

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Thursday 12 June 2003

Session 2

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## Scottish Parliament

Thursday 12 June 2003

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 09:30*]

### Europe

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Good morning. The first item of business this morning is a debate on motion S2M-124, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on Europe.

09:30

**Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP):** There could be no more appropriate moment for the Parliament to debate Europe; to reflect on current developments that will have lasting implications for the governance of our country and a profound impact on our lives; to consider the extent of Scotland's influence on them; and to look forward to how Scotland's interests can best be represented in the new Europe that is taking shape before our very eyes.

Right now Scotland is little more than a bystander at the big discussions that will shape and define the terms of our relationship with Europe for generations to come. If anyone doubts that, they need only reflect on the events of this week. In Scotland, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, opinion is deeply divided on the single currency, but what is beyond argument is that the chancellor's decision to kick euro membership into the political long grass was taken in London for London. It had nothing to do with Scotland and it ignored completely the needs and interests of the Scottish economy. We have distinctive economic conditions in Scotland. Our housing market is different, being less volatile than that of London and the south-east of England, we are a more export-oriented economy than the UK as a whole and we have a major financial services sector.

Also, as we have heard many times in the chamber, we have a chronic and long-term problem of low growth. It could therefore reasonably be argued that we—even more than the rest of the UK—need the benefits of euro membership for the increased output and employment that Gordon Brown extolled on Monday, before he went on to reject early entry because of the overheated housing market in the south-east.

**George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD):** Will the member give way?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** In a bit.

Our distinctive economic conditions demanded a separate Scottish assessment of the five tests, but that was never going to happen because, as we know, Scotland's interests were never a factor. The decision was based solely on the economic needs of London and the south-east, and on the pathetic powerplay between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

The decision on the euro exposed Scotland's powerlessness and lack of influence on these central matters, but it exposed something else as well: the utter uselessness of the Secretary of State for Scotland. Exactly one month ago today, Helen Liddell made a speech in which she asked people to "reflect" on what being excluded—

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** Does the member accept that the post of Secretary of State for Scotland remains essential within the structure of British government and that it is Helen Liddell herself who is useless?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I think that both are useless and I am sure that the Prime Minister will have something to say about that later.

Helen Liddell says that failure to join the euro would leave Scotland "out on a limb" and that Edinburgh would be left "offshore", so it would have been reasonable to expect that, on Monday, when her darkest fears became a reality, Scotland's so-called voice in London would have been heard loudly objecting to a decision that, in her own words, leaves Scotland out on a limb. Not a bit of it; instead, the bold Helen announced herself "pleased" with the chancellor's decision.

**George Lyon:** Will the member give way on that point?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I will take more interventions when I get into my stride.

That is proof, if proof were needed, that Helen Liddell's outburst a month ago was nothing to do with standing up for Scotland's interests and everything to do with impressing the Prime Minister and keeping her seat at the Cabinet table. Let us hope that the reports are true and that the Prime Minister uses his imminent Cabinet reshuffle to abolish the post of Secretary of State for Scotland because, with friends like Helen, Scotland does not need enemies.

**Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** Will Ms Sturgeon comment on Mr Alex Neil's statement that

"A Scottish economy run from Frankfurt will be no more successful than one run from London. Joining the euro would place severe limitations on the degree to which we could be independent in Europe"?

She should not launch attacks on politicians of other parties when there are so many splits in her own.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Mr Raffan knows only too well that Mr Neil is more than capable of speaking up for himself and I am sure that he will do so during the debate. I will explain in the course of the debate exactly why Scotland should and must be independent in Europe. If Mr Raffan listens, he might learn something.

I believe that Scotland's rightful place is at the heart of Europe, represented at the top tables, and playing her full part in the decisions and debates that shape the European Union and have such an enormous impact on our everyday lives here at home.

The Scottish National Party is passionately pro-European. We believe in an enlarged, confederal Europe, a voluntary coming-together of states in a union that collectively exercises certain sovereign rights pooled by its members. In today's world—ever smaller, ever more interdependent—there are many issues that are best dealt with collectively, across state boundaries. There are areas where the states that make up the European Union are stronger together and weaker apart.

**George Lyon:** Will the member give way on that point?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** The member should be patient. If he keeps asking, he might get somewhere.

On matters such as environmental standards; the flow of goods, services, capital and, of course, people; employment law; and common defence and security, it makes sense to pool sovereignty and act collectively. However, we oppose a European superstate. The nations and peoples that make up the European Union now, and even more so post-enlargement, are historically, culturally, politically, constitutionally and linguistically diverse. That is why each member state must retain its own distinctive identity and its own sovereignty in respect of constitutional, fiscal and other matters of vital national importance. That is our vision of Europe.

As a party, our response and attitude to each development on the European stage, to each decision about whether, on any given matter, sovereignty should be pooled or retained, or in some cases about how pooled sovereignty is exercised, will be governed by a simple test: is it in Scotland's national interest or not? It is the application of that simple test that results in our support for the euro. Early entry to the single currency, subject to the approval of the Scottish people in a referendum, is, I believe, in Scotland's interests.

**George Lyon:** Will the member give way on that point?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** God loves a trier.

**George Lyon:** We have noticed—the member is trying.

Mr Salmond, that leader over the sea, said that "Failing to join the euro ... will continue to wreak damage"

to the Scottish economy. Does Nicola Sturgeon argue that an independent Scotland should go into the euro immediately, if the SNP can win a referendum in Scotland, or in one year, two years or three years?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I think that I made it clear that we support early entry to the euro.

**George Lyon:** What is early entry?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** We do not know whether the Scottish economy is ready now because there was no separate assessment in Scotland of the five tests. What we know is that remaining outside the euro has a price for Scotland. Scotland's interest rates are double those in the euro zone. What that means for home owners in Scotland, for example, is mortgage payments of more than £1,000 extra every year. We are paying the price right now of decisions taken elsewhere. That is the reality. It is our concern for the Scottish national interest that allows us to support entry to the euro. It also means that we support the development of the European constitution but steadfastly oppose the conferral in the EU of exclusive competence over fishing.

**Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind):** On the matter of the constitution, I absolutely agree with what the member has just said about steadfastly opposing a federal constitution, but what will she do if Germany, France and Italy say yes to federalism?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** As Margo MacDonald is, I believe, a nationalist, she would agree that Scotland should be independent in Europe so that we can influence those decisions in a way that we simply cannot do at present.

I want to outline why we support a constitution but also—in direct response to Margo MacDonald—why we believe that it reinforces the need for Scotland to be an independent member state. Before I do that, let me make one thing clear. Before the UK Government moves to ratify the constitution treaty, it must have the courage to seek support in a referendum. Peter Hain may say that it is a tidying-up exercise, but the constitution marks a significant step in the evolution of the EU and it must have democratic legitimacy. We should not allow the case for a referendum to be appropriated by the Eurosceptics and used as a Trojan horse against the whole concept of European participation.

It is interesting that the Tories are new-found converts to the idea of referenda on European

matters, given that they refused to have a referendum on the Maastricht treaty, which introduced the single European market and increased qualified majority voting. However, Labour—and indeed its Liberal Democrat representatives—can learn the lessons of Tory mistakes. I hope that the minister will take the opportunity today to support calls for a referendum and press the UK Government on that point.

**The Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services (Tavish Scott):** Would Nicola Sturgeon care to state at this stage what the referendum would be about? At this moment, the convention has not concluded its discussions, there is no agreement on its final proposals and we do not know whether the final proposal will include a single president of the European Council. It is ludicrous to suggest that we should have a referendum today until we know what the final outcome is.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Tavish Scott should listen. I did not suggest that we should have a referendum today and, if he does not mind my saying so, that is a singularly stupid point to make. There should be a referendum prior to ratification of the constitution treaty. Does he support that or not? Perhaps he will answer that direct question in summing up.

**Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab):** Will Nicola Sturgeon give way?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I will not give way just now, as I have to make some progress. I may take further interventions later.

I believe that the constitution is a good step forward. Transforming the various treaties that make up and have developed the European Union into a formal written constitution gives us the ability to enshrine certain fundamental principles. Democracy, subsidiarity, the principles of human rights, cultural and linguistic pluralism and the protection of minorities are all entrenched in the draft constitution. Most important of all for those of us who believe in a confederation of states, in defining the scope and extent of the EU's competence, the constitution sets limits on its reach. The powers of national Parliaments are entrenched, and that is fundamentally important.

Of course, there are parts of the constitution that we cannot and will not support. National control of national resources is essential. That is why we totally reject that part of the constitution that gives the European Union exclusive competence over fishing. The effect of that proposal would be to exclude marine conservation and fisheries from the principle of subsidiarity. It would also preclude any possible legislative role for Scotland in relation to the conservation of fish stocks in Scottish waters. It is, quite simply, unacceptable.

Centralised EU management of fishing over the past 20 years has been disastrous. It is time to return control more closely to fishing communities.

It is also the case that exclusive competence in that area does not fit with the other exclusive competences.

**Irene Oldfather:** Will Nicola Sturgeon give way?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I will not give way just now; I have to make progress.

The other competences—monetary policy, commercial policy and the customs union—all impact on all member states. Fisheries policy impacts only on the few member states with significant coastlines and fishing industries, so it is clear why that part of the constitution should be opposed.

The question is who will speak up for Scotland on that issue of vital national importance. Neil MacCormick, Scotland's only elected representative on the European convention, has fought valiantly on behalf of Scotland's fishing communities. When the final amendments to the draft treaty were lodged, it was Neil MacCormick who attempted to delete fishing from the list of exclusive competences. Peter Hain did not even bother to try, so there was no back-up for Scotland's fishermen from the UK Government, in spite of the fact that this Parliament was told by the First Minister on 29 May:

"Not only has the UK Government made representations, but it has written to the EU to make it clear that it is also opposed to the proposal."—[*Official Report*, 29 May 2003; c 251.]

That is fighting talk—

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Will Nicola Sturgeon give way?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I have to make progress; I have been quite generous with interventions.

That is fighting talk, but it is a pity that Peter Hain did not get the letters from Jack McConnell or the UK Government. Of course, we now know that there was no letter from the UK Government, because it has no intention of opposing the proposal. It takes the view that no change to fisheries competence is being proposed and that there is therefore no need for it to oppose the proposal.

How the UK Government can describe a decision to enshrine exclusive competence over fishing in a constitution, when fishing is not even mentioned in the existing treaties, as "no change" is beyond me. However, that is how it has described it, and we are now told by Jack McConnell, that that is

"the shared position of the Executive and the UK Government".

It really could not be clearer. When faced with a choice between standing up for Scotland's national interests and doing as London tells him, Jack McConnell toes the line. He expects to be taken seriously when he lodges an amendment to today's motion promising to

"ensure that Scottish interests are fully taken into account during the forthcoming Inter-Governmental Conference".

The truth, as we now know, is that, when the draft constitution goes to the IGC, where the crucial decisions are taken, there will be no one standing up for the interests of the Scottish fishing industry.

**Tavish Scott:** Will Nicola Sturgeon give way?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I will not give way just now; I have to make progress.

That is the price that we pay for being part of the UK, which brings us to the central question of what we want Scotland's place in and relationship with Europe to be. I said earlier that the powers of national Parliaments are enshrined in the draft constitution, but the hard fact is that the Scottish Parliament, in the context of the EU, is not a national Parliament. The constitution represents a firmly statist view of the European Union. Member states, post-constitution, as is the case now, will be the component parts of the EU and the collective decision makers on policy. We have only to glance at the draft constitution to know how true that is. If a country is not a member state, it has no clout.

**Irene Oldfather:** Will Nicola Sturgeon give way?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I am running out of time and I have already been quite generous with interventions.

All that a regional Parliament can do is try to snatch bits of influence here and there, and then only with the consent of the parent member state.

The Executive amendment is right to point to references in the draft constitution to the role of regions and the mechanisms for consulting them. Those are important provisions and, in the interests of the regions of Europe, we support them. However, Scotland is not a region. We are a nation with a Parliament of our own and we should not have to rely on the UK to represent our interests when decisions are taken, especially on issues such as fishing, which are of vital national importance to us but of marginal significance to the rest of the UK. That is how we end up with fishing deals that are devastating for our industry.

Scotland independent in Europe would have a more powerful voice than we have now, with 13 MEPs, seven votes in the Council of Ministers—votes for us, not against us, as the UK votes were in last year's fishing talks—and the right to nominate a commissioner.

**Irene Oldfather:** Will Nicola Sturgeon give way?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I will not give way; I believe that I am now in the final minute of my speech.

I know that there are members who believe, contrary to all the evidence, that our interests in Europe would be best represented as part of the UK. That is a valid point of view, although it is one with which I clearly disagree. I simply ask those people to look ahead, and not even very far into the future. Post-enlargement, the EU will be— even more than it is now—a union of small nations. Seventy per cent of all member states will have populations of less than 10 million, and seven out of 10 of the countries poised to join have populations similar to or smaller than that of Scotland. If Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Estonia, Cyprus and Malta can have seats at the top table, why cannot Scotland? Why should Scotland be content with second-class status?

Those are the questions that we should ask ourselves and we should do so honestly. We all have different opinions, but we should engage openly in debate. None of us should hide behind the age-old Labour-SNP enmity that so often stunts rather than fosters discussion about Scotland's future.

What is the place in the world that we want our Parliament and our country to have? All of us have an obligation to address and answer that question.

I move,

That the Parliament supports the European Union as a confederation that collectively exercises certain sovereign rights pooled by states but in which each state retains its own sovereignty in respect of constitutional, fiscal and other matters of national importance; believes that decisions about pooled and retained sovereignty should always be taken in Scotland's national interest; therefore welcomes the development of a European constitution but opposes the conferral of exclusive European Union competence over the conservation of marine biological resources under the common fisheries policy; considers that the terms of the final draft constitution should be subject to the approval of the Scottish people in a referendum prior to ratification; regrets that the decision by Her Majesty's Government to delay entry to the single currency does not take account of Scotland's economic interests, and believes that Scotland's interests would best be represented in the European Union as an independent member state.

09:47

**The Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services (Tavish Scott):** I welcome this debate on Europe, particularly on the morning that Ana Palacio, the Spanish foreign minister, has made an interesting contribution in *The Scotsman* to the increasingly important debate on the future of Europe.

This morning's debate comes at an important stage in the debate on the future of Europe. The



105 members of the convention are about to produce a new constitution for the European Union after 16 months of work. The outcome should either help EU enlargement to work, and that is the Executive's wish, or dictate whether the creaking institutions of the European Union come grinding to a halt. The convention has the potential to have a great impact on the future of Europe and the future of countries in Europe including Scotland.

When they gathered at Laeken back in December 2001, EU leaders were clear that a number of issues faced the developing Europe of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps the most important issue was a growing perception among citizens that Europe was becoming more and more distant. It was clear that Europe had to be reformed, to be more open and transparent in the way it conducts its business, to involve the people affected by its policies and laws and, most important, to be a Europe that people actually understand.

The convention has produced some good, sensible proposals. It is true that they are not necessarily the stuff of tabloid headlines, but they should make a real difference to how the EU conducts its business and the extent to which it involves all those with an interest. The Scottish Executive has involved itself fully in the work of the convention. Last summer, the First Minister acted as rapporteur for a Committee of the Regions opinion on more democracy, more transparency and more efficiency in the EU. That opinion was adopted unanimously and formed a crucial plank of the committee's formal submission to the convention. Our work with other influential regional Governments led to the adoption in November in Florence of a declaration by 43 governments.

In addition to our active involvement and leadership at the regional level, we have been able to fight for our interests with the full weight of a major member state behind us. We led the drafting of a joint submission on the role of the regions in Europe that was submitted to the convention in February on behalf of the Scottish Executive, the National Assembly for Wales Government and the UK Government. That submission contained a package of proposals to reflect the important role that the legislative regions have in implementing EU legislation.

Our submission called for greater flexibility to be given to the implementing authorities so that they can reflect local circumstances and for greater use to be made of framework legislation, which sets the broad objectives to be achieved but leaves the detail up to those who deal with the implementation.

**Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP):** I do not want the minister to over-egg the idea that somehow the Scottish Executive is playing or has

played a full role in the convention. Scottish Executive members are not part of the convention. If they attend at all, they do so as observers, which does not give us the status that is required of the Scottish Parliament, and no one is attending the Council of Ministers meeting in Greece.

**Tavish Scott:** The Scottish National Party is eternally obsessed with who sits in what chair, rather than what gets done. The important point is what we achieve for Scotland. The SNP constantly forgets that and is never interested in what we achieve—it is interested in who is on the plane.

I will tell members what has been achieved at the convention by the Scottish Executive working with the member state—the Scottish National Party could not care less about this, but people in Scotland do because it affects the legislation that governs this country. Our submission called for the Commission to consult us on new policies at an early stage in the planning process—presumably, the Scottish National Party opposes that, as Nicola Sturgeon is grinning away furiously. Our submission also called for a new mechanism to ensure subsidiarity—another thing that the SNP will, presumably, oppose. We do not want the EU to start making Europe-wide policy when we could do the job as well at member-state or regional level. That is something that the partnership parties are committed to but which the Scottish National Party clearly opposes. If Richard Lochhead will define his party's position, I will be grateful for his intervention.

**Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP):** Does the minister believe that the Scottish Government and Parliament should have access to the European Court of Justice to ensure that Europe adheres to that important principle?

**Tavish Scott:** The importance of the European Court of Justice is considerable and I will address it later.

In areas of fundamental importance to the good government of Scotland, the Executive has worked hard and with considerable effect—although the SNP does not believe in doing that. Parliament will wish to be aware that the convention text takes good account of the role of regional Administrations, which is a first in European treaty terms. We consider that to be important, and its significance should not be underestimated and is not underestimated by the partnership parties.

The convention proposes a new protocol on subsidiarity. It includes the monitoring mechanism that we demanded. National and regional Parliaments will have the chance to cry foul if they believe that particular proposals breach the principle. Those are important victories as a result of the work that we have done and they should be

regarded as such. Under the convention's proposals, the Commission will be obliged to consult widely before making legislative proposals, and it will be compelled to take into account the regional and local dimension of the action envisaged.

That is a good result. We know that there is still work to be done with our partners to ensure that those proposals make it through the inter-governmental conference that will kick off later this year to negotiate the final constitutional treaty, but we have excellent foundations for that discussion now.

I will tackle some of the misinformation spouted by Nicola Sturgeon. The SNP claims that the convention proposes additional competence for the EU in the fisheries field. That is untrue. Nothing in the draft proposals under consideration in the convention at the moment would bring about any change to the current position on competence. If a proposal emerged for any extension to EU competence, the Executive and the UK would oppose it vigorously. Are we giving up any responsibility for fishing? The answer is an unambiguous no.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** The minister and I will agree to differ on whether enshrining something in the constitution makes a difference when it is not even mentioned in the existing treaties. We will put that to one side.

Tavish Scott argues that the status quo pertains. Does that mean that he is prepared to argue today that the status quo is in the interest of Scotland's fishing industries and that he does not want to take this opportunity to change it and get a better deal for those communities and industries that have suffered so much, particularly in recent months?

**Tavish Scott:** I would have more respect for that position had SNP members not made U-turns on fisheries throughout the recent election. They said—we all remember this—that the transitional relief package was wrong, and then they said that it was right. They said that decommissioning was wrong, and then they said that it was right. I have here Mr Lochhead's press release, which I will read to him, if he likes. The SNP's position on fishing is a complete sell-out of everything that it ever says in the chamber.

It is one of the rich ironies of Scottish nationalism—into the European Union but out of the common fisheries policy. The SNP never explains, particularly in fishing constituencies, how that would happen. It never explains how it would negotiate entry into the EU in an independent Scotland and at the same time withdraw from the CFP. Its position is not credible.

The Executive has taken forward and will take forward genuine management changes to the

CFP. Those changes will build on the progress made in December in securing relative stability and the retention of the 6 and 12-mile fishing limits and the Shetland box. Those were important victories for the Scottish fishing industry. All those policies were secured at that time, despite the scepticism of many.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)**  
rose—

**Tavish Scott:** There are persuasive arguments for fishermen being involved in local decision making, a point that I know Stewart Stevenson agrees with. Both partnership parties not only agree with those arguments but are implementing policies on that through regional management initiatives. That is the future—working with the fishing industry to build a sustainable future.

**Stewart Stevenson:** The minister said that Scotland, when independent, would need to negotiate entry into the European Union and yet, simultaneously, he appeared to suggest that we would have to negotiate out of the common fisheries policy at that point. If the minister adhered to the view that Scotland has to negotiate into the European Union, would it not be the case that we would be outside the common fisheries policy at that point and that no sensible, independent Scotland would join the CFP as it is presently constituted?

**Tavish Scott:** So how would Mr Stevenson negotiate with Denmark, Norway and the other member states that have competence in the North sea? The SNP never provides answers to those questions because it does not have any.

Fishing, and the SNP's duplicity on that issue, is one aspect of its motion, but there are further nationalist inconsistencies on Europe that must be exposed. Is it independence in Europe or independence out of Europe? Is it yes or no to the convention? Yes or no to the euro? Nicola Sturgeon proposes a Scottish test. Is that the John Swinney test or the Alex Neil test? Is it the Roseanna Cunningham test or the Kenny MacAskill test?

John Swinney regards the convention proposals as "generally a positive step". I quote Andrew Wilson in his paper for national assembly discussion on "Economic policy and positioning":

"Scotland's best interests would be served through membership of the European single currency area as soon as is practically possible".

Then we turn to Mr Neil. I have re-read the text of an interesting lecture that he gave in September and it makes fascinating reading. As usual from Mr Neil, it is entertaining, but not, I suspect, for Mr Swinney:

“My purpose is to initiate a debate in Scotland and particularly within the SNP on whether a yes or no vote is in Scotland’s interest.

I will argue that the SNP, when the time comes, should campaign for a no vote in the UK Euro referendum.

I will argue that the SNP in the run up to the referendum should revisit our support in principle for membership of the Euro.”

It is rich for the SNP to attack the Scottish Executive for the constructive work that we are doing to strengthen Scotland’s role in the European convention and in the wider debate about Europe, at the same time as the SNP is having a sordid internal debate. On that basis, Parliament should reject the SNP motion today.

The convention proposals set out clearly for the first time where the EU has exclusive competence; where it shares competence with member states and their regions; and where it can act only in support of member-state action. That is a good step forward for two reasons. First, it enables people to see at a glance the division of competence between the EU and member states. Secondly, it allows a clear definition of competence, which should protect us against creeping encroachment by the European Union into areas that were previously our responsibility. The Executive welcomes the opportunity to make the positive case for Europe and will play a full role in the debate on Europe.

Inevitably, that will include the euro. It is for Westminster to determine the future on that matter, but the Executive believes that entry into the single currency is in principle desirable. The principal role of the Scottish Executive is to work with business, organisations and people throughout the country to prepare for the time when the UK joins the single currency. The First Minister and the Deputy First Minister will be members of the Scottish committee on euro preparations. As the representatives of the people of Scotland, we should seek to promote the benefits that our nation can gain from Europe and the euro. Every member of the Parliament who understands those benefits should join us in that campaign.

I turn to the other amendments. The very phrase “the Tories and Europe” brings back so many happy memories: Teresa Gorman, Bill Cash, even Lord Lamont of Lerwick and Phil Gallie—a history of catastrophic economic mismanagement.

I will quote two Conservatives who spoke following Monday’s statement by the chancellor in the House of Commons. Mr David Curry asked:

“Given that there will be a natural gravitational pull toward countries that have espoused the policies that are considered to be central to the European Union, is it not important that the Chancellor bears those facts in mind and gets on with his further assessment at the earliest sensible

opportunity?”—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 9 June 2003; Vol 406, c 434.]

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Will the member give way?

**Tavish Scott:** Let me read out the second quote. Murdo Fraser will enjoy this one, as it comes from Kenneth Clarke, whom I know he particularly admires. Mr Clarke said:

“I look forward to Budget day next year, when he”—  
the chancellor—

“and I might at last begin to campaign together in support of the views that we hold in common”.—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 9 June 2003; Vol 406, c 424.]

I am sure that Conservative members of the Scottish Parliament share those views.

Mr Gallie’s amendment is presumably a response to the cries from certain hysterical sections of the press and to a deep-seated desire to question, under cover of a referendum, the UK’s continued membership of the European Union.

I invite Parliament to reject the Tory and SSP amendments, as well as the SNP motion. The debate about Europe’s future is about a vision, within an ever more interdependent world. It is about whether this country is frightened, isolationist and living in the past or—as the partnership parties believe—optimistic, internationalist and willing to embrace change.

I move amendment S2M-124.4, to leave out from “supports” to end and insert:

“welcomes the many benefits that the European Union (EU) has delivered for Europe and for Scotland; continues to believe that the EU should seek to become more effective, efficient, democratic, transparent, accountable and easier to understand; notes the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe towards these objectives; further welcomes the submission to the convention of the proposals on Europe and the regions drawn up by the Scottish Executive in conjunction with Her Majesty’s Government and the Welsh Assembly Government; further notes with approval the references in the draft Constitutional Treaty under consideration in the convention to the role of the regions, and to mechanisms for consulting them; welcomes the intention of Her Majesty’s Government to involve the devolved administrations in the operation of the subsidiarity mechanism proposed by the convention, and calls on the Scottish Executive to continue to work with other sub-member state administrations and Her Majesty’s Government to ensure that Scottish interests are fully taken into account during the forthcoming Inter-Governmental Conference.”

10:02

**Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** I make no apology for concentrating on two issues: the euro and the convention on the future of Europe. I do so ignoring the SNP motion, principally because it is based on a hypothetical situation that will not arise in the foreseeable future. In the

recent Scottish parliamentary elections, support for the SNP fell back considerably. I believe that that trend will continue. The objective of an independent Scotland has clearly been rejected by people in Scotland. For that reason, the terms of the SNP motion are totally irrelevant.

This week, expectancy reached a high with the chancellor's production of a stone of paperwork on the euro. For those who are no longer up to speed on stones, a stone is about 6.5kg. In the chancellor's deliberations, carried out over six years, we find no change in the arguments for taking the United Kingdom into the euro. Back in 1997, of the five criteria set by the chancellor, only one was met; the same is true today. I suggest that we are dealing not with an economic argument for adoption of the euro, but—as Nicola Sturgeon suggested—a political decision that needs to be made. Nicola Sturgeon's approach was somewhat confused. She envisaged Scotland having fiscal autonomy, but at the same time she wanted to pass control of our currency to a European body.

