility to respect the decision that has been backed up by 2 million votes, which is the highest ever endorsement for a political decision made in Scotland.

The First Minister is fond of expressing great confidence in the ability of the Scottish people, but to my great disappointment, over the weekend that confidence evaporated. The First Minister should not question the judgment of the people just because they did not agree with him. On Friday, within hours of the result, and of agreeing to participate in the process for securing more powers, the First Minister was actively seeking to undermine that with a range of bogus distractions, claims and allegations. Today he claims that he accepts the result, but his complaint-ridden statement betrays that claim. I have some hope that that will change with new leadership in the SNP.

This morning, I was pleased to meet Robert Smith to take him through my party's proposals for a more powerful Scottish Parliament inside the United Kingdom. Members know that he has been tasked with leading the effort to reach agreement in short order. There is a tight timetable, but I am confident that agreement can be reached.

Members know that we Liberal Democrats published our proposals two years ago, under the chairmanship of Sir Ming Campbell. Our proposals reflected the desire of people in Scotland, which we believe is for change—but change within the United Kingdom.

We propose that the Scottish Parliament should raise the majority of the money that it spends—the missing powers. That would give us control of the purse strings and therefore control of our destiny, on the domestic agenda. If we wanted to do something that was different from what Westminster was doing, we could do so. If we wanted tax cuts for people on low and middle incomes, we could choose to do that. If we wanted

to invest more in childcare, we could raise the extra funds to pay for that. That can be done within a federal structure, in which the big risks and rewards, in an uncertain world, can be shared across the whole United Kingdom.

We say that the whole of income tax, including the rates and bands, should be decided here. If we add inheritance tax and capital gains tax, we will give the Parliament the powers to tackle inequality and address wealth. We propose to assign the revenues from corporation tax, so that we can reap the benefits of decisions to grow the economy here. We argue for prudential borrowing powers, so that we can invest and save for the long-term future of the country.

We also think that more can be done to integrate services for people who are looking for work, if the power over the work programme resides here.

A federal settlement will give this institution permanence. Liberal Democrat plans will equip every part of the United Kingdom, first and certainly in Scotland, with nimble government. In Scotland such a Government will be able to respond effectively to issues here because it will have the financial resources and clout to do so.

It is a positive agenda, and I hope that the SNP engages positively and constructively, and not with back-door attempts to re-run the referendum and to put forward three tests—that sound exactly like the three tests that the First Minister set on independence—but with positive proposals for change, which reflect the biggest democratic endorsement that this country has ever seen.

We also need powers to be transferred not just from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament, but down into communities. It is striking to note the difference in the votes in different parts of the country; the most sceptical areas were often those that are most remote from this Parliament. We need to push power down to communities so that they can have a bigger say.

The result on Friday was clear, legal and decisive; I am sure that no one in this Parliament disputes that. Two million people decided that we are better together. As the First Minister said last week, the question of independence has been concluded for a generation—possibly for a lifetime. It has been laid to rest. Our task now is to build a better Scotland that meets the hopes and ambitions of people in Scotland—the 55 per cent as well as the 45 per cent. The people have high hopes. We have our work cut out if we are to meet them.

14:54

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): We have been back in the chamber for just under 55 minutes and it seems that, although we can all make statements about bridge building and finding common ground, perhaps we mean slightly different things by them.

I echo the thanks that several speakers have expressed already to the many campaigners and activists, the many people who have become politicised throughout this process. I have found taking part in this historic debate, with its historically high level of public participation, to be an energising experience and a privilege.

There has been bad behaviour on both sides, as Johann Lamont rightly said and the First Minister recognised. I have condemned bad behaviour on both sides, whether I have seen it online, in public meetings, in George Square or outside the BBC. However, throughout the debate I have found it far easier to find examples of inspiring, compelling, creative and inclusive behaviour. [*Applause.*]

On Sunday, just a few days after the vote was in, when I was still catching up on sleep, as many of us were, I had the chance to speak at the United Nations international day of peace. What excellent timing that was. I talked about some of the examples that I found: the yes campaigner knocking on doors, who, when she found an elderly gentleman—a no voter—who was giving up on voting because he had mobility problems and did not know whether he could get to the polls, called the local better together team to get him a lift to the polls, so that he could exercise his right to vote; the many examples of cups of tea and sweets and biscuits shared between yes and no campaigners outside polling stations; and the friends and families who found that although they had been debating and disagreeing, and were voting in different ways, that had not dented in any way the bonds of friendship and love between them. I believe that that degree of empathy and goodwill has been shown by the overwhelming majority of people who have taken part in the debate. It has been a privilege.

All through the debate, my party has had a range of views. A large majority of us campaigned enthusiastically for a yes vote, but many of us found that we needed to demonstrate that it was possible to disagree in the spirit of friendship, because that was what was happening inside our party.

There were many reasons why we did not endorse a devo max, devo next, devo in-between kind of option. I do not see any variant of devo next that will not increase our need to represent ourselves on the world stage and to take the further steps. It may be a long-term debate as to

whether Scotland will indeed go in that direction, but some progress in that direction will happen. We need to find the opportunities and avoid pitfalls.

Very clearly, the Smith commission will not have the time to undertake the depth of public engagement that Scotland deserves and in which those newly politicised people around Scotland deserve to take part. We must find a way to avoid it being just another party political stitch up—whether it involves large or small parties. If the deal is done inside the political bubble, it will fail to give effect to that groundswell of enthusiasm for genuine democratic reform.

There is a risk of rush. We all know that fast legislation can sometimes be bad legislation. The timescale has been committed to, and we need to hold those promises to account, but we also need to make sure that the detail is right.

There is a connection to the wider debate about UK reform. Clearly the two timescales cannot be aligned, but the processes cannot be entirely separate. Already a House of Commons committee is taking forward an inquiry that, among other aspects of its remit, will look at the next stages of devolution in Scotland and their timetable, as well as the impact on devolution or decentralisation throughout the rest of the UK. There will have to be some alignment of our parliamentary processes, to scrutinise the changes.

My fundamental concern is that there could be not a transfer of genuine economic powers—the ability to run a different economic policy for Scotland's different circumstances—but the transfer of responsibility to implement somebody else's economic policy. At the moment, that means making Westminster's cuts on its behalf. We must avoid that.

Westminster has an innate resistance to change. We need only look at the time that it has taken to debate the future of the House of Lords to see that. Against that innate resistance to change we see an appetite among voters in Scotland for the change that is needed not only to a broken political system, but to the broken economic system that it has been propping up.

There are other areas in which we could look at decentralisation, from the Holyrood voting system, which we cannot control, to equality law, transport and energy. We could also look at decentralisation within Scotland.

The First Minister said, quite rightly, that the referendum leaves us with the most politically engaged population in western Europe. We will have to accept that power should never be corralled by politicians; it can be taken from us, and we will be a healthier and stronger democratic

country when all of us have a healthy respect for and awareness of the electorate's ability to exercise that power and to take power from us at any given moment.

The generational change that the First Minister spoke of is exciting. I say that knowing that my party's youth wing is bigger than my entire party was five days ago, which is an exciting and terrifying prospect. The ability of people to vote at 16, the new engagement of people who have not previously been politically engaged and the potential prospect of new political and constitutional relationships within these islands leave me—in the absence of independence—with some mixed feelings.

That brings me, of course, to the First Minister. As others have said, we will have the opportunity to debate our feelings about Mr Salmond's contribution at a later date, but I can only acknowledge that, whether I have been on the same side of the independence debate with him or on other sides of different debates, I can think of no one else on the Scottish political landscape who has done more to advance the case for democratic, radical reform of the constitution of these islands. Although I have not always voted with him on budgets or in other votes, I pay tribute to him for that.

The Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate.

15:01

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): I, too, would like to pay tribute to the First Minister and to the campaign leaders across the board for the referendum campaign. More important, I would like to pay tribute to the tens of thousands of folk who slogged away for months to try to achieve their vision of a fairer, more socially just Scotland.

In Aberdeen, my SNP colleagues and I worked side by side with members of the Green Party, the radical independence campaign, quines for indy and Labour for indy, who were joined under the yes Aberdeen umbrella by swathes of people who had never previously taken part in a campaign. I am talking about people like Dell, who canvassed and leafleted morning, noon and night so that he could see his vision come to fruition; 10-year-old Eleanor, who supplied our yes hub with cookies and wrote her own yes leaflet for school; and 98-year-old Mrs Margaret Corall, whose wise words went viral on Facebook and Twitter even though she did not know what they were. The fact that so many folks who had never previously been involved in politics joined us in our efforts was truly inspiring.

Having new people working alongside veteran campaigners from various political groupings could

very well have been fraught, but it was not, because everyone shared the same hope and vision. They conveyed that hope and vision to people in communities throughout Aberdeen, inspiring others to register to vote for the first time, to vote for the first time and to participate in campaigning for the first time.

The truly amazing thing about the referendum campaign is the amount of participation that took place. I am proud that we witnessed record turnouts across the country, and I am even more gratified that the gaping chasm that normally exists between turnouts in rich areas and those in poorer areas narrowed. That would have made the late Brian Adam very happy, as he worked hard to improve turnout and trust in politicians in the poorer areas of Aberdeen during his many years on the council and in the Parliament.

Trust is key in ensuring that people who had been disenfranchised now remain enfranchised. We should trust our young people to make decisions and should give them the vote in every election. The vast bulk of young folk studied the debate and made their choices from a very informed position.

The folk who voted no did so for many reasons. Some were scared into doing so, like a number in Aberdeen's Polish community who were told that they would be deported if there was a yes vote or senior citizens who were told that they would not get a pension in an independent Scotland. Their trust and faith was shattered by fear, and it is a poor politician who has to rely on fear to win. Others voted no because of the vow to give more powers. That vow must now be kept by those on the no side.

When I joined the SNP half a lifetime ago, I signed a membership card that pledged me to campaign for an independent Scotland and the furtherance of all Scottish interests. I will continue to campaign for an independent Scotland but, until the day the people of Scotland decide that that is the right way forward, I will do everything in my power to further all Scottish interests. I will lobby and campaign to ensure that powers over tax and social security are decided in this place, so that we can enact a fair wage policy and protect our most vulnerable, their carers and their families. I will continue to argue that we should have control over our economy and all our resources, including our vast oil wealth, so that we can create jobs and opportunity; and I will continue to fight against the abhorrence that is Trident and will always believe that we should put nurses before nukes, teachers before Trident and bairns before bombs.

The promise of devo max was what enticed a number of folk to vote no—the devo max that the no politicians prevented from being on the referendum ballot paper in the first place. They did

everything in their power to stop that going on the referendum ballot paper. Scotland is now watching to see whether the promises and the vow are kept by the no politicians.

Democracy and participation have grown in Scotland over these past few weeks and months. The people of this country now recognise that they themselves have power. That genie is now well and truly out of the bottle and woe betide any politician or political party that does not recognise that Scotland and our people have changed for ever.

15:07

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Before taking the oath in the Parliament, I said:

"I state that I believe that the people of Scotland should be citizens, not subjects and that I hold firmly that my allegiance should first and foremost be to them."—[*Official Report*, 11 May 2011; c 3.]

I believe in that principle even more strongly now, following the events of last Thursday. The sovereign will of the majority is to remain as part of the United Kingdom. I have spoken to friends, constituents and relatives and I know that it is painful for those who worked very hard for a yes vote to acknowledge it, but the fact is that the majority of the electorate voted no, and not by a tiny margin; 400,000 more Scots voted no than yes, which is a whole 10 per cent of the electorate.

There are some who question why people on the left like me voted no. I did not take a knee-jerk position and a narrow party-political decision but a decision that was made for very clear and principled reasons. I voted no because I want to see a fairer, more equal society. Ending zero-hours contracts, addressing the abuse of agency working and blacklisting, ensuring fair pay and dignity at work and building caring public services and the NHS, which are what we all want to see, are the issues that motivate me and have always motivated me. They are central to my political belief and philosophy.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): Is continued austerity, with 60 per cent of the cuts still to come and the Labour Party signed up to 96 per cent of those, part of the member's fair agenda?

Neil Findlay: Given the £6 billion black hole that we would have had in the budget of an independent Scotland, I believe that we would have had turbocharged austerity had we had an independent Scotland.

The issues to which I referred are central to my political philosophy. That is why I have always been a member of a trade union and why I have used my time in the Parliament to campaign on

those and other issues that affect the everyday real lives of working people.

The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell): Will the member take an intervention?

Neil Findlay: Not at the moment.

I want to see change as much as anyone inside or outside the Parliament, but I want change for workers in Liverpool and Leeds just as much as for those in Livingston and Leith. I fundamentally believe that we do not challenge the power of capital by dividing along national lines the greatest force we have in challenging that power—the UK labour and trade union movement.

The labour movement has delivered the greatest advances for working people that we have ever seen. The right to vote, the NHS, the welfare state, the minimum wage and this very Parliament were all delivered not because political elites handed down such things to us but because working people campaigned for and demanded them. It is that commitment to the collective advancement of working people that makes me a socialist and not a nationalist.

I want powers to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor, not to provide tax cuts for the biggest tax-dodging corporations. The Scottish Government said in its white paper that it wanted a fairer and more equal Scotland, yet the only redistributive policy in the white paper was a 3 per cent tax cut for corporations. That is not how to create a fairer society.

I accept that the council tax freeze puts money in people's pockets, but it also rewards those with the most expensive houses while the services the poorest rely on are cut as council budgets are reduced.

Aileen Campbell: Will the member give way?

Neil Findlay: Not at the moment.

That is not progressive.

In our NHS, we see crises brewing by the day in recruitment, A and E, general practitioners, boarding out, bedblocking and, as was exposed during the campaign by a concerned whistleblower, a budget that is due to be slashed by £500 million—the First Minister may laugh at that, but I am sure that those sitting in hospital are not laughing—yet we are told that the Government is protecting the NHS. In our colleges, we saw 130,000 places cut in a deliberate policy that is stifling the life chances of our people. Despite all that, the Government portrays those policy choices as progressive. Those claims went unchallenged by anyone in the yes camp.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): It sounds as though Neil Findlay is trying to fight a 2016

devolved election campaign without any additional powers for this Parliament. Will he use the last two minutes of his speech to talk about the additional powers that this Parliament needs to deal with inequality and social injustice?

Neil Findlay: Why do Bob Doris and his party not pursue a progressive policy agenda with the powers that they have now? Once they do that, they can talk about new powers.

Many of us on both the no and yes sides want similar things: a fairer Scotland, a more just Scotland and a caring Scotland. We simply disagreed on the best way to achieve that goal. The task is to convince those in power that being all things to all people changes little. We need progressive action to address the inequality in our society.

There are two distinct lessons from Thursday for us all. First, people want economic and societal change. Secondly, the majority do not believe that we have to break up the country to achieve such change.

I know that the First Minister is hurting, so I say this to him gently, but can anyone imagine what would have happened and what he would have said had there been a yes vote and the no parties had said that, were they to receive a majority at the following election, they would unilaterally reverse that democratic referendum decision? That would be a constitutional outrage. I therefore ask that the First Minister reflect on his comments of yesterday and consign his plans for a constitutional coup d'état to the waste paper bin marked "Very bad and dangerous ideas".

The people have spoken. They want a fairer Scotland. The Government's test will be whether it is willing to use its powers to take progressive decisions to improve the lives of the poorest in society, so that those with the broadest shoulders carry the greatest burden and progressive politics with redistribution at its core wins the day.

15:14

Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): What a privilege it is to be called to speak in this debate and what a time it is to be alive in Scottish political life. Although on the night—or in the morning of Friday 19 September, I should say—it became clear that the people of Scotland had said no, what we witnessed during our referendum campaign was engagement in the democratic process at a level unprecedented in modern times.

With a turnout of 85 per cent and 97 per cent voter registration, it is fair to say that the citizens of Scotland have come alive and that they have higher expectations of the level of political debate

and involvement in future democratic contests. I hope that all parties live up to those heightened expectations.

I have never seen such enthusiasm on the part of so many voters as I saw when I went round on polling day to polling places in Cowdenbeath, Kelty, Lochgelly and Ballingry. People who might not have voted before, for they felt that their vote simply would not make any difference, came out to vote in great numbers. People who had never been involved in political campaigning before stood at school or church gates to urge their neighbours to vote yes. Young people were dancing in the streets and car horns were tooting.

Underlying that fantastic and joyous display of engagement in democracy was one key emotion—hope. It was hope that, by voting, people could bring about improvements to their lives and the lives of their families, their communities and their country. It was hope that, by using their sovereign power between 7 am and 10 pm on polling day, they could usher in through their own actions a more prosperous and fairer Scotland.

Nowhere was that enthusiasm, engagement and hope clearer to see than among the young people of Scotland. What a credit and inspiration these 16 and 17-year-olds are to their country, for their involvement was truly wonderful to behold. Sadly, some of them might not realise that it is not in the Scottish Parliament's gift to extend their voting rights to any other election for, as with much else that is to do with our daily lives here in Scotland, the power over the voting age still lies at Westminster.

I therefore hope that there will be cross-party support in Scotland for the SNP's call to extend the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds across the board. What politician could look young people in the eye and tell them that, although they were deemed mature enough to vote for the future of their country, they are somehow not eligible to vote in the coming Westminster and subsequent elections?

As to the future, it is clear that we are all going there together—the 45 per cent as well as the 55 per cent. We are all about the business of working together for a better Scotland and in the best interests of the Scottish people. That is why it is vital that we in our Scottish Parliament hold Westminster to account for the last-minute promises that the unionist parties made to people who in all good faith relied on those promises when they came to vote—some 25 per cent of all no voters, by all accounts. That is why it is so important to ensure that all the powers that the unionist parties promised as being meaningful to daily life in our country—for job creation, tackling poverty, protecting the vulnerable, giving our carers a better life and ensuring an international

platform for our distinctive Scottish voice—are now delivered, and as per the timetable that they promised.

It must be said that the past 72 hours or so have not been propitious in that regard, with growing fears and concerns among the energised electorate of Scotland, who are watching carefully, that so-called vow to Scotland will not be honoured. Over that same short period of 72 hours, the SNP for one—I know that the same applies to the Greens and other parties—has had a vast increase in membership. The figures keep changing from minute to minute, but I believe that we have now doubled our membership since the close of play on Thursday and that our membership has grown to 51,000-plus people. What a credit that is to the engagement of the people of Scotland. People are energised and are now taking ownership of their future, which is quite right.

I simply say in conclusion that our truly remarkable First Minister, Alex Salmond, has taken Scotland into a new era—an era of self-belief and confidence and an era in which people have rightly understood that they are entitled to be ambitious for their country and to hope that their lives and their families' lives can be better. For my part and for the 71 per cent of 16 and 17-year-olds who voted yes, the dreams of a better future for Scotland are still very much alive.

15:19

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): This is the fifth referendum in which I have campaigned, starting with the 1975 European Economic Community referendum. Like other referenda, it has given us an opportunity to work across the grain of the established party-political structures. In 1975, I campaigned on behalf of the SNP against the EEC. However, I had my own private views and, when I voted, I did so against my party—I voted for the proposition. I am not sure that I have told many people that, but this is a good time for us all to recognise that political parties have neither control of their members and supporters nor a monopoly of wisdom. I know that, because I am one of those who have crossed that line.

In referenda, we build new teams to fight campaigns. I want to spend a couple of minutes talking about the First Minister's abilities with regard to building teams.

I first met the First Minister in the mid-1970s when, as a student, he was the editor of the *Free Student Press*. I am not going to say anything that might pre-empt what he might write in his biography in due course. It is all on the public record; I simply want to remind members of the

point. The *Free Student Press* was a great effort. It was a paper that went to every student in Scotland once a term, paid for by advertising and contributed to by many. I mysteriously found myself part of the team in a tiny way, providing some photographs. The First Minister drew me into that team, as he drew in others.

In West Lothian, during the 1979 referendum campaign, Alex Salmond essentially orchestrated a cross-party campaign, an SNP campaign and—because Tam Dalyell widnae dae it—the Labour campaign for yes. How many men can run three campaigns and not break sweat? That is magnificent. Indeed, in his book on the 1979 referendum, Neil Ascherson picked out the West Lothian campaign as being by far the most effective.

In 1987, Alex Salmond defeated the incumbent Tory in Banff and Buchan. At that time, employment in that constituency was in the worst quintile in Scotland. Unemployment was a significant problem. When he demitted that office in 2010, the constituency was in the best quintile for employment. Therefore, the First Minister was absolutely correct to focus on the need for real powers that generate employment. How did Banff and Buchan move from the worst quintile to the best? Every time there was a threat to a job, at the front of the queue, fighting for jobs, was the First Minister. That is what he has done throughout his political career, and I know that he will continue to do so.

Alex Salmond is a man who takes on immense challenges. There was no greater challenge than the one that presented itself in relation to the Peterhead fishing boat, the *Sapphire*, which sank within sight of the harbour mouth. The families who lost their loved ones—all on board were lost—sought to have the boat lifted so that they could recover their relations. It was an impossible task that no one else would have contemplated doing. However, somehow, within a matter of days, millions of pounds-worth of effort had been committed to the raising of the *Sapphire* and, at a quarter past 8 on 14 December 1997, the *Sapphire* was brought into Peterhead harbour by the barge *Tak Lift VII*. That was an achievement of great moment—one that involved building a team and bringing people in but, fundamentally, one that was focused on giving comfort to individual people. It had nothing to do with party politics and everything to do with doing the right thing by people.

Our First Minister is, rightly, robust in how he deals with perceived weakness and failure, but, when people need support in extremis, he is first in the queue to deliver it.

In 2007, Alex Salmond built a team that delivered the first ever SNP Government. It was a

team of individuals who—including himself—had not a single minute of ministerial time between the lot of them, and he turned us all into a very effective team. In 2011, he earned the right to lead the first majority Government in this Parliament.

In 2014, we moved from a position of around 30 per cent support for yes to a vote of 45 per cent. We did not do that alone; we did it by building a team across political parties and people of no party. That is the result of the effort that Alex Salmond put in.

Today we are looking at a victory for the no vote that might yet be seen to be a pyrrhic victory. The leading article in today's *Australian* says:

"The Scottish Nationalists need not despair: they have lost a battle but not necessarily the war."

One of the great Chinese philosophers said, "Of the greatest leader, the people will say, 'We did it ourselves.'" If there is a message from this referendum it is that we, the people, did it ourselves; Alex Salmond merely helped.

15:25

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): There will be much written and spoken about the referendum, some of which we will recognise and agree with, while other views will undoubtedly be hotly contested. However, as we interpret and reinterpret the result, I find myself agreeing with at least one thing that Jim Sillars said—that, for 15 hours from 7 am to 10 pm, the people of Scotland were, indeed, sovereign. Their voices, their views and their votes were all that mattered. From the queues at the polling stations first thing in the morning to the steady stream of people throughout the day leading to a huge turnout, it was an incredible day, and the people of Scotland said decisively "No thanks" to separation by a vote of 55 per cent to 45 per cent. I thank all of them for voting.

I am astonished, although I should perhaps not be surprised, that, a mere 24 hours later, the sovereign will of the people of Scotland was simply brushed aside and Alex Salmond was making a unilateral declaration of independence. One cannot help but think that, despite his resignation, he is intent on causing the maximum difficulty for his deputy. He cannot talk about respecting the result and then deny the democratic will of the people, setting out plans to simply assert independence. As the heir apparent, Nicola Sturgeon needs to be very clear. Does she respect the will of the Scottish people? Does she respect the result? Will she get on with the business of government, or will she deny the democratic will of the people and simply assert independence? I know that her voice has left her

just now, but I look forward to her answers when her voice returns.

I turn to the YouGov survey, as I want to debunk some of the myths that are around. The first myth is that the age profile of those who voted is somehow instructive. It is not true that there was a majority no vote only among those aged 65-plus. In fact, there was a majority no vote in every age group from 16-year-olds to over-65s with the exception of the 25-to-39 age group. In four out of five age groups, the majority voted no. Some frankly reprehensible things have been said about those aged over 65, which I hope that the SNP will distance itself from.

The second myth is that women were increasingly voting yes. The gender analysis showed that, by a margin of 16 per cent, more women were voting no. The third myth is that the Labour vote was haemorrhaging to yes. The truth is that, although 27 per cent of Labour voters voted yes, 22 per cent of SNP voters voted no. Let us have no more selective telling of the referendum story.

Annabelle Ewing: Will the member give way?

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Jackie Baillie: No. SNP members would do well to listen to this.

The people of Scotland voted no. The settled will of the Scottish people is to remain in the United Kingdom—that was their democratic decision and we should respect it, not diminish it.

Without doubt, this has been an exciting and energising time in Scottish politics. I am genuinely pleased at the engagement and interest that have been shown across our communities. Whether during the organised debates that we have had with one another or in doorstep conversations, I have been struck by how much we agree on. Our vision for Scotland is a shared one, and on the outcomes that we seek to achieve—social justice, fairness and equality—much more unites us than divides us. It is our job, in this Parliament, to work with civic Scotland—indeed, with all sections of the country—to heal the divisions, and what better way is there of doing so than focusing on what we can achieve by working together?

I know that we in this chamber agree on many things; we have debated the issues often enough in the past few months. The fundamental difference is that I believe that that healing comes about through political determination and will, not constitutional change. Some of our greatest achievements, such as votes for women, the creation of the NHS and legislating for the minimum wage, have taken campaigning and political struggle. Such economic and social policy

advances are not arrived at by simply changing the border.

The frame for my politics has always been social justice—for example, tackling child poverty by providing the best possible start in life and opportunities for families to prosper and succeed. Those are the very areas that I want us to work together on across the chamber.

We will face a number of domestic policy challenges. The fuel poverty figure stands at 900,000 households—the highest level ever. As we approach winter, we need urgent and radical action if people are not to have to choose between heating and eating. On health, which is already the responsibility of this Parliament, we learned from a leaked paper that the SNP proposed to slash £450 million from front-line services, including services at the Vale of Leven hospital in my area. Another leaked paper said that 10 per cent savings were to be made during the next two years from the newly formed health and social care partnerships in the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde area alone. I was encouraged that Alex Neil, the cabinet secretary, said that none of that was true, and I look forward to supporting him in ensuring that those cuts do not happen.

I close by reflecting that on 18 September the people of Scotland were in charge. They voted no. Scotland's settled will is to remain in the United Kingdom, and we need to respect that. However, it is clear that, whether they voted yes or no, all the people who voted share the desire for change. It is therefore our responsibility in this Parliament to set aside our divisions and unite to deliver that change.