Tavish Scott mentioned David Curry and Ken Clarke. There are divisions in our party, as there are in many democratic parties—although perhaps not among the Liberals, who take a tight line on this issue. I know that there are divisions in the Labour party, just as there are among the nationalists. The minister might have mentioned Ted Heath, who took us into the Common Market. Ted deceived many of us in the Tory party, because he took us into a common market and we did not envisage the federal approach to Europe that he apparently did.

**Tavish Scott:** Did Mr Gallie agree with Mrs Thatcher when she signed the UK up to the Single European Act?

**Phil Gallie:** I agreed that it was desirable to have common conditions, in so far as that was possible, for trading in Europe. I was concerned principally that the same level of subsidies should be provided to companies and businesses across Europe.

**Irene Oldfather:** Will the member give way?

**Phil Gallie:** Irene Oldfather should hold on—I am trying to answer the question.

I accept that Mrs Thatcher's vision was somewhat overcome by the detail of implementation of the Single European Act. One must also consider the people who were behind her at the time—people such as Douglas Hurd, Lord Howe and Ken Clarke, all of whom were pushing in that direction.

That brings me on to another point—

**Irene Oldfather** *rose*—

**Phil Gallie:** I will give way in a moment.

When we talk about the euro, we look back to the exchange rate mechanism. The people who support the euro are the people who took us into the ERM. People who are now members of the Scottish Parliament from all the other parties encouraged us to adopt that line. However, the ERM ended up as an absolute disaster for Scotland and the UK. Surely our politicians of today should have learned the lessons of the ERM.

**Irene Oldfather:** Does Mr Gallie accept that the very first reference in a treaty of the European Union to economic and monetary union appeared in the Single European Act, which was designed by a member of Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet and widely supported by the Conservatives in 1987? That is the genesis of economic and monetary union. I do not recall that at any time the Conservatives wanted to put the Single European Act to a referendum.

**Phil Gallie:** The member is absolutely correct. We went further than the Single European Act and agreed to the Maastricht treaty without a referendum. In the Maastricht treaty, Britain obtained opt-outs on the very issues that Irene Oldfather suggests: the social chapter and the common European currency. For that reason, there was value in our accepting the Maastricht treaty. To some extent, it was a pull-back from the Single European Act.

I remind members of the effect that the ERM had on the economy of Scotland and the UK. I remind members that, from the point at which we pulled out of the ERM, our economy grew. It grew to the extent that in June 1997, when Tony Blair attended the meeting of the Council of Ministers in Amsterdam, he was able to boast that the UK had the strongest economy in Europe. To a large extent, that was the consequence of our looking after our own financial affairs, ensuring that our currency matched our national needs and having the flexibility to govern as we felt was reasonable.

**Mrs Ewing:** Before we go too far down memory lane, I remind the member that John Smith, Gordon Brown and others in the Labour party gave huge support to the decision to join the ERM. We should remember that. The decision to join the ERM was supported not just by one political party—it had cross-party support.

**Phil Gallie:** I thought that I had made that clear. Many people who are now members of the Scottish Parliament suggested that it was right for us to enter the ERM. I am concerned that those who are now shouting that we should adopt the euro are the same people who shouted for us to join the ERM. They have not learned their lesson. Today, I am trying to get them to remember where their past support for the ERM took us.

When the euro zone was established, we were told that it would be a disaster for the United Kingdom and would affect employment. Today, Labour boasts that we have the highest level of employment in Europe. What has been the problem with staying out of the euro zone? We were told that failure to adopt the euro would have a devastating effect on our financial services industries, but just last week we learned that Edinburgh is now the second most important financial services centre in Europe, second only to London. I have to ask: what has been the disadvantage in our staying out of the euro zone?

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** As a representative of Edinburgh in the Scottish Parliament, I inform Mr Gallie that the city has been a centre for financial services for some time. Does he recognise that a financial services company in Edinburgh that employs many of my constituents is very much in favour of early entry to the euro zone?

**Phil Gallie:** I am not aware that people are very much in favour. I recognise that opinion is split in business, much as it is across the country. In the business world, far more people feel that taking Britain into the euro would be damaging than believe that it would bring benefits.

On that point, I have some sympathy with the SSP amendment. Rightly, the socialists emphasise that the people who will gain most from our adopting the euro will be the large global companies. I agree entirely with the SSP on that point, which is one that we should all take into account.

We have heard much about the convention on the future of Europe and have been told that it is a tidying-up exercise. However, when I consider the effects that it could have on our judicial system for a start, it frightens the socks off me. The idea of having some sort of European procurator who would look after the affairs of our Scottish judicial system seems to me to be totally wrong. We are passing out powers rather than taking them in—powers that many people in the chamber fought for many years to bring back to a Scottish Parliament.

**Mr Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** Will the member give way?

**Phil Gallie:** I am sorry, but I am in my final minute.

We should also question the contents of the new Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. What effect will the charter have on health, education and transport? Europe already dominates the scene with regard to environmental issues. All aspects of the charter could well take powers away from the Scottish Parliament. The charter threatens the powers that have been

devolved to this Parliament in relation to areas on which it is right that local people should make decisions.

The last thing that I want to see in this country is other people speaking for us on foreign affairs and defence issues. [*Laughter.*] SNP members may laugh, but I point out to them that we elect 72 Scottish members to go to Westminster and that the Westminster Government speaks for Scotland.

I move amendment S2M-124.2, to leave out from “confederation” to end and insert:

“partnership of nation states working together for the common interest; expresses concern at the clearly federalist objectives of the current proposals of the Convention on the Future of Europe; pledges to analyse the detail of these proposals as they affect devolved responsibilities and report back our objections to Her Majesty’s Government along with our view that, given the conclusions drawn up by HM Treasury over the last six years on the United Kingdom entering the European single currency, there is no basis for the United Kingdom surrendering the pound for the euro and that further uncertainty on monetary union will be bad for Scottish interests, and urges Her Majesty’s Government to hold an early referendum on both the Convention proposals and European monetary union.”

10:13

**Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP):** I think that I have found a new comrade today. However, even in our short time in the Scottish Parliament, no one could accuse the SSP of basing our views on Europe on the need to keep the Queen’s head on the £5 note—although Colin Fox might have a sentimental attachment to the idea of having Rabbie Burns on the Scottish pound.

Despite the fact that the SSP also opposes the euro, I do not think that Phil Gallie and I will find ourselves on the same platform in the eventual referendum campaign. The SSP is part of the European social forum, a meeting of which I attended in Florence last year. The forum stands for a Europe of citizens’ and democratic rights and opposes deregulation, privatisation and cuts in public spending. The SSP believes in international solidarity and co-operation with the peoples of Europe but does not believe that signing up to economic and monetary union and the single market will in any way help to deliver that kind of co-operation and solidarity.

The Lisbon summit—the big business summit, as it was dubbed by much of the press—set out the agenda that people are now trying to implement throughout the European Union. That agenda—on this point I agree with Phil Gallie—means a shift towards centralisation of political and economic power away from the structures in Scotland and Britain.

The European Union has no democracy. The European Parliament is the only elected

component of the structure. The Council of Ministers and the 20 commissioners make the decisions and the elected Parliament plays only an advisory or supervisory role. The new draft constitution attempts to change that in some ways, but that is the situation that has existed for several years. The commissioners are accountable to no one—not to the European Parliament and not to any national Parliament. Neil Kinnock, who could not win an election in Britain, has no problem being in charge of transport policy across Europe.

**Mr Raffan:** Is Ms Curran aware that the European Parliament sacked a previous Commission? The European Parliament has the power to remove the Commission, so she is misinformed on that issue.

**Murdo Fraser:** The commissioners were all reappointed, however.

**Frances Curran:** I thank Murdo Fraser, who rightly points out that the commissioners were all reappointed, even though they were accused of fraud, corruption, expense claims irregularities—the lot. It is right that the European Parliament should have the power to remove the Commission and we should argue for that right. If the SSP gets candidates elected in the next European elections, we will link up with people across Europe who feel the same as we do and support those ideas.

**Phil Gallie:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Frances Curran:** No, I want to press on.

The European Parliament must be one of the most expensive advisory bodies in the world. The SNP, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats want to sign us up to an undemocratic structure that will take decision making out of our hands.

All the member states have signed up to the convergence criteria and the growth and stability pact, which limits Government borrowing to 3 per cent of gross domestic product. Let us be clear: that is intended to slash public services, force the privatisation of public services and state-owned companies and give tax cuts to the rich. Those are the ideas that were brought into Britain more than 20 years ago. Ironically, the policies that Britain has followed—including those of Blair and Brown—which have slashed public spending and privatised public services, have already ensured that many of those measures have been implemented and that there is no problem with Britain meeting the convergence criteria. However, many other countries in Europe might not be in that position.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** You have one minute.

**Frances Curran:** Last year, Germany was warned that it was in danger of breaching the

criteria and that it needed to make cuts in public spending. That highlights the fact that we are talking about a democratic issue. Who should decide how much Germany spends on health—an unelected committee and the European Central Bank or the elected Government and the population of Germany?

The whole project is about profit, exploitation, trade and global capitalism. Phil Gallie was right to say that the main beneficiaries will be the multinational companies. They want as few restraints on them as possible, especially when they enter the new markets in the countries that are to join the EU. There will be an attempt to lower wages across the EU. We are involved not in a race to the top but a race to the bottom as cheap labour becomes integrated into the euro zone.

Since the introduction of the euro, there has been industrial revolt across Europe. In Rome, 2 million people went on strike and demonstrated against privatisation and attacks on their pensions. During the EU summit in Seville, 10 million workers took strike action in opposition to the EU and there were demonstrations of 1 million people in Barcelona, Seville and Madrid. There have also been strikes in France and other countries. The EU is not as popular as members might think. We are involved in those events and demonstrations and in the development of an alternative type of Europe. I will be going to the European social forum in Paris in November.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ms Curran, you really will have to sum up.

**Frances Curran:** I believe that the Scottish Executive—and I appeal to the Labour members, some of whom might remember their radical past—should consider hosting the ESF. Perhaps I will have support from VisitScotland for that idea.

I move amendment S2M-124.3, to leave out from “supports” to end and insert:

“believes in a socially just, democratic and accountable Europe for citizens and not big business; further believes that the structure of the current European Union undermines democracy within Scotland and that any further attempt to centralise political power in Brussels, or financial decisions at the European Central Bank in Stuttgart, would not be in the interest of ordinary Scots; is concerned that the economic agenda of European monetary union has the intention of furthering the aims of capitalist globalisation and the interests of trans global corporations, resulting in lower wages, cuts in public services and a wholesale onslaught against workers’ pensions; demands the right of the Scottish people to make their views known through a referendum; opposes entry to the euro, and calls on the Scottish Executive to offer to host the 2004 annual anti-globalisation event, the European Social Forum, involving up to 100,000 people, that has already taken place in Florence and will meet in Paris in November 2003.”

10:20

**Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab):**

It is important to consider how far Scotland has travelled. Four years ago, there was no Scottish Parliament. Devolution has given Scotland the opportunity to play an active part in Europe in a range of ways. Through the work of the Scottish Parliament and its committees, through our networks with other regions throughout Europe, through our representation on the European Committee of the Regions and through the establishment of an office in Brussels, which was a major milestone in the previous session of Parliament, the message is loud and clear—Europe's newest and youngest Parliament is keen to be a key player in the debate on the new Europe.

For all members, it is important that, in the light of a changing and reforming agenda in Europe, our citizens believe that Europe is relevant to their everyday lives. The Executive's amendment refers to making improvements in accountability and transparency to better connect Europe's citizens and to give them the confidence in the EU that they desperately need. As I listened to Phil Gallie's speech, I wondered whether he and I were reading from the same convention document, because I see in the draft document much progress towards the improvements that are needed.

**Phil Gallie:** Irene Oldfather said that she had seen progress with respect to Scotland's voice in Europe. Can she name one major change since devolution that introduced something that did not exist under the previous arrangements?

**Irene Oldfather:** I have just spoken about one of the key milestones, which was the establishment of a Brussels office to provide the early intelligence that is needed for the Scottish Parliament to scrutinise European legislation. That will enable better decision making for Scotland's people.

I will deal with some points from the convention's draft document. I welcome the fact that information about European council meetings is likely to be transmitted directly to national Parliaments in the minutes of legislative deliberations. The Scottish Parliament has asked for that to happen for three years, so that is, indeed, progress.

**John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP):**

I have listened patiently to all the arguments from all the major parties, but the only member who mentioned the most serious implication of Europe was Phil Gallie. He used the F-phrase: fiscal autonomy. Without fiscal autonomy, we are kidding ourselves if we think that we have any authority here, in Europe or anywhere else. We

are being led by Westminster and unless fiscal autonomy is transferred from Westminster to Holyrood, we cannot do things for senior citizens, for example, because everything is controlled down south.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Was there a question in that, Mr Swinburne?

**Irene Oldfather:** Mr Swinburne's point is interesting, but I am not sure—and I do not think that the Conservatives are sure—that that is exactly what Phil Gallie said.

I welcome the commitment by Peter Hain in his submission to the convention to the role of the devolved Parliaments in helping the EU to become more democratic and transparent. Indeed, the UK submission to the convention takes on board about 96 per cent or probably even 98 per cent of the proposals made by the Scottish Parliament's European Committee, which were debated in the chamber on several occasions. The submission states:

"In the EU context, the UK Government strongly supports proposals made to the Commission by the Scottish Executive ... that it should consult implementing authorities at the pre-legislative stage. This should include direct consultation with regional and local authorities on relevant policies".

If that is not a step forward, I do not know what is.

Other proposals that the UK supports include a more focused role for the Committee of the Regions, greater use of framework legislation and impact assessments on regulatory authorities. That might be beginning to sound a wee bit like European mumbo-jumbo, but the proposals would improve the lives of the Scottish people by delivering better legislation in a legislative process that would be relevant and subject to scrutiny.

**Nicola Sturgeon rose—**

**Irene Oldfather:** I will take an intervention from Nicola Sturgeon, although she did not take one from me.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I am sure that I will be able to make that up to Irene Oldfather in future. Can we cut to the chase? It is all very well to talk about being consulted on European legislation and being involved in the operations of the subsidiarity mechanism—those are important steps forward. However, when it comes to where the decisions are taken, Scotland's voice will not be heard. Article 1.22 of the draft constitution says:

"The Council of Ministers shall consist of a representative of each member state at ministerial level ... only this representative may commit the member state in question and cast its vote."

Therefore, if our interests do not coincide with UK interests, we lose out, as happened with fishing. Can Irene Oldfather tell me why, in a European

Union that is increasingly made up of small states, Scotland should not simply be represented at the top table in her own right?

**Irene Oldfather:** I am happy to cut to the chase because Scotland has the best of both worlds. In fact, Scotland is represented within the UK delegation of 78 members in the European Parliament. That compares favourably with other smaller nations with populations akin to Scotland's—for example, Luxembourg has only six members. Furthermore, in the Council of Ministers, after enlargement, the UK—*[Interruption.]* Nicola Sturgeon does not seem to like the answer, but she asked the question. In the Council of Ministers, after enlargement, the UK will have 29 votes, whereas Luxembourg, Estonia and Latvia will each have only four votes. If that is not pulling one's weight, I do not know what is.

**Mr Monteith:** Does Irene Oldfather agree that the breakdown of the voting figures for individual nations shows that the votes have been weighted in favour of France and Germany, which have bilateral treaties to meet before any international meetings so that they can ensure that no grouping of small countries—even if they have coinciding interests—can overrule them?

**Irene Oldfather:** As a member of the UK delegation working within the Committee of the Regions, I have no doubt that the big players such as Britain, France, Germany and Italy carry a great deal of weight. That is where the key decisions are taken.

Presiding Officer, I acknowledge that I am running a little bit short of time, but I want to spend a moment on the motion.

**Phil Gallie:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. This is not personal in any way, but I note that the Scottish Socialist Party had six minutes to put its case, whereas Irene Oldfather has now taken seven minutes and 40 seconds. I am interested in what she has to say, but I feel that there must be an element of fairness. I would like you to explain why that has happened.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That is not a point of order.

**Irene Oldfather:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I want to spend a moment on the motion. In debates such as this one, I normally begin by saying that I welcome the debate, but I think that the timing of this debate and the content of the motion are entirely wrong. I am disappointed that, when we have worked for two years in the Scottish Parliament, a week before the European convention—

**Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP)**  
rose—

**Irene Oldfather:** I am not taking any interventions.

**Carolyn Leckie:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member wishes to make a point of order.

**Carolyn Leckie:** I have to be a wee bit strong about this point, Presiding Officer. Phil Gallie was right and I thank him for his point of order. You prompted Frances Curran several times and you were strict in bringing her speech to an end. I expect a wee bit of consistency, thank you.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Irene Oldfather has eight minutes. When she sat down and Phil Gallie got to his feet, she had spoken for seven minutes and I indicated to her that she had one minute left.

**Irene Oldfather:** Thank you, Presiding Officer. I think that I have taken more interventions than any other member has in the debate.

As I was saying, I am disappointed that the hard work that was done over two years in the Parliament to put together a submission on which there could be consensus—members of all political parties worked on the European Committee to achieve that—is being let down by the motion. The motion sends out entirely the wrong message to our European partners, some of whom—in Flanders and Catalonia—have worked with us to put together a submission based on the agreements that we had in the Parliament, because we realised that, working together, our submission to the Commission would carry weight. The debate today—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You will have to finish now, Irene.

**Irene Oldfather:** I am just concluding.

Today's debate is regrettable in its timing. It should have waited until after the conclusion of the convention.

**Carolyn Leckie:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I did not want to interrupt Irene Oldfather's concluding remarks, but I must ask you why she had eight minutes and Frances Curran, who was moving an amendment, had only six.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That was because of the proportional timing that they had been allotted. Irene Oldfather had eight minutes and Frances Curran had six. If you look at the *Official Report*, you will see that Frances Curran went over her six minutes by quite some time. Irene Oldfather also went over her time—she took interventions—but when she had spoken for seven minutes and had taken Phil Gallie's intervention, I signalled to her that she had one minute left.



10:31

**Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green):** Unlike Irene Oldfather, I welcome the motion, because it opens up an important discussion about the current and future structure of Europe. The new European convention clearly takes us further towards a federal Europe—that is, Europe as a single state, which devolves power to appropriate levels. The Scottish National Party has argued its case for a Europe of nations—a confederation of nations that pool a certain amount of their sovereignty. However, there is a third way: a Europe that is not a single state or a collection of states, but is built from a lower level—from regions and communities. We need a Europe that is built on a scale that suits people, not on a scale that suits only big business and big government. At the first meeting of the Parliament this session, the Greens, along with members of other parties, asserted that the people are sovereign in Scotland. By the same token, sovereignty throughout Europe must begin with the people.

**Mr Raffan:** Will Mark Ballard give way?

**Mark Ballard:** No. I am sorry.

I welcome, therefore, Peter Hain's paper on Europe and the regions, which Irene Oldfather mentioned. The paper proposes more ways to give recognition in the legislative field to local and regional government. However, we must go beyond legislative structures. We need a localisation agenda to give proper recognition to local economic, social and ecological interests, but at the moment, the European Union is moving ever further away from this green ideal of a network of strong, self-reliant economies. The EU is pushing the process of economic globalisation ever more ruthlessly through its role in the World Trade Organisation. Economic and monetary union is exacerbating economic centralisation and accelerating the removal of democratic control over the economic system. Enlargement, as it is currently designed, is little more than the export of the free-trade model eastwards with potentially devastating impacts on the economies of central and eastern Europe.

Therefore, Her Majesty's Government's decision to delay entry into the single currency was in Scotland's interest. That is not because of the chancellor's five economic tests, but because entry into the euro would have tied Scotland into the big-business-oriented economic agenda of the growth and stability pact. The drive is on to create one huge European economic superpower that is able to compete ever more fiercely in international markets with Japan and the US. However, in between the cracks of that drive, some green shoots are pushing up and showing an alternative route forward. Many people know instinctively that bigger is not always better and that greater

security and sustainability are more likely to come in the context of strong local and regional economies and democracies.

People are therefore questioning the future role and direction of the European Union. There is a growing sense that the European institutions are disconnected from the people whom they are supposed to represent. That is more than a simple communication problem that can be remedied by a little more transparency and consultation, as President Prodi would have us believe. It is a problem of substance as well as of process.

The European Union's overriding priority of ever-increasing international trade and competitiveness is seriously undermining its often genuine aspirations to achieve greater sustainability. Its unwavering support for economic globalisation means that it is unable to become the world leader in promoting sustainable development that it has the potential to be. Until we address and change that, the EU will continue to be part of the problem, not part of the solution.

A Europe of local economies holds the potential for a reconnection with the European Union that puts sustainable development firmly at the core of its agenda—a European Union within which there is sufficient flexibility and space for local economies to flourish and for relationships to grow between the different peoples of the union. That is an ambitious agenda, but the growing disillusionment with the European Union shows that it has to be seized.

The price of not doing so will be high. If the European Union continues to put its corporate-led, deregulated, neo-liberal agenda above social justice and sustainable development, the result will be the further marginalisation and exclusion of growing numbers of its citizens. People will engage only with a European Union that is relevant to their everyday lives and that they feel is democratic and accountable. More than two millennia ago, Aristotle recognised a fundamental truth:

"To the size of states there is a limit as there is to plants, to animals, and to implements: for none can retain their power or facility when they are too large."

That is a truth that we would do well to remember in all our discussions about Scotland's place in Europe and the future structure of a European Union.

10:36

**Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** I must say that I had hoped for more from Mr Ballard's speech. A federation is not the same as a unitary state. He should look up the "Oxford English Dictionary". There is too much confusion in the European debate over the terms "federation"

and “unitary state”. I find Mark Ballard’s economic arguments totally indistinguishable from Miss Curran’s. The Greens—the Liberal Democrats will make this point very strongly in the run-up to the European elections—are highly socialist in their outlook. Perhaps they should merge with the Scottish Socialist Party.

This week has been momentous—in both hopeful and disappointing ways—for anybody who is committed to the widening and deepening of the European Union. No party in the Parliament has been more consistently in favour of that principle or more continually pro-European than the Liberal Democrats.

First, last weekend, we had the Polish referendum, which had a much higher yes vote than was expected—75.5 per cent—on a much higher turnout than was expected, namely 59 per cent. Scottish socialists may be against the European Union, but former Polish communists are not. Perhaps that is due to a distinction, which I will have to study, between Trotskyites and Marxists. We now look forward to an equally resounding yes vote in the Czech Republic this weekend.

Secondly, of course, on Monday, we had the chancellor’s characteristically Scottish not proven verdict on the euro—not now, not yet, maybe next year. That reminds me of the song “Send in the Clowns”. For once, I agree with the shadow chancellor, Michael Howard, who said:

“The national economic interest took a back seat. As the Government dithers, uncertainty is maximised.”

The Scottish economic interest certainly took a back seat. I agree totally with Nicola Sturgeon. As I said last week, in the one-size-does-not-fit-all debate I know which interest rate would be better for the current state of the Scottish economy.

**Murdo Fraser:** Will Keith Raffan give way?

**Mr Raffan:** No.

It would not be the 3.75 per cent that the Bank of England in London set to deal with the overheated economy in the south-east of England, particularly the booming housing market. It would be much more the 2 per cent that the European Central Bank in Frankfurt set. That would give the Scottish economy a badly needed boost.

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** The interest rate in the European Union is 2 per cent, which Keith Raffan is very much in favour of. Why is unemployment in Europe at 8.8 per cent, which compares with ours at 5 per cent, and economic growth at 0.8 per cent compared with our 2.2 per cent growth?

**Mr Raffan:** I am a bit worried about Mary Scanlon’s economic illiteracy. The whole point is—

[*Laughter.*] After the exchange rate mechanism debacle, the Tories should be laughing into the mirror. It was the Tories who totally undermined the British economy in the early 1990s, and they are the last people from whom I would take economic lessons. The whole point about a 2 per cent interest rate is to stimulate the economy, which we want to happen in Scotland. My gosh, do the Tories not want that?

**Margo MacDonald:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Raffan:** No, I am not giving way. [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Mr Raffan:** I say to Murdo Fraser and others that what counts for the British people is the money—whatever it is called—in their pockets, not pound signs on their lapels.

**Murdo Fraser:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Raffan:** No.

We all know the achievements of the European Union. Sixty per cent of our trade is with the European Union and 3 million jobs depend on the European Union. Former Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry of all parties have intervened to say that by not going into the euro yet, we have lost £12 billion in trade. The *Scottish Mirror* was right to say this week that the longer we stay out, the more we will lose out.

Tomorrow is the deadline for the draft constitution of the enlarged European Community. As Tavish Scott said, rightly, that is only the end of the beginning. The draft constitution will then begin the tortuous process of going through the IGC, which will culminate in decisions being taken next year. We do not know how the constitution will finally turn out. The Liberal Democrats’ position is clear: we do not want the draft constitution to be diluted beyond recognition. The leader of the European Liberal Democrats, Graham Watson MEP, has made that absolutely clear, as has our representative on the convention, Andrew Duff MEP. Above all, the convention is about removing the democratic deficit.

**Margo MacDonald:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Raffan:** In a second.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You are in the last minute of your speech, Mr Raffan.

**Mr Raffan:** I welcome the proposed extension of the European Parliament’s powers of democratic control over budgets and over European legislation. I welcome the creation of a European foreign minister, which ends the uncomfortable division of responsibility between Commissioner Patten and Mr Solana. I welcome the strengthening of the regional role in the EU.

I cannot do better than to quote the *Financial Times*, which said:

“Another page is turned in the tortured history of Britain’s involvement with the European Union ... littered with indecision, cries of betrayal and laments for missed opportunities”.

Over the next 12 to 15 months, my party believes that the moment will come to decide on both the euro and the constitution, which Valéry Giscard d’Estaing says he wants to last for 50 years, and to decide on the future direction of Europe. Otherwise, more opportunities will be missed and European Union policy will be shaped, yet again, in the interests of other nations and not in those of our own.

10:42

**Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** As the European Union goes through major changes, Scotland will, as ever, be left on the sidelines. We have a new European constitution. It carries many good points, one of which is a legally binding fundamental charter of rights. I know that Phil Gallie is not very keen on that, but it will cover labour law and social policies and it is likely to be rather progressive. The Tories do not often like giving rights to people.