15:31

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): I arrived at my local polling station in Dyce church hall on Thursday morning at around 7.45. Usually when I arrive it is empty and only a small handful of people have voted on their way to work. On Thursday, I found a bustling polling station and was advised by the staff that they had had a queue out the gates of people waiting to vote when the doors opened. When I arrived at the campaign rooms and spoke to my fellow campaigners, I found that that story had been repeated at their polling stations, including those in some of our most deprived communities, where the polling station staff usually have to find ways of keeping themselves entertained during the long fallow periods when no one comes through the door. On this day, during this vote, they were stressing about the possibility of a serious rush around teatime.

One of the things that we should do is pay tribute to the people who staffed polling stations

and who assisted with the vote. Many people who arrived at polling stations had never cast a democratic ballot before and they required the assistance, support, patience and perseverance of the staff. We should pay tribute to them for their work and for ensuring that the vote was able to be carried out without any fuss, without significant delays and without people finding that they were unable to access the polling stations at 10 o'clock. They deserve to have tribute paid for their efforts.

On participation, the point has been made about the narrowing of the gap between the poorest communities and the wealthy communities. My colleague Kevin Stewart mentioned the late Brian Adam. He would be most proud of the fact that Middlefield turned out to vote and, according to ballot box sampling, it voted yes. I am sure that that would have brought a wry smile from him.

The other thing that struck me during the campaign was the people who campaigned. I have not been involved in local politics in Aberdeen for as long as some of the people there, but I have been involved for more than a decade. I know the familiar faces of the people who we can rely on to turn up at an election campaign to knock on doors, to go out leafleting and to do the jobs that need to be done. In this campaign, there were many faces that I had never seen before. There were a lot of people who were not involved in politics, whether with the SNP or any other political party.

Kevin Stewart also mentioned the Aberdeen branch of women for independence, or, as they referred to themselves—as people from the north-east would—the indy quines. They were led by a lady called Gillian Martin, who is a constituent of the First Minister—she is from Newmachar—who became inspired to get more actively involved following the passing of Margo MacDonald. Indeed, she posted on her blog at the time asking, “What would Margo do?” Gillian Martin and her team were an absolute force of nature. They held information meetings across the north-east. They manned—or womanned—a stall in the city centre to pass out information to voters and answer their questions as they came by. Above all else, they got people who had never been involved or engaged to become involved and engaged in the process.

Another group who surprised me were people I knew myself, such as some of the playground mums at Dyce school, where my daughter goes to nursery, who told me about the work that they were doing within their friend groups, in the playground and within their families to talk to people about independence and the opportunities that they thought that it would bring. Towards the end of the campaign, they came out and started door knocking and getting involved in the campaign proper. If I had said to those people six

months prior to the vote that they would be actively involved in the campaign, they would probably not have believed me. The same goes for the people who did not get involved in campaigning but came to debates and public meetings. They included people I know from my school days who I saw in the audience at public meetings. If someone had told us when we were at school not only that they would be in the audience at a public meeting but that I would be speaking at that meeting, we would probably not have believed it.

When the First Minister was out campaigning with us in Dyce not long before the vote, he was handed a letter from a young girl in Dyce—Molly, aged 8 and three quarters. I am sure that he remembers the letter, in which she thanked him for fighting for her future. I point out to the First Minister that in the letter she said that her ambition was to go to university and become an astronomer. Her mum advises me that her ambitions have changed and that she now wants to grow up to be Nicola Sturgeon. He can perhaps pass that on to the Deputy First Minister.

One other group that deserves a mention is Scotland's carers. Certainly a large number of carers took the opportunity of this campaign to get involved and to put down a marker for the kind of things that they want for Scotland in the future. A declaration supporting a yes vote was signed by well over 100 carers. They were not just supporting a yes vote in and of itself; they were looking for greater control of welfare in Scotland and greater control of the powers that influence and affect the lives of carers and those they care for.

Greater powers on welfare were hinted at during Johann Lamont's speech. I and the carers who got in touch with me prior to today's debate want to see more detail on exactly what welfare or taxation powers we will see in Scotland. We have had the promise of more powers. We have to see some flesh on the bone in that regard. We have to understand what those powers are and how we can use them to transform lives for Scotland's carers and for Scotland's people in general.

The people of Scotland are active and engaged and they are hungry for change. We must ensure that that change is delivered for them.

15:38

Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con): As is already clear, all of us will have different recollections of the referendum campaign and different reactions to the result. It is important that in this Parliament of all places we are responsible in what we say and careful in how we say it.

On the campaign itself, it is true that the number of voters registered and the turnout of 85 per cent reflect a degree of electoral engagement that is unprecedented. On an issue of this importance, that was reassuring and welcome.

Of course I accept that on a single issue voters will find it easier to respond. I do hope that that level of interest is reflected in the more complex territory of multiple parties fighting elections on different manifestos.

I will not dwell on the campaign. Like many, I have received numerous anecdotes of conduct that was inappropriate and unimpressive. I heard directly from no voters who were scared to display window posters or wear lapel stickers. If they were justified in that apprehension, that is certainly not the political climate that I want to see in Scotland.

Democracy is underpinned by freedom of opinion and freedom of expression, with respect for those who hold opinions with which we disagree. If we depart from that with self-indulgent displays of venom and contempt, democracy is dis-served and our country diminished. From my perspective, I very much enjoyed the campaign. It was a positive experience, and my front-room windows and stickered car remained intact, but I know at first-hand how the debate divided Scotland. As passions ran high, fissures ran deep in families, communities, the workplace and among friends.

I turn to the result. Voters in Scotland decisively rejected independence and endorsed the partnership of the United Kingdom. That is the clear and democratic outcome of the referendum and the sovereign will of Scottish voters. This is not about triumph and victory posited against dejection and defeat; it is about allowing Scotland to have her say on an issue of unparalleled importance, hearing what she said, accepting that verdict and moving on.

The Edinburgh agreement was framed in the knowledge that one side or the other would be deeply disappointed. That is why, as the First Minister said, the agreement, which was signed by him and the Prime Minister, explicitly confirmed that both Governments would respect the outcome. On both sides, we now have to implement the spirit of that agreement. We need to do that because the democratic will obliges us to do it, because it is the right thing to do and, most important of all, because, for the sake of Scotland, we must move forward into a new era.

I do not want to diminish what I know is a deep sense of disappointment and dismay felt by those in the SNP and all the other parties and people who were involved in the yes campaign. There will be a sense of exhaustion, deflation and dejection. I am not unfamiliar with electoral defeat—I have

known the heat and anguish of searing electoral defeat. We are all in politics for positive reasons, not negative ones. In our different parties, we espouse different approaches to the great public services of health, education and justice and different approaches to enterprise, the economy, the environment and climate change.

In a debate of the magnitude of the independence referendum, greater attention has been focused on constitutional issues than on any other issue. That was inevitable, as we can do only so much at any one time. There is now a huge responsibility on the Scottish Government to pick up the devolution baton and start running with it. What is the state of the health service? Why is there such concern about accident and emergency departments? Are we filling GP vacancies in rural areas and, if not, what are we doing about it? With an anticipated £0.5 billion cut to the health budget, what is the priority health plan?

Are the merged colleges producing what local economies and communities need? Are young people and those who want to update skills to return to the workplace being failed by the disappearance of part-time college courses? What is the true state of the stability of the finances of our Scottish universities? How many eligible Scottish students are failing to be placed in a Scottish university?

How do we translate the great legacy of the Commonwealth games into quantifiable progress on addressing obesity and physical inactivity among young people, and how do we measure that?

The range of significant and unanswered questions in devolved Scotland is vast. Those are the questions to which the Scottish Government must now turn and which the Opposition parties must pursue and harry the Government on to get answers. However much we discuss the result of the referendum and ponder the implications of the result, that result did something, which was to make crystal clear the renewed obligation of the Parliament to Scotland. We should discharge that obligation. We should serve our country.

15:44

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I, too, pay tribute to the First Minister for his leadership for decades across the board and, speaking personally, for his tolerance of my—how shall I put it?—politically idiosyncratic moments in the chamber.

I say to Jackie Baillie that constitutional change is not academic. She mentioned votes for women, which was constitutional change that was about power. That is what the debate was all about. The

issue was where power over the major decisions should lie. She also touched on the demographics of the yes and no vote. With a caveat relating to the sample size, I note that, according to the website "Lord Ashcroft Polls", 73 per cent of those over 65 voted no, compared to the 55 per cent overall figure, and that 71 per cent of 16 and 17-year-olds voted yes.

Jackie Baillie: Will the member take an intervention?

Christine Grahame: Please let me make some progress.

Given that the over-55s represent some 36 per cent of Scotland's population—thankfully, that figure is growing—the demographic gap and political priorities will widen. That will happen not just in Scotland or, indeed, the UK, but across Europe. I do not think that I am a typical pensioner—whatever that is—mainly because I am still working full blast well past retirement age and have been committed to independence and social justice for decades, but I have a great deal in common with other grannies and granddads out there, and the last thing that I want is hostility between the generations because of the outcome of the vote. I would be the first to woman the barricades and halt any move to granny or granddad wars, but I want to address why there is that difference.

First, there was the issue of access to information. Although others tweeted and Facebooked—I do not do that—many pensioners accessed the debate through the press and terrestrial media. No one on the no side can possibly dispute the inequality of the debate there. Only one national paper—the *Sunday Herald*—declared for yes; others had headlines that screamed vote yes for higher prices and so on. Nicholas Witchell even had the audacity to tell us the Queen's private thoughts on the debate. BBC impartiality was parked.

However, the crux for me was the threat to the state pension either directly by people being scared into believing that it would not be paid out or that it could not be paid from Scotland's own resources, and, indeed, the threat that even any private pension, which is a contractual matter, was not secure. That was a real whammy of a blow for a person who is retired or whose retirement is imminent. Incidentally, I know of cases in which pensioners entered the polling station to no campaigners still telling them that they would lose their pension should they vote yes. Therefore, I fully understand why the scare stories stuck as they were intended to.

Strangely, nearly a quarter of a million pensioners claim pension credit in Scotland because the UK state pension is so low. Worse

than that, one third who are entitled to that benefit do not claim it. That was neatly sidestepped by the no side. On top of that, some 50,000 Scottish pensioners are already worse off due to Westminster cuts of £90 million to the savings credit.

The battle for independence was so that Scotland could harness its resources for a fairer and more just society for all its people, not just for the young and the middle aged, but for the old—the pensioners. For the time being, I am waiting for Westminster to deliver that social justice to Scotland's pensioners.

The no campaign promised energy bills that were lower by some £170 per annum. Labour has said that it will freeze energy bills. Let us see how that all pans out and what happens to the winter fuel allowance of £200, which is currently not means tested.

At the same time, those grannies and granddads should think of their grandchildren, because Ed Balls is committed to continuing the Tory austerity cuts. Freezing child benefit alone will cost the average family—people's children's families or their grandchildren's families—£400 a year. They will be that amount worse off. That is what the Children's Society says. I simply ask Scotland's pensioners to watch this space. Promises that are made on the back of a fag packet are, like fag packets everywhere, easily thrown away.

Labour in Scotland has promised that nothing would be in or out of consideration for cuts if it governed in the Scottish Parliament. Means testing, which is already a failure with the pension credit—we should remember that one third do not claim it—may be extended to personal care, bus passes and even prescriptions on a Labour agenda. If we add to that the means testing or even ditching of the winter fuel allowance, which is literally a lifeline for many pensioners, that pension will be under greater pressure, and that will make life even tougher for our older people.

On the pronouncements of the self-proclaimed keeper of the promise, I prefer my late mother's dictum when I returned from a night out full of jollity. She would say, "It'll be a different story in the morning." Indeed it is, and it has been. On promises or vows, I say to my fellow pensioners that they should not count on Westminster; instead, they should count what they have in their purse or wallet in the coming years once they have paid the bills and count up whether their grandchildren's prospects for a happy and fulfilling life in Scotland improve under Westminster rule.

Labour in particular has a lot to answer for. It has saved David Cameron's political skin, aided and abetted the Tories in the no campaign, and

scared older people into believing that they would be on the breadline, when many of them are there already. So far, mum's the word from Labour.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): A little bit of calm, thank you.

15:49

Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab): Last Thursday morning I began going round polling station after polling station and continued throughout the day, and I was taken aback. I have attended many election days in my life, but I have never before seen polling stations so continuously busy throughout the day.

When it reached 10 o'clock at night and the polls were closing, I was not sure whether it would be good or bad in terms of how the vote would go. However, I was absolutely sure in my mind that the day was a triumph for democracy, and that must be the starting point for discussions on the referendum.

There are lessons that we need to learn on some of the issues. We should condemn what happened in George Square, and we need to learn lessons regarding the vileness of some of the campaign, particularly on social media. We can learn from those things, but overall we need to be positive.

I do not believe that the 2 million people who voted no are somehow the winners. My view is that the 3.6 million people who took the time to come out are the winners, because 100 per cent of them voted for change, and change we will have. We have a timetable set out in front of us, and it will be met.

In the campaign, particularly during the past few months, I talked to thousands of people throughout my constituency and elsewhere. On the doorsteps, the conversation was about change: not just constitutional change, but change for the purpose of building a fairer and more just society. If we are to honour the triumph of democracy that the referendum was, we must look at how this Parliament uses its current powers, those that are coming through the Scotland Act 2012 and those that will be negotiated in the coming period to bring about the social and economic change in Scotland for which so many people came out and voted.

We need the right to work. I spoke to people on the doorsteps and they believe that the best way to tackle social inequality and poverty in this country is to give every person the opportunity to work with dignity and to earn a decent wage. We need to look at our current policies and those that we need to introduce in order to give people the right to work.