There are areas of concern in the new constitution, however, in particular fishing. As Nicola Sturgeon said, the draft constitution omits any question of the right of representation beyond the level of nation state, thus ensuring that Scotland is consigned to be treated as a region, rather than as a nation. Next year, there will be 10 new members of the European Union, seven of which will have a population smaller than that of Scotland. Representatives of Latvia, Cyprus, Malta and Estonia, for example, will be sitting round the top table, deciding on matters that will have a direct influence on the daily lives of the people of Scotland, yet we will not be there, working with them to ensure that we represent the Scottish interest.

Our unionist colleagues often point out to us—Phil Gallie said it today—that that is what our Westminster colleagues are for: they represent us at the EU. Irene Oldfather said that we have “the best of both worlds” because UK ministers represent us on the Council of Ministers. The fishermen do not reckon that we have the best of both worlds. When ministers represent our interests at the EU, they often do so behind closed doors. At this reforming time for the EU, it is essential that there be greater transparency, accountability and democracy at the heart of the decision-making process.

I welcome the fact that Jack McConnell has a pal in the convention, who put a word in for him

and said that we want more transparency and accountability in the new constitution. However, the real power base lies in the Council of Ministers, and that is where we should be arguing for those changes. We should not just be a bit player on the convention. Would it not be nice to see some more open proceedings of the Council of Ministers, so that when UK ministers are there, apparently representing our interests, we could hear what they were saying and see what they were doing for us? If they are so confident about how they are representing us, they should be pushing for more open proceedings for the Council of Ministers, so that they can show off what they are doing on our behalf.

**Margo MacDonald:** Does the member agree that it is the underlying differences in the concept of democracy that give rise to that secrecy at Council of Ministers level? To take one example, an Italian Prime Minister who owns the media outlets and the television channels is not used to having to explain things in public. We seem to accept that and to think that that is the way that it should be.

**Michael Matheson:** It is important that the EU be more transparent. If the public of Europe—not just politicians such as ourselves—are to have faith in the process, it must be made more transparent and the EU must be more accountable to the people.

Justice and home affairs in the European Union are, increasingly, issues of co-operation between member states. The Scottish Executive could play a key part in the development of European Union policy in that area. During the Danish presidency, 184 meetings on justice and home affairs were held. How often did the Scottish Executive send a representative to those meetings to discuss such matters as co-operation on criminal issues and police co-operation? We were there seven times out of 184. Our Executive could have been there to ensure that the Scottish justice system was promoted and that its integrity was protected, but it fails to rise to the game and to ensure that we take part in that process.

With the enlargement of the EU and the draft constitution, the only way in which Scotland’s interests in the EU will be properly protected is if Scotland is a normal, independent nation such as Cyprus, Malta, Estonia or Latvia, and if we are sitting at the top table.

10:48

**Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** I rise to speak in support of the amendment in the name of Tavish Scott. I was interested in what Nicola Sturgeon said about the SNP being passionately in favour of the EU. One of the more

interesting encounters in the recent election campaign occurred in North East Scotland, where the Tories and SNP were fighting each other tooth and claw for the anti-European vote and were begging the fishing community not to stand a candidate of their own.

“Only the Tories can save you”, said Jamie McGrigor, conveniently forgetting that it was the Tories who signed up to the common fisheries policy in the first place. Of course, that is why they lost North East Scotland seats to the SNP. Considering that the Tories and the SNP are competing with each other in that area over who has the strongest anti-European credentials, it was telling that John Swinney was schmoozing with the Cod Crusaders. Grampian Television news recorded that John Swinney said that he would do everything he could for them, but when one of them asked, “Will you take us out of Europe, John?” there was a long, long silence. “Nice weather we’re having for the time of year,” said John in the end. Why did he not reply, “No, I am passionately in favour of the EU”? Perhaps Mr Swinney—although he is not present at the moment—could answer that today. He could tell the fishing communities whether the SNP wants to leave Europe, as it tries to maintain in the north-east of Scotland.

I believe that the SNP leadership’s attitude to Europe—

**Mrs Ewing** *rose*—

**Maureen Macmillan:** I said “the SNP leadership”, and I do not include Margaret Ewing in that.

**Mrs Ewing:** The member should not exempt me. What she has portrayed is ludicrous. Our argument with the European Union has been about the common fisheries policy, which is exactly what the Cod Crusaders and the Moray Makes Waves campaign have been about. We are arguing for this Parliament’s right to lead the negotiations on the common fisheries policy and to repatriate management.

**Maureen Macmillan:** Why did John Swinney not answer the question that was put to him about total withdrawal from Europe?

**Mrs Ewing:** It was probably edited out.

**Maureen Macmillan:** I doubt it. I believe that the SNP leadership’s attitude to Europe is moving inexorably to the right. Whatever happened to the SNP love affair with Europe? Was it broken on the rock of reality? In 1999, the SNP MSPs all rushed off to Brussels to say, “Here we are. Look at us; we are the SNP. Aren’t we lovely?” Nobody was interested.

When I was a member of the European Committee in the first year of the Parliament,

Bruce Crawford spent an enormous amount of time failing to prove that Scotland was not getting its fair share of money from Europe. That is the sort of silly focus that the SNP has on Europe.

**Richard Lochhead:** The member has been speaking for more than three minutes and has spent the whole time attacking the SNP. Will she illuminate us as to what she would change about Europe? Perhaps if she had spoken more about those issues during the election campaign, she would have found that her party would not have done so badly—given that the SNP won the elections in North East Scotland and the Highlands and Islands.

**Maureen Macmillan:** It is funny that Richard Lochhead should intervene, because the other thing that the SNP does is to oppose every directive that comes along. Richard Lochhead opposed the waste water directive. In an article in *The Press and Journal*, he said that he opposed the measures that had to be taken on board to sort out the waste water problem. A page later, he was complaining about the state of Scottish beaches. That demonstrates the opportunism of the SNP. It would not accept the Caledonian MacBrayne tender and it will oppose the directive on food supplements, not out of principle but because it always tries to schmooze certain sections of the community. The SNP has no principles on Europe.

**Phil Gallie:** Will the member give way?

**Maureen Macmillan:** How much time do I have left, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You have just under two minutes left.

**Maureen Macmillan:** I will take a short intervention from Mr Gallie.

**Phil Gallie:** Rather than attacking the SNP, perhaps the member was offering sage advice on moving to the right. Perhaps she will take on board the fact that it worked for the Labour party.

**Maureen Macmillan:** I thank the member, but I will not accept that.

The SNP rhetoric is one thing in the north-east and another thing elsewhere in the country. The SNP wants a referendum on the new convention, as do the Tories. SNP members all have different points of view on the euro. Alex Salmond wants it now; Nicola Sturgeon is not sure when she wants it; John Swinney wants it only when everyone else wants it; and Alex Neil does not want it at all. The SNP members are passionate about disagreeing with one another over Europe.

The reality for the SNP is that it finds itself ignored by Europe and that it is becoming increasingly anti-Europe as it vies with the Tories for right-wing votes. It is not passionate about

Europe. All that it wants to do is take the money and run.

10:54

**Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Last week, the European Commission banned Shetland Islands Council and Orkney Islands Council from buying fishing quota that they intended to lease to beleaguered local fisherman. The Commission ruled that the aid provided by the northern isles councils was illegal, because it conferred an unfair advantage on the islands' fleets—an unfair advantage to fish their own coastal waters.

The funds that were to be used were not local authority funds and were not provided by the taxpayer. They came largely from the oil industry as compensation for disruption to the islanders' way of life. It is exactly that politics of the madhouse, which is driving Scots fishermen from the seas that they have fished traditionally, that makes it essential that we wrest back from the European Union control of our national waters.

**Tavish Scott:** Mr Brocklebank should get his facts right before he makes the sort of assertion that he has just made. What he said about the European Union judgment is absolutely untrue. It allows the councils to consider mechanisms to achieve the same outcome in being able to purchase fish quotas; it does not ban them from doing so in the way that Mr Brocklebank described.

**Mr Brocklebank:** Tavish Scott is wrong; the councils are not allowed to purchase the quotas and they are appealing against the decision.

I often hear Ross Finnie claim that the problem with the Scottish fishing industry is that there are too many boats fishing too few fish. Let us examine that. In 1975, just after we joined the then European Economic Community, there were 1,800 boats of around 18m fishing in Scottish waters. On the basis of current decommissioning plans, by 2004 there will be around 700 boats. That is a drop of more than 60 per cent, the direct economic impact of which has been estimated at around £900 million a year out of the Scottish economy. Does Ross Finnie really believe that any economic benefit that Scotland gets from the European Union comes remotely close to £900 million a year? In one breath, Ross Finnie tells us that there is no alternative to further decommissioning. In the next, he declares that he will not preside over the destruction of the Scottish fishing industry. The fact is that in Scotland we have devolved powers only out to the 12-mile limit. We do not have control of the grounds, nor is it within the gift of the Scottish minister to do a blind thing about it.

For 25 years as a working journalist and television producer, I have reported on the way in

which the common fisheries policy has consistently worked against the best interests of our local fishing industries. Meanwhile, UK politicians of all hues have jumped through hoops trying—if I can mix the metaphor—to square the circle of the common fisheries policy.

Despite all the evidence that the Community was hell-bent on the destruction of the Scottish fleet, our politicians have seized on every tiny concession and parroted the European line that there really is no alternative.

EU policy stipulates that common resources must be shared by member states. Guess which is the only common resource to be identified—fisheries. It is worse that member states are allowed to share in the catching beanfeast, regardless of whether they are landlocked. In other words, the fact that Scotland has a long, fish-rich coastline and Austria has none is totally irrelevant. The CFP is, and always has been, a carve-up of fish-catching capacity, with the lucrative spin-off in ancillary jobs.

**George Lyon:** Ted Brocklebank should remember that it was his Tory Government that took us into the common fisheries policy, so when the Tories negotiated it, surely they got it fatally wrong.

**Mr Brocklebank:** That is the age-old cry that is still used three decades later. Ted Heath got us into the CFP. Nobody here is denying that it was a catastrophic decision, but unlike the Liberal Democrats—and unlike the Bourbons—we learn from our mistakes.

With EU enlargement, the problem will simply get worse. None of the new entrants adds significantly to the fishery pool, so for Scotland, enlargement simply means more boats competing for fewer fish.

Having made our bed, must we continue to lie in it?

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** The member should tell us what he wants to do.

**Mr Brocklebank:** I will come to that.

Ross Finnie and his colleagues in the Executive have no doubts. While the Scottish fleet has the heart cut from it and our coastal communities continue to haemorrhage jobs and people, Mr Finnie in his promoted role—from home guard captain to surgeon general—has the job of administering the painkillers. Despite the fact that not a penny of the vaunted compensation package has been paid out and many skippers do not know where next week's wages are coming from, Mr Finnie continues to promise aspirin tomorrow.

The fact is that Mr Finnie cannot negotiate with people who see no advantage in negotiating with him. Any crumb or sprat thrown to Scottish fishermen would affect directly the interests of other countries, so unanimity can never be achieved—it is as simple as that.

Until now, the Scottish National Party has worked within the common fisheries policy, but I am delighted to see that there appears to be a degree of unanimity coming from it. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation has talked this week about its long-term goal always being to regain control of Scottish waters. The Fishermen's Association Ltd says that its long-term goal is to regain control of Scottish waters.

We are told that we cannot regain control of Scottish waters, but the hard fact is that the European Union has no sovereignty over the waters of nation states. Only the United Kingdom has sovereignty over its waters—at least, until that sovereignty is tidied up somewhere down the Brussels road.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must conclude now.

**Mr Brocklebank:** Our policy is not complete withdrawal from the European Union; we want simply to pull out of the CFP, which, over three decades, has proved to be incapable of reform. The CFP is a pernicious, unfair and hugely dangerous threat to the richest fishing grounds in Europe. We have a responsibility, not only as Scots but as Europeans, to sustain that remarkable gift of nature for future generations.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must finish now.

**Mr Brocklebank:** The EU has shown that it cannot do that, so we must do it.

11:00

**Mr Bruce McFee (West of Scotland) (SNP):** It gives me great pleasure in my first speech in the Parliament to support the motion in the name of Nicola Sturgeon.

Last week, the Parliament debated matters concerning young people. Many members who are present commented on the positive contribution that young people make to our society, welcomed their enthusiasm and remarked on the confidence that many of our young people display. Only two days before that debate, as we awaited the arrival of the Queen, we witnessed an example of that confidence when we were entertained by a choir that was composed entirely of youngsters.

It is such a pity that, in a few short years, many of the unionist politicians in the Parliament—by which I mean Labour, Tory and Liberal members;

or the British nationalists, if that title is preferable—will have done their best to destroy the confidence that those youngsters displayed, which they so admired.

When those youngsters start to take an interest in current affairs, and even politics, they will discover that they do not live in a confident, self-reliant country. The same unionist politicians that applauded their confidence will tell them that they live, almost uniquely in this world, in a country that does not have the ability to govern itself. Those youngsters will be told that Scotland does not deserve a place in the United Nations and is not entitled to direct representation in the Europe Union.

As the EU enlarges, we are being left behind. Scotland has no voice in the decisions that are being taken on membership of the euro. As the future of Europe is being determined, we are on the outside looking in; others take our decisions for us. The harsh reality is that, in all those matters and in many more, Scotland is a powerless nation that is suffocated in the union with England.

Some members would have us believe that Scotland's best interests are served by its being part of a larger British voting bloc in the EU, but one needs to look no further than the fishing issue to recognise what nonsense that argument is.

On 29 May, at First Minister's questions, John Swinney asked the First Minister a question on the imminent meeting of the European convention. Mr Swinney said:

"Tomorrow, when the convention meets, it will consider a proposal to make fishing policy a matter for the EU's exclusive control. Does the First Minister's Government support that proposal?"

That was a perfectly clear question.

The First Minister replied:

"Mr Swinney asked a specific question about the specific proposal for exclusive competence on the common fisheries policy. Not only have we made representations on that matter, but we have written to the UK Government and asked it to oppose the proposal. Not only has the UK Government made representations, but it has written to the EU to make it clear that it is also opposed to the proposal. Not only is this Administration opposed to it, but the UK Government is opposed to it. We will ensure that that view is put across."—[*Official Report*, 29 May 2003; c 251.]

That was a perfectly clear answer—there were no ifs, no buts and no maybes. The Scottish Executive was opposed to the proposal and so was the UK Government. It seemed that, at last, there were some unionists who were prepared to stand up for Scotland's interests. However, that impression did not last long.

In a letter to John Swinney, dated 10 June, Jack McConnell shifted his ground dramatically. I quote from that letter:

"During First Minister's Questions on 28 May 2003 and in answer to your question on the European Convention and competence on the common fisheries policy, I said that we had written to the UK Government and asked it to oppose the possibility of extending competence."

The First Minister well knows that that was not the question. As with so many other aspects of Executive policy, the talk is tough but the delivery is poor. Squirming like a worm on an angler's hook that tries to wriggle free, the First Minister chooses to attempt to rewrite the record.

Last night, a lady in the village in which I live—a lady who knows a thing or two about politics—said that, on that issue, the First Minister was either a fool or a liar. I will not make that allegation in the chamber, as such a term would be considered to be unparliamentary language, but members will be reassured to learn that I was able to convince her that the First Minister was no fool.

Scotland can no longer afford to be held within the straitjacket of the so-called devolution settlement. As more powers become centred in Brussels, the relevance of the Westminster Government diminishes. It is vital that we are full participants in mapping out the future of Europe. We need direct representation in the making of decisions that affect all our livelihoods. It is time for Scotland to have that direct voice in the European Union. I urge members to support the motion.

11:07

**Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind):** First, I congratulate the SNP on using its debating time to discuss a motion on developments in the EU. I disagree with Irene Oldfather—we should not wait for others to make up their minds before we express an opinion. We are supposed to be representing the Scots and giving voice to their thoughts and opinions. Now is as good a time as any to do so, before the die is cast and some of Ted Brocklebank's dire warnings are proved to be true.

We call this morning's session a debate and we will vote on our consideration of the arguments that have been put forward by members of all parties. There is the rub. It will not matter a docken leaf what decision we reach, because we do not have the power to enforce any decision that we might make on the advisability of joining the euro or of endorsing the draft constitution. We cannot even ensure the implementation of the outcome of the considered deliberations of the Parliament's committees on the effect of genetically modified foods.

We have heard faint echoes of the argument that we should leave such things to London. I would have hoped that that idea is gone. In saying that we should open our minds, Nicola Sturgeon

began well. She said that, instead of the SNP and Labour bashing each other as usual, we should consider the matter at hand. That is what I would like to do.

I want to examine some of the options. We talk glibly about the benefits and disadvantages for the Scottish and UK economies of joining the euro, as if those two economies were the same. Again, I must congratulate Nicola Sturgeon, who pointed out that the Scottish and UK economies are not the same and that the economic situations north and south of the border are very different. The Parliament has nothing to lose by admitting the reality and examining where that admission takes us.

The SNP suggests that we should have a referendum on the euro right away. I freely concede that a 2 per cent interest rate would advantage the Scottish economy at the moment, as Keith Raffan said, but would it advantage the English economy? Why do I mention the English economy? I do so not just because I am an independent, but because the English economy is Scotland's biggest market. Do we want to beggar our neighbour and jeopardise our market by imposing on England an interest rate that is as unsuitable for its needs as the current rate that is set in London is for our needs?

If we want to consider the interests of the economies north and south of the border, we must examine the economic developments in Europe that will flow from the existence of a single interest rate. Europe's single interest rate suits us just now, but it might not suit us in future. I do not claim to know economics, but if we know anything about the subject it is that—as a number of honest European politicians have noted—there is a closeness between having a common interest rate and having a common fiscal policy, which is what the rate feeds into.

Would we be happy with a common fiscal policy that operates from Poland through to Scotland? Have we thought about the implications of that? I seem to recall that members of this Parliament have suggested that there should be different fiscal policies north and south of the border.

**Mr Raffan:** On interest rates, Margo MacDonald makes the mistake of lumping the whole English economy together. An interest rate of 2 per cent would probably be in the interest of large parts of the English economy, especially in the north-east and north-west.

**Margo MacDonald:** The point is a fine one, but I did not make a mistake. The people who live in the north-east of England think of themselves as English and identify with most other folk who live in England, just as the people who live in Shetland—as Tavish Scott would admit—probably

think that they have more in common with the people of Lanarkshire than with folk who work in Poland.

Let me return to my theme, which is the honesty of European politicians who are prepared to talk about what should happen in the future. What does the Labour party think about the issue? We know what Tony Blair thinks, although like the rest of the population, I do not believe a word that he says. However, I am prepared to believe Gordon Brown. Gordon Brown has said that joining the single currency is not a good idea right now and that we should see how things develop before we commit ourselves. To go from one system of economic management to another and from one economic cycle to another would be a huge leap. Gordon Brown has said that we should give ourselves a bit of time. I happen to agree with that very sensible suggestion.

What does the Scottish Executive think of the single currency? We know that the Lib Dems think that we should go in tomorrow. Being federalists, the Lib Dems have no objection, as far as I can work out, to the federalisation and harmonisation of tax policy, but what does the other half of the Executive think? It would be nice if some of them were here to tell us. Perhaps that is why there are no Labour ministers in the chamber.

And what does the SNP think about tax harmonisation across Europe? SNP members want us to go into Europe. They love Europe, and are passionate about it, but do they realise that Europe is a pork barrel? The reason that Ted Brocklebank's party, when it was in Government, agreed to the common fisheries policy is that it traded off fishing against other perceived advantages to the British economy. What advantage would be gained for the Scottish economy? Would we trade fish for tax? What would we oppose? The SNP will need to take a cold look at the implications of the federal development of Europe.

We need to be honest about this issue. Within the last fortnight, the European Central Bank's spokesman has said that we could forget the national health service because we would not have the taxation system to support anything more than an accident and emergency service.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must sum up now.

**Margo MacDonald:** I, for one, am not willing to cede that sort of sovereignty to any unelected crowd, in Brussels or elsewhere. I do not believe that there is an homogeneity of understanding across Europe about what democracy is. For goodness' sake, have a look at France just now. The President would be in the jail if he did not have immunity. It is true. And the man who has

drawn up the European constitution was heavily into diamonds—he was into diamonds in a big way.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ms MacDonald, you must wind up.

**Margo MacDonald:** We should not forget what other European countries' history of democracy is, especially when we are willing to give up so much of what our people fought and died for for over 200 years.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I intend to include as many back benchers as possible. I will leave the time for speeches at six minutes, but I remind members to keep an eye on the clock. When I call one minute, members should stick to one minute. They should be careful about accepting interventions in their last minute.

11:14

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** I will try to be concise.

I congratulate the SNP on introducing today's debate. Europe is an important issue, especially at this time, although not necessarily for the reasons that Nicola Sturgeon stated in her opening remarks. One thing that comes over clearly from the motion is that SNP policy is fluid and flexible. There seems to be some movement in SNP policy after the experience of the election, not least in the decision to adopt the policy of withdrawing from the common fisheries policy, which prior to the election was an exclusively Conservative policy. We should all learn from that.

**Mrs Ewing:** Will the member give way?

**Alex Johnstone:** I want to move on from the subject of fishing, although I will return to it briefly.

A couple of points that have come up in the debate so far need to be answered. People have asked why the Conservative party has decided that a referendum is required on the proposals for a European constitution. History shows that political parties tend to favour referenda that they can win and oppose those that they cannot. One reason why the Conservative party wants a referendum is that we believe that the will of the British and Scottish people is behind us in opposing the proposed constitution. We support the notion of a referendum. What I want to know is why the SNP, if it believes in the proposed constitution, wants a referendum.

**Mr Raffan:** Will the member give way?

**Alex Johnstone:** Excuse me, Keith.

From what the SNP has said about the referendum, it appears that it wants to pick and mix. The SNP wants some sort of multiple choice



approach to the constitution, but a referendum would not necessarily deliver that to the best advantage.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** We want a referendum on the euro and on the constitution because we believe that there must be democratic legitimacy. We also wanted a referendum on the Maastricht treaty, but the Tories rejected that. Our position is entirely consistent; the inconsistency lies with the Tories.

**Alex Johnstone:** For the long-term future record, I remind Nicola Sturgeon that the Conservative party has a record of fighting referendum campaigns and then abiding by the result. Will she do likewise after the referenda that she takes such great pleasure in proposing?

I must change my subject and continue quickly to the main question that I had hoped to discuss today, which is why there is such scepticism about Europe not only among Conservative party supporters but among people of every political persuasion. Indeed, we have seen some remarkable alliances develop during the course of today's debate. As I mentioned, the SNP has now adopted a policy that is more about quitting the common fisheries policy. It is just a pity that the SNP did not realise much earlier that getting out of the CFP was the only way.

As we speak, a particularly important point is being reached in negotiations on the mid-term review of the common agricultural policy, at which we are represented by both Scottish and Westminster ministers. A number of the proposals that have been made could greatly benefit both the Scottish farming industry and the broader rural economy in Scotland. In particular, the proposal for decoupling would give us the opportunity once and for all to return to farming as a business that is carried out on the basis of profit and loss. For economic and environmental reasons, we should no longer be required to support artificial and unnecessary production. By decoupling, we could give our farmers what could be described as freedom to farm.

However, the discussions that have taken place in the European Parliament and the policies that have been expressed by countries such as France show that some countries obviously oppose any change that would disadvantage their own feather-bedded farmers. Such policies would take away the advantages that the new proposals might deliver for farmers here in Scotland.

That is where our party realises the importance of being represented by strong blocs within the structures of Europe. An independent Scotland might well be able to recognise the important advantages of accepting the European Commission's proposals for the mid-term review of the CAP, but an independent Scotland would have

no power to defend those proposals against the blatant vested interests of a French Government that continues to buy the support of its farmers in every election that comes along.

**Margo MacDonald:** Will the member give way?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh):** The member has just entered his last minute.

**Alex Johnstone:** I think that I have two seconds to spare, so I give way.

**Margo MacDonald:** Does Alex Johnstone think that the British Government has been any better able to defend Scottish farmers?

**Alex Johnstone:** What I am saying is that, in the continuing negotiations, we need the strongest possible representation to avoid being walked all over once again by the French. If the UK Government is prepared to enter into negotiations, it does so from a position that is significantly stronger than that which a small member state could adopt. It is essential that we negotiate from a position of strength. To accept, as the SNP does, that it would be more valuable for us to be represented as an individual small country is to accept that we will never again have the opportunity to defend ourselves against the power bloc in central Europe.

It is important that we have raised the mid-term review of the common agricultural policy. In the weeks to come, I hope that the SNP is not left with egg on its face as it was over the common fisheries policy, when it had to change its policy once again because it had not noticed what was happening.

11:20

**Mr Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** Regrettably, after two statements, six years and 18 economic reports, we still have no clear direction from the Chancellor of the Exchequer on membership of the euro. On Monday, we heard of the undoubted benefits that we would enjoy from membership of the euro. However, we still have to wait—maybe for the budget, maybe until next year, or maybe for four years.

Last week, a local businessman in my constituency told me that the volatility in the exchange rate could mean the difference this year between him making a profit and him making a loss. How can he plan future investment under the current indecision? If the Treasury's watchwords are growth, stability and employment—the fifth test—how can a delay in entry allow him to plan ahead?

There has been much talk of the economic performance of euro zone countries—indeed,

Mary Scanlon spoke about Germany in particular. Many of the problems of the German economy have arisen because of German economic policies and not because of its currency.

**Mary Scanlon:** I refer once again to this week's *The Economist*, which concludes that, in Germany, the interest rate is too high and that budgetary rules mean that Government spending will have to be cut at a time when the country is sliding deeper into recession. For next year, the forecast for the biggest driving economy in the whole of Europe—with 80 million people—is for growth of 0.2 per cent. Does that not give Jeremy Purvis cause for concern?

**Mr Purvis:** The German market economy is inflexible, which prevents it from being competitive. Therefore, it is wrong to point to the German economy as an example of the failure of the euro. I ask Conservative members to consider the respective policies of each country in the round. I will not agree with Mary Scanlon, but I will agree with the German ambassador to the United Kingdom, who said on Monday evening:

"Germany would be much worse off if Germany didn't have the euro."

**Mary Scanlon:** How could it be worse off?

**Mr Purvis:** Mary Scanlon will have to take that up with the ambassador. I am sure that he would be delighted to hear about the economic policies of the Scottish Conservatives.

**Alex Johnstone:** I was interested to hear Mr Purvis say that a businessman in his constituency was concerned about the volatility of exchange rates. In Mr Purvis's constituency, and all across the Borders, there is a dependence on knitwear, on other manufacturing and on trade with the United States. Would not joining the European single currency increase the exposure to volatility of many of those industries?

**Mr Purvis:** Being a strong partner in a euro bloc is exactly what the Borders needs to compete with the United States and Japan. I thank Alex Johnstone for raising the point. Using the economic tools that are available to us for growth is exactly what our Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning is doing, what the UK chancellor should be doing, and what the European Central Bank must do for the euro zone.

For years, the SNP—whose motion we are debating—favoured its own currency and favoured nationalising the Bank of Scotland to establish its own rates of interest for the Scottish pound. The SNP complains that interest rates are controlled from the south-east of England and are set to meet the needs of the south-east of England. However, the SNP's solution is to return macroeconomic policies not to Scotland but,

instead, to Frankfurt. The SNP argues that crucial economic powers should be harnessed to a body of pooled sovereignty. That represents a massive shift in SNP policy since the 1970s. There would never be a free and independent Scotland again.

It is wholly inconsistent for the Conservatives, and for some SNP members this morning, to favour the internal market but not to favour having the necessary tools within that market to make it work effectively—namely, the single currency. Without a single currency, it is impossible to have a fully functioning single market in which Scotland can plan investment patterns in comparison with European partners. It is hardly likely that our financial services industry, which represents 10 per cent of our gross domestic product, will appreciate knowing that the Treasury has outlined all the benefits of entry but has then reined back and said, "Not yet." How can we take advantage of the single market without the euro to allow us to compete on an equitable basis for inward investment and for investment opportunities in the euro zone?

**Murdo Fraser:** I understand that it was the policy of the Liberal Democrats that we should join the euro in 1999, when it was established. Given the respective performances of the UK economy and the euro zone economies since that time, have the Liberal Democrats revised their opinion?

**Mr Purvis:** The biggest disservice to the UK economy was the derogation in the Maastricht treaty that John Major and the Conservatives negotiated. We have wasted 10 years during which we could have been preparing. In 1999, we would have had six years to prepare our economy, but we have been delayed and we are suffering for it.

Murdo Fraser has a keen interest in economics and I am sure that he will have noticed the decline in the UK share of inward investment since the establishment of the euro.

**Murdo Fraser rose—**

**Mr Purvis:** I will be happy to give way if Murdo Fraser wishes to contradict me.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member has been very generous in allowing interventions, but he is in his last minute. I will compensate him for the time that he has allowed to others.

**Mr Purvis:** The Treasury analysis, which I am sure Murdo Fraser has read, and the United Nations international investment report, which I am also sure he has read, have shown the decline in the UK share of EU inward investment since the economic and monetary union was established. Before EMU it was, on average, 25 per cent; since then, it has been 15 per cent. I agreed entirely with Kenneth Clarke when he said on Monday that

Britain's problem was that we always thought about catching the train, but then ran along the platform before jumping into the guard's van at the end. My constituents, who have been deprived of a railway for many long years, will feel aggrieved by that analogy, but it is time now for us to take the driving seat.

11:26

**Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP):** It must be difficult for some people in the public galleries to follow this debate—especially the children. The challenge for us all is to translate the debate into language that people can understand and feel is important. EU issues have a detrimental effect on people's lives. I will concentrate on the interests of workers in Scotland.

Where there have been progressive reforms, the British Government has resisted them tooth and nail. What is the Government's record, and what can we deduce about its intentions? What does Gordon Brown mean when he talks about a Europe that is more inclined to support our values? When he talks about flexibility, freedom and liberalisation, he means in the interests of big business, not of ordinary people. He means the tearing down of reforms that have been won for workers. Blair is teaming up with Berlusconi and Aznar to translate enlargement of the European Union into workers' rights at the lowest common denominator.

The record shows that the British Government has continually achieved a watering down of all progressive reforms on workers' rights when legislation is implemented in Britain. The European works council directive was watered down. The Government had to be taken to court over parental leave. For fixed-term workers, the Government excluded pay and pensions from the clause on equal treatment. Measures on information for, and the consultation of, workers in national companies were all watered down. On collective redundancies, the directive was watered down. On the protection of young people, there was delay, delay, delay. For the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations acquired rights amendments, the deadline passed in July 2001. There is no protection of pensions despite that being a legal requirement.

**Mr Raffan:** Will Ms Leckie explain how it will help workers if we withdraw from Europe and make unemployed a large number of the 3 million people who depend on trade with Europe?

**Carolyn Leckie:** Keith Raffan is completely and utterly misrepresenting what I am saying.

**Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

**Margo MacDonald:** On a point of order.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There is a point of order.

**Carolyn Leckie:** Keith Raffan knows that the Scottish Socialist Party does not think that one simple measure, whether it be withdrawing from—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There is a point of order.

**Carolyn Leckie:** I am sorry.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I apologise, Ms Leckie, but I have to stop you. Ms Cunningham has been trying to catch my eye with a point of order.

**Margo MacDonald:** So have I.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Is it proper for us to be debating when there is an empty Executive front bench? It is quite extraordinary—the front bench is entirely vacant. That does not seem to me to express any kind of courtesy to the chamber.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** In standing orders there is no explicit provision on that point. However, it is accepted practice that a minister should be on the front bench. I am sure that the Minister for Parliamentary Business will be cognisant of the member's point.

**Margo MacDonald:** On the same point of order, Presiding Officer. I hesitate to embellish what you said, but standards are laid down for the conduct of ministers in the chamber and the minister's conduct today would not meet them.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** As the member knows well, it is not for the Presiding Officers to interpret or comment on the ministerial code of conduct. If Margo MacDonald wishes to raise the matter, she knows how to do so.

I see that the minister has returned to the chamber and that he wishes to make a point of order.

**Tavish Scott:** I apologise profusely. I went to the loo. [*Laughter.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I suggest that we allow Carolyn Leckie to continue her speech.

**Carolyn Leckie:** I ask the Deputy Presiding Officer for some time to be added on.

I am sure that we could have forgone commenting on the minister's trip to the loo if he had been supported in the chamber by Andy Kerr, who supported the minister's amendment, yet I do not have a clue what his position on Europe is.

I think that I had addressed the issue of TUPE just before I was interrupted. There is no protection for pensions—the British Government

removed it in 1997, with Ian McCartney in the chair at the Council of Ministers.

I can speak directly about the working time directive because of my experience in the NHS. All sorts of clauses in the directive have been watered down, including counting public holidays in with workers' annual leave entitlement. Britain has to comply with the directive by August 2003. The Scottish Parliament and the British Government will be asked to say whether the directive is being applied in Scotland and the UK—they will be asked whether Britain is compliant. The answer to that question is no, Britain certainly is not compliant.

The NHS is failing to monitor, regulate or even record working times. There is no such thing as compensatory rest in the NHS, which also makes excessive use of bank working, a practice that is not monitored at all. Nurses and other NHS workers are working in excess of 50, 60, and in some cases, 70 hours a week. I reiterate that Britain has to comply with the working time directive by August 2003, yet there are no structures, procedures or systems in place in the NHS to do that.

**Mary Scanlon:** Will the member give way?

**Carolyn Leckie:** I will take Mary Scanlon's intervention, but I am running out of time.

**Mary Scanlon:** I want to elaborate on the point that Carolyn Leckie has just made. I received a written answer this week that confirmed that, in some NHS trusts in Scotland, only 10 per cent of junior doctors are compliant with the working time directive, which must be complied with in two months' time.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Because of interruptions, I will give Carolyn Leckie another minute.

**Carolyn Leckie:** Thank you.

Mary Scanlon will also know that the British Government negotiated an extension for junior doctors, and that, even then, the directive will be implemented for junior doctors before it is implemented for the rest of the NHS work force. Junior doctors are further ahead in respect of implementation of the working time directive than the rest of the NHS work force, for whom nothing has been done.

The question is complex. Instead of squabbling about the minutiae, members of all parties should say whether they would support a Europe that places democracy in the hands of the people as the SSP does. Would they support a Europe that increases workers' rights and protection; drives up wages; drives down working hours; and ensures full and protected final salary and state pensions? Would they support a Europe that regulates and

sanctions companies such as the Boots Company plc and Ethicon Ltd, which exploit workers in poorer countries by taking flight for greater profits? I know the Tory and Labour record on and attitude to such issues, but what sort of Europe does the SNP visualise?

I hope that members will take the opportunity to participate in a real debate that allows us to get underneath the issues and not just to deal in soundbites. I also hope that members will support Frances Curran's amendment, and that they will encourage the European Social Forum to come to this country. In the past, 100,000 people have attended its meetings. The ESF would be better for tourism than Charlie's visit the other day, when I saw only about 50 people in the street.

11:34

**Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP):** I spent some time last night and early this morning considering what I might say in the debate, but having sat through about 99 per cent of it, I have to say that it has been a strange debate.

The fact is that the SNP has propounded a visionary approach to the European dimension that has been dumbed down by our unionist colleagues; I refer in particular to Irene Oldfather's speech, in which she spoke about the "other regions" of Europe. It seems to me to be absolutely wrong that she should say that; that kind of attitude portrays Scotland as a tartan waitress at the top table, or as a country that prompts from the pit in a theatre when decisions are being taken. I campaigned for decades for a Scottish Parliament, but I do not want a Scottish Parliament that is reduced to observer status on major issues that affect the daily lives of our citizens in Scotland.

John Swinburne had the courage to mention fiscal autonomy and Bruce McFee highlighted the important issue of Scotland's being deprived by our lack of the right to an international voice. In his amendment, the minister talks about "the regions", but I had believed that the Liberals were federalists and that they would therefore look with greater vision to what is happening in Europe.

It does not matter how we approach Europe: some Eurosceptics like some bits of it and other Eurosceptics like other bits of it, and there are Europhiles who like the whole thing and Europhobes who hate it all, but we must address the issue of Europe. It is a fact of modern political and democratic life that we are inside the European Union. That is where the SNP intends that we will stay.

I had the privilege of serving for 10 years on the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee and I look forward to serving on the Scottish

Parliament's European and External Relations Committee in this session of the Parliament. I saw the bundles of paper that went before the European Scrutiny Committee, which are decried by some as proof of how obsessive and over-bureaucratic Europe is. I say to those critics that they will find, if they look at what comes out of the Scotland Office in Whitehall, a bureaucracy that is over-obsessed with detail.

It is important that we see the concept of Europe behind all the arguments about policies. The European Union was founded in the first place in the hope that my generation could grow up to see never again war in Europe such as was seen in the two great wars.

Developments have taken place in Europe since that time and the Scottish Parliament must play its role in them. It is not enough for Jack McConnell to say that nobody is going to the Council of Ministers meeting in Thelassaloniki this month or that we are to be observers at the Commission or the council. We must, as members of the Scottish Parliament, exert our democratic right to represent our people. I have clear reservations about the common fisheries policy and about the changes that are to be made to the common agricultural policy, but I welcome the enlargement of the community and think that it is important that that happens.

I had the unusual privilege of heading a Foreign and Commonwealth Office delegation to the Baltic states when they were under Soviet occupation. We do not have to clamber into the Scottish Parliament building over heaps of sandbags, but that is exactly what I had to do in all the Baltic states in order to talk to representatives there. We are lucky with our democracy, but why do countries such as Hungary, Slovenia or the Baltic states look towards the European Union? They see Europe not as a gravy train—as someone tried to claim—but as a star of hope and democracy. People in those countries have lived through decades of oppression and we should value the fact that they want to join us. We should be involved directly in the discussions that are being held with them and in reaching the conclusions that recognise our needs and their needs.

11:39

**Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab):** I rise to support Tavish Scott's amendment. Alex Fergusson's comments were absolutely right; indeed, I thought that he was being polite when he described the SNP's position on this issue as being very "fluid and flexible". Those of us who have longer memories might remember that the nationalists took an "in, out, in, out" approach to Europe; they might have even shaken it all about sometimes.

It is a shame that Margo MacDonald has left the chamber for the moment. Some members might not know that her husband, Jim Sillars, lived in my house in London for a time when he was a Labour MP. We had many interesting discussions about Europe: Jim was usually on the anti-European side of the argument, while I was very much on the pro-European side. It certainly made for some very lively suppers. However, I am afraid that Margo seems to have picked up too much of his Euroscepticism.

One of the UK's great tragedies is that we did not adopt a positive approach to Europe soon enough. No matter whether we are talking about the CAP, the CFP, the policy on the euro or whatever, the trouble is that the UK has always been at the coo's tail when we have tried to get into negotiations. We have never been in on the ground floor, establishing the ground rules. Everyone in the UK must learn that salutary lesson: we must get in there and do the deal that will benefit our people.

**Alex Johnstone:** First, I want to remind Helen Eadie that my name is Alex Johnstone, not Alex Fergusson.

The lesson that I tried to draw from the current negotiations in Europe is that, although what is on offer delivers for us, the French do not like the proposals and will knock them on the head. That is why we must always negotiate from a position of strength.

**Helen Eadie:** We both agree on that point. We must constantly be in there, battling for our people's rights. It does not matter whether we fight for the rights of coal miners, iron and steel workers or fishermen who lose their jobs; all our workers have lost jobs over the past decades and it is our job to get the very best deal for them. I hope that we all unite on that point.

As for the points that Carolyn Leckie and other SSP members raised, I think that the Parliament has very much agreed the principle of having its own presence in Brussels. Such a presence provides us with early intelligence to ensure that we can challenge the quality of some of the decisions that are made there. After all, we do not want to keep going to court to challenge and fight decisions that have already been made.

That said, policies and measures such as the working time directive, parental and paternal leave, maternity rights and environmental improvements have benefited the people of this country. How those measures are implemented in our hospitals is a matter for our internal Government. However, the bigger policy issue that we must agree to is that progressive arguments must be made in Europe for our workers in order to ensure that they receive advances that we

believe in. The Amalgamated Electrical and Engineering Union, Amicus, the GMB, the Trades Union Congress and many other UK unions have argued powerfully for such an approach; they know that 3,500 jobs are lost every day because we do not have the euro. That is another salutary lesson that we must take on board.

**Phil Gallie:** If that is the case, why have the Institute of Directors and chambers of commerce throughout Great Britain come out against the euro? Is it because they believe that it will cost, rather than create, jobs?

**Helen Eadie:** Last night, I was in the company of farmers and representatives of the National Farmers Union of Scotland who told me that the industry throughout Scotland is being decimated because we are not part of the euro. That is not just my message; it is what farmers who are trying to sell their products are arguing. For example, in the Borders, the manufacturers of paper gowns—

**Mr Monteith:** Will the member give way?

**Helen Eadie:** Yes.

**Mr Monteith:** I thank the member for being so generous. Earlier she posed a question that I would like to answer now. The problem with berries, in particular, is the result of imports from eastern European countries that are not yet members of the euro zone. Does the member not therefore accept that the significant factors in that situation are more likely to be the lower cost, and sometimes quality, of the berries from those countries, rather than the euro?

**Helen Eadie:** No, I do not. Mr Monteith obviously needs to speak to some farmers on the matter; they are very unhappy with the Conservative party's approach.

The Scottish Parliament has been positive in its approach to Europe. It is interesting that the SNP is taking a different tack from Professor Neil MacCormick, who has been party to the work of the Scottish Executive, the Scottish Parliament and civil servants at the Scotland Office in batting very strongly for team Scotland. The claim that we do not have a very strong voice in Europe completely ignores the fact that we have such strong representatives over there.

The convention on the future of Europe and the debates that we are currently having are all about paving the way for enlargement. We have to bring together and simplify the various treaties to make them easily understandable for the people whom we represent, who need to know the answers to those questions. As a result, I strongly support the minister's amendment.

11:46

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife)**

**(Con):** In Scotland, we used to have a Scottish currency. However, when we joined the most successful political and economic union that the world has ever known, we gave up many of our political and economic rights. I am glad that we did so, because it was the right thing to do. The benefits have far outweighed the costs. For example, we were able to retain our Scottish culture as well as share in our British culture. We also retained a number of distinct institutions, procedures, laws and traditions, as we would have wished to.

When Scotland joined the union, it experienced some economic shocks. However, they were overcome because we enjoyed three distinct advantages. First, our economies converged. Although we already traded with Scandinavia, the Baltic and—in particular—France, our volume of trade with England was large. Not only did that trade grow, but our access to the new worldwide markets and new continents also grew. We were economically in step.

Secondly, we had a common tongue. Some nationalists might not like to hear this, but the Scottish form of English has existed in Scotland as long as Gaelic has. Greater economic and political interaction—

**Mr Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Mr Monteith:** Certainly. I thought that that point might provoke someone.

**Mr Gibson:** Mr Monteith's point is absolutely untrue. The Gaels have a word for English—"Beurla"—which means jargon. In other words, compared with Gaelic, English is a very recent language in Scotland.

**Mr Monteith:** I simply defer to Professor Charles Jones of the University of Edinburgh—I recommend that the member read his book on the English language, which contains evidence that Gaelic and forms of English existed in Scotland at the same time. The point is that the countries in the union had a common language, although there were some differences.

Thirdly, we also enjoyed labour mobility. Given those factors—converging economies, a common language and labour mobility—the economic, political and monetary union in 1707 was a success. It is interesting to note that we would not enjoy those three advantages if we in the UK—or in Scotland—joined the euro zone.

**Mr Raffan:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Monteith:** I want to finish my point. As the Chancellor of the Exchequer has explained, there

is no economic convergence. Furthermore, we would not have the labour mobility that we would like to have. In that context, I draw members' attention to the labour mobility that exists in the US.

**Mr Raffan:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Monteith:** I will come back to the member.

Finally, we would not enjoy a common language throughout a united states of Europe.

**Mr Raffan:** Will the member give way?

**Mike Rumbles** *rose*—

**Mr Monteith:** I will give way to Mike Rumbles.

**Mike Rumbles:** Is the member's description of the Conservative position somewhat fraudulent? He seems to be indicating that the Conservatives would join the euro if the economic conditions were right and if doing so would be to our economic advantage. That is not their position. Will he confirm that their position is that they would never join the euro, no matter what the economic conditions were?

**Mr Monteith:** I think that Mr Rumbles is somewhat ahead of himself: I was talking about the SNP's policy and motion. However, he will not be surprised to learn that I will be delighted to explain exactly where I stand.

It is interesting that, as I have said, Britain and Scotland's relationship with the euro zone would not enjoy economic convergence, common language or labour mobility.

**Mr Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Will Mr Monteith give way?

**Mr Monteith:** I must make progress. I might take an intervention later in my speech.

The relationship would not enjoy those things because the euro zone is structurally rigid. Therefore, I do not believe that it is in our economic, political, social or cultural interests for this country—Scotland or the United Kingdom—to join the euro. I say all that because the SNP's policy on the euro is at odds with, and contradictory to, its policy on independence and—that unionist concept—fiscal autonomy. For SNP members to suggest that Parliament should have greater financial powers when the evidence on monetary union suggests that we would lose them is either to fool themselves or to deceive the public. I will let the public decide which it is.

It is possible for a British Parliament to share taxation powers with its Scottish sister Parliament, but it would not be possible to share those powers if the British Parliament were set to lose such powers, which it would lose with the euro.

**Mr Mather:** Convergence has not taken place in

the UK. Over the past 30 years, Scotland has grown at an average rate of 1.6 per cent and the rest of the UK has grown at 2.1 per cent. Scotland has had no power or flexibility: it has no tax powers, no borrowing powers, no control of interest rates and no control of exchange rates.

**Mr Monteith:** I am cognisant of all those factors, but the union has existed for hundreds of years and there has been convergence over that time. There might be convergence next week or even next year, as the chancellor tells us, but the following year there might not be. The convergence test that the chancellor has set is fallacious.

The trend in Europe is to push towards more central control of taxes. Portugal wanted to cut its taxes; its Government was elected on the basis that it would cut taxes, but it was told by the European Central Bank that it could not do so. It is not only the euro that threatens the Parliament and its control over taxes, but the European constitution, which the SNP is so keen to support.

It is clear that the SNP is riven with contradiction. Its policies on fiscal autonomy and independence are contradictory, and its policy on more powers for Scotland and support for the euro and the draft constitution are contradictory. I believe that we should send them all home, "Tae think again."

11:52

**Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP):** It is funny that Brian Monteith should say that the SNP is riven with contradiction, given that the Conservatives seem to be against centralisation in Brussels and elsewhere, but have—against Scotland's interests—defended centralisation within the UK for decades.

I read last week that thousands of world war two veterans in the United States pass away every week. That reminded me that we should never lose sight of the reason why so many people wanted a united Europe—it was to bring peace, so that never again will we have a massive European war like the two that we experienced last century.

**Irene Oldfather:** It is a major omission that that is not mentioned in the motion.

**Richard Lochhead:** The SNP has made the point in every international debate and every debate on Europe.

**Alex Johnstone:** Is not it the case that the reason why the SNP avoids that subject wherever possible is that peace in Europe, which it claims should be credited to the European Union, is in fact down to our membership and active involvement in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation?

**Richard Lochhead:** The SNP's anti-nuclear stance shows that of all the mainstream parties in the chamber, we are the most peaceful. It is ludicrous to suggest otherwise.

In today's interdependent and globalised world, it is important that nations decide how they can use their sovereignty; when to pool it, share it or retain it. In these important days when many international and European debates are taking place, the question that Scotland must address now is: What decisions do we want to take in Scotland and what decisions do we want to be taken in London, Brussels, Washington, New York or wherever? That is the massive challenge that faces the people of Scotland.

**Mr Monteith:** Will the member note that there was a civil war within the United States while it had a common currency called the dollar?

**Richard Lochhead:** I am speechless from trying to work out the relevance of that point to the debate and to my speech in particular.

Scotland must decide where to secede power and where to get power back. The cleverest nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the ones that make the right decisions. The SNP thinks that many decision-making powers must be taken back from London because they would best be made in Scotland. Powers over fuel duty, whisky duty, taxation and all the other powers that are still with London should come back to Scotland. We should also decide where to pool sovereignty with other international institutions. We think that some powers should come back from Brussels to Scotland, such as power over our own fishing grounds—we must have power over that.

We must manage our sovereignty here in Scotland. We want to gain sovereignty in other international decisions, such as in relation to nuclear weaponry and to what happens at the World Trade Organisation and other forums; we are currently shut out of all such decision-making forums. We must work out what is in Scotland's best interests. The SNP wants to repatriate from Europe sovereignty over issues such as fisheries, genetically modified crops and so on, and it wants to repatriate from London sovereignty over other issues. We want to take decisions here about where we should pool sovereignty with other people.

I will address what is currently happening in Europe. In 1958 there was the treaty of Rome, in 1987 there was the single European treaty, in the 1990s there was the Maastricht treaty, in 2000 there was the Nice treaty and next year we will have another important treaty, which will decide the fate of many of the decisions that will affect Scotland. The pace of integration in Europe is quickening and there is less and less time

between treaties. If we want to have decision-making powers in Scotland, and to have an influence over our society and our economy, it is imperative that we get involved now. The only way to get involved is to get involved directly.

We want to determine what sort of Europe we live in. Most members and most people in Scotland want to live in a Europe of the people, not a Europe where big business can drive through policies on issues such as GM crops, and in which the people of Scotland can have no say in what happens in their own environment. That is why it is so important that we have a direct say over such matters.

The membership of the EU will increase soon to 25 states—more eastern European states will get on board. The EU cannot be widened at the same time and pace as it is deepened. If that is done, one of two things will happen: either the EU will collapse, which I do not think any member in the chamber wants, or it will turn into a super-state in which democracy is an abstract concept for Scotland. I do not believe that members or people in Scotland want that to happen.

There are three solutions. First, we need subsidiarity so that decisions are made at the proper level. We should make decisions about our fishing grounds here in Scotland. Those decisions should not be made by land-locked countries such as Austria or Luxembourg, or by countries such as Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania, which will soon join the EU and will have more say over the Shetland fishing grounds than will the people of Scotland or the people of Shetland. Secondly, we must—on GM crops and other issues—repatriate sovereignty from the relevant authorities. If the relevant authority is an international forum, we must repatriate authority from that and we should do so if the relevant authority is the EU. Thirdly, we need equal status with other nation states. Our north-west European neighbours such as Sweden, Denmark and Ireland have seats at the top table—Scotland should seek that status.

11:58

**George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD):** I welcome the chance that the SNP has provided for us to debate Europe—its motion is drawn extremely broadly.

There is a good argument that the common fisheries policy, the European constitution and the single currency are all important subjects that are worthy of a debate in their own right, but I will concentrate on the single currency. Earlier in the week, following the UK's move to kick the decision on the euro into the long grass, Alex Salmond, in a press release at Westminster, criticised the chancellor's decision to delay the decision to go into the euro. He stated:



"Failing to join the euro ... will continue to wreak damage to ... Scotland".

Nicola Sturgeon confirmed earlier that the SNP policy is early entry to the European single currency. Several members have already pointed out the contradictions in the SNP policy. The SNP has argued consistently day after day and week after week in the Parliament and throughout the election campaign that Scotland's economy can be rescued from decline only by Scotland's leaving the UK single currency area.

The SNP argues that monetary policy in the UK is skewed to favour the interests of the housing market in the south-east, which results in low growth, poor performance and the fact that we consistently lag behind the rest of the UK. The SNP claims that the economic hot spot of the south-east draws resources and young people away from Scotland. We have heard many times from SNP members such as Andrew Wilson, John Swinney and Jim Mather—we heard it relentlessly during the election campaign—that the answer to Scotland's economic problems is for us to have independence, a Parliament with proper powers and a full economic toolbox.

We must respect that legitimate argument. However, within months of Scotland gaining independence and grabbing the toolbox from Eddie George at the Bank of England, the SNP would hand the toolbox back to Willem Duisenberg at the European Central Bank. As my good friend and highly respected SNP MSP Alex Neil argued in his lecture for *The Sunday Times*:

"How can we in the SNP argue for full fiscal freedom from London if we are then prepared to hand back fiscal powers to Brussels and Frankfurt?"

That is a fatal contradiction. A Scottish economy that was run from Frankfurt would be no more successful than one run from London.

**Richard Lochhead:** Does the member suggest that London is better at looking after the Scottish economy than Brussels would be? If so, is the member anti-euro?

**George Lyon:** I am pointing out the argument of one of the SNP's leading members, who said that there is a fatal contradiction in the SNP's economic policy because it seeks an independent Scotland and early adoption of the euro. The SNP must face up to the fact that its policy on the euro is fundamentally flawed, contradictory and not credible in the eyes of the Scottish people.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Mr Lyon is somewhat confused. Our argument is perfectly simple: it is that Scotland has no economic, fiscal or monetary powers whatever within the United Kingdom and that we should have the same range of economic powers that every other member state of the European Union has. That argument is

straightforward. What is Mr Lyon's position on the euro? He cannot have it both ways—he argues for the euro, but criticises the SNP because we want to take Scotland into it.