We need the right to health and social care. People on the doorsteps were genuinely worried about the pressures on the NHS, and I have said before that no matter the colour of the Government, major challenges in that respect face us as we move forward. We will not tackle those challenges and pressures by burying our heads in the sand and denying that they exist. I have written to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing—who is not in the chamber today—asking for a meeting to look at some of the major crisis points and challenges that the NHS faces in Fife.

We need the right to education and to access to education, so that every child can achieve their full potential. Far too many children in Scotland leave our school system without the qualifications and skills to enable them to get jobs and work. In my constituency, we have a ridiculous situation in which companies use recruitment agencies to recruit from all over Europe because they cannot get the skills locally, while there are young people in Fife who have very little hope for the future. That situation must be addressed.

We need the right to dignity in retirement for every pensioner. That is about not just pensions but communities and infrastructure, and the way in which we support people in retirement to have an active life.

We need the right for people to have a roof over their head, given the number of homeless in my constituency and throughout many parts of Scotland. We need a housing programme that will address the housing crisis that we have in Scotland.

The right to localism is important, because far too many powers have been centralised. I certainly did not campaign and fight for a Scottish Parliament to bring powers from Westminster only then to suck powers up from local government. We need stronger local government.

Mark McDonald: Will the member give way?

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

Alex Rowley: If we are to tackle social inequality and give people the best opportunities in life, we need to recognise that we can do that through every level of government, and that means empowering local government.

We united in this Parliament on the right of 16 and 17-year-olds to have the vote. We should be putting forward a motion on that, campaigning on it and joining the UK political parties to say, as Ed Miliband has done this afternoon, that every 16 and 17-year-old should get the vote.

15:55

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to take part in this debate. I listened with great interest to the First Minister's statement and I particularly welcome his comments on the extension of the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds. Observant members will be aware that I lodged a motion on that very point yesterday, and I am pleased to say that as of 1.30 today, when I last looked, it had cross-party support from 26 MSPs. I encourage all members to give it consideration.

Without a doubt, one of the truly memorable aspects of the campaign was the engagement of young people in the process. The interest was amazing. The 7,000 people who attended the Hydro in Glasgow for the referendum debate will no doubt recall it for a long time to come. The sight of, amongst the throngs of people at the polling stations last week, so many young people, some in school uniforms, as I witnessed at Wormit in my constituency, is something that I will not forget in a hurry. We need to build on that enthusiasm. It is clear that we have shown the rest of the UK the way, and I am grateful for the comments that Alex Rowley has just made on the franchise issue.

I move on to other matters. As others have said, the unionist parties have committed themselves to more powers. Indeed, before the infamous vow was published in the *Daily Record*, the mantra in referendum literature was "more powers guaranteed". On 8 September, at the Loanhead miners club, Gordon Brown said that Labour has been the party of home rule since Keir Hardie. He said:

"We would be moving quite close to something near to federalism in a country where 85 per cent of the population is from one nation."

He was reported as saying that he was seeking nothing else but agreement on a modern form of Scottish home rule.

Then we had the infamous vow, in which the language slightly changed. According to the three UK party leaders, it became "extensive new powers". Although there was no reference to welfare, the continuation of the Barnett formula was expressly mentioned. At Dalgety Bay on Saturday, Gordon Brown did not talk about modern forms of home rule. Instead, he said:

"The promises that were made last week about change, about the delivery of further devolution, must be, and I believe, and will ensure, will be delivered."

At the very least, we have a difference in description. Despite the term's frequent use in the press, and with due respect to the First Minister today, "devo max" seems not to have been used much by the political leadership. The public may

indeed have difficulty in fully understanding what it means.

The Liberal Democrats, like the Liberals before them, of course are historically home rulers, but the Campbell commission report said nothing about welfare, and paragraph 26 called for the Barnett formula to be scrapped. It was a wee bit surprising, therefore, that Nick Clegg was quite so keen to sign the reaffirmation of Barnett in the vow. However, events move on, and we must accept that.

What of the "line in the sand" party, which has moved so far in a comparatively short period of time, and which at a Westminster level is now adopting the slogan "English votes for English laws"? I remind members of that famous speech by another Scottish former Prime Minister, Alec Douglas-Home, at the University of Edinburgh in February 1979, at the time of the first referendum, when he urged a no vote. He outlined five defects of the Scotland Act 1978 that required remedy, one of which was the ability of Scottish MPs to vote on English bills while English MPs could not vote on comparable legislation for Scotland. It is not just Tam Dalyell who signalled that.

Here we are, 35 years later, with the same issue. I note that there has surely been sufficient time for the unionist establishment to come up with answers—to echo criticism of the SNP that we heard often in the referendum campaign. Of course, there are answers. Independence would have been one, but that is not to be. However, a move to further fiscal freedom would be another, with Scotland simply paying a proportion to the UK Treasury for the joint services of the UK state.

Indeed, one of the rising stars of the Conservative back benches at Westminster, Dominic Raab, said in *The Sunday Telegraph* on Sunday, while arguing for the Barnett formula to be scrapped, that there is a case for devo max. He indicated that there are international models to consider, such as the Basque Country, where the Basque Government levies income, corporation and capital taxes and pays Madrid for common national services. The Campbell commission argued for inheritance and capital gains tax to come to the Parliament.

If there is a genuine desire to give the Parliament effective powers, there is plenty of scope to go beyond the politics of the lowest common denominator. The Strathclyde, Campbell and Labour devolution commissions cannot be the last word.

If we really want to respond to the 45, to the widespread disenchantment demonstrated in Scotland's largest city and elsewhere, to the concerns of the disabled, to the army of carers, the despair of the long-term unemployed and to

the change agenda, fresh thinking is required on all sides. The alternative—more Westminster stitch-ups, more jockeying for party advantage and more fudge and mudge—will simply bring the question of where power lies in Scotland back sooner rather than later.

Ultimately, the people—not politicians in party huddles, whether at Chequers or elsewhere—will set and force the pace. Above all else, the referendum demonstrated that the old order of politics is on its deathbed. The Westminster model of privilege and power preserved is not fit for purpose. People in Scotland—and, indeed, increasingly people in the rest of the UK—recognise that.

Although the campaign was energising, my great regret is that the power to take decisions for ourselves in Scotland has been lost, at least for the time being. However, that does not mean that the people should remain quiet and certainly does not mean that the Parliament should do so.

16:01

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): I noted that Alex Rowley said that, “change we will have”, and many speeches have referred to the term “vow”. If the prize of voting no was devo max, the UK parliamentary motion suggests that that is not the prize that we are now being offered.

Many people know that Conservative Party MPs are pushing for the Barnett formula to be scrapped. The confusion among the no camp about its position was highlighted again by Rod Campbell, who talked about the Campbell commission. Perhaps confused is the Lib Dems’ default position on matters fiscal.

I wonder what history will make of the 11th hour offers that were made. I wonder what it will make of the Treasury briefing. Indeed, more important, as the First Minister mentioned, I wonder what the legal authorities will make of the Treasury briefing. We need to follow that with great interest.

Johann Lamont referred to Labour’s devolution commission report on the Sewel convention and the position of the Scottish Parliament. That is to be welcomed. She also mentioned concerns on the workplace. I wonder whether those concerns are necessarily shared by partners in the no campaign, because it had a combined position.

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I should have pointed out that it is my intention to put all the information that I have on the Treasury briefing in the hands of the correct legal authorities so that the investigation that the UK cabinet secretary does not want to make can proceed through the appropriate legal authorities. Then we will see what happens.

John Finnie: I thank the First Minister for that intervention. I am reassured by it and will pay great attention to how the matter progresses.

The referendum was not about electing a reforming Labour UK Government. Indeed, I do not think that that is what we are likely to see anyway—I do not know whether there is any commitment to reviewing health and safety in the workplace or the position on employment tribunal fees and arrangements, which reward poor employers.

The Labour leader talked about different ways to get the answer that we both want and not going back to business as usual but, of course, it is business as usual. I do not want a private NHS and, although the Labour Party south of the border has been complaining about that, we have heard very little about it north of the border. I certainly do not want a House of Lords. That is a way of rewarding the donors to the unionist parties and has no place in a liberal democracy.

Neil Findlay: I hear a lot of critique of the no side from Mr Finnie. Where was the critique from the left of the yes camp of some of their regressive stuff that was in the white paper and the Government’s policy? Mr Finnie was silent.

John Finnie: Mr Findlay knows that I have spoken out on corporation tax, for instance, if that is what he is alluding to.

We know that more of the same means more illegal wars. Trigger-happy folk, including peace envoy Mr Blair, are mouthing off. We know that business as usual means Trident, with £1.43 billion being spent on the early design and the cost of replacement being perhaps £130 billion. It means austerity, which I raised during Mr Findlay’s speech, with 60 per cent of the cuts still to come and the Labour Party signed up to 97 per cent of them—and Labour will do more through its attack on the under-25s.

If we are talking about what we all want, let me say that I do not want the same language. I do not want talk of “British jobs for British workers”, for instance.

I am keen that we find common ground—that is important—but I am afraid that the UK unionist parties still view the corporations as being ahead of the citizens. There is no place for that in my outlook on politics.

Politics is about priorities, and priorities have to be funded. The question is what will be improved by the no vote. Will the no vote address the challenge of zero-hours contracts, which concern Mr Findlay? Will it improve the situation in relation to work capability assessments?

The UK will cut the Scottish Government's funding, which will have implications for the priorities that are decided on in this Parliament.

I share Jackie Baillie's concern about the 900,000 people who are affected by fuel poverty. She will be aware of the survey in the Highlands and Islands that shows that the vast majority of pensioners in the area are in severe fuel poverty, with the highest percentage in Orkney—it is ironic that most of those pensioners live in sight of the flare at the Flotta oil terminal. Energy is a reserved matter, of course.

I take issue with Jackie Baillie on what she said about people choosing between heating and lighting. That choice is already being made, and is reflected in the decisions of food banks to give out cold food because people do not have the wherewithal to heat food.

Jackie Baillie: Will the member take an intervention?

John Finnie: I thank the member, but I will not; I have a few points to make and I have taken a couple.

I respect the result, and it is important that we do so. Mostly, I respect the engagement that has taken place, particularly in many areas where, historically, there has not been engagement. I am thinking about the radical independence campaign event in Merkinch, in Inverness, which showed that people turn out when they are given the facts and encouraged to believe that their views matter. I am sure that all sides of the debate respect that.

Most of all, I respect the aspirations to make things better that many people hold. Of course we will work with everyone to deliver improvements. The fiscal commission working group said that we need economic and taxation levers if we are to do that, but that does not mean that we should not keep fighting for social and environmental justice.

Democracy is a great thing. We need to reinforce that message for people who engaged but who feel that, because they did not get the result that they wanted, it is a lost cause. Democracy is never a lost cause. We commend everyone for their participation in this historic event.

16:07

Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP): This is not the same Scotland as it was a few weeks ago when we all went back to our constituencies to fight the campaign. The SNP is not the same party—quite literally, given the influx of new members who have been energised, who I believe will make up the majority of the party's membership.

I am not the man that I was, either; I am 89 per cent of the man that I was, thanks to the canvassing exercise programme that I see a few members around the chamber also went through. I have had new experiences, such as carving my way through activists and journalists during the last few days of the campaign as the world's media descended on central Edinburgh, and seeing Irvine Welsh with a megaphone, trying to stir up last-minute turnout and support in the last few hours of referendum day from a car that was running around central Edinburgh. I have made and renewed friendships, often across political boundaries.

However, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that we have not got to a new constitutional arrangement. I came to the chamber without a pre-prepared speech, intending to listen to what members said. Last night I went to the radical independence campaign's meeting in Edinburgh, to take the temperature and hear what the campaign thinks; here, I want to consider the

"brave new world
That has such people in't!"

I have heard a few things. The phrase "settled will" has been used twice. I think that that is quite a dangerous phrase. It is associated with the creation of the Scottish Parliament in 1997, as a result of a vote by the people of Scotland that was carried by a margin of 50 per cent. Having taken to various media to try to calm people on my side and make them realise that we lost, let me also say that that level of triumphalism can be dangerous. We must recognise that 2 million people voted no, 1.6 million voted yes and 0.7 million did not vote at all. There are three minorities in this country, but we must not let that crystallise, because we are one Scotland and should continue to be so.

Johann Lamont said that we should let Holyrood be a lively, energising place. We should. The debate was lively and energising, but it took place outside Holyrood. If Holyrood is to be lively and energising, we must allow that debate to flourish. These walls do not just hold people out: they can constrain debate; they can hold it in. We should be brave enough to continue to debate, consider and imagine a Scotland beyond the walls of this chamber.

Ruth Davidson said that the Scottish Government spent seven years telling people what it could not do and that instead we should focus on what it could. This Government has shown, over two terms, what this Parliament can do and has done so in spades. Free education; unfair taxes frozen, others made progressive; the right to buy scrapped; prescription charges gone; renewable energy put first and, to the utmost of our power, the NHS protected. Ruth Davidson alleges that

this Parliament has done nothing; perhaps more accurate is to say that it has done nothing—or almost nothing—that she agrees with, which is very different.

I will make no apology for continuing to argue for more while working with what we have. Instead, an apology should come from anyone who says, “This is all. This is what is yours; stay in your box.” Holyrood can, Holyrood has and Holyrood will.

Willie Rennie set out a series of powers in an interesting contribution. I would say yes to any of them, to make Holyrood more able. However, he does not need to look at the Campbell commission. He could look at the Steel commission that preceded it, the Calman commission or a succession of home rule pamphlets, going back to Gladstone and beyond.

There is an imperative here, for the people of Scotland, who voted on a prospectus that said that more powers were coming. Twenty-five per cent of no voters said that the most important reason for their no vote was that it would still mean extra powers for the Scottish Parliament. That was the case for 34 per cent of those who decided in the last month—at a time when no was losing support at a record rate, losing undecideds two to one, and when noes were going to yeses three times faster than yeses were going to noes.

It is fair to say that winning a vote but losing the argument is no victory and losing a vote but winning the argument is no defeat. Whatever the powers are, I would like to hear the other parties talking not just about powers in and of themselves but about what they want to do with them. I want them to pass the test that they have insisted we meet. Delivering the powers will be a problem, but for Westminster the problem beyond that will come when the people of Scotland realise how little has been offered and that the great, lively, energising debate and the aspirations to change Scotland and deliver the kind of social justice that Neil Findlay speaks of so highly will not be realised by what is on the table.

It was called devo max, but that term does not describe it well. What must emerge is something more like that. Ultimately, the independence question will come back, but we need that to satisfy the aspirations that the people of Scotland have expressed. Sovereign power lies in the hands of the people of Scotland, although they have lent it to Westminster. Ultimately, that is what the people of Scotland wanted. They will continue to want it and it must be given.

16:14

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): Many times in this chamber the First Minister has stated that

we should accept the sovereign will of the Scottish people. Last week we saw the sovereign will of the Scottish people when they made their marks on the ballot papers: more than 2 million Scottish people made their way to the polling stations to state that they want to remain part of the UK. In my region, in the Borders and in Dumfries and Galloway, more than two to one were against separation from Britain. There are seven councils in my region—East Lothian Council, Midlothian Council, Scottish Borders Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, South Lanarkshire Council, South Ayrshire Council and East Ayrshire Council—and in not one of those areas did people support the plan for Scotland to break away from the rest of the UK.

After an election or a referendum, the first question to ask is, “What has the electorate told us?” On this occasion, the answer has been definitive: the people of Scotland want greater self-governance. They want more powers and they will get more powers. The Scotland Act 2012 is already delivering the greatest transfer of fiscal powers to Scotland since the Act of Union. From 2016, the Scottish Parliament will have more powers over income tax and borrowing, as well as other tax powers, but it is clear that the Scottish people want more home rule. It is quite right, as Marco Biagi said, that the Scottish Lib Dems have shared that desire for some time and have campaigned on that very matter.

What was unhelpful was that, mere hours after the outcome, as Scotland was still digesting the results, voices were already decrying the reneging on the promise of more powers, and we have heard a bit of that in this afternoon’s debate. There has been no reneging on the promise of more powers, and simply wishing that that were the case will not make it so. There is a clear timetable, which remains on track. A motion has been published that confirms that a command paper will be laid before the UK Parliament by the end of October. That will lead to a wide consultation of not just the Scottish Parliament but the Scottish people, and we will see draft clauses for a new Scotland bill in January next year.

John Finnie: Is Jim Hume in a position to give any reassurance regarding the stance of his Tory back-bench colleagues on the Barnett formula?

Jim Hume: All the leaders have made it very clear that they want to keep the Barnett formula in place. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Order.

Jim Hume: It has been a divisive campaign that has pitted neighbours, friends and often families against one another. There has been poor behaviour on both sides of the debate, so it is

incumbent on all of us to lead by example and to heal any wounds that might exist. The First Minister had it right on Friday when he appeared before a “One Scotland” banner. I thought that he gave an extremely dignified speech on Friday morning, during what I understand would have been a moment of great personal disappointment for him. He struck the necessary tone for going forward, and I commend him for that.

However, I was disappointed when, at the same time that a service of reconciliation at St Giles cathedral was being attended by representatives from all sides, the First Minister stated:

“I think Scots of my generation and above should really be looking at themselves in the mirror, and wonder if we by majority, as a result of our decision, have actually impeded progress for the next generation, which is something no generation should do.”

I state in the fullest of terms that no one in Scotland, regardless of whether they voted yes or no, has to look themselves in the mirror and justify to themselves how they voted last Thursday. To use such language is deeply unhelpful and it reinforces the divide that exists between some yes and no voters.

Where do we go from here? We get back to the bread and butter of politics—the issues that really matter to the Scottish people. It is time for the Scottish Government to channel all of its energy into governing. The people have spoken, and the sovereign will of the Scottish people demonstrates that they do not want independence but want the Scottish Government to work within the framework of a United Kingdom in which Scotland has greater powers.

My hope is that the Scottish Government will now get on with governing, and will refrain from blaming Westminster for all Scotland’s ills and from saying that it would be able to govern much more effectively if Scotland was independent. It can begin that process by taking a long, hard look at the health portfolio. Last week, Channel 4’s “FactCheck” blog said:

“The idea that the Scottish government has bravely struggled to protect the NHS budget under intolerable pressure from Westminster is contradicted by independent research.

The reality is that Scottish governments have for some years chosen to increase health spending by less than it went up in England.”

That blog post was in response to the publication by a whistleblower of documents that revealed that there is to be a £450 million funding shortfall for the NHS in Scotland over the next two financial years, which will clearly have significant ramifications for the ability of health authorities to deliver care to patients.

The absence of topical questions from today’s business prevented me from seeking answers from the Scottish Government on that worrying revelation. It was a misleading tactic during the campaign period to state that the only way to protect the NHS was through independence, and it did not work.

Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Will Jim Hume take an intervention?

Jim Hume: I am sorry, but I am in my last 20 seconds.

All of us want an NHS that is free at the point of need, and we must all work together to keep on providing that. It is clear that people want more powers for the Scottish Parliament, so all the parties across Holyrood and Westminster must now work hand in hand to deliver that. Ultimately, what everyone wants is a better and fairer Scotland. I hope that we can all work together in meeting those aspirations.

16:20

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): In our last debate before breaking up for the referendum we all spoke of our hopes for Scotland’s future. Along with so many others, I expressed what I believe is a shared wish across this Parliament to build a socially just Scotland. Here we are, five days after the biggest outpouring of democratic political expression that our country has ever seen, and it is now up to us; it is up to the 129 people in this chamber to carry ourselves in the manner that the people of Scotland want to see and will respond to. It is up to us not to relive the constitutional arguments of the past three years, but to come together to use the powers of this Parliament to build a fairer Scotland. It is up to us to give Scots hope that the Scottish Parliament, working within the UK, can deliver a better future.

I will make a few observations about the campaign and the result, but most of all I want to say that I stand ready. I believe that colleagues from every party stand ready to work with the Scottish Government, the SNP, the Greens and every other yes supporter and no supporter in the country to create a better Scotland, and not to focus on further constitutional change—that issue has finally been settled once and for all—but to talk about protecting the NHS that we all so clearly care about, to talk about improving our schools and colleges to create a Scotland of opportunity and learning, and to talk about decent work and how we can give people jobs that reward them rather than exploit them.

In many ways I am still the naive and hopeful optimist that I was when devolution spurred me to stand for election in 1999; the non-politician who was inspired to get involved and to get my hands

dirty to help to create the fairer society that I had always thought possible. I recognised much of that spirit among yes campaigners and supporters over the past few months and weeks. That alone gives me hope that we can come together in common cause once more. However, 15 years in the Scottish Parliament has taught me to recognise that there will be difficult hurdles and attitudes that we will need to overcome.

On the no side, the overwhelming emotion has not been one of joy or celebration, or even victory, but just relief. The last few weeks in particular, in the run-up to the vote, were times of anxiety. I lost count of the number of friends and neighbours who told me how worried they were that we would wake up on 19 September with our country split in two. The word “scaremongering” was flogged to death in the campaign, but the point that I am making is that people were genuinely scared. Although many of us are now ready to reach out, I know that there are many, too, who are still angry or resentful about the experience that they have been put through and who will therefore be wary of working with the other side. I simply ask those colleagues to take a few trusting steps once more.

On the yes side, there can be few politicians, let alone fellow Scots, who have not experienced huge disappointment at some point in their lives, and who will not have some degree of empathy for the feelings and emotions that have been running strong. The temptation must be to lash out in anger and to blame old people, the BBC, voting irregularities and, of course, those closest to you: Labour. I simply ask those who are still wrestling with what was, in the end, a decisive result, not to dwell on bitterness and resentment but to take comfort from the democratic engagement that we have all shared and the hope that that should bring to all those who are involved in elected politics.

What I perhaps did not fully appreciate until now is that there are also those on the yes side who did not expect to win and for whom the yes vote surpassed all expectations. There are clearly many who, rather than coping with the bitterness of disappointment, have been energised and believe that their dream is one step closer. I am not asking them or anyone else in Scotland who still believes in independence to set aside their political beliefs; I am simply asking that we all respect the result of the referendum.

The immediate post-referendum debate already seems to be focused on constitutional powers; what new powers will be devolved and when. However, what really matters is how we help families who are being squeezed by austerity and recession, how we protect our elderly people when social care is being cut, and how we ensure that

colleges and not just universities provide educational opportunity to those who need it.

A most encouraging aspect of the campaign was that it was fought using the language of progressivism and the language of an egalitarian, altruistic and compassionate Scotland—the language of Labour. Let us put aside the politics of grievance and—as hard as it may be—our political tribalism, and work together to deliver affordable and accessible childcare, which is entirely our choice here in the Scottish Parliament, to build the homes that people need and, if we want to see an end to food banks, to use our powers to help the most vulnerable people, rather than simply railing against our political opponents.

I join others in the chamber and beyond in recognising the First Minister’s achievements. He has taken what must have been the painful and difficult decision to step down. I hope that he will forgive me if I ask him for one more sacrifice: not to leave us on a note of constitutional disagreement, but with a demonstration of political unity—to accept the olive branch and the hand of friendship that is being extended to set us on a healing path, and to accept the verdict and the wishes of the people of Scotland.

16:26

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): Our First Minister has helped us all in this Parliament to grow in confidence and self-belief; he has also helped to grow our democracy.

At the start of the referendum campaign, support for independence stood at about 25 per cent and we had a party membership of about 15,000. We have now surpassed the 50,000-member mark and we are sitting on 49 per cent plus of the intended votes for the 2016 election. That is positive growth, and the flood of new members is a clear statement about continued energy, enthusiasm and integrity in, and truth of, our movement.

The First Minister has much to be proud of. He has been central in galvanising grass-roots support and in building trust in our future as a nation. People who have never voted in their lives queued up to register and engaged in politics in spite of the no campaign’s determination to frighten them into silence and passivity.

The First Minister has sometimes been accused of being a bit too serious, but I can think of many magical moments when his humour shone through. Talking of humour—although this really is not funny at all—in Labour’s conference week we have seen Mr Miliband’s commitment to promises made melting like snow off a dyke. We should not be surprised: the panic that brought about the

three-in-a-bed no vow to deliver more powers was panic indeed.

According to a poll, one in four voted no on the strength of that vow. A vow is a vow. I vow to support everyone who voted for more powers to realise that vow. Elderly people were told by no canvassers that they would lose their pensions and that their taxes would shoot up. Now they face a higher pension age, continued austerity and no heating allowance. That was Labour's vow today at its party conference.

Alongside the lies were some deadly promises. Let us look at what else Labour is saying today. Today, at 12.40 pm on Leading Britain's Conversation radio, Rachel Reeves—for those who do not know, she is the shadow work and pensions secretary, Labour's key driver on pension policy—did not even know what the basic pension rate is. She was asked three times. I can tell her that it is £113.10. Is that part of the vow to the pensioners of Scotland? Mr Macintosh, that is Labour language.

One of the worst of the revisions from Labour relates to bairns not bombs: we have the promise of bombs not bairns. In West Dunbartonshire, where Faslane is sited, the people voted for independence. The bombs that are carried by nuclear convoys that pass through all our towns—one passed through Hamilton in February—are seven times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb. Ed Balls has made the obscene announcement that he will cap child benefit at 1 per cent to provide enough money for Trident's replacement. Let us have more children in poverty and big bombs—that is Labour language.

Labour, once opposed to weapons of mass destruction, has tumbled gleefully into bed with Messrs Cameron and Clegg to make sure that our largest population centres continue to be threatened by nukes that they do not want, while they all work out how to get bigger, more lethal and more destructive bombs.

The reality, which Labour might have preferred not to mention, tells us a great deal about how Westminster political leaders will behave towards us in Scotland as we see them move into general election mode. Even if some people are prepared to grant some benefit of the doubt to folk such as William Hague—on the basis of experience, I am not—they need only look at the current crisis in London. Reneging on promises is never a pretty sight—look what reneging on university tuition fees has done to Nick Clegg—but reneging on vows that were made jointly is a bit like somebody turning up at church to get married then telling their new spouse that it was all a terrible mistake.

The people of Scotland should not be conned. The promises will not be delivered, because the

House of Commons will stop them, and we have no power there. Even the limited representation that we have, which is made up of Labour politicians who openly back austerity, suggests that we might be able to increase the 20 per cent of our tax revenues but not decrease them. Those politicians would rather promote nuclear weapons in our own back yard than look after the children of Scotland and the rest of the UK.

We know that independence is now supported by 45 per cent of our population, which includes Glasgow—the Labour heartland. In my constituency, the vote also ran high. Why is that? Because the people have wakened up to the reality: what has Labour ever delivered for us?

As we look to the future—a future that is still filled with hope and aspiration—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Christina McKelvie: We see that people have embraced hope over fear. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Christina McKelvie: Groups such as women for indy, carers for indy, Common Weal and the national collective are not going away. They will not go back into their box and they will not go quietly into the night.