**George Lyon:** We are debating the SNP's motion and it is the SNP's policy that is contradictory. The SNP argues that Scotland would benefit from regaining control over interest rates—one of the major monetary tools—from the Bank of England, but it would a few months later hand that control to the European Central Bank, which would have to take into account the interests of about 24 different currencies. How can the SNP argue that when it believes fundamentally that Scotland is disadvantaged within the single monetary area of the UK? The SNP must deal with the contradiction that lies at the heart of its economic policy.

Michael Matheson's speech highlighted the danger to Scotland of the SNP's policy of independence. He set his sights high when he said that an independent Scotland should take its place at the top table of Europe with Latvia, Cyprus and the other small nations.

**Margo MacDonald:** Will the member give way?

**George Lyon:** I would be delighted to, but I am in my last minute and I must make progress.

As Irene Oldfather pointed out, that would leave Scotland in the second division of Europe, with only four votes to cast against the big countries' 29 votes. I support Tavish Scott's amendment.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I offer my regrets to Gordon Jackson, but we must now begin the closing speeches. I call Christine May to close for the Labour party.

12:04

**Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab):** I support Tavish Scott's amendment. The debate is our first opportunity to discuss the view that our membership of the EU within the United Kingdom is fundamentally important to the economic, social and cultural life of Scotland. That idea is one of my long-held views and I had high hopes for today's debate, although I agree with Irene Oldfather that it would be better to have the debate after Giscard d'Estaing's draft document is finalised.

There has been a cacophony of discordant voices from the SNP on the various aspects of EU policy, about which the SNP members have individual disagreements—I suspect that those disagreements are purely for party-political or electoral advantage. Should we be in or out of the euro now or later? Should we have a referendum now or later? What should the subject be? Nobody knows.

Many Tories, including Phil Gallie, have been busily lighting votive candles to ward off the bogeyman of the charter of fundamental rights—be afraid; be very afraid.

**Carolyn Leckie:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Christine May:** I will take an intervention in a moment.

The Conservatives do not take responsibility for anything that the previous Conservatives did. They claim that a big boy did it, or in their case—as they say where I come from—a little owl did it and got stabbed in the back by her own party.

**Murdo Fraser:** I am delighted that the member has given way. Will she say which leader of a major political party in the UK is the only one who has campaigned on a platform of withdrawing the UK from Europe?

**Christine May:** I thought that it was Iain Duncan Smith.

What have we done? We have played our part in the United Kingdom and raised arguments that cater for Scotland's interests. Members throughout the chamber, including Margo MacDonald, Alex Johnstone—who made sensible comments about the common agricultural policy—Margaret Ewing, Carolyn Leckie and Mark Ballard have advanced some of those arguments.

**Carolyn Leckie:** Christine May referred to the EU charter of fundamental rights and is obviously proud of it. Does she agree with the British Government, which, together with its right-wing friends such as Berlusconi and Aznar, cobbled together a scheme to ensure that the charter was not incorporated into treaties and therefore not legally enforceable? Does she agree that the charter should be incorporated into treaties and made legally enforceable?

**Christine May:** I was coming to that point. It is my view that, at the time, the UK Government was right not to argue for the inclusion of the charter of fundamental rights. However, as a committed European, I remain committed to an expression of the rights of individual citizens within the EU and I will continue to argue with my party and the UK Government that we should have something that sets out those rights.

Members raised and sought to debate some key matters, such as the stable economy that Gordon Brown and the Labour Government have delivered for this country for the first time in anybody's recollection. We need jobs and profits, but we must also take account of workers' rights in an enlarged Europe. We must take account of the impact of enlargement on the rights of individuals and the economy of this country.

Our membership of the European Union is not a lucky bag or a pick-and-mix; we cannot have various bits that we like and not have bits that we do not like. The European Union is about us getting together in a partnership of nations and regions with like interests and like economies and arriving at a balanced conclusion. That is why Gordon Brown and Tony Blair are correct that, for the moment, the circumstances are not right for membership of the euro. However, given that some of the tests have been met and that Gordon Brown and Tony Blair are confident that the other tests can be met, we should now start to move apace in making the case for joining the euro. When the referendum comes, I will campaign for membership because I will believe that the time is right.

The aim of reaching a balanced conclusion is why we participated in the Giscard d'Estaing convention and why we managed to achieve amendments to the original draft document that took account of Scotland's interests and of the differing aspects of our economy, culture and social life. That is why we will continue to participate in the on-going reviews of the various structural funds of the European Union.

Tavish Scott's amendment, which sets our membership of the European Union in a clearly Scottish and international context, bringing forward the benefits of peace and stability, is the right way to go. I am pleased to support that amendment.

12:10

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** This has been an enlightening debate in which we have heard the parties set out their positions on the European constitution. It seems that Labour now believes unreservedly in the euro but, like some latter-day St Augustine, thinks that it does not want it quite yet. The famous five tests dreamed up on the back of an envelope in the back of taxi to give some credibility to the Government's position are quite irrelevant compared to the sixth test: can Labour win a referendum? The answer to that question is, of course, no. Labour therefore has to dream up all sorts of excuses as to why the other five tests have not been met. I am sure that that process will continue for many years to come.

I am pleased that the Lib Dems are as enthusiastic about the euro as ever. They are the people who said that we should have joined the euro when it was established in 1999, despite all the evidence that that would have been a disaster for the UK economy.

Wim Duisenberg, the president of the European Central Bank, said just yesterday that he had to revise his forecast for euro zone growth from the 2

per cent that he had predicted for the coming year down to between 0.4 per cent and 1 per cent. He said:

"Inflation is dropping significantly, further fuelling economists' worries about the risks that prices might start falling, damaging investment and risking even lower growth."

It is clear that joining the euro in 1999 would have been a disaster for us.

**Mr Raffan:** Will Mr Fraser give way?

**Murdo Fraser:** Mr Raffan did not give way to me, but I will show him a little more courtesy than he showed me.

**Mr Raffan:** I am grateful to Mr Fraser. I point out that I gave way to Mary Scanlon.

In view of the strong criticism by the leaders of Mr Fraser's party of the lack of economic growth in Scotland, which interest rate does Mr Fraser think would be better for Scotland: 2 per cent or 3.75 per cent?

**Murdo Fraser:** That is a fair point from Mr Raffan—I will address it in my remarks.

I want to deal with a point that Jeremy Purvis raised about inward investment. Ernst & Young published a report on 4 June on inward investment in the UK that showed that the UK share of inward investment projects in the EU rose from 26.5 per cent in 2001 to 28.4 per cent in 2002. The report said:

"The UK will continue to punch well above its weight in inward investment terms in Europe. To continue to do so its efforts must not be sidetracked by the euro debate."

That is the fact of the matter, from the consultants Ernst & Young. We are not being damaged by staying outside the euro zone.

The motion today is from the SNP and, interestingly, I detect a note of healthy Euroscepticism from members on the SNP benches. Of course, the SNP's policy was once independence in Europe. If the press are to be believed, there are some within the SNP who are starting to question whether independence is in fact what they want at all. Perhaps they are thinking twice, not just about independence but about whether they want to be in Europe after all.

As my colleague Brian Monteith said—indeed George Lyon, in a remarkably Eurosceptic speech, also made the point when he quoted Alex Neil—if fiscal autonomy is the policy of the SNP, how does the SNP square that with its policy on joining the euro? Joining the euro means giving up control of interest rates and economic decisions and, in due course, taxation policy. What fiscal autonomy will be left to Scotland if we join the euro zone? The fact is that the euro would be a disaster for our economy.

**Irene Oldfather:** We gave up our total autonomy in trade negotiations long ago. In many respects we long ago ceded sovereignty to get into the single market. If we move to one monetary authority, we pool our sovereignty again in order to have a common position. Does Mr Fraser agree with Ken Clarke's statement that when we create a single market we pool sovereignty?

**Murdo Fraser:** I am sure that Irene Oldfather will not be surprised to learn that I occasionally disagree with my esteemed colleague Mr Clarke on that issue as on others.

The euro would not be to our benefit. We trade substantially with Europe but, by comparison with the rest of the UK, we have large oil and electronics sectors. Those industries are priced in dollars and euro fluctuation against the dollar would only damage them.

On interest rates, I would like to respond to Keith Raffan's comments. Looking at the property market in Edinburgh, Inverness or other hot spots in Scotland, who can argue that it is prudent to call for 2 per cent interest rates? In the euro zone, as Ireland has found out to its cost, interest rates that are set too low mean high inflation and long-term damage.

**George Lyon:** Will Murdo Fraser give way on that point?

**Murdo Fraser:** I am sorry, but I have already taken a number of interventions and I am very short of time.

We must retain the same currency as the rest of the UK. As Margo MacDonald said, the rest of the UK is our main market. If we were to be independent, we would still have to have the same currency as England to retain our single market.

**Mr Purvis:** Will Murdo Fraser give way?

**Murdo Fraser:** I am sorry, but I am in the final minute of my speech.

SNP members are out of step with public opinion in Scotland, and not for the first time. They would surrender our currency, our control of interest rates and our national ability to influence economic affairs, which would have serious consequences for jobs, living standards and other aspects of economic welfare.

By contrast, on this issue as on so many others, it is the Conservatives who speak for the people. We believe that the Scottish Parliament must be responsible for ensuring that Scottish views on the convention are clearly represented to the Westminster Government, thereby ensuring that Scotland's specific concerns are covered in any final outcomes. Only we see that membership of the single currency and the inability to set interest rates in our own interests would hit jobs and

incomes. To safeguard people's living standards, we must keep control of our economic policy and set the interest rates that are right for us. Throwing away that flexibility would undermine economic stability, putting jobs at risk.

Only we oppose a European constitution, because that would be a further step down the road to a unitary super state. Whatever the outcome of the European convention, the Scottish Conservatives believe that the people of Scotland have the right to decide. The Government must hold a referendum on the proposed European constitution. It must trust the people. I am delighted to support the amendment in the name of my colleague Phil Gallie.

**Carolyn Leckie:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. As Frances Curran moved an amendment, do you consider that it would be better in the interests of fairness that she should be given the opportunity to sum up on that amendment? With three amendments before the Parliament, it seems bizarre that she is the only member unable to respond. If you are not of a mind to allow her to sum up, would it be competent to put the question to the chamber and ask members to allow her to sum up?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am afraid that that is not competent. I will not be calling Frances Curran to close. I understood that the allocation of closing slots had been determined by some form of agreement about how such matters would be conducted. It was on that basis that you were called to speak as the SSP's second speaker in the debate. You have raised an issue that we will obviously need to consider for future reference. I take your point and I will try to respond to you in the fullness of time. Now, however, I call Tavish Scott to close for the Executive.

12:18

**Tavish Scott:** If I may, I shall start with two of Parliament's committed ladies on the subject of Europe: Helen Eadie and Margaret Ewing. I shall do so because I believe that they both made a similar and extremely important point: that the current social, political and economic realities mean that we have to engage with and use Europe as effectively as we can. Both Mrs Ewing and Mrs Eadie said that, as did a number of other members, unlike the Eurosceptics from whom we also heard during this morning's proceedings. That fundamentally important point often gets overlooked in the context of debates on Europe. It illustrates a reflective approach to those issues that is particularly important at this time, given the future of Europe convention.

A number of members picked up on the importance of the future of the European

convention, either agreeing or disagreeing with it. I observe, however, that few looked at it in detail. Irene Oldfather did so, illustrating to Parliament the benefits that positive engagement in the convention can bring to the Scottish Executive and, more important, to the people of Scotland in delivering legislation and powers that are within our competence.

The convention deserves our support. It is an innovative and open way of addressing the increasingly big issues in Europe that need to be sorted out. I agree with Carolyn Leckie on her point about needing to make Europe more understandable—it was a fair point that was made by many members.

We need to ensure that Europe regulates only when it must. That would be a profoundly important advance in European policy. We must also ensure that the European Union carries out its business more efficiently and, as Michael Matheson put it, more transparently and accountably. I hope to ensure that Parliament reflects all principal points of approach to those matters.

The convention will and must tackle the democratic deficit, as Keith Raffan rightly put it. That is why the Executive has been active in pushing for a means of enforcing the subsidiarity principle, with which most members would agree. It has also been pushing for recognition of the role of the regions in Europe, more efficient policy-making and greater involvement with those on whom European policy impacts.

**Richard Lochhead:** I return to the theme of enforcing subsidiarity and ensuring that Europe adheres to that principle. Once again, I ask the minister to clarify whether he believes that this Parliament and his Government should have access to the European Court of Justice to achieve adherence to that principle.

**Tavish Scott:** I was going to come on to that issue, and Mr Lochhead has given me the opportunity to do so now. The Executive believes strongly that breaches of the principle of subsidiarity are political rather than judicial matters and would be most effectively dealt with at an early stage in the legislative process. The Executive set out in the paper that it submitted to the convention a number of practical and workable proposals to ensure that early, pre-legislative consultation negates the need to risk overburdening what I am sure Mr Lochhead would accept is an already busy court.

The convention is moving in the right direction—one in which Parliament should have confidence. However, the convention has not concluded its work and it is on that point that I disagree fundamentally with the Conservatives. There

remain important issues to resolve. As Christine May said, there also remain a number of bogeymen that, hitherto, one could read about only in the pages of the *Daily Mail*. Mr Gallie mentioned them, which is at best disappointing but it is not of any great surprise.

The proposals will be discussed at the IGC later this year and into next year, and the big issues remain up for grabs. The Executive will work extremely hard with our partners on those issues to ensure that the convention delivers firmly on the agenda that we have set for it.

**Phil Gallie:** Perhaps the minister has had the good fortune to examine the charter to which I referred. Will he give me an assurance that there is nothing in the charter that will affect the decisions we take in Parliament on health, education, the environment and transport?

**Tavish Scott:** Mr Gallie needs to accept my point that the process is fluid at the moment. We have worked hard through our representatives, who are involved in different aspects of the convention's work and who represent different parties in Scotland. We have done that over the past 16 to 18 months and will continue to do so throughout the IGC process. At no time will we take our eyes off the ball on the issues that Mr Gallie or other members raised.

**Mr Raffan:** I am glad that Mr Scott has emphasised the point that the constitution is a draft constitution. Many of us hope that there will be major constitutional change, but, through this year and into next year, the process has to go through the IGC, and we do not know what the outcome will be. That is why Menzies Campbell MP is right—there should be a referendum if we are facing major constitutional change, but no referendum if the process is simply a tidying-up operation, which we hope it will not be.

**Tavish Scott:** Mr Raffan makes a fair point. I add to that by illustrating the work that the Scottish Executive is doing on linkages with other areas of Europe. It is important that the Executive has developed formal co-operation agreements with European partners. During 2002, agreements were signed with Catalonia and Tuscany, and more will follow shortly. Those are important commitments, and not only for some of our partners. The core point is that we must work with other parts of Europe to find common cause on issues of considerable economic, social and cultural interest and to ensure that we achieve shared objectives.

**Frances Curran:** Will the member give way?

**Tavish Scott:** I want first to deal with enlargement.

A number of members raised enlargement in

relation to economic activity in Scotland. Alex Johnstone made some important points about agriculture. He will be aware that the National Farmers Union and other representative bodies have been closely involved in discussions with partner organisations in some of the accession countries, especially Poland, about the benefits that both sides can gain from enlargement. There is much to be said for such engagement. As Keith Raffan rightly said, last weekend 77 per cent of Poles voted in favour of accession to the European Union—on a 59 per cent turnout. That drives a coach and horses through the complaints of some. Poland has followed Malta, Slovenia, Hungary, Lithuania and Slovakia in supporting accession to the EU.

The issue of the euro has been raised to the considerable excitement of many members. The Scottish Executive will work closely with Scottish business organisations and people throughout Scotland to prepare for the time when decisions about the euro are taken.

I want to deal with two points that were made about fisheries. The first relates to the ridiculous speech that Mr Brocklebank made. Yesterday Jörgen Holmquist, the director general of the fisheries directorate-general, confirmed in Brussels to Highlands and Islands Enterprise that the competition directorate-general ruling on the Shetland and Orkney quota purchase scheme did not ban the practice in its entirety, only the discriminatory elements of the system. The member should get his facts right before he makes such speeches.

Nicola Sturgeon claimed that fisheries are not mentioned in the current treaties of the EU, but she should read the treaties. Article 32 of the treaty establishing the European Community requires a common fisheries policy, and annex 1 of that treaty lists fish among the products that are covered by article 32. A little homework would not do the member any harm.

Important issues face Scotland at this time. It is important that Parliament and the European and External Relations Committee engage with the issues that we have debated. However, it is the partnership parties in the Executive that will take those issues forward. From what we have observed today, only the partnership parties have a positive engagement with the future of Europe.

12:27

**Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP):** We can characterise the Tory position in this debate as follows: we are in, we do not like it, we want out, but we do not want to say that. That is the extent of the Tories' contribution.

**Murdo Fraser:** I am sure that Roseanna Cunningham would characterise Mr Gallie and perhaps even me as politicians who can speak our minds. Does she think that if we believed that Britain should pull out of the EU we would be afraid to say so?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** That is just what I said. Murdo Fraser is obviously waiting for Iain Duncan Smith to tell him that it is okay to say that Britain should pull out of the EU. That is the difficulty that Conservative members face.

Lib Dems and Labour members conveniently ignore all the divisions within and between their parties and end up unutterably confused in a debate such as this, as evidenced by the speech that we heard from George Lyon.

Few subjects that are debated in this chamber better highlight the stark difference in vision and ambition that exists between members of other parties and members of the Scottish National Party. Some woeful speeches were made this morning.

**Mary Scanlon:** Public sector spending in Scotland is 20 per cent higher than it is in England. The SNP number-cruncher is sitting in the front row of the SNP benches, so can Roseanna Cunningham confirm that, if Scotland were independent, its spending and consequent borrowing would be compatible with the monetary rules of the European Union?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** There would be some debate about the figures on which the member is basing her argument. I would be happy to engage in a separate debate about those figures, but that cannot be done in this context because the member is putting forward a position that is arguable.

A number of the speeches that members made can only be fairly characterised as covering up the fact that they do not want to be clear about their position or do not know clearly what their position is. Maureen Macmillan's was one such speech. I suspect that the entire speech was intended to cover up the fact that she does not know what side of the Labour debate she is on.

I am sorry that Margo MacDonald has left the chamber, because although she spent six minutes and 43 seconds on her speech I am still none the wiser as to her position on Europe. I must say the same about Jeremy Purvis's speech.

The SNP, in contrast, would have Scotland's voice heard at the centre of Europe. Our position is clear. The Executive parties and the Conservatives are happy to have Scotland's voice muffled and distorted by diverting our representation through Westminster—the same Government that has consistently failed to defend

Scotland's interests. Perhaps the big difference between our position and that of the other parties is that we want to participate in the development of the European Union rather than being stuck—mentally as well as geographically—at the periphery, half wishing that we were Americans, which is the problem underlying current Labour party policy on Europe.

We look forward to our country being at the heart of European progress. We welcome the enlargement of the EU and the development of its constitution but we want to be directly involved in the process. In fact, the SNP's Neil MacCormick, as a substitute member of the European convention, is the only democratically elected representative of Scotland involved with that body, which demonstrates our commitment to its future.

Despite the fact that the First Minister is chair of the group for European regions with legislative power—REGLEG—and despite the fact that 80 per cent of devolved Scottish functions are covered in some way by EU competence, the Executive has done little to promote Scottish interests, involvement or influence and has failed to get a place in the European convention. From what Tavish Scott said, we can see that he believes that the Scottish Parliament's role is simply to implement decisions made elsewhere by other people. Effectively, that accords second-class status to Scotland. We could not more fundamentally disagree with that view.

The European convention and the development of a European constitution will give the EU a legal personality that will allow it for the first time to sign treaties and sit on international bodies. The usual suspects have, of course, started throwing their rattles out of their prams about that, portraying it as the loss of our identity—usually our British identity, whatever that is—and an erosion of the sovereignty of the member states. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. The draft EU constitution enshrines the principle of conferral and entrenches the principle of subsidiarity. That means that the EU can exercise only those powers conferred on it by the member states and that it will act only if a policy cannot be implemented at national, regional or local level. Far from being eroded, the powers of national Parliaments will be entrenched. The only pity is that this Parliament is not on that list.

**Mr Monteith:** Is the member aware that the draft constitution gives the European Commission powers to veto national powers relating to energy and culture? What does the SNP say about that with regard to the protection of Scottish energy and Scottish culture?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** It should come as a surprise to no one that there are things that the SNP, like every other political party, disagrees with

over Europe. We all have our debates about which is the best way forward and the areas in which we should regain or hold on to competence. There is no difference between the SNP and any other party in that all our members have views about specific issues. However, we are saying that Scotland should have the ability to debate those issues at the centre and should not sit on the sidelines, which is what everyone else in this chamber thinks is appropriate.

Increased powers for the European Parliament across more than 30 policy areas will increase the amount of democratic input in the EU's decision-making processes. However, as with any major development of this nature, if we are not involved in making the rules, we are in danger of losing out. With Scotland not having a direct say in the European constitution, there is a danger that some serious issues of importance to Scotland will be omitted, overlooked or traded away. That is the point that Brian Monteith is making.

**Irene Oldfather:** Will the member give way?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Irene Oldfather has been up and down all morning like a jack-in-the-box. Someone really should put a lid on her.

The extremely important issue of exclusive competence on the common fisheries policy, which, as other members have said, the First Minister told John Swinney that he had asked the UK Government to oppose, would exacerbate the current ridiculous situation that results in land-locked member states of the EU having more say than this chamber has over the future of Scotland's fishing industry. Elliot Morley, the UK fisheries minister, says that he knows nothing about the Scottish Executive's objections or concerns. There is something fishy here and I can assure the chamber that we have not heard the last of this one.

I am surprised, given the constituency that he represents, that Tavish Scott's view of the fishing industry is that everything is just fine and dandy and that fishing communities have scored great victories. Frankly, that is Alice in wonderland territory and I am surprised to hear that from him.

The SNP has consistently argued that major constitutional changes should be put to the people in a referendum for approval. In Scotland, the people are sovereign—not the Crown or the Parliament. Therefore, it is the Scottish people's sovereign rights that are being pooled with those of other member states. That cannot and should not be done without the Scottish people's explicit and specific endorsement.

On the euro, Britain and Scotland are, again, being left at the starting post because of our reluctance to join with others. The SNP has put the case that the five tests should be considered individually for each of the nations and regions

within the UK. That is because Scotland has distinctive economic conditions that require an equally distinctive assessment of the five tests. When we talk comparatively about the economy and growth rates throughout Europe in European debates, it is significant that the Tories choose to ignore the virtually zero growth rate of the Scottish economy.

An independent Scotland would benefit from being in the euro zone. There would be lower interest rates, a stable exchange rate, control of tax—which we do not have at the moment—and control of borrowing. Scotland is being hamstrung by the application of five highly political and vague tests that are meaningless in the context of the Scottish economy and where it needs to go.

A lot is happening out there in the big wide world and Scotland needs to grow up, get out there and be part of it. We are not a region; we are a nation and we need the full economic powers of independence to be able to compete properly in Europe and have the competitive edge that our economy needs to survive and thrive. We are not too wee or poor and, despite some of the evidence to the contrary that is offered up frequently from members in other parts of the chamber, we are not too stupid. Small countries in Europe are successful. An independent Scotland would be following a model that is becoming the norm within the EU. However, all the small countries that are coming in would no doubt be characterised by Tavish Scott as inward looking and living in the past. That would be news to Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Estonia, Slovakia and all the rest. The economies of small EU countries, which are our closest economic competitors, have grown at five times the rate of growth in Scotland. That is the model that the SNP wants Scotland to follow.

All the small countries to which I referred have a guaranteed seat at the top table, permanent representation in the Council of Ministers and the right to nominate a commissioner. They also have, per head, considerably more members in the European Parliament than Scotland has. Colleagues of many of the members opposite are extremely exercised by the Boundary Commission for Scotland review that is slashing the number of Westminster parliamentary seats in Scotland to ensure a so-called fairer reflection of our per capita entitlement within the UK. However, I would happily get rid of the lot and take instead our fair entitlement to representation within Europe. The time has come to cut the connection with Westminster—which is a ball and chain, not an umbilical cord—and speak for ourselves in Europe. It is time for independence.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There being no business motion to discuss, I suspend this meeting of the Parliament until 2.30 pm.

12:38

*Meeting suspended until 14:30.*

14:30

*On resuming—*

## Point of Order

**Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. You will recall that yesterday afternoon I raised the question of the inquiry into the Holyrood building project and I tried to amend parliamentary business so that a statement from you and the First Minister could be accommodated. In opposing the amendment to the motion, the Minister for Parliamentary Business suggested that First Minister's question time would be the appropriate vehicle for such statements. She said:

"I suggest that First Minister's question time is the correct vehicle for that."—[*Official Report*, 11 June 2003; c 563.]

The early edition of today's *Edinburgh Evening News*—under the front-page headline "Jack Unveils Parly Inquiry"—goes into specific detail about what is likely to be announced. I understand that some documentation is likely to be issued, but either the journalist is showing an extremely vivid imagination or some information has been leaked from the First Minister's office. If the information in the article proves to be reasonably accurate, I ask you to pursue the matter with the First Minister, as that would seem to be an insult to the Parliament.

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** There has been a great deal of speculation in the press over the past weeks and some of it has not been particularly well informed on the subject of Holyrood. We do not know what the First Minister will say, so I suggest that we listen to him later today. After that, I can make the comparison and decide whether there has been a case of vivid imagination.



## Question Time

### SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

#### Doctors (Working Hours)

**1. Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what problems it has identified regarding the provision of hospital care services as a consequence of the reduction in junior doctors' hours to 56 and what further reductions in doctors' hours are planned. (S2O-158)

**The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm):** Meeting the requirements of the new deal for junior doctors has proved to be a challenge for the service, particularly in some specialties. The new deal implementation support group is working with trusts to provide assistance and guidance in that area. Junior doctors are currently excluded from the working time regulations but, from August 2004, junior doctors' working hours will be progressively reduced to a maximum of 48 hours a week.