Johann Lamont talked about going to vote with her 17-year-old son. She will not be surprised that I did likewise with my 16-year-old son. On Saturday, I asked him, "Where do you think I should go now, son?" He said the wise words of a young man: "Mum, get votes for 16 and 17-year-olds. There is no room in our country for racism, fascism or any other extremist view. This is a country that cares for all its people, no or yes." To my son and every son and daughter of Scotland, I give my vow to fight with every fibre of my being to bring about the kind of Scotland that my son and Johann Lamont's son want.

16:32

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

People who live through great historic times are seldom aware of the significance of the events that they are experiencing. Because all of us have been so close to the referendum campaign and all that it has entailed, few of us have had the opportunity to step back and consider how future generations might view it.

All the twists and turns of the long campaign over the past two years, all the events that led up to the vote and the vote itself will be pored over by historians in the future. This has been a truly important period in our country's history and it will probably be many years before any of us appreciates how significant it has been.

Our response to the events will also be treated as historic. How this generation of politicians, as elected representatives of the people, reacts to what has happened will shape our nation's future. What we say in the chamber today and what has been said elsewhere in the past days and will be said in coming days will be part of Scotland's historical record.

It has often been remarked that in politics we should be magnanimous in victory and gracious in defeat. As a Scottish Conservative, I have over the past two decades had to develop a good line in being gracious. Today, unaccustomed as I am, I will try my best to be magnanimous. If I fall short, I can plead only my lack of experience.

We have heard from some on the losing side of the referendum many gracious words, and I hope that we have also heard from the victors a tone not of triumphalism but of trying to bring the country together, in the recognition that it has been divided. In that vein, I pay tribute to the First Minister. He has been an extraordinary political figure, whose place in the history books is assured. As an occasional challenger of orthodoxies myself, I salute his mastery in that field. Given some of the comments that he has made since Friday morning's result, I welcome the more constructive tone that we heard in the chamber today.

The referendum result was a substantial victory for those of us who believe in the maintenance of the United Kingdom, and we should not shy away from recognising that. Let there be no doubt that it was a result with great credibility. The turnout alone—that remarkable turnout—established that beyond doubt.

This was the first time in 307 years that the people of Scotland had been asked whether they want the United Kingdom—this remarkable family of nations—to continue in existence. They voted by a substantial margin that they wished that to be the case. As someone who is a committed unionist, I could not hide my pleasure at that outcome on Friday morning, and I am no less enthusiastic about it today.

A lot has been said and written about the great debate that has taken place in Scotland over the past two years. In my experience, the debate was, in the main, a decent, intelligent and civilised one. I took part in maybe 30 debates, many of them with SNP colleagues here in the chamber. On the whole, they were conducted in civilised fashion. There was some nastiness at the edge of the debate, but I do not think that it does us much credit to dwell on that at the present time.

However, we should not forget that, for many in Scotland—hundreds of thousands of people; perhaps more than a million—the debate held no

interest whatsoever. They had made up their mind at an early stage that the prospect of Scottish independence had no attraction for them. They did not want to hear the arguments or to engage in discussion; they just wanted the whole thing over with as quickly as possible. To those people, even the debate was a threat to their identity. For them—a significant proportion of our fellow citizens—the result on Friday morning was as if a great weight had been lifted from their shoulders, and they have no wish to see the debate continue now that the matter has been settled.

And the matter has been settled—let there be no doubt about that. In the very last speech in the Scottish Parliament before the referendum, Nicola Sturgeon, the Deputy First Minister and—who knows?—maybe our next First Minister, described the referendum as “our once-in-a-lifetime opportunity”. Other people in the SNP have talked about it as being a “once in a generation” event. So let there be no talk about a re-run of the referendum for the foreseeable future. That would be an affront to the democratic outcome and to the clearly expressed view of the majority of the Scottish people.

The case has often been made that those voting no were not voting for no change, and I entirely agree with that. Further devolution will be delivered, and it will be delivered quickly. There is a challenge here, too, for the rest of the United Kingdom. I have never made any secret of the fact that I believe that we should move towards a federal, or at least quasi-federal, system of government across the United Kingdom. I believe that it is highly likely that that will now happen. However, it should not be a precondition of further devolution being delivered to this place. Indeed, the Prime Minister has made it clear that it will not be.

Finally, as others have said, we need to move on from just talking about the constitution. This has been a lively—at times impressive, at times wearying—debate. Scotland has reached a conclusion and has decided its future. Now it is time to pay attention to other issues. How do we tackle the poverty that affects too many Scottish communities? How do we deliver excellent public services at a time when our public finances are under pressure? How do we create the best educational opportunities for our young people, regardless of their parents' background?

Those are the issues that we in this Parliament now need to address. If we continue to obsess only about the constitution, if we neglect those other vital matters, I fear that the verdict of history will be that this generation of politicians has failed. For that, the people will not easily forgive us.

16:38

Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (Ind):

I thank the First Minister for his statement and acknowledge the extraordinary contribution that he has made over all these years. I am slightly taken aback by the comments that suggest that he is in the past now. I simply do not accept that. He may be demitting office, but I do not doubt that he still has a huge role to play in Scottish politics.

Similarly, I do not think that the result that we received on Friday morning means that the matter is done and dusted and is the settled will of the Scottish people. It may be the result that was voted for by a majority of people on that big and fantastic occasion, but life goes on and things change. Will everybody who voted yes be content with whatever the vow turns out to be? I doubt it. There will always be people who are committed to Scotland governing herself. I will certainly be one of them, and I know that there are hundreds of thousands of others. We might have another referendum. It might be in my lifetime; it might not be. However, the idea that 1.6 million people can, overnight, drop their enthusiasm for and excitement about the future is not correct. I am trying to say that we can accept the result, but it will not stop our ambition for something else.

One of the really staggering things about the referendum campaign was the way in which people discovered Scotland for the first time. People who had not had the opportunity before and who had not been north of Shettleston were suddenly appearing in Caithness, Shetland and the Western Isles, and in the east, west, north and south for the first time. That raises the question, "Where should we go as a country?" The first thing that we must do is encourage people to get to know what this country is, because without really knowing and understanding Scotland, how can we see what is best for our country? The exciting thing is that people—maybe not enough of us and, for some of us, too late on this occasion—have found their place and have, beyond discovering Scotland, discovered politics and even themselves. Through this campaign, we have excited people about the possibilities of their involvement in the governance of Scotland.

There has been a great deal of talk of the Scottish Parliament having control of the health service in Scotland. The health service was a hot topic and many people in the health service agree that there are issues around the NHS budget and what we should do about that. For me, it is rather like the West Lothian question—it comes down to our being in control. The health service budget does not operate in a vacuum. Two of the biggest pressures on the health service are people being out of work—we know that work is good for health—and people feeling completely powerless

in the face of welfare changes, which is making them sick. We need to have the two levers of welfare and creating employment opportunities if we are to relieve the pressure on the health service.

For me, the answer to the West Lothian question will always be independence. There is no sense in MPs from Scotland going to Westminster to vote on the English education service or the English health service—why would they do that?—but there is no way round it. I think that Westminster will turn itself inside out and tie itself up in knots trying to resolve the problem, but there is only one answer for our health, our wellbeing, the discovery of our country and allowing people to take part.

It is not that we do not care about people in Liverpool. I am sick of the argument that, for the sake of universal socialism, we should never govern Scotland. That is nonsense. We can share the work of unions across the world—as a country, we have done that. I care as much about people in Liverpool as I care about people in Bonn, in Gaza or anywhere else where there is real concern for our fellow human beings. However, the answer for us, if we are to do our best by our country, will always be that we must absolutely govern it.

My dedication to an independent Scotland will not be diminished by the outcome that was announced last Friday morning. I suggest that it is only the start of a long road—or a short road—not the end of one.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): I call Drew Smith.

16:44

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab): Thank you Presiding Officer, and for your own words in time for reflection this afternoon.

I begin, perhaps unusually but not without precedent, and hopefully not for the last time, by agreeing with Annabelle Ewing. It is a privilege for all of us to take part in this debate today, just as it has been a privilege to be part of the historic discussions that we have had in this chamber and outside it during the past two or three years.

All the votes are now counted and the result is known; the people have had their say. Before this afternoon's debate began, one might have asked what was there for politicians to add when the people have spoken so decisively. Unsurprisingly, we have managed to fill the time. Beyond the anecdotes from the campaign trail, our next task will be to meet the hopes of those whom we represent.

When Parliament last met, members on this side made it clear that whatever the result, we

would accept it. There was much talk about self-determination, and it was pointed out then that self-determination would be the result whatever the outcome of last week's vote—and so it is. The people of Scotland have, by a margin of 10 percentage points, exercised their right to self-determination in favour of union with the rest of Britain and Northern Ireland.

I appreciate that there are people in this country and, most obviously, in this chamber who are grieving as a result of their side losing this argument among the people of Scotland.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I thank Drew Smith for taking my intervention, and agree with him about respecting the will of the people. Will he respect the will of the people of Glasgow, who overwhelmingly voted yes?

Drew Smith: Of course, the question that was asked was about national self-determination, and I believe that that is what Sandra White has been campaigning for. I hope that we will respect that.

In the public debates in which I took part during the past few weeks, I said that if the vote was to be for breaking up the United Kingdom, I would have accepted it, but would have deeply regretted it. I am therefore happy that the positive case for partnership has won, over the case for independence. That means that, although I accept that the grief—and, unfortunately, the bitterness that we have heard from members including Christine Grahame and Christina McKelvie—is genuine, we cannot allow grief to be transformed yet again into grievance. The vote was a decisive endorsement of our place in the United Kingdom and of this Parliament's permanent place in the governance of that kingdom.

We argued that Scotland could last Thursday vote for the best of both worlds, and that is what it did. It voted for a strong Scottish Parliament within the UK and not in opposition to it, and that is now the duty of all of us in this place and generation who have determined our future. The Parliament has come of age, and now it will be strengthened.

Those who continue to believe that nationhood can be demonstrated only through statehood might see more powers as some kind of consolation in their defeat, but I do not believe that devolution is a consolation prize. It is a prize that is worth taking on its own terms. This Parliament has always had real power, even if it has not always had the unity of national purpose to exercise it. Big decisions lie ahead in the days and, as we are now agreed, the years to come. The first decision that faces all of us is whether we have the courage to accept the result and to choose to make this place work as the campaigners and leaders who founded it wished it to work.

As we have heard this afternoon, the referendum campaign had good and bad points. However, it is a truth that is acknowledged by us all that the energy and ideas that have dominated the past period were not just about the country that we will be, but about the kind of country that we choose to be. I often felt that many people on the yes side were asking the right questions about our politics and future, but I was never convinced that their answer was the right one, and the people of Scotland have made that decision for themselves, too.

The questions about social justice and democracy are the questions that led to this Parliament's creation at the end of the last century. They must now lead our approach to the future of devolution, which is—as others have said—the settled will of the Scottish people. In two referendums in my lifetime, the people of Scotland have affirmed the place of this Parliament, and now they have affirmed the place of Scotland within a union with our closest neighbours and friends. It falls to us to reach out to one another, whether we are cheered or depressed by the result, and to pick up the baton that campaigners on all sides and all the people of Scotland have carried to the final result.

The result of the vote is more than a rumour; it is the settled will of the Scottish people. The nation as a whole has determined it and no one in this place or elsewhere has the right to ignore that. As members of a great and proud labour movement, we on this side relish the task that lies ahead of us to reconnect, to articulate in this Parliament the concerns of real people—just as you asked all members to do, Presiding Officer—and to rebalance power in our society in favour of people, which is the job that Labour has always strived to do.

Whether or not the hand of reconciliation is accepted by the other side, there can be no doubt that it has been extended today. What happens next will be the ultimate test of positivity. I hope that those who have lost their argument have the courage to accept that hand in the spirit in which it is offered.

No one side of this binary debate has demonstrated that they have all the answers. We are now a country that is blessed with a national ambition for change. Whether on the question of powers, the purpose for which they are exercised or the course that the people have set, let us have partnership, and not partisanship. Let us have the ambition and the determination to deliver the better Scotland, the better Britain, that our people have instructed us to bring about.

Since you have generously given me the time, Presiding Officer, I turn finally to one example that I used in the campaign, which was the 1 million

children who were lifted out of poverty by the previous Labour Government—800,000 across the rest of the UK and 200,000 here in Scotland. I was a no voter because I am just as proud of that achievement and of that change in the rest of the UK as I am of any change that we have made here in Scotland. That is the bigger idea and the ideal, which people voted no for last Thursday—to make change here and to be part of change with all our neighbours and friends in our United Kingdom.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Smith. I call the First Minister to close the debate. First Minister—I would be obliged if you would continue until 5 o'clock.

16:51

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I shall obey your strictures, Presiding Officer. I start by apologising to Parliament because I will not be at the debate tomorrow. I have an unavoidable First Minister's appointment to keep. I have decided to sum up today, so members get two for the price of one on the first day of the debate.

I think it has been a rather good debate. I just heard Drew Smith talk about bitterness. I actually think that there has been surprisingly little bitterness in this debate, unless he has been listening to a different debate. The contributions on all sides have been very interesting. I have listened to every single one of them and I will go through them to demonstrate that I have done so. I will then turn to the three unionist parties and say a bit about the future.

First, Kevin Stewart and Christine Grahame talked about fear—in particular fear among older people about their pensions. I think that they made a substantial point: there is no credit in making older people afraid of things. It is a pretty low campaigning tactic.