**Phil Gallie:** What interest has been taken in the training of junior doctors? What effect will the reduction in hours have and how will services be affected? For example, it is thought that a children's ward in Ayr hospital will have to be closed because it will not have sufficient facilities for the training of junior doctors given the change to their hours. Will that situation spread across Scotland or is it unique to Ayr?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** Many issues arise from the implementation of the working time directive, in relation not just to doctors but to other health care staff. We have known about the situation since 1992. It is unfortunate that we made so little progress in the 1990s, but we are catching up and most people believe it a good thing that doctors should not have to work excessive hours.

On the specific question about Ayr hospital, I am aware that there is public engagement with Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board. I pay tribute to the board, because it is not going for the traditional end-stage consultation; it is engaging with the public in a new way at an early stage, in accordance with the Executive's new guidance. That is the correct way of dealing with such complex issues. The board has not made any decisions yet.

**Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP):** Does the minister accept that many trusts are continuing to fail to make junior doctors' posts compliant with the 56-hour rule? That failure puts patient care and safety at risk. Will he state today whether the 50 per cent of newly qualified junior doctors' posts

that are still non-compliant with the 56-hour rule will be compliant by the August deadline? How will he achieve that in 10 weeks?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** The posts will not be completely compliant by August. However, the figure to which the member refers is from a few months ago and there has been a great deal of progress since then. We are taking a partnership approach towards the issue and are working closely with the junior doctors committee, which was recently involved in a big event in Edinburgh to drive the matter forward. The issue is complex; it involves service redesign and doing things differently. We are getting there but, as I said, progress was slow in the 1990s. We are catching up but, as my answer indicated, it may take several years to get to the full 48-hour limit.

**Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab):** Does the minister accept that the implementation of the European working time directive, the reduction in junior doctors' hours and the training regime for junior doctors are having a serious and detrimental impact on patient access in my constituency of Greenock and Inverclyde and throughout Scotland? When can we expect a co-ordinated approach from him to that problem in favour of patients?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** There is a co-ordinated approach. There is no simple solution. We have been introducing 375 extra junior doctors and that process continues this year. That is part of the solution. We are also in the process of expanding the consultant work force in an unprecedented way. In the partnership agreement, we have set a target of 600—more consultant-delivered care is also part of the solution. The third vital strand is the redesign of services, but that will be done in accordance with the principles of quality and patient safety. Those are the key criteria that will be applied, but we cannot avoid the European working time directive. Ultimately, it is in the interest of patients for junior doctors to work reasonable hours.

#### Combat Stress

**2. Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive what support it is giving to the organisation Combat Stress. (S2O-147)

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe):** During the financial year 2002-03, the Executive paid £740,000 for nursing care provided to war pensioners in Hollybush House in Ayr, which is run by the charity Combat Stress. I am not aware of any recent application from that charity for grant funding.

**Mr Ingram:** I thank the minister for that answer,

but I am sure that he will remember the fine words that the First Minister and others expressed in the chamber about the need to support our troops during the recent conflict in Iraq. Does he agree that our servicemen and women who come back from such conflicts psychologically damaged are even more deserving of our support in the form of treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder as and when it is required? Why is it that, in this country, unlike in Australia or the United States of America, it is left to charities such as Combat Stress to pick up the main burden of that task? Some 32 per cent of the clients of Combat Stress receive no financial support whatever from the Government.

**Mr McCabe:** The original question was about the treatment supplied to war pensioners in the facility that was mentioned. I explained to the member that the national health service fully reimbursed the cost of the nursing care that was provided. I fully support the words of the First Minister that our troops should receive the highest-quality medical care after combat experience, whenever it is required. I am sure that the national health service will do all that it can to ensure that that is a reality. As the member will know, particular emphasis is placed on war pensioners. When they need national health service treatment, they are fast-tracked through the system to ensure that their treatment is appropriate and speedy.

### **Radiographers and Oncologists (Recruitment and Retention)**

**3. Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to increase the recruitment and retention of radiographers and oncologists in the Greater Glasgow NHS Board area. (S2O-189)

**The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm):** The Scottish Executive is taking positive action to recruit and retain radiographers and oncologists in the Greater Glasgow NHS Board area, including providing significant extra resources and pursuing a targeted recruitment drive for the Beatson oncology centre. On top of that, the Executive is implementing a range of recruitment and retention initiatives, including various courses and incentive schemes for all national health service staff.

**Robert Brown:** I accept that there is an international dimension to the problem but, as there is a worldwide shortage of oncologists and radiologists, can the minister confirm that there are adequate training places in universities and training centres for the recruitment of new people to those specialties? Does he expect to be able to overcome the shortages in the near future, particularly at the Beatson, where I believe there are six oncology shortages?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I am sure that I speak for

all members in welcoming Professor Rodger to his post as the medical director of the Beatson from last week. Professor Rodger discussed the issue in question in his first week. Many staff have been recruited at the Beatson and a significant number of therapy radiographers have applied for and got jobs there. There is great progress in that area.

Robert Brown referred to oncologists and particularly clinical oncologists. We know that there is an international problem in that respect. I am pleased that over the past two or three years in Scotland we have increased the number of specialist registrars, who are the health professionals who will become consultants in due course. Robert Brown will have heard Alan Rodger speak with confidence about attracting applicants for some of the clinical oncologist posts that are currently being advertised at the Beatson.

**Dr Jean Turner (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind):** As there is a world shortage of oncologists and as we perhaps cannot compete with salary payments, I suggest to the minister that we might give oncologists an inducement. As the national health service sells off most of its land for building houses, perhaps we could do a deal with the builders, keep some houses and offer lovely homes to go along with the jobs—we have a lovely country. If that is not possible, we might remember that, many years ago, banks gave their staff cheap mortgages. Perhaps we could extend such a scheme to nurses and other members of the NHS. However, lovely houses with jobs for people from abroad would be perfect.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** Many factors will help to attract consultants to Glasgow, one of which is the splendid new Beatson that will be built very soon. The £700 million capital investment in the health service in Glasgow will also attract people. I regret that, in all Jean Turner's excursions into the territory, she has not noticed that the sale of land is helping to pay for £700 million of investment in Glasgow's health service.

We are making positive progress on consultants' contracts in Scotland. Jean Turner will know that such progress has not happened in England. If we continue to negotiate in the final stages—which I believe we will do—the Scottish health service will have significant inducements and advantages.

### **Sport in Schools**

**4. Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to promote sport in schools. (S2O-187)

**The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mr Frank McAveety):** Through the Scottish budget for 2003-06, which was published earlier this year, the Executive announced the investment of £24 million in the development of the active

primary schools programme and the school sports development officer programme.

**Cathie Craigie:** I welcome that investment. However, will the minister give support to the many volunteers who back up what is happening in schools by giving their time and energy to participate in sporting activities outwith school hours—at weekends, for example? In some areas, education facilities are willingly made available to organisations, but that is not the practice in all education authority areas. How will the minister encourage sporting facilities that are owned by education authorities—and therefore by the public—to be made more readily available for voluntary use?

**Mr McAveety:** One of the key elements in the programmes is the development to link in with local community sports clubs. Through the provision of the £24 million, we wish to see a willingness to engage with local communities and particularly the many thousands of volunteers who have held together many sports clubs throughout Scotland. The sportscotland commitment on the design framework for new schools takes into account sporting facilities. Through a combination of new resources, partnership at a local level and a broader framework, we confidently believe that we can make a difference in respect of many matters that the member has raised.

### Men's Health Week

**5. Mr Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it is supporting men's health week from 9 June to 15 June 2003. (S2O-183)

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe):** The Scottish Executive is happy to support men's health week as part of the drive to improve the health of the nation as a whole. The Scottish Executive has been funding Men's Health Forum Scotland for three years. That organisation promotes and co-ordinates activities and events throughout Scotland in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, not only in men's health week, but throughout the year.

**Mr Baker:** Will the minister join me in welcoming men's health week, especially as statistics show that, on average, men die five years earlier than women? The gap is wider for men from lower-income backgrounds. How is the Executive addressing men's health issues in the light of that situation?

**Mr McCabe:** I am happy to join Richard Baker in welcoming men's health week and congratulate him on bringing the issue to the chamber. I am equally happy to restate the Executive's determination to close the health inequalities gap

and to ensure that men are aware of the behavioural and lifestyle choices that pose so much danger. The Executive is providing £60,000 a year to the Men's Health Forum over a three-year period. We are working with the forum to ensure that men's health issues are integral to health policy developments. Our involving people team wants to obtain men's views in the wider service redesign debate and is working to create a more gender-responsive service.

Examples of activities during men's health week include a free men's health MOT at Rutherglen primary care centre and the provision by Blantyre health partnership of free diabetes checks at Hamilton racecourse and Asda supermarkets. The Western Isles health promotion department is targeting workplaces, placing information on national health service pay slips and broadcasting men's health discussion topics on Isles FM.

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** I call David Davidson.

**Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con):** Thank you, Deputy Presiding Officer. I apologise, Presiding Officer—I forget that you have been promoted. I must catch up.

Does the minister agree that one of the best ways of improving men's health in the community is to free general practitioners from the restrictions imposed on them by the Scottish Executive and to leave them to decide how best to deliver men's health?

**Mr McCabe:** One of the best ways of improving men's health is for us to sign up fully to a health promotion agenda across Scotland. That agenda must show awareness of a variety of lifestyles and behavioural choices that impact negatively on men's health and on health in general. Irrespective of our political perspective, we should all be determined to bring down the terrible statistics that for far too long have impacted on health in general in Scotland and, more specifically, on men.

**Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** Does the minister agree that the issue is not just about lifestyle and behavioural choices, but is linked to the fact that men are far more reluctant than women to approach or consult their GPs? When it comes to the diagnosis of cancer, that can lead to premature death and an inability to treat the cancer in time.

**Mr McCabe:** I concur completely with the member's views. There is evidence that men are far more reluctant to present to their GPs and that, when they present, their condition is more advanced than is desirable. A large part of our health promotion and health awareness agenda is about convincing men that there are no macho issues involved and that it is in their interests to present as early as possible. If they do, they will

enjoy a better life journey and a far better quality of life.

### Scottish Agricultural College

**6. Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will advise the Scottish Agricultural College to publish in full the Deloitte & Touche report on the college and the farm appraisal options for the farm at the Craibstone campus. (S2O-142)

**The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Allan Wilson):** The Scottish Agricultural College has already made public the main Deloitte & Touche report, which contains all the salient information from the option appraisal. The report to the college is supported by a volume of more detailed information. The Scottish Agricultural College is of the view that, for reasons of confidentiality, it would be inappropriate to publish that volume. The college holds the same view of the option appraisal of its farm facilities at Craibstone.

**Brian Adam:** I am rather disappointed with the answer that the minister has given, especially in the light of comments that he and his colleagues have made in the past. It is true that some of the Deloitte & Touche report has been published, but it is not true to say that all the salient points are in the public domain. I question the objectivity and independence of both that report and the totally separate report on the farm option appraisal for Craibstone. I seek the minister's help in putting those matters into the public domain for reasons of openness, transparency and accountability and to assist the parliamentary inquiry that is under way. Will the minister assure me that he will reconsider his previous answer and encourage the authorities to publish both reports in full?

**Allan Wilson:** I think that we might be talking at cross-purposes to some extent, but I will try to deal with the point. Executive officials have seen volume 2 of the report, which, in our opinion, supports phase 2 in volume 1 of the report. I do not believe there to be a conspiracy of silence in that regard.

We have no power to direct the SAC, which Mr Adam would have understood if he had listened to my previous response. However, as I am always ready to assist the Opposition, I state that I would welcome the publication of the volume in question and, today, I invite the SAC to publish it, save for any confidential material that it might contain.

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** Does the minister agree that Scotland needs a national centre for land-based education and research and that the SAC's preferred option—a hub-and-satellite model—will create a national centre while maintaining a local specialism in Aberdeen and

Ayrshire? Can the minister confirm that, as the SAC is a private company limited by guarantee, the final decision on the future of the college will be made by the board of directors?

**Allan Wilson:** The answer to the last question is yes. However, for the public record, I will state that ministers should have considerable influence in that decision as a result of the significant public funding that goes into the SAC. We need to ensure that we receive best value for that funding, so I am firmly of the opinion that ministers need to be satisfied that any reconfiguration is in the taxpayers' best interests. On the first part of the question, the partnership agreement provides, in the longer term, for the examination of the case for the development of a rural development institute. We will take that forward in accordance with the agreement.

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** Will the minister go further and accept that it is essential that, now that the Environment and Rural Development Committee has decided to invite representatives of the SAC to give evidence on 25 June, all information pertaining to the matter is made available to the committee so that the issues can be fully discussed in public with all the facts to hand?

**Allan Wilson:** No. It would be inappropriate of me to pre-empt the parliamentary inquiry that is under way. The members conducting the inquiry can request whatever information they feel is necessary for them to reach a satisfactory conclusion. That might include some of the information to which Alex Johnstone referred.

### M74 (Northern Extension)

**7. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Executive how many objections were received in the recent consultation on the M74 northern extension. (S2O-168)

**The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen):** A total of 379 objections were received.

**Patrick Harvie:** On what criteria would the minister base a decision to approve the setting up of a local public inquiry on the M74? What impact would there be on public confidence in the Scottish Executive's role in the planning process if, just six weeks after an election in which the share of the vote of the parties that campaigned hard against the M74 extension increased while every other party did badly in Glasgow, a decision were made not to allow a local public inquiry into Britain's biggest motorway project?

**Nicol Stephen:** I will base my decision whether to have a local public inquiry on the normal criteria. I will be given advice by civil servants following their examination of all the objections. That will be done in the proper and objective way.

I hope that I will make my decision on the issue very soon after the receipt of that advice.

**Janis Hughes (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab):** I represent a constituency that will be affected by the M74 and did not too badly in the election, despite the fact that I support the northern extension.

Does the minister agree that the comments made by the Scottish Green Party during the election on the environmental effects of the extension are not lost on my constituents in Rutherglen and Cambuslang, who will benefit from the reduction in traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles, in the main streets of the area as that will lead to improved air quality in our town centres?

**Nicol Stephen:** I agree. The M74 project will have positive environmental benefits. It will reduce congestion and delays, and improve air quality in the local communities. A good example of that, as the local member pointed out, will be the traffic reduction in communities along and close to the route. For example, it is estimated that traffic will be down by 15 per cent in Rutherglen Main Street and by around 13 per cent in Calder Street. Those will be significant improvements. The M74 project is worth while on a number of fronts.

**Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP):** Does the minister agree that 110,000 car journeys per day through urban Glasgow will be detrimental to the people who live along the route of the extension and, indeed, to the rest of the planet?

**Nicol Stephen:** The impact of the scheme is relatively neutral in terms of the total number of traffic journeys. There will be important benefits from improving the present situation in the south side of Glasgow, where there is significant traffic congestion. I believe that the scheme will also help to regenerate the south side of Glasgow and bring new jobs to the area. That is an important benefit that everyone in the chamber should welcome.

#### **Genetic Modification (National Public Debate)**

**8. Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Executive how the genetic modification national public debate is being conducted in Scotland and what role the Executive is playing in that debate. (S2O-169)

**The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Allan Wilson):** The public debate is being managed at arm's length from Government by an independent steering board. It is for the steering board to run the debate as it sees fit to ensure a credible and wide-ranging dialogue with the Scottish public. The first event in Scotland took place in Glasgow yesterday. Local events are expected to follow throughout Scotland.

**Mr Ruskell:** I thank the minister for his answer. I noted with interest that *The Scotsman* today quoted Ross Finnie as saying:

"I'm wholly opposed to any conclusions being arrived at before the results of the GM trials are known."

Given that statement, will the Executive give the public an opportunity to debate GM after the trials' results are known?

**Allan Wilson:** I saw that quote and I noted that Mr Ruskell was quoted extensively in the same report. I am not sure whether the quote from Ross Finnie is accurate. The farm-scale evaluations are assessing the impact on biodiversity of herbicide-tolerant crops. The debate is obviously intended to cover much more than that because it will deal with broader GM issues. I assure Mr Ruskell that there will be an opportunity for the public and environmental groups to comment on the farm-scale evaluation results.

**Mr Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Can the minister tell us whether Mr Finnie, when he was in Brussels recently, took the chance to speak to the Belgian environment minister, who has banned GM field trials in his country? That is unlike Mr Finnie, who continues to ignore the concerns of two parliamentary committees and the views that the Scottish public have overwhelmingly expressed against GM planting.

**Allan Wilson:** I have not had the opportunity to discuss that particular matter with Mr Finnie, because he is in Luxembourg. Of course, Belgium is bound by exactly the same European directive as the UK is. Evidence of potential harm is required to support any decision to halt the release of a GM plant. It is erroneous to suggest, as Mr Gibson did, that there is somehow a moratorium on GM releases in Belgium. There is not.

#### **North-east Fife Fishing Industry (Financial Aid)**

**9. Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what intermediate and long-term financial aid it plans to make available to assist with the current situation in the fishing industry in north-east Fife. (S2O-152)

**The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Allan Wilson):** Ross Finnie announced a £50 million restructuring support package for the industry earlier in the year. That is in addition to funding available under the 2000-2006 financial instrument for fisheries guidance programme.

More generally, the enterprise network has in place a range of initiatives to stimulate business growth and more employment. With Fife Council, Scottish Enterprise Fife has commissioned a survey of local companies to assess the economic impact of recent changes to European Union

fishing regulations. That report will form the basis of a co-ordinated response from the council and the local enterprise company to the difficulties facing local industry.

**Mr Brocklebank:** Is the minister aware that the fishing community of Pittenweem is particularly disadvantaged, even compared with the other fishing communities round the coast of Scotland? We opened a new fish market a decade or so ago; it has no fish to sell. We have an ice factory that operates on a care and maintenance basis. The number of fishing boats has dropped by something like 70 per cent over the past 25 years. Is he able to say anything to the prawn fishers of Pittenweem and places round the rest of the coast to assure them that, when the vaunted aid package finally arrives, it will go not only to the white-fish fishermen, but to the nephrops fishermen?

**Allan Wilson:** There are a lot of issues in that question. I undertake to develop some of them with Mr Brocklebank in the fullness of time, as we are doing with the constituency member, Iain Smith. I understand the frustration that exists about the delay in aid payments, but the Executive cannot act without European Union state aid approval. I understand that the European Commission has just approved our decommissioning proposals. However, we await the formal decision, and we need to ensure that that decision has been taken before we can take forward work on the transitional aid programme. I undertake to work with members along those lines.

**Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD):** The minister will be aware that I have, on a number of occasions, raised the problems that face the nephrops fishermen of Pittenweem and north-east Fife because of the impact of the white-fish regulations on the prawn catch. The price of prawns has fallen significantly and the income to the industry has fallen by more than 40 per cent this year to date. Will the minister assure me that he will consider different ways of providing support to the industry in north-east Fife, including support for research on and development of alternative fisheries, for example, the sprat fishery in the Firth of Forth? Will he also ensure that the Executive considers other sources—for example, the Scottish Co-operative Development Agency—to assist the fishing co-operative in Pittenweem?

**Allan Wilson:** I would put the drop in the price of prawns down to oversupply in the market, poor European markets and, possibly, a very good prawn catch in the Western Isles. I undertake to work with Iain Smith along those lines to ensure that appropriate research opportunities that might help to spread the pain, so to speak, are entered into.

## visitscotland.com

**10. David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it is satisfied with the effectiveness of visitscotland.com. (S2O-134)

**The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mr Frank McAveety):** Operational matters are obviously the responsibility of visitscotland.com. However, we believe that that organisation's role is to play a significant role in developing the Scottish tourism market to ensure that all businesses within the Scottish tourism sector get maximum opportunity through the development of the strategy that we have put forward through visitscotland.com.

**David Mundell:** Will the minister undertake to take up with VisitScotland and the operators of visitscotland.com the concerns of small tourism operators about the barriers that they perceive are being put in place to tourists being able to contact them directly through the visitscotland.com website? At the moment, there are many barriers to accessing a number of accommodation providers directly and tourists have to go through the call centre.

**Mr McAveety:** I have already paid a visit to visitscotland.com this week, and I raised that question with the organisation. It is willing to deal with providers and all within the sector to try to address those concerns. The opportunity of a visit is also being extended to David Mundell, if he wishes to take the offer up. I hope that he gets the e-mail, if he has not already received the three that I understand he has already received.

On the broader issue, we want to work with those in the industry to ensure that we maximise the opportunity for profiling the opportunities that exist in Scottish tourism. If we grow it together, everyone can be a beneficiary. If practical issues need to be overcome, we will endeavour to do that.

I hope that Mr Mundell will be able to take up the kind offer.

**Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP):** Does the minister acknowledge that disenchantment with visitscotland.com increases rather than decreases as the months go by? Is one of the problems not that it has two conflicting objectives: to sell Scotland to the world and to make money for SchlumbergerSema? Is that not exemplified by the fact that a 10 per cent per day booking charge is levied on all guesthouse and hotel owners? Is that charge not excessive?

**Mr McAveety:** The charge is the best that is available in the United Kingdom, if not Europe. In fact, at a basic minimum, market competitors operate at 15 per cent commission. Some, such

as lastminute.com, operate at between 25 per cent and 30 per cent commission. Therefore, it is not necessarily excessive.

The industry has engaged in partnership and, by focusing on the joint strategy of improving opportunities and investment in Scottish tourism, so that we gain a growing market share in world tourism, we can make a genuine difference. If one of the partners benefits from that, that is a by-product, but the central issue is to ensure that we increase the range and quality of products in Scottish tourism, so that we can market them internationally. Areas such as the South of Scotland, which Alasdair Morgan represents, as well as other parts of Scotland, will benefit from that growth agenda.

### Schools (Indiscipline)

#### 11. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians)

**(Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what its policy is with regard to indiscipline in schools. (S2O-145)

#### The Minister for Education and Young People

**(Peter Peacock):** We are working with schools and local authorities to address discipline problems and to implement the recommendations of the discipline task group's report

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Is the minister aware that David Eaglesham, general secretary of the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association, said earlier this year:

"There is still pressure on schools not to use exclusions. That is wrong"?

In light of that statement, would the minister not agree that Scotland's teachers deserve to be more strongly supported?

**Peter Peacock:** I wish to make it clear that we take discipline problems in schools extremely seriously. That is in stark contrast with the time when Lord James Douglas-Hamilton was himself an education minister in the Scottish Office. The complacency on the Tory benches—

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** That is ridiculous.

**Peter Peacock:** The Tories refused to collect the statistics that would have revealed the problem. We are not taking that line. We are prepared to collect statistics about difficult situations in schools precisely to allow us to take the action that the Tories failed to take when they were in government.

To deal with Lord James's specific point, I have made it clear to him—not least in the chamber, a week ago—that we will never second-guess a head teacher about the difficult decisions that they have to take in individual discipline situations in schools.

**Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** Does the minister agree that there are some excellent examples of alternatives to excluding disruptive pupils, such as the Schoolhouse at Dumfries High School, to which I referred during the debate on young people last week? Will he consider ways in which such excellent projects can continue once funding for fixed-term alternatives to exclusion ceases?

**Peter Peacock:** Elaine Murray makes a very good point, which picks up on the point that I was making to Lord James Douglas-Hamilton. One of the reasons why we collect data on difficult situations in schools is so that we can understand the problems more fully and then take the necessary action. The pupil support bases, behavioural support teachers, learning support teachers and the various actions that are now being taken to address problems in schools, to which Elaine Murray has alluded, are very much making an impact on individual schools and pupils, and we want them to be rolled out across Scotland to ensure that every school is following the best practice that exists.

### Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning

#### 12. Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and

**Lochaber) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive how many deaths have been caused since 1999 by (a) lung cancer, (b) road traffic incidents and (c) amnesic shellfish poisoning. (S2O-138)

#### The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe):

Tragically, during the period 1999-2000, 15,850 deaths were recorded from lung cancer; 1,287 were recorded as the result of road traffic accidents; and no deaths were recorded as a result of amnesic shellfish poisoning.

**Fergus Ewing:** We are all aware of the essential need to protect public health. Those statistics show that there is no real risk of death from amnesic shellfish poisoning. There is certainly no case for the even tighter testing regime that is being proposed. Does the minister agree that the view of the scallop fishing industry is that it would have no future if we were to adopt a new, tighter testing regime, and that we would lose a proud, sustainable and successful Scottish industry for no good reason?

**Mr McCabe:** The statistics do not show that. I think that everyone in the chamber would agree with me and would struggle to see the relevance of an analogy between deaths from lung cancer and deaths from amnesic shellfish poisoning. I only wish that we had been blessed with the foresight and the science that would have given us the same success in preventing deaths from lung cancer that we have had in preventing deaths from amnesic shellfish poisoning.

## First Minister's Question Time

15:09

### Prime Minister (Meetings)

#### 1. Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):

To ask the First Minister when he next plans to meet the Prime Minister and what issues he intends to discuss. (S2F-67)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** I spoke to the Prime Minister earlier today and we speak regularly on matters of importance to Scotland.

**Mr Swinney:** Earlier this afternoon, the First Minister wrote to the Presiding Officer—I assume that that is now a matter of public record—to establish an inquiry into the Holyrood Parliament building project. In that letter the First Minister said:

“Nothing less than an independent investigation, with full access to the facts will suffice.”

I very much welcome that remark. Will the inquiry that he has established jointly with the Presiding Officer have the power to compel ministers who were involved in decisions between 1997 and 1999 to give evidence? Will it have the power to secure access to all the relevant Cabinet and other Government papers from that time and will it be held in public?

**The First Minister:** For the information of the members who have not yet seen the letter, I clarify that I have written to the Presiding Officer outlining that Lord Fraser of Carmyllie has agreed to head up the independent investigation into the cost of the Holyrood building project. I have said consistently for a number of weeks that this complex situation requires serious thought and preparation. I believe that Lord Fraser is an independent, objective person with a reputation that commands respect from across the political spectrum and throughout Scotland and that he is the right and proper person to head up the inquiry. I hope that he will be assisted in that by the Auditor General for Scotland, who has clear responsibilities to the Parliament and to Scotland in his professional position.

As far as I am concerned, the inquiry should have full access to all the relevant information and I hope that it will also have access to the relevant individuals, although that will not be possible in every case, given the tragic events of the past few years. I certainly intend that Lord Fraser will have available to him any documents, information and advice that he requires relating to the Scottish Executive—or more particularly to the position before 1999. The Auditor General previously had

access to that information in the investigation that he carried out, which is why I think that his involvement is a good thing. I hope that, as a result, Lord Fraser will conduct a full and proper investigation that will make public all the evidence, all the information and all the key recommendations to stop such a fiasco ever happening again.

**Mr Swinney:** I thank the First Minister for his answer, but I want to press him for more specific detail on what he is proposing. Has he secured from the Prime Minister a guarantee that the information from the period 1997-99, which is, understandably, the property of the United Kingdom Government, will be available to Lord Fraser of Carmyllie? I noted that the First Minister said that he hoped that that information would be available. Will he confirm that all the information from that critical period 1997-99 that concerns the public will be available to the inquiry and will be made public as well?

**The First Minister:** As I thought I made clear, the Auditor General had access to all that information during his earlier inquiry. He is therefore in an ideal position not only to use the information again as part of the inquiry that Lord Fraser will lead but to make that information available to Lord Fraser if there are no other means by which he can access it.

I have absolutely no doubt that that information could, should and will be available. If that requires me at any time to intervene to talk to anybody, I will do so. I am determined that the investigation into the costs and the delays in the Holyrood building project will be full, open and transparent, that it will get to the bottom of things and that it will get the answers to the questions that the people of Scotland are asking. I am determined that no barriers will be put in the way of Lord Fraser producing a report that can stand the test of time and ensure that what has happened never happens again.

**Mr Swinney:** When the remit for the inquiry is constructed, I am sure that the First Minister's words will be studied very carefully to guarantee that the commitments that have been given to the Parliament today are honoured.

I ask the First Minister for a further commitment. The cost of the Parliament building rose from an original estimate of £40 million to £109 million. The figure rose to £195 million and then to £338 million, and it is now a staggering £375 million. Will the First Minister assure me that he will use all the powers of his office to ensure that not a penny more is spent on the Parliament building project?

**The First Minister:** In private and in public, I have made it clear to the Presiding Officer and, through him, to the Scottish Parliamentary



Corporate Body that they will have my full support in taking as firm a stance as possible to ensure that last week's predicted cost increase, which was discussed in meetings on Tuesday, is not required in full and that any further increases are avoided, if at all possible. It is ridiculous that, within weeks of the start of the Parliament's second session, we find ourselves discussing even the possibility of a further cost increase, given that, as recently as a few weeks before that, we all received assurances that there would be no such further increase.

It is time that the matter was dealt with firmly and properly. This week, the Presiding Officer has done that exceptionally well. He will have my full support for the actions that he has already taken and for any further actions that he wishes to take on the matter.

### **Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)**

#### **2. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands)**

**(Con):** To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland—assuming that there still is one—and what issues he intends to discuss. (S2F-66)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** I intend to speak with the Secretary of State for Scotland later this afternoon.

**David McLetchie:** That might be a last supper or a last conversation.

At their next meeting, I hope that the First Minister will discuss the proposed inquiry that Lord Fraser will conduct, to which Mr Swinney alluded. Some weeks ago, at the height of the election campaign, the First Minister said that there needed to be a full public investigation. Will he advise us whether he had the Secretary of State for Scotland's support for making that statement? He made references to the Auditor General's previous investigation into Holyrood but, as far as I am aware, that investigation did not include the questioning of the principals involved. If the powers of the proposed inquiry rely on what was available to the Auditor General, I assume that that will not be sufficient to do the job without the active co-operation of the individuals who were involved between 1997 and 1999. I invite the First Minister to comment on that.

**The First Minister:** Obviously, I did not discuss that matter with the secretary of state. It is right that such an initiative is a matter for the First Minister, the Executive and the Scottish Parliament. It will also be important to discuss with Lord Fraser the exact terms of reference relating to the conduct of his investigation. That is necessary not only to pay proper respect to Lord Fraser, but to ensure that the terms of reference are as complete as possible. We will ensure that

he is involved in such discussion in the next week. That is why, in my letter, I offer to make a full statement to Parliament before the end of June.

Lord Fraser will want to consider how best to conduct the investigation. That should involve the questioning—others may prefer to use the word “grilling”—of key people who have been involved during the past four to six years. Lord Fraser will have that opportunity and I am sure that he will want to take it up. If he requires any assistance from me in that task, he will receive it.

**David McLetchie:** The First Minister will acknowledge that people in Scotland expect a full and independent inquiry. Anything less than that will be seen as a whitewash and will not command public confidence.

The First Minister said that he would discuss the terms of the remit with Lord Fraser, but I was concerned to note that the First Minister's letter to the Presiding Officer states:

“A detailed remit for the investigation should be agreed between ourselves, Lord Fraser, and the Auditor General before the end of June.”

I suggest to the First Minister that, in that group that will determine the remit and powers of the inquiry, the one important party that is conspicuous by its absence is the Scotland Office on behalf of Her Majesty's Government.

The inquiry must be able to cover the period prior to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Executive. Does the First Minister agree that, if the inquiry is to be comprehensive, if witnesses are to be compellable, and if all the relevant information is to be available, the Scotland Office should be a party to the discussions that determine the powers and remit of the inquiry?

**The First Minister:** It would have been interesting to see what the response would have been if the letter had said that we intended to agree the terms of reference of the investigation with the Scotland Office. Presumably, Mr McLetchie would have accused me of being under the thumb of the Scotland Office and of allowing the Scotland Office a veto over the terms of reference.

**David McLetchie:** The nationalists might have done so, but the Tories would not.

**The First Minister:** Perhaps both those parties would have done so.

It is important that the inquiry's terms of reference are properly agreed with Lord Fraser, with the active involvement of both the Presiding Officer and the Auditor General, given their important roles in the matter. As Mr McLetchie is aware, I believe that it is important that I discuss

the matter with all the party leaders in advance of any final decisions. I also intend to ensure that the conveners of the Finance Committee and the Holyrood progress group are kept fully informed. Having made the matter clear to Parliament, I would also wish to ensure that the Scotland Office has a chance to discuss the matter with me over the next week.

I have no intention of giving anybody a veto over the inquiry. I want to agree proper terms of reference so that the inquiry can get to the bottom of this story, provide the answers that the people of Scotland desire and ensure that this never happens again.

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** I ask that the next three questions and answers be kept tight so that we can revisit the Holyrood issue under question 5.

**Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD):** In the light of recent reports that the UK Department of Transport and the Strategic Rail Authority may consider the closure of rural lines, and in the light of the remark by the rail minister, David Jamieson, that no branch line could be considered sacrosanct, will the First Minister make it clear to Westminster colleagues that the Scottish Executive is committed to, and expects to be supported in, maintaining and extending Scotland's current rail network?

**The First Minister:** As we are about to hear in this afternoon's transport debate—which some members did not want to have—the Scottish Executive is very committed not only to not closing lines in Scotland but to opening new lines or reopening old ones. People are looking forward to that investment in communities across Scotland, not least in the Stirling to Dunfermline area, in the Airdrie to Bathgate area in central Scotland, and in the Larkhall to Glasgow area, as well as in other parts of Scotland that are referred to in the partnership agreement and in our other plans. Our objective is to expand rail services in Scotland; it is certainly not to decrease them.

### European Single Currency (Preparation)

**3. Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what action has been taken to assist the preparedness of public and private sector organisations in Scotland for adoption of the European single currency. (S2F-79)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** Where there are practical benefits, we already encourage public bodies to use and accept euros—I believe that some taxi drivers in Edinburgh currently accept euros, and that is certainly to be welcomed. More generally, as part of preparations for the possible UK adoption of the

euro, we have a Scottish changeover plan, which feeds into the UK plan. Both the Deputy First Minister and I plan to participate in the Scottish preparation committee that was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Monday.

**Irene Oldfather:** Will the First Minister join me in commending the work that has been undertaken by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to raise awareness of forward planning? Is the First Minister aware that it is difficult for business and the public sector to make contingency plans for the euro without a definite Government commitment? Will the First Minister work with those local authorities and businesses that are keen to prepare to ensure that they are not financially disadvantaged in advance of the chancellor's decision next year?

**The First Minister:** We are very keen to work not only with public bodies and businesses in Scotland, but with the voluntary sector and others who will have an interest in this matter. We want to ensure that, right across Scotland, bodies public and private, and individuals and organisations, are ready for the decision when it comes. We firmly believe that, at the right time, the introduction of Scotland and the rest of Britain into the European currency will be the right thing to do—but we must do it at the right time. We must be prepared, when it comes, to take full advantage.

### Scottish Enterprise (New Chief Executive)

**4. Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what arrangements are being put in place to recruit and appoint a new chief executive of Scottish Enterprise. (S2F-65)

**Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab):** Or a new chief executive of the SNP.

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** As I said last week and said again to Robert Crawford personally earlier this week, I want to put on record our thanks—thanks that I am sure will be shared across the chamber—for Robert Crawford's contribution to Scottish Enterprise over the past few years. The decision that he has made will have been difficult for him. Those of us in public life in Scotland will know exactly how he was feeling and will admire him for making the decision in the way that he did.

Responsibility for taking forward the appointment of a new chief executive for Scottish Enterprise lies with the board of Scottish Enterprise. I would, however, expect the new chief executive to take forward our strategy for a smart successful Scotland.

**Alex Neil:** I associate myself and, I think, my whole party with the First Minister's comments about Robert Crawford. Also, for the benefit of Duncan McNeil, I declare that I have no interest to declare in the matter.

Does the First Minister agree that it is very unfortunate indeed that the perception exists, rightly or wrongly, that the existing chief executive of Scottish Enterprise has been hounded from office by a right-wing campaign to do in Scottish Enterprise? If we are to attract the right kind of talent to regenerate the Scottish economy, no public official should be subjected to the kind of unfair attacks that were made on Robert Crawford. That should not happen to his successor. It creates a bad image for Scotland; it is bad for the economy and bad for the future of our country.

**The First Minister:** I do not intend to speak for Robert Crawford; he is perfectly capable of speaking for himself. He has made his points very clearly this past week. However, there is a degree of cheek around among those who are willing to jump on the bandwagon and try to make some political capital out of Robert Crawford's resignation, but who, at the same time, on the Conservative benches, have spent months campaigning for something like a £200 million cut in his budget. Although I accept that Mr Neil should have no responsibility for—and certainly none of the blame for—the SNP's manifesto for the election back in May, it is the case that other members of the SNP have tried to do the same thing. To campaign for months for a substantial reduction in the training and skills budget of Scottish Enterprise and then to jump on the bandwagon when the chief executive resigns is very false indeed.

We do not support organisations or individuals; we support action for enterprise in Scotland and that is what we are going to deliver.

### Holyrood Building Project

**5. Janis Hughes (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what progress is being made regarding an investigation into the Holyrood building project. (S2F-78)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** The prize for the most unfortunate question slot of the week goes to Janis Hughes.

**Janis Hughes:** Thank you.

**The First Minister:** As I said earlier, I have today written to the Presiding Officer outlining the latest position in relation to the investigation.

**Janis Hughes:** This may be a difficult slot to be in, after what has gone before, but it is an important one.

I am sure that I speak for most if not all of my Labour back-bench colleagues when I express my outrage at the situation that we find ourselves in. We are the people who repeatedly have to answer our constituents when they complain about the seemingly endless costs of the new building.

I welcome the inquiry that the First Minister has announced today, but can he give me a categorical assurance that the inquiry will be swift and—more important—that it will not lead to any further delays in the completion of the project? Will he tell us today that the inquiry will not add in any significant way to the already excessive costs?

**The First Minister:** I am determined, in bringing about this investigation, to do it properly and with due regard to all the current circumstances. That is why it has taken some time to get to where we are today and why it will take another week or so to finalise the plans.

It is critical that any investigation does not lead to a further increase in costs or to delay. Those factors have to be taken on board. It is also very important that any investigation does not become a substantial cost to the public purse in Scotland. The endless Government and parliamentary inquiries that have been held at Westminster have cost an absolute fortune in both time and resources. I do not want to see that situation repeated in Scotland. Enough money has been spent on the project already without making the situation worse.

It is also the case that we need to have a proper investigation in order for us to learn the right lessons. This morning, I was in a brand-new school in Glasgow—All Saint's Secondary School—which was built under the Glasgow public-private partnership. The school, which is an outstanding facility for teachers and pupils alike, is the sort of building that public money in Scotland should be spent on. I am determined that it is that sort of building that will benefit from public money in Scotland in the future.

**Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind):** I thank the First Minister for copying me in on the letter that he wrote to the Presiding Officer, giving me sight of it before question time today.

I seek two points of clarification, the first of which relates to a paragraph in the letter to which the First Minister referred in reply to an earlier question about the committees to which he would make a full report after the meeting that he is to hold with Lord Fraser of Carmyllie and the Presiding Officer. The paragraph says:

"I envisage that the report ... would be submitted to the appropriate Parliament Committee to allow further additional scrutiny at that stage."

I ask the First Minister not to close his mind to establishing a separate, specialised parliamentary committee. Further scrutiny might well be needed and, under the terms of the Scotland Act 1998, such a committee would be able to command evidence. I think that that was the point that was worrying Mr McLetchie.

Secondly, I seek clarification on the position of people who find themselves unable to say all that they know of the project. I refer in particular to past construction managers and project managers such as Bill Armstrong and Alan Ezzi. We need to know that people can blow the whistle on decisions that were taken in the past. We also need to know that people will have an amnesty and that they will be released from some of the promises that they had to make not to speak about contracts.

**The First Minister:** On the first matter, it is important that the Parliament retains responsibility not only for the establishment of committees but for the way in which the committees do their business. An earlier draft of my letter included a reference to the Audit Committee, which would seem to be the obvious committee to look at any report that was prepared. The Audit Committee could also call witnesses in public hearings if that was required. Decisions on the issue of committees are most properly in the domain of the Parliament and not of the First Minister. I will make the report available and the Parliament can decide what to do with it.

On the second matter, I think that it is important that anyone who has any information that could help Lord Fraser or the Auditor General in their investigations is able to give the information freely and openly in a way that does not make them feel concerned about their own position.

I intend to make that point clear inside the civil service. I hope and presume that the Presiding Officer will do the same for Parliament staff. I also hope to discuss with Lord Fraser how we can achieve the same result for others from outwith those two staffs.

**The Presiding Officer:** I shall exceptionally allow a further two questions.

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP):** I want to raise two matters with respect to the First Minister's letter. First, the First Minister states that he has invited the Auditor General to examine issues of financial probity. Is the First Minister concerned that there has been a lack of probity?

Secondly, the First Minister states that people in Scotland rightly expect answers to all their questions. We agree with that, but, as the First Minister is aware, before we can get at the truth, we need to have access to all the information. Up until now, that has been denied on the grounds of commercial confidentiality. Will those documents be made public? If not, the public will never know what happened.

**The First Minister:** As I stated earlier, Lord Fraser will be able to publish all the evidence that he wishes to publish. I hope that he will have full access to all the information; not only to the

information that he wants to see, but to information that members in the chamber want him to see. We will take steps to discuss that matter with him over the next few days.

I stress that I do not want any of the statements in the letter that I submit today to the Presiding Officer to imply a particular perspective on any matter or an acceptance of any accusation. A number of claims and accusations that have been made about the project need to be, and certainly should be, investigated.

The one statement in my letter that is perhaps not objective is that we want to get the matter cleared up once and for all. I am determined to do that, and I hope that this process will lead to that conclusion.

**Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):** The Holyrood building is almost complete and will speak for itself as a

"bold statement of Scotland's standing in the world"—  
[*Official Report*, 3 June 2003; c 319.]

if I can borrow that phrase. Very serious questions need to be answered; however, does the First Minister agree that this is no time to lose our nerve about completing this important building?

Members of the Holyrood progress group will whole-heartedly welcome an objective inquiry into matters such as the construction management contract and the role of the concept architect. We, too, want answers to those questions. However, will the First Minister endorse our determination to get this excellent building finished as soon as possible and to drive down the fees and charges of contractors and consultants as demanded at the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body meeting on Tuesday?

**The First Minister:** Again, I think that I am on record as saying that, now that the Parliament has come this far, it would be ludicrous to leave the building unfinished. However, it is also important to do all that we possibly can to support in any way those who are responsible to ensure that costs are capped wherever possible and controlled as much as possible. That remains my objective and I am sure that it remains the Presiding Officer's objective. He has my full support in achieving that.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes this extended question time—

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Will you make a statement on the costs of this fiasco? The leader of the SNP, John Swinney, referred to a figure of £375 million. The First Minister referred to a cut in costs. Will you tell us and the people of Scotland what the project's cost is that will not rise again? Is it £375 million or more than that?

**The Presiding Officer:** That is not really a point of order. It is transparent that on Tuesday of this week I went with the earliest possible information and I will continue with that practice. I shall continue to make information available as it becomes so.

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. In the light of the decision that was announced by the Fire Brigades Union just over an hour ago to agree a deal on the pay settlement, will you through your good offices ensure that time is made available next Wednesday at the earliest for a ministerial statement on the future of the fire brigade and the outcome of the current dispute?

**The Presiding Officer:** That is of course a matter for the Executive. As of now, I have not received any communication from the Executive on that point. Perhaps you should pursue the matter with the Executive.

Did I understand that there were further points of order? [*Interruption.*] I am sorry, but members who are leaving the chamber should do so. I am taking points of order and must hear them.

**Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. In yesterday's debate on stage 2 amendments to the Education (School Meals) (Scotland) Bill, Tommy Sheridan alleged that, on the issue of swipe cards, I had knowingly picked up Carolyn Leckie's comments wrongly. However, the *Official Report* shows that Carolyn Leckie clearly stated what I said she had. She said:

"A child who is entitled to a free school meal does not get the same portion".—[*Official Report*, 11 June 2003; c 591.]

As a result, I ask Mr Sheridan not only to make an apology but to accept and admit when he is wrong. After all, that is what he told other people to do yesterday.

**The Presiding Officer:** That is not strictly a point of order; it is a clarification of a previous day's debating point. Undoubtedly, the members referred to will take your points on board.

## Public Transport

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-130, in the name of Nicol Stephen, on investing in public transport. Members will appreciate that we are starting 10 minutes late. I would be grateful if all the opening speakers would keep to the advertised time limits and also if members would exercise the same degree of discipline throughout the rest of the debate.

15:40

**The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen):** It is a considerable privilege—and a significant responsibility—to be Scotland's Minister for Transport.

I begin by emphasising the approach that I intend to take. I strongly believe in the importance of working openly and in close consultation with local people and local communities. That open, partnership approach applies equally to business and to environmental groups, as well as to members inside the chamber. Many MSPs have already contacted me about issues of concern to their constituents and I look forward to having regular discussions with MSPs, including the transport spokespersons from all the political parties, as well as to a constructive relationship with the members of the Local Government and Transport Committee.

I pay tribute to my predecessor, Iain Gray, who worked hard to make progress on our transport agenda and was serious about investing in our public transport system. I am certain that everyone in the chamber wishes him well.

Over the next three years, the total share of spending on public transport will increase to nearly 70 per cent of the total transport budget. By 2005-06, that budget will have expanded to £1 billion per year.

Public transport is the focus of today's debate, but I am also determined to deliver vital road projects, particularly where safety or environmental improvements can be achieved. High-quality, safe, reliable and sustainable public transport is crucial when there is congestion on our roads.

The strength of our commitment is now matched by the scale of the major projects that we are determined to deliver. I recently reported to Parliament on the reletting of the ScotRail franchise. As the First Minister made clear this afternoon, we want not only to maintain but to extend existing services.

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP):** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Nicol Stephen:** Thank you, but not at the moment. I have limited time—less than I thought I was to be allocated—so I must make some progress. I will take some interventions later.

More investment is being made in rail. A new rail link to Edinburgh airport, with a target date for completion of 2010, will give direct access not only from the city centre but from Stirling, Fife, Dundee and the north-east, and from Glasgow and Newcastle. A new rail link to Glasgow airport, with a target date for completion of 2008, will give a major boost to business and tourism in Strathclyde. Another project is the reopening of the Airdrie to Bathgate rail line, for which the target date for completion is also 2008.

**Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab):** I am grateful to the minister for his comments on the Airdrie to Bathgate railway line. I appreciate his confirmation, given the comments that were in *The Herald* yesterday. Can he assure me that the reopening of the Airdrie to Bathgate line remains a central plank of the Executive's policy on the provision of public transport in Scotland? Can he confirm that the technical feasibility study is on track to report in the spring of 2004?

**Nicol Stephen:** That is my understanding of the situation. For several projects, the crucial issue is to maintain the momentum and keep the projects on target and on track.

We want to support the construction of the Borders rail line, which will bring significant social and economic benefits to an area that for too long has had too few public transport links.

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** Does the minister agree that the Waverley line will bring social and economic benefits to my constituency as well as to the Borders? Can he reassure my constituents and me that the partnership agreement contains a firm commitment to taking work on that line forward? Will he agree to meet me to discuss transport issues in Midlothian?

**Nicol Stephen:** I am happy to meet Rhona Brankin to discuss that. All that she says is correct.

The target date for completion of the Waverley line is 2008.

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** Will the minister take a brief intervention?

**Nicol Stephen:** I am halfway through the time allocated for my speech and about one tenth of the way through my speaking notes. I must make progress.

The Larkhall to Milngavie line is another line for which we await the outcome of final development

work by Network Rail. We continue to support feasibility studies for the Aberdeen and Glasgow crossrail projects and we are working with the Strategic Rail Authority to redevelop Waverley station, to cope with ever growing demand. I also look forward to new trams running on Edinburgh streets.

Those measures amount to the most significant and ambitious expansion of Scotland's railways for decades. It is crucial not only that we plan for major new investment, but that we give confidence that we will deliver.

The Parliament has before it a bill to re-open the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line, which would reconnect Alloa to the rail network; provide a more efficient route for coal from Ayrshire to Longannet; and benefit the rail network as a whole by taking freight trains away from the Forth bridge, which would pave the way for additional rail services between Fife and Edinburgh. I want not only to support the principles of the project, but to help to develop it. Therefore, I am pleased to announce that the Executive will provide the full £30 million of funding that Clackmannanshire Council seeks for the project, provided of course that the Parliament sees fit to approve the private bill in due course.

**Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP):** I welcome the minister's announcement about the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line, but will he advise members whether a tolling arrangement will be imposed on it?

**Nicol Stephen:** There is no such intention. The line's target date for completion is the winter of 2005-06, so we will make speedy progress.

The bus is the most widely used form of public transport. The historic decline in bus passenger numbers is being reversed, which justifies the scale of our investment in bus services. We invest more than £180 million a year in buses through grant, subsidy and concessionary travel schemes. We will extend free local off-peak travel by introducing a Scotland-wide free bus travel scheme for older people and people with disabilities. We will also progressively introduce a scheme of concessionary travel for young people, starting with those in full-time education and training. We also plan to encourage new bus services by piloting kick-start routes to create better-value and new services.

Our biggest investments over the next few years will be in buses and trains.

**Christine Grahame** rose—

**Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)** rose—

**Nicol Stephen:** I am sorry—I cannot take any further interventions because I am short of time.

The growth in car traffic and congestion threaten not only our economy, but the environment and public health. Global climate change must be addressed now if we are to avoid serious difficulties in future decades. We must reduce our dependency on hydrocarbons. Cars will continue to play a role in our transport system, especially in rural areas, but we must focus their use on journeys where there is no practical alternative. I am particularly committed to getting freight off our roads—our freight facilities grants are helping to achieve that.

The improvement of people's health is a priority for the Executive. A crucial element of that is promoting healthy transport choices—choices that are healthy for the user and for others. As most journeys are short local journeys, a simple solution is more walking and cycling. We will develop a range of initiatives to encourage more walking and cycling and we will do even more to create a safe environment for our children by introducing 20mph zones around schools and continuing our support for safer routes.

Ferries are vital for many rural communities. We have made major improvements to ferry services and have introduced three new vessels, but we recognise the continuing need for new investment. A new vessel was introduced on 5 June on the Sound of Harris route, which allowed the existing vessel to be redeployed to the new Sound of Barra route. Another new ship is due on the Mallaig to Skye route in July. We will continue to work with Caledonian MacBrayne to deliver future investment.

In many parts of the Highlands and Islands, air services are literally lifeline services, yet costs—for local people and visitors alike—are high and reliability can be poor. That is why I am working to reduce the cost of lifeline air links by suitable use of public service obligations to improve services, increase frequency and reduce costs.

Too often transport services for road, rail, ferries, waterways and air have been planned in isolation and we need a more integrated and modern transport system

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Minister, I have to protect time for bank-benchers.

**Nicol Stephen:** I am on the final page of my speech and I will conclude.

A key element of all our plans will be a wide consultation on our proposals for a strategic transport authority. I was going to say more about that but I am out of time. We will conduct that consultation over the summer and I will make sure that members receive a copy of the consultation document so they can inform themselves about the issues.

The partnership agreement clearly sets out our transport priorities and our commitment to reliable, safe and sustainable public transport. They will be good for the economy and for the environment. The key issue is delivery, and I am determined to deliver.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the proposals set out in *A Partnership for a Better Scotland* for a reliable, safe, efficient and sustainable transport system to connect Scotland and encourage economic growth; recognises the importance that the Scottish Executive attaches to delivering improved public transport services by increasing investment and establishing a strategic authority, and recognises that the public transport system must serve the environmental, health and educational needs of people of Scotland.

15:51

**Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP):** I welcome the new minister and the commitment that he made to the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line; I am sure that that will be well received within and without the chamber.

The election has passed and the coalition has produced a statement in the form of its partnership document. We cannot disagree with the coalition's democratic right to deliver that agreement, or with its contents in relation to transport. I doubt if there are any intentions in the agreement that do not have the universal support of the chamber. I confirm that the minister will have our full support in seeking to deliver and he is correct to emphasise delivery.

We have two caveats, the first of which is that this time, the Executive must deliver. The previous parliamentary session was plagued and marred by discussion, debate, studies and consultations, but very little was delivered. Whether in road miles or rail track miles, the Scottish public was short-changed. We must make progress and we must deliver—for the sake of the Parliament as well as for that of the Executive. I welcome the fact that the new minister was not one of the serial spinners who were given ministerial appointments during the previous parliamentary session and he is entitled to be given the benefit of the doubt.

Secondly, we must make progress and there are two key ways to do so. Minor changes can be made at little cost. As the minister is aware, not all benefits are dependent upon substantial capital investment. For example, there must be proper enforcement of bus lanes and other road traffic regulations. The bureaucracy that plagues local authorities must be eased so that they can deliver on that. If the minister is not prepared to take on board support for re-regulation of the buses, which we believe is a prerequisite, the Executive and the Parliament must consider how to improve quality

contracts because they are not delivering at the moment. The minister also spoke of walking and cycling; modest support for those could go a long way.