Neil Findlay and Jackie Baillie asked me whether I was going to make a UDI. I say to Parliament that I have no intention of making a unilateral declaration of independence. People will think that only if they read the *Daily Mail*, but if people read the *Daily Mail* they get into a spiral of delusion, which can spread throughout the body politic. I believe in referendums. Incidentally, I know that only 30 of the 142 countries that have joined the United Nations since the second world war have actually had a democratic referendum. In Scotland, in particular, referendums are really important, because they apply the key constitutional requirement in the history of Scotland, which is the sovereignty of the people. That is why I have advocated referendums and it is why I continue to advocate them. If people read very closely the interview that I gave on Sunday,

they will see that that was exactly the point that I was making.

Annabelle Ewing spoke movingly about 16 and 17-year-olds coming to vote.

Stewart Stevenson claimed that I had campaigned with him in the 1970s. I deny that—I think that it was the 1980s or the 1990s.

Mark McDonald spoke movingly about Brian Adam and how proud he would have been of Northfield and its participation in this referendum. I absolutely agree with that.

I hope that Annabel Goldie is here. Oh yes, she is. Fantastic! You should know better, Annabel. Never when you were questioning me across the well of the chamber would you have suggested that the Scottish National Party would plan a £450 million cut in the health service budget. The health service budget will be increasing. The pressures on the health service's budget are caused by two things in the main. One is pensions and the other is withdrawal of the national insurance rebate. It is interesting that those two pressures on our budget are directed by Westminster, which is exactly why we want to control the finances, as well as the administration, of the health service budget.

Alex Rowley made the excellent point that when we talk about participation we should not talk about the 1.6 million or the 2 million, but about the 3.6 million people who participated. I thought that that was a first-class point.

Roderick Campbell forensically analysed the offerings of the unionist parties in a way that only an advocate of his experience could. I thought that that was an object lesson in how to apply logic to some illogical aspects of their proposition.

John Finnie put the whole matter into its democratic context, and did so extremely well.

Marco Biagi spoke spontaneously and without notes, and his speech was all the better for that.

Jim Hume should remember that the Campbell commission actually advocated the ending of the Barnett formula. Therefore, there has been something of an adjustment in the Liberal Democrat position. Jim, I would never insult people of my generation in any observation, because I would be insulting myself.

Ken Macintosh said that, once upon a time, he was "naive and hopeful". Ken, I still regard you as naive and hopeful, as you go forward.

Christina McKelvie uttered words that I am sure no Labour member will utter in this chamber for some time to come—"child benefit". It will be some time before we hear that expression from the Labour Party.

I congratulate Murdo Fraser on overcoming his crushing disappointment that fiscal federalism, which he has long advocated, is not his party's policy.

Jean Urquhart movingly set out how we can continue with an aim while accepting the will of the people. That was a substantial point.

As I said, I did not recognise Drew Smith's designation of the debate as bitter; it has not been that in any way.

Drew Smith: Will the First Minister give way?

The First Minister: I will in a second, but let me turn to the propositions that were put by the three unionist parties.

I was struck by Johann Lamont's point that she agreed with Grahame Smith of the STUC. He said:

"The vast civic movement for meaningful and progressive change that has built up in the last two years is impatient for change and will not accept minimalist proposals developed in a pre-referendum context handed down on a take them or leave them basis."

If Johann Lamont agrees with that, she should say so, because I think that Grahame Smith put his finger absolutely on the present mood of Scotland. The Labour Party has talked—at least, Gordon Brown has—about home rule or something just short of federalism, but the Labour Party's offering is actually the most modest of all the unionist parties' offerings; it is offering control of about one fifth of this country's revenue.

I pointed out that the Liberal Democrats are rather encumbered by the fact that their offering, which they claim is the most radical, actually wanted to get rid of the Barnett formula—which they are now defending, as far as I can make out.

Willie Rennie: If the First Minister checks the Campbell commission report, which I am sure he has read, he will find that it says nothing of the kind. It talks about continuation of the Barnett formula. That has been confirmed by Danny Alexander and by the three UK party leaders. The Barnett formula is remaining.

The First Minister: You wanted to replace it with a needs-based formula—that is what you have been arguing for and what you argued for in 2010.

I come to the Conservatives. When I spoke to the Prime Minister on Friday morning, at no time did he tell me that, a few minutes later, he was going to utter those words about the general debate in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and say that they

"should be able to vote on these issues"

or that

"all this must take place in tandem with and at the same pace as the settlement for Scotland."

Not only I, but others across the political spectrum—lo, even unto Danny Alexander—detected in that suggestion, which was not made during the campaign, that

"at the same pace as"

and "in tandem with" meant what the Prime Minister said on Friday morning and would result—

Ruth Davidson rose—

The First Minister: Ah! Excellent. Please go ahead.

Ruth Davidson: Does the First Minister recognise that we can have concurrent activities without one being contingent on the other?

The First Minister: The problem is that, as far as the Labour Party is concerned, one concurrent activity is a non-starter. I am sure that I do not have to explain to Ruth Davidson that the Prime Minister was laying a trap for the Labour Party. He wants to have a situation in which the Labour Party loses a majority over English business, and Ed Miliband does not want that. That is why I suggest that, given that the parties cannot agree on the English situation, things happening

"in tandem ... and at the same pace"

would result in a betrayal and breaking of promises in terms of the Scottish situation.

Willie Rennie: Will the First Minister take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry, Mr Rennie, but the First Minister does not have time.

The First Minister: We are therefore absolutely entitled to make the point that the guardians of the process should be the politically active people in Scotland who have moved into the marvellous, wonderful and energetic political debate.

It has been said by a number of members across the chamber that we on this side of the debate should be grieving. Actually, we are in a very enthusiastic position, not just because of the level of participation, but because of the 51,284 members of the Scottish National Party. People have been encouraged to join us, the Greens and the other yes forces because the political awakening of Scotland will take us forward. That is why we look forward to the next few months and years of Scottish politics.

The Presiding Officer: The debate on the First Minister's statement will continue tomorrow afternoon. I gently remind the First Minister that we should use full names, not first names, in the chamber.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are no decisions to be taken as a result of today's business.

Dads Rock

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S4M-10546, in the name of Gordon MacDonald, on Dads Rock, international What's On 4 junior award winner 2014—gosh. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament congratulates Dads Rock, Scotland's only network of free playgroups for dads and kids, which won the Most Outstanding Baby and Toddler Group at the International What's On 4 Junior Awards; notes that the international annual awards, now in their eighth year, celebrate the best children's activities, classes and party providers in the UK, Ireland and Australia; congratulates Steve Leslie of Dads Rock on winning the Most Outstanding Community Group Volunteer for Children or Families award; understands that nearly 90,000 international votes were cast by parents and carers, including from the Edinburgh Pentlands constituency, and considers that this is a fantastic achievement for a small charity that was only established in 2012.

17:01

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): I welcome to the gallery the members of Dads Rock and the group of dads who have come along for the debate. I declare an interest, as I am an unpaid trustee of the charity.

Dads Rock was formed in my constituency in 2012. Before we recognise the achievement of this small charity, we need to understand why it was necessary to start it in the first place.

In Scotland, more and more fathers are sharing or fulfilling the primary care role, which has resulted in a groundswell of recognition of the importance of working with dads to allow them to spend more time with their kids. The Working Families organisation has said:

"Fathers want to spend more time with their children, and are doing more of the direct care for them. Research suggests that this desire for more time with their family is widespread, with 82% of full time working men saying they would like this."

The Fatherhood Institute has said that

"A substantial number of fathers are now full- or part-time 'home dads' ... Among fathers of under-fives, 21% are solely responsible for childcare at some point during the working week"

and

"43% of fathers of school-aged children provide care before/after school".

A recent study by the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that 60 per cent of parents said that fathers should spend more time with their children. The research shows that higher

direct involvement from dads leads to more positive outcomes for our children.

That is just some of the background to why Dads Rock was founded by two Edinburgh fathers, who came together to start something to help others and have fun with their kids at the same time. No equivalent service in Edinburgh was offered for fathers by the local council. Dads Rock was started to fill that gap and is now the only free weekend service that makes space for all sorts of dads, granddads and male carers to come and play with their children and develop a network of support from other fathers.

The founders had a good understanding of what dads wanted, as they were dads themselves, and they came up with a winning combination. A free musical playgroup fed into many people's love of music and allowed dads to know that that common bond would make it an inviting place to come without judgment or pressure.

Over time, the Dads Rock team found that dads wanted more outings with their children, so it has increased the number of free outings, which has given dads the confidence to discover new places such as the national galleries or a city centre farm in a relaxed way to have fun with their kids and speak to other dads.

Dads Rock has now been going for two years. It is amazing to see the need for such an organisation grow. It has recently launched a Glasgow playgroup to support more families and it is working in partnership with the award-winning PEEK—possibilities for each and every kid—project in Glasgow, which provides vital street play for children.

Dads Rock has also built formal and informal relationships with a wide variety of organisations such as Fife Gingerbread, local midwifery and social work teams, the Pilton community health project, one parent family support, Stepping Stones Edinburgh, the Broomhouse Centre, the violence reduction unit and Whale Arts, to name but a few. It has also reached out to local schools and nurseries, had referrals from several social work teams, and worked with local health agencies to deliver specific messages on male health.

The feedback from all that activity clearly indicates that the Dads Rock service has had a positive impact on parents from a resilience point of view, improving attachments between children and parents, and expanding their social circle to allow new friendships and relationships to develop. Dads Rock is about promoting positive images of fathers and highlighting that dads want to be seen as being just as vital to their children's upbringing. To get that message across, Dads Rock has built relationships with councillors, MSPs

and the Scottish Government. Its influence is such that the Minister for Children and Young People herself opened one of its playgroups.

Dads Rock has become an advocate for dads and families and it has helped them have a voice at a local and national level. Dads Rock now sits on the Scottish Government's fathers advisory panel as well as its young father panel and the Edinburgh council play forum. Through its success it has become an advocate for others to refer to; for example, the Scottish Government, the Scottish Book Trust and MSPs have all approached Dads Rock asking for assistance in engaging with dads.

That level of engagement and the development of the charity resulted in it winning one of its first awards in 2013 when families voted for Dads Rock to win a local parenting magazine award, called the parents choice award. Then, in June this year, the Dads Rock team was nominated for two national awards organised by the What's on 4 little ones website. The awards were for the most outstanding toddler group and for the most outstanding volunteer. More than 90,000 votes were cast for all the nominees and Dads Rock was up against well-known national organisations but, despite that, it became the only dads group that went through to the final and one of the few groups representing Scotland.

One of the volunteers, Steve Leslie, had been nominated by local dads for the most outstanding volunteer award. Every week, he gave his time free of charge to set up the playgroup and pack everything away at the end of a hectic session; he served on the board of Dads Rock, produced CDs of the Dads Rock members singing with their kids and generally helped out where necessary. The Dads Rock delegates attending the event were astounded to win in both categories and, in true Dads Rock style, they led the 150-strong attendees in a singsong of "We will rock you".

Congratulations to the Dads Rock team for all their hard work, and thanks to the families who voted for them, but especially thanks to the dads and their children who have made Dads Rock the success that it is.

17:08

Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab): I thank Gordon MacDonald for securing the debate. Hopefully, it will be less controversial than our discussions earlier this afternoon.

I was delighted to hear that Dads Rock has won an award for the most outstanding baby and toddler group. It is hard to believe that Dads Rock was established only two and a half years ago, yet it is already an international award winner. It is

great to see some of the Dads Rock people in the public gallery.

I extend my congratulations to all those who have been involved in getting Dads Rock off the ground and in ensuring its huge success, as it expands its network of free musical playgroups across Scotland and more dads and more children have access to the Dads Rock experience.

I first came across Dads Rock when it contacted me to help with its search for a playgroup venue in Dunfermline. The Dunfermline group started up in June 2013 and I persuaded my husband to go along with my two youngest children. I have to admit that he was really reluctant to go along—I virtually had to push him through the door—but he must have enjoyed it as he has been going along ever since. My four-year-old son delights in singing the Dads Rock signature tune, “We will rock you”, at the top of his voice all the time.

The Dunfermline group has since been facilitated by Dads Rock Fife co-ordinator Bruce Henderson, who has done a fantastic job working with Dads Rock Edinburgh and getting the group off the ground, reaching out to dads from all backgrounds and keeping the children entertained. Bruce has now moved on to facilitate Dads Rock in Buckhaven and he is working on a new group in Abbeyview, which it is hoped will be launched next month.

The dads who met at Dads Rock Dunfermline have now started their own free playgroup, Dunfermline Dads, and, like Dads Rock, it is going from strength to strength. More dads are attending every week and they have even started up their own five-a-side football team as well.

For most mums, having a baby opens up a new social circle. From buggy walks to baby massage and from playgroups to bookbug sessions, there are lots of opportunities for mums to make new friends and meet other mums who are going through the same experiences. However, as Gordon MacDonald highlighted, becoming a dad for the first time can often be difficult, especially for younger dads, those without family support and the increasing number of stay-at-home dads with primary caring responsibilities. Many dads simply find the whole experience quite isolating, and that is where Dads Rock comes in. It is more than just a playgroup. It is a unique place where dads can speak to other dads about “dad things”, find invaluable peer support while playing with their children and be supported to be the best parents they can be.