The major aspect remains that the Parliament's existing powers are unable to deliver. If we accept what the minister said about having to deliver on the transport plans, that raises the question of how we are to do that.

We understand that the minister has a budget of £3 billion to spend over the next 10 years. When the claims on that budget have been quantified, they appear to amount to almost £2.33 billion. That will leave £700 million to fund the annual ScotRail franchise and the yearly maintenance of our roads network—both are sadly deteriorating and, as has been stated before in the chamber, have been underfunded—for the next 10 years. I suggest that there is a great danger that those figures do not add up.

I appreciate that the minister did not have time to elaborate on the concept of the Scottish strategic transport authority, but we believe that it is essential and a prerequisite for making progress.

The first five items referred to by the minister as high-level commitments are all rail projects. Each has a substantial cost and each falls within the ambit and remit of the Strategic Rail Authority. If we are going to create a transport authority to deal with Scotland, why should it deal only with the national concessionary fare scheme? Why should it not be given charge of the purse strings that are currently held by the SRA? Why should it not be the democratically elected Parliament and Government that decide who holds the purse strings and controls expenditure on rail projects in Scotland, either directly or through the transport authority? That would mean better accountability to the Parliament and it would allow the minister to give instructions, as opposed to giving directions and guidance as he does at the moment. We need the powers of the Strategic Rail Authority in respect of the internal Scottish rail network to be given to the Scottish transport authority so that we can better deliver.

The same applies to flights. I appreciate the minister's comments on the Highlands and Islands. We fund Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd and are responsible for it. Why, then, should we not be responsible for the civil aviation safety regulations and the Department for Transport security regulations? Those regulations are impacting severely on the cost of landing and fares and if we wish to increase usage and reduce and if costs—which is imperative if we are to increase usage—this Parliament should have those powers. That is not constitutional change for constitutional change's sake: it is a matter of

allowing the Executive and the Parliament to have a better, democratically accountable transport network, and to have the powers to deliver the same.

We welcome the minister's comments. We will support him, but he must deliver, and to deliver, he needs powers. This is not a constitutional debate; it is about delivery and taking the powers to deliver what our people demand and are entitled to expect.

I move amendment S2M-130.3, to insert at end:

“notes that the delivery of tangible improvements within defined timescales is essential; recognises, furthermore, that in order to achieve these an integrated and inter-modal public transport network is required, and therefore calls for the transfer of the legislative and financial powers to the Parliament that are necessary to address fully rail and aviation services in addition to bus and ferry services in order to ensure the delivery of the network sought.”

15:56

**David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con):** I will speak quickly. I also welcome Mr Stephen to his role, and, on a personal level, I echo his comments about Mr Gray. However, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Today's somewhat truncated presentation was, I am afraid, the usual jam tomorrow, smoke and mirrors on funding, and very careful language when it comes to commitments. Once again, the commitment to the Borders rail link is to examine the funding. It is the same language that we heard before—to look at, to investigate, to have studies—but the funding measures do not exist.

**Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD)** *rose—*

**Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)** *rose—*

**David Mundell:** I will not take any interventions as I have very little time.

Although we welcome the fact that the minister made a commitment to the Stirling to Alloa line, he is starting to underline the strategy of the previous Executive, under which we were to have a 10-year plan, then it was a report and then, in the last days of Mr Gray's tenure, it developed into daily press releases with funding announcements and photo opportunities flung in. I am afraid that, given the basis on which Nicol Stephen made that announcement—welcome as it is—it looks as if we are going back to that strategy. We need the minister to set out clearly his priorities because, as has been identified in the chamber and by commentators, there simply is not enough money to meet all the commitments. He will have to set priorities and tell us what they are.

I agree with one thing that the minister was quoted as saying in the press this week, which is that the public will not



"believe the Scottish Executive's promises on major new infrastructure projects"

until they are built. That is the case. Unless we hear more details and more precision, that scepticism will remain on this side of the chamber. We need a firm commitment on the Borders rail link. We need to know where the funding is coming from for the Waverley station upgrade, which is the project that can do the most to increase capacity on our railways. What about the funding for the Aberdeen western peripheral route, which will do more for the bus traveller in Aberdeen than any other initiative? That is why our amendment calls for a detailed statement.

I was disappointed not to hear more about the strategic transport authority, which the minister said he was going to announce to us. I look forward to receiving the detail. However, I hope that the authority will not be presented as the panacea for all our transport ills, as was previously presented to the chamber. In the past, the minister's predecessors stood in the chamber and said that the creation of Network Rail would solve all our transport problems. That was after his Labour predecessors told us that Stephen Byers would solve all our transport problems. Then there was the ScotRail franchise, which, as we pointed out at the time, could not be delivered within the time scale that was set out. I would be grateful if the minister would tell us in his closing remarks what the likely extension of the time scale will be.

I hope that the strategic transport authority will not be presented to us as a simple solution. Hard cash is the only solution to Scotland's transport difficulties, which is why the Conservatives remain committed to an additional investment of £100 million a year in our transport infrastructure.

I move amendment SM2-130.1, to leave out from "welcomes" to end and insert:

"believes that only a fully costed programme of investment in transport infrastructure with detailed start and completion dates, rather than platitudes, will deliver the improvements to public transport that the travelling public and Scottish business so desperately need and calls on the Scottish Executive to present such a programme to the Parliament forthwith."

16:00

**Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab):** I, too, congratulate Nicol Stephen on his appointment to his new role. I agree with comments that have been made about his predecessor Iain Gray and his role in developing the transport plan that Mr Stephen has inherited.

Mr Stephen rightly recognises the need to move forward from the plans that have been put in place to the delivery phase. In many areas of policy, but particularly in respect of transport, the Parliament needs to implement policies through which people

start to experience real improvements in the transport systems that they use day in, day out. People need to experience such improvements. I agree with much of what Mr MacAskill said in that regard, although I would not go as far as to agree with his views about greater powers being required in order to deliver.

Delivering on transport is essential if the Parliament is to deliver on any of its aspirations. It is essential in order to achieve economic growth, which is central to the Executive's plans, tackle congestion and create a sustainable transport system. It is also essential in respect of social justice.

I will give an example from my area where a successful approach has been taken in the past. The existing Bathgate to Edinburgh line was initially developed in the 1980s in response to many economic problems that West Lothian was suffering in the mid-1980s. It has been a great success in developing the West Lothian economy and giving opportunities to people from that area to travel into Edinburgh and access employment in the Edinburgh area. It has contributed greatly to allowing people to travel into and out of Edinburgh without having to use their cars and the number of people who have used it has exceeded all expectations. On the basis of that experience, I welcome the clear commitment that the Executive has given and that Nicol Stephen has reaffirmed to the further expansion of the Bathgate line to the west, which will create new opportunities for the people of West Lothian to travel to Glasgow as well as opportunities for travel from North Lanarkshire to West Lothian and Edinburgh. That commitment will enhance opportunities.

Most of the projects that have been committed to in the Executive's programme are correct projects that try to expand our public transport system. However, I want to flag up an area in which we have been subject to justified criticism: there is not enough emphasis on walking and cycling. Such activities can play a role in developing a sustainable transport system and in ensuring that the health of the people of Scotland improves. This is an opportune week to mention that issue, given the reports relating to obesity and its costs to the national health service. In taking on his new role, I encourage the Minister for Transport to try to ensure that such modes of transport are given more priority than perhaps they were in the first four years of the Parliament. I also encourage him to recognise the role that they can play not only in respect of transport, but in developing health.

As we move forward, it is vital for the minister to consider the bus industry, which is extremely important in creating opportunities for people, particularly by connecting many of the poorest

communities to employment opportunities and the whole social infrastructure. A number of concerns were raised with me in the previous session when I was convener of the Transport and the Environment Committee and by constituents about how bus companies still far too regularly make changes to their timetables that impact on communities and users—I know that a number of MSPs, such as Rhona Brankin, have raised that issue. Perhaps there is a need for the Local Government and Transport Committee and the minister to review the way in which the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 works and the way in which users, local authorities and bus companies work together, so that bus systems can be developed.

I recognise that we are fairly constrained for time in the debate and I do not wish to take time from other members. However, I say to the minister that, over the months and years to come, we will judge his and the Executive's performance very much on the aspiration to deliver. Only once we deliver improvements in the transport system will the public give the Parliament and the Executive credit for having the correct policies. It is not good enough just to have the ideas—we must deliver them on the ground.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** As Mr Muldoon said, the debate is very tight—in fact, it is oversubscribed. I ask for speeches of four minutes maximum.

16:05

**Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD):** I am pleased to welcome Nicol Stephen to his new role as the Minister for Transport. As the Liberal Democrats' new transport spokesman, I look forward to working with him.

Transport is a very important area that reflects many aspects of our public life. It is an important part of our economy, it is important for employment and it is important for the environment. For that reason, it is important that we have this early debate on transport, albeit that it is somewhat truncated.

The Liberal Democrat manifesto for the previous Scottish parliamentary elections contained a bold programme for transport. I am delighted that that programme is reflected in "A Partnership for a Better Scotland", which contains some important transport projects: delivering the rail links to Edinburgh and Glasgow airports; reopening the Airdrie to Bathgate railway; and reopening the Kincardine-Alloa-Stirling rail link. I welcome especially Nicol Stephen's announcement of funding for that last-mentioned project, which—as he rightly said—will take some of the pressure off the Forth rail bridge and help to improve rail services for passengers from Fife to Edinburgh, which is extremely important.

The partnership agreement also refers to construction of the Larkhall to Milngavie line and the redevelopment of Waverley station, which is important for the development of rail services for Fife and for commuters from Fife, as well as for the south and west of Scotland. Waverley station must be redeveloped and the Strategic Rail Authority must realise that that is a crucial project—I am certain that the minister will ensure that the SRA is put under pressure to support it alongside the Scottish Executive.

The Borders rail link is also an important project. It is obvious that Mr Mundell did not hear the minister state quite clearly that it is intended that the Borders rail link be open in 2008. That was not just a bit of waffle, but a clear commitment by the Executive. The link is absolutely vital.

**Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Does the member agree with Liberal councillor Jane Ann Liston that the money that has been proposed for the Borders rail link should be diverted to St Andrews?

**Iain Smith:** The member should read what Jane Ann Liston said. She said that if legal problems resulted in a delay in construction of the Borders rail link—a big "if"—the money could be diverted to St Andrews, instead of being wasted. She did not say that money should be spent on a link to St Andrews rather than on the Borders rail link. In future, Tricia Marwick should get her facts right before she intervenes.

It is extremely important that we make the investment in rolling stock that will enable us to deal with some of the serious problems of overcrowding on our rail network. That money will start to come into play from this October, which is to be welcomed.

It must be recognised that the Executive is making major investments in the public transport network. That must be contrasted with the amendments from the Conservatives and the SNP. Once again, the Conservatives offer nothing. The £100 million that they say they want to invest in the public transport infrastructure is for building more roads; it is for covering Scotland with more tarmac, rather than for investing in our public transport network.

Kenny MacAskill of the SNP should learn that some of the problems of the rail network in Scotland are caused by problems south of the border, rather than by problems north of it. The cuts to Virgin Trains rail services north of Edinburgh that came into effect in May resulted not from problems in the rail network in Scotland but from problems in the rail network south of Birmingham. We cannot solve those problems if we are not involved in discussions about the strategic rail network as a whole. Scotland must

remain part of those discussions and part of the Strategic Rail Authority. If we do not, the impact of rail services south of the Border on Scottish services will be forgotten. Under the SNP's proposals, we would end up with a worse rail service. The SNP would like to think that we can live in isolation, but we do not.

Let us support the Executive and the minister in this ambitious programme for public transport in Scotland.

16:09

**Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** I must declare a passing interest in that I travel from Fife to Edinburgh, mostly by public transport.

I want to concentrate on transport in and around Fife, especially the rail network. I turn first to the problems at the Forth bridgehead. In peak hours, the capacity of the Forth bridge is exceeded and tailbacks are getting longer. If there were ever a case for getting cars off the road and people on to public transport, that is it.

Why are the alternative public transport facilities not used by more people? Quite simply, it is because the public transport options from Fife to Edinburgh are inadequate. The trains are unreliable and, at peak times, packed. The rail bridge needs millions of pounds to be spent on it because it has been neglected for years—I would welcome a statement from the minister about when he expects essential work on the Forth rail bridge to be completed. The idea that was put forward by Helen Eadie that the Forth bridge could be knocked down is daft and dangerous—the rail bridge is a vital artery to the north, connecting Dundee and Fife with Edinburgh. For many years, the train fares from Fife to Edinburgh were kept deliberately high to suppress demand for rail travel because it would have cost far too much to meet the genuine demand, but we are now paying the price for that short-sightedness.

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Does the member accept that intervention of that sort is what one would expect given that nationalised companies and the Government control roads as well as railways? Does she also accept that it would be better to separate the bodies and have some of them being run on a for-profit basis?

**Tricia Marwick:** We need an integrated network. We are paying the price for the short-sightedness of previous years.

We cannot have more trains and carriages on the Fife circle because the platforms are not long enough. We have been promised that that work will be done but have not been told when. Markinch station is supposed to be a hub station,

but it has no disabled access, no toilets, no closed-circuit television cameras and—apart from during a couple of hours in the morning—no staff. A new station has been promised, but Railtrack went into liquidation and we are still waiting for the work to be done.

For many years, in the face of opposition from Fife Council, I have campaigned for the reopening of the Leven to Thornton line. Levenmouth is the largest conurbation in Scotland that is without direct access to a railway station. The line exists and there is demand for a station, which would once more open up the area to tourism and allow people in an unemployment black spot to access jobs throughout Fife. However, without the support of Fife Council, no progress has been made on the station. Will the minister consider the case for the reopening of the Leven to Thornton line?

The problem with the previous Executive was that it had no vision. An excellent case has been made for a fast ferry service between Burntisland and Granton—the crossing could take as little as nine minutes. The car users of Fife are still paying tolls on a bridge that was paid off years ago and the profit from the tolls is now allegedly going into public transport. The fast ferry service must be supported and the infrastructure must be put in place. There is no mention of the fast ferry service from Granton to Burntisland. I ask the minister to consider the issue and to find out how quickly such a service could be set up.

16:13

**Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con):** I am pleased to be able to make my first speech in Parliament this session on two issues that are of increasing concern to my constituents in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale. The first concerns the much-vaunted integrated rural transport policy, which was beloved of the previous Scottish Government and will no doubt be equally beloved of this one.

Last week, I attended the annual general meeting of the Castle Douglas branch of the Dumfries and Galloway Elderly Forum—not, before anybody suggests it, as a paid-up member. One member who lives in the village of Twynholm spoke about a regular bus journey that he has to make to Dumfries. It involves his taking a bus that is operated by one company to Gatehouse of Fleet to connect with another company's bus that travels to Dumfries. That would be fine if Gatehouse of Fleet were not 15 minutes in the opposite direction to Dumfries from Twynholm, and if Twynholm were not a mere one minute away from the A75 trunk road, along which the bus has to travel to Dumfries. That gentleman has to travel for half an hour and wait for between 20 minutes and half an hour in each direction for absolutely no good reason.

With an integrated transport policy like that, it is no wonder that the percentage of my constituents who are car owners must be among the highest in the country. Putting that problem right is hardly rocket science and I hope that the Government will get some sense into those policy areas. I wish only that my expectations matched my hope.

**Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Alex Fergusson:** I will take a brief one.

**Sarah Boyack:** It will be brief.

Given that the last Conservative Government privatised the rail industry and deregulated the bus industry, and that Brian Monteith is still enthusiastically in favour of that approach, can Mr Fergusson tell us exactly how the £100 million he proposes to spend every year would change the life of the constituent that he just mentioned?

**Alex Fergusson:** Our proposal would change his life hugely for the better, but we do not have time to discuss that today. I am sure that we will have time to do so as we go on.

**David Mundell:** That £100 million would complete the A75, which Ms Boyack ignored when she was Minister for Transport and Planning.

**Alex Fergusson:** Exactly—the A75 would be brought up to scratch for a start.

My second point concerns the recent announcement that Stena Line, which operates ferries to and from Northern Ireland from Stranraer, is to join with P & O to operate a single port at Cairnryan for both companies. Cairnryan is only about five miles from Stranraer harbour, on which is located Stranraer railway station. However, there is no rail link from Stranraer to Cairnryan and that will put enormous pressure on a desperately fragile road infrastructure, which—I point out to Ms Boyack—would be hugely improved under our transport plans. The Stena Line plan would also put almost intolerable pressure on the small village of Cairnryan.

I urge the minister to undertake an investigation into the possibility of restoring the rail link between Stranraer and Cairnryan. It is not a great distance and such a link could have a dramatic impact on how freight is transported to the port—a subject that is close to the minister's heart, as he made plain in his introduction—and on the quality of life for the residents of Cairnryan village. Such a rail link would also be entirely in accordance with the wishes of the First Minister, as he made clear during today's question time. Further, establishment of that rail link would send out a clear signal to the ferry companies—whose continued presence is absolutely vital, as the minister will be aware, to the region's economy—that the Government is committed to their continued presence.

Because this is my first speech in this session, I am happy to offer the minister a win-win situation for himself and for my constituents. I trust that he will have the good sense to grab the opportunity that the commercial decision by the ferry companies affords him.

I support the amendment that is in the name of my colleague David Mundell.

16:16

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab):** I welcome the many commitments on public transport in the partnership document, particularly those on the rail links to Edinburgh and Glasgow airports and the feasibility study on a Glasgow crossrail system. I, as a Glasgow MSP, will not be alone in pressing the minister for further assurances on that issue in the future. I welcome in particular the concessionary fares schemes, which formed the best financial decision of the previous Parliament. I look forward to the new concessionary fares scheme for young people.

In the few minutes that are available, I want to make several observations about recent experiences in my constituency in relation to bus services. The number 83 bus was taken off its established route without any consultation with the elderly community in Broomhill, which the bus served. The removal of the service meant that literally hundreds of elderly people were stranded and could not make the journey to, for example, the post office and the local hospital because they simply could not climb up the steep hill from the new bus stop to their homes. There was no consultation with local communities on the variation of that bus service and no assessment of what the communities need in the way of bus services. I am glad to say that following a successful campaign and a positive response from the bus operator—which I shall not name—we have returned the service. However, I am afraid that not all such scenarios—there have been many others—have been as successful as that one. I am sure that I am not the only MSP who has experienced such an issue.

I am exercised about such developments in our bus services because, as members have said, we are talking about some of the poorest communities, which rely on bus services as their only mode of transport. Those communities suffer the most. Transport is a social inclusion issue—I know that the Executive believes that, but it must match detail to its commitments in the partnership document to ensure that the commitments work.

It is a fact that the poorest Scots are more likely to use the bus as their main mode of transport. Only 28 per cent of Scots in the upper social classes use buses as their main mode of

transport, which is something that must change in the future. It is a startling fact that bus and coach fares account for £200 million of household expenditure, whereas car use accounts for £2.31 billion of such spending. That is quite a contrast.

What needs to be done? I will take a particular interest in ensuring that we get better bus services in the lifetime of this Parliament. In my opinion, communities should as a matter of law be consulted about variations in bus routes. Before there is any variation in a bus route, a bus operator should be required to notify not only a traffic commissioner, but the communities that the bus route serves. I believe that key services such as hospitals, clinics and out-patient departments should be served as a priority. I hope that the new strategic transport authority will take up a statutory obligation to provide for the gaps in bus services. That would be a good reason for having a national transport authority, and I believe that such a duty should be statutory.

I had wanted to say a lot more about that, but I have scored a lot of my speech out, although I am sure that other members will pick up some of the points. I will make only two more points before I close.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** You have one minute.

**Pauline McNeill:** On the integration of information on public transport, it is fundamental that people get basic information about how different modes of transport relate to one another if we expect the general public to give up their cars and use public transport. I am afraid that, at the moment, we are a million miles away from that.

Park-and-ride facilities must be included in that package. As a motorist, I believe that, if we are to shift people's mentality, we have to give them choice. They must be able to use the car, the bus and the train—perhaps even all on the same day. They must be able to make a journey from Glasgow to Edinburgh, know that they can get off the motorway, know that they can get on a train and know that they can park before they get there. That is basic stuff, but those are some of the issues that we have to tackle.

In my last 10 seconds, I will say a word on the ScotRail franchise. The new franchise must deliver improvements on overcrowding and time keeping. Lack of information is a frustration to every commuter in Scotland and there must be improvements, so I hope that the Executive will press very hard for that.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must close now.

**Pauline McNeill:** I will use just the last second, if I may, Presiding Officer.

People stand in utter amazement on the platform at Waverley station as the 6.30 train decouples while most commuters want to get on it. They all stand on the train. That has to end and ScotRail must explain to people why it makes such crazy decisions.

16:21

**Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green):** I hope that during this session the Green group will be able to persuade the Executive to start using "sustainable" meaningfully. "Sustainable" does not mean "nice"; it means an activity that can continue indefinitely without depleting resources. Strictly speaking, the only sustainable transport methods are walking and cycling, which are barely mentioned in the partnership agreement. Indeed, the main news in relation to cycling is that the public transport fund, which funded half of local authority expenditure on cycling, is being abolished.

It is outrageous that the motion should congratulate transport policy in the week in which the Royal Mail has announced its plans to abandon its historic rail service. What representations has the minister made to his Westminster colleagues to address the VAT anomaly that has caused this disaster for pollution and congestion?

The minister will be judged not on his rhetoric, but on whether in four years' time we have more bus services, more rail services and less congestion. I welcome the rhetoric: the Executive clearly wishes to show a commitment to public transport, even if waiting for delivery is like waiting for a bus in Peebles. We even have Tory colleagues lodging motions calling for new railways, which I support.

The Greens have won the arguments for public transport, but the trouble is that the roads keep coming and, with every road that is built, congestion gets worse. David Mundell complained that the transport policy outline is "jam tomorrow". The problem, I suggest, is that there is actually jam today—congestion jam. How much freight does the Executive intend to shift from road to rail in this session? What plans does it have to tackle the short journeys that are at the heart of traffic congestion in cities? What are the plans and targets for road traffic reduction?

There is much mention of roads and trains in the proposals—MSPs travel, by and large, by car and train—but there is very little mention of measures to increase bus services; I notice only one. Revenue support for bus services is much lower than it is for rail and every week we receive letters from constituents about threatened or lost bus services. We heard about some of the difficulties

earlier. What is the point of new concessions for buses when the services do not exist in the first place?

Let us consider investment in bus services throughout Europe. The proportion of total bus revenue from subsidies and grants in Austria is 70 per cent; in Belgium it is 68 per cent; in Italy and Holland it is 60 per cent; in Denmark it is 48 per cent; in France and Greece it is 45 per cent; in Germany it is 38 per cent; in Spain it is 33 per cent; in the United Kingdom it is 32 per cent and in Scotland it is 29 per cent. The figures are abysmal.

If the minister really wants a more public transport-friendly policy, which I believe he might well want, the key to that must be a review of the Executive's civil service staffing for transport, and a change in the road culture that informs the thinking at Victoria Quay. It is not enough to move freight from road to rail; the minister must also move civil servants from roads to public transport.

16:25

**Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I, too, want to talk about rail travel, because it is the most environmentally friendly and safest mode of transport for passengers and freight.

Let me first knock back Iain Smith's argument that Virgin Trains services in Scotland having been reduced as a result of the congestion around Birmingham New Street station means that we should not have our own strategic rail authority. It puzzles me that it is possible to get a train from Oostende to Vienna successfully, going through some of the busiest cities in west Germany without having to have one Government or one strategic rail authority in charge in all the countries on the way.

Rail services have suffered great disinvestment since the early 1970s. One need only examine the west coast main line—the main line through the western part of the south of Scotland—which has had no real new investment since electrification was completed at that time. I will not even blame the Conservatives for that, because I noticed this morning that Phil Gallie was effectively criticising or disowning every living former Tory Cabinet minister. He has done that job for us.

The point is that there were penny-pinching Treasury restrictions on investment, which demanded an unrealistic rate of return on every rail investment. The very successful Inter-City 125s have celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary—they are still the mainstay of much express rail travel in this country. Even in the early days of those trains, British Rail could not order as many of them as it needed, because the Treasury would not let it. The backlog will take many years to make up, and the Government has a difficult job on its hands.

The occasional high-profile success in returning freight to rail is trumpeted to us. Generally, however, the picture is very bad. The irony is that, the more successful we are in increasing passenger services or in increasing their speed, as Virgin Trains did recently, the less space on the network there is for freight trains. That is a particular problem for the west coast main line.

As Chris Ballance said, it is especially disappointing that the Government, in the shape of the Royal Mail, is not giving the lead that it should give. We expect about 500 jobs with the freight rail company, English Welsh & Scottish Railway, to be lost if the Royal Mail proceeds with its plan to shift all its operations on to road, which will mean 50 job losses in Scotland. What message does it send to the rest of industry, which we are trying to attract to use the railways, when a Government body—a firm owned by you and me—decides to transfer totally to road? As Chris Ballance mentioned, the Post Office cannot reclaim VAT because it is a Government body, so its internal road service costs nothing in VAT, whereas there is an extra 17.5 per cent on rail services, which it cannot reclaim. Those are the economics of the madhouse, and we should do something about them.

I welcome the minister's commitment to cycling, but statistics such as the number of cycle lanes that exist can be misleading. We need look only at Edinburgh, where the many non-mandatory cycle lanes all provide very convenient places for people to park their cars. The Executive has not done very much to encourage the people who use bikes daily, rather than as a fashion accessory that they can trot out at weekends.

It will take many years to develop the rail network that we need. Hopefully, that will include a substantial amount of rebuilding or reinstatement of old railway lines. Alex Fergusson mentioned the old military line that goes up to Cairnryan. Lots of projects to reopen such lines will not be justified in the short term, but we need to preserve from building development and so on the formations that exist so that, in future—when we have and want to use the money—they are still there to be reused.

16:29

**Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab):** I welcome the Minister for Transport to his new role. I feel quite new to this myself, because over the past year or so I have been the ministerial parliamentary aide to the First Minister and, as such, have been bound by ministerial code and prevented from participating in debates in the Parliament. Although I enjoyed being in the post, I am pleased to be free from

those restrictions and able once again to take part in important debates such as this one. I am also now in a position to be able to criticise the Executive on matters where I think that it has got it wrong and I assure members that I will do so when I see fit.

It just so happens