Fife Gingerbread has successfully used the Dads Rock model to work with teenagers and more vulnerable parents, and that work is especially beneficial in extending further support to dads outwith the formal playgroup setting. It is

more costly, but it offers huge rewards, and it is vital that the work continues to be supported. Longer-term funding is crucial if new groups are to be developed and the Dads Rock model is to be extended into more communities to reach more dads, granddads and male carers.

Culture is also a challenge. The project workers to whom I have spoken on the ground tell me that, in many of our communities, dads can be a bit reluctant to come forward and when they do it takes them a wee while to get involved in the storytelling and especially in the singing. Reaching out to more vulnerable dads is especially challenging, particularly where dads had a difficult time when they were young or where other personal challenges make it difficult for them to develop secure bonds and relationships with their children.

That is why the partnership work is so vital, as it breaks the mould, encourages positive interactions and relationships between dads and their children, gives dads the extra support that they need and recognises that dads are central to the family equation and play a vital role in their children's upbringing. The results are more creative play, better relationships and a better, happier future for both dad and child. That applies in the pre-school years, when children start school and when children become parents themselves.

I conclude by once again congratulating Dads Rock on its achievements so far. I hope that it continues its brilliant work in reaching out to more dads from all backgrounds across all our communities, helping to ensure that we really do get it right for every single child and helping with the goal that members throughout the chamber have of building a better and brighter future for children, dads and families right across Scotland.

17:12

Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP):

I thank Gordon MacDonald for bringing the debate to the chamber. It is important that we celebrate what fathers are today, in the 21st century. One reason why I know a bit about Dads Rock is that it came to the Equal Opportunities Committee when we held an inquiry into fathers and parenting. I was pleased to be part of that inquiry and I shared some of my experiences with some of the members of Dads Rock.

Like Gordon MacDonald, I have to declare an interest, as I was a single father for more than 10 years. Groups such as Dads Rock are now providing great support for people like me. Let us not forget that more than 3 million children live in a single-parent household, that 23 per cent of households with dependent children are single-parent families and that about 8 per cent of single

parents—about 136,000—are fathers. I was not on my own, and single fathers are definitely not on their own.

What so impressed me about Dads Rock, and the reason why I am so delighted to celebrate it today, is that it is so much in advance compared with some other groups. The Equal Opportunities Committee visited other groups; I went to see one in Aberdeen, in the region that I represent, which was more focused on fathers who have some other problems as well as looking after their children. I recognise the approach that Dads Rock takes. The T-shirts that the Dads Rock representatives in the gallery are wearing are fantastic; they look great, and the name is so important.

What I mean by that is that, as Dads Rock said in some of the evidence that it gave us, dads are perceived as the rock in families but in fact, as I know for myself, just like mothers, fathers have times when they need support. They are no more rocks than mothers are and it is very important that, in 21st century Scotland, we recognise that fathers need help as well.

Fathers and mothers need maximum support. Particularly in today's society, in which gender is still stereotyped, fathers not only need support but need to come out of the darkness. They are not visible. Fathers are not as seen as mothers and it is important that we change the attitudes of people around us.

Dads Rock is doing a fantastic job. I refer again to its T-shirts. They have the visual effect of saying, "We are dads and we are proud to be fathers. We want to be seen, just like mothers." Vulnerability is important. We may be seen as a rock inside the family and as a big part of the family, but that rock is fragile as well and needs as much help as possible.

Dads Rock is a fantastic idea. The idea that more and more such groups are growing throughout Scotland makes me proud to be in the debate and to celebrate the fact that we are fathers. We do not celebrate the role of fathers enough. We need to celebrate it a lot more. I remember that, at school, mother's day was always a special day and, somehow, father's day was a lesser day. We need to address that. We need to shout from the rooftops the contribution that fathers make.

As I said, I am delighted to speak about the role of fathers in society today. Members should believe me that, just like mothers, fathers need all the support that they can get. I recognise Dads Rock, which is encouraging fathers to be all that they can be.

17:17

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I also thank Gordon MacDonald for the debate and welcome the dads to the gallery, T-shirts and all.

Dads Rock deserves commendation for its group award for the most outstanding baby and toddler group as well as board member Steve Leslie's individual award for the most outstanding community group volunteer for children or families. That is an impressive haul, given the fact that the awards celebrate the best of children's activities and classes from throughout the United Kingdom, Ireland and Australia and were decided, as Gordon MacDonald said, after a massive 90,000 votes were cast.

Playgroups have a special and important role in early childhood education. Many provide a wider range of equipment and activities than some children may have access to at home, such as sand, water play, arts and crafts and making and listening to music.

Like many other groups, Dads Rock is free, which allows many families to access the service. It is able to provide that service free because of its own fundraising efforts. I am pleased to say that, only last Saturday, it raised £1,400 at its annual fundraiser.

In addition to its Saturday play sessions, Dads Rock runs a rock academy, which allows children and dads to learn together and demonstrates the organisation's understanding of the importance of parents interacting with their children's first learning experiences. We heard much from the previous chief medical officer about how beneficial early attachment is between parent and child.

Attending a playgroup has multiple benefits not only for children but for parents. The exposure to new experiences and the emphasis on learning through play encourages children to develop skills such as interacting confidently with other children, learning to explore the world around them and to solve problems. The groups also enable parents to meet other parents and to participate in their child's early education, and give them a place to discuss concerns, experiences and development. Parent-led playgroups are invaluable in affirming parents' role in their children's early education.

As members said, Dads Rock was founded by two fathers who understood the importance of playgroups in supporting parents and enabling parents and children to learn together and who were dismayed to find that in Edinburgh there were no groups run by dads for dads. I represent the Highlands and Islands and I can say that Dads Rock is well ahead, given provision in my region. Perhaps the founders can come to Inverness and beyond, to show people how it is done. If there is a

need in Edinburgh, there is a need in every part of Scotland.

Dads Rock's vision is

"For a Scotland where dads are seen as being equally valuable and vital."

That is great. It is disappointing that that is not always the case.

This is a matter for another debate, another day: I hope that dads' access to their children following separation from their partners can be looked at more sympathetically in future. I can honestly say that not a week passes without a dad somewhere in the Highlands and Islands asking me whether I can do something to enable him to see his child. It is rare that I can do anything.

When the Equal Opportunities Committee took evidence in March it received several submissions. Allan Reddick, a dad of two, told the committee about being the only dad in the room when he took his daughters to activities such as dance classes. He said:

"Nobody speaks to the dad ... Dads feel out of place and think, 'I shouldn't be here. This isn't for me.'"—[*Official Report, Equal Opportunities Committee*, 6 March 2014; c 1851.]

We heard about the research of Dr Gary Clapton, from the University of Edinburgh, and we heard that

"The value of positively involved fathering is incontestable and proven".

I speak from experience, as Christian Allard did, when I say how much children need fathers and how difficult—indeed, often impossible—it is for a single mum to fill the gap. Dads Rock deserves praise for its commitment to learning through parent-child interaction and play and for the support that it provides to fathers. I thank Gordon MacDonald. I wish that dads rocked not just in Edinburgh but throughout Scotland.

17:22

The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell): I thank Gordon MacDonald for bringing this debate to Parliament, and I thank the members who have stayed here to show their support for Dads Rock.

It is nice to be able to welcome Dads Rock to Parliament again. I have been delighted to hear of its success and I congratulate it on winning internationally recognised awards.

As Gordon MacDonald said, Thomas Lynch and David Marshall created Dads Rock back in 2011 because they strongly believed then, as they still do, that dads can and do play a vital role in the upbringing of their children. I wholeheartedly support that view.

I know that most dads want to be fully involved in their children's lives from day 1. I also know that, at times, some organisations and sectors, including schools, general practitioner surgeries, playgroups and parent and toddler groups, unintentionally make dads feel unwelcome or excluded. As, I am sure, Dads Rock advocates, it is time that that changed.

More and more dads are taking a principal role when it comes to raising their wee ones, often supported by organisations such as Dads Rock. My experience reflects that. I am lucky enough to have unwavering support from my husband when it comes to caring for and raising our wee boy, Angus. I will no doubt have that support when the next one comes along. I can confirm that this bump is a baby, and not the result of a poor campaign diet.

We know instinctively that fathers play an extremely important role in their children's upbringing. We need to do all that we can do to support and encourage fathers' involvement right from the start—from pregnancy through to birth, to the early years and beyond. I was at a Sense Scotland conference earlier this year, and one of the most beautiful things that I heard was how a father's voice can get through to the baby in the womb much more easily than a mother's voice can, because of the man's deep bass tones. That is a lovely way in which a father can be involved in their partner's pregnancy. We must encourage dads to get involved, from pregnancy and right through the child's upbringing.

In our wide-ranging consultations of fathers and professionals across Scotland during the development of our national parenting strategy, we heard that many fathers did not feel engaged, valued or encouraged to be active and involved parents. What a waste that is. As a result of what we heard in the consultation, the parenting strategy that we launched in October 2012 acknowledged that fathers undeniably should be closely involved in their children's lives at every stage.

As we continue to implement the strategy, we are working with a number of partners to look at how we can make services relevant and better able to involve fathers more positively in their children's upbringing. We are looking at how the strategy fits with fathers and what we need to do listen effectively and respond positively to what dads want and need. I know that that is of particular interest to Christian Allard, given his personal interest and his work on the Equal Opportunities Committee.

Through that work, we plan to continue to ensure that services such as health and education and the third sector make dads feel welcome and included. For example, we are working alongside

Children in Scotland to look at ways in which our public bodies can ensure more equal treatment of dads when it comes to parenting responsibilities. We are funding organisations such as Fathers Network Scotland to deliver practical support to people and organisations at the front line, who work every day with fathers and families in Scotland.

Working closely with Fathers Network Scotland, we co-chair the national fathers advisory panel, which meets throughout the year to consider how fathers can contribute to the development of policy and practice across the Government. We are constantly looking at how we can better engage dads; most recently, members of the panel have been helping us to restyle our “play talk read” website and our family information service website to ensure that they work in a way that speaks to dads.

That work is all very positive and there are many people and organisations who are working hard to meet the changing needs of families and fathers in Scotland, but we need to go further. We all need to think more broadly about how we portray fathers and how we can improve our interactions with them—how we celebrate them, which Christian Allard spoke about in his speech. Positive messaging about fathers is critical. The media, marketing, social norms, public attitudes and public services all have a role to play.

As Gordon MacDonald, Mary Scanlon and Christian Allard all said, good relationships and positive social networks are as important to fathers as they are to mothers. Indeed, I heard just today of a dad who has set up a new dad and toddler group in Barrhead, supported by the early years collaborative in East Renfrewshire, because he really wanted to provide an opportunity for local dads and their children to meet up, socialise, make new pals and support one other. Cara Hilton spoke of potential projects in Fife. Who knows? Perhaps the Highlands will be the next place on the map, as Mary Scanlon hoped for in her speech.

We need to see more such new initiatives supporting Scotland’s fathers and their children, and we will continue to work with members of the fathers advisory panel, including Dads Rock and Fathers Network Scotland, over the next few months to map the delivery of support groups for dads across the country. That will mean that we will better understand the provision and consider what else needs to be done to fill the gaps, encourage participation and widen access.

However, tonight’s debate is about celebrating Dads Rock and congratulating it on winning the most outstanding baby and toddler group category at the international What’s on 4 junior awards. It really is a great and much deserved achievement

for such a young charity. Now in their eighth year, the awards celebrate the best activities, classes and party providers from all over the UK, as nominated and voted for by some 90,000 parents and carers. Congratulations also to Steve Leslie for winning the most outstanding community group volunteer for children and families. What an inspiration Steve is for us all. From across the Parliament, we want to say very well done indeed.

As Gordon MacDonald said, I have had the pleasure of visiting Dads Rock and I was fortunate to attend the opening of its Granton project. I was struck by its sense of fun and its dedication to promoting positive images of fatherhood.

As others have said, Dads Rock was set up by dads for dads, and its playgroups are positive, enjoyable and rocking places to be on a Saturday morning. Just as Cara Hilton’s husband and children enjoy themselves at Dads Rock in Dunfermline, my husband and my wee boy enjoyed themselves when they came with me to visit the project in Granton. I do not know whether Cara has had the chance to sing “We will rock you”, but I was glad that the boisterous singing drowned out my poor attempts at joining in. It was certainly incredible fun, and my husband and wee boy loved their time there—albeit that it was just a short time on a Saturday morning.

Dads Rock took part in the second learning session of the early years collaborative in the Scottish exhibition and conference centre in May of last year. That was a memorable occasion, not least because it had 800 people on their feet singing “If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands”. There was also a serious side to Dads Rock’s participation, in that it shared how, uniquely in Scotland, it brings fathers and children together for fun, music, messiness and—most important—bonding and attachment.

Members should not just take my word for it. Feedback from the dads themselves is much more worthy of mention. Among their comments are that

“Saturday mornings are always about Dads Rock.”

“Saturday mornings are now daddy and daughter day”

and

“I look forward to Saturdays so I can catch up with other dads, and I feel comfortable speaking about dad/male issues with others.”

When asked to sum up Dads Rock in a few words, dads said that it was “a one-off”, that

“there’s nothing else like it,”

and that it is

“Unique, good laugh, good guys, great kids.”

Of course, someone else said that it is simply “rocking”.

I again thank Gordon MacDonald and the other members who have contributed to the debate. I also want to warmly thank Thomas, David, Steve and the rest of the team at Dads Rock for their continued and unstinting commitment to Scotland's children and their fathers, and I wish them every success for the future.

Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, and congratulations.

Meeting closed at 17:31.

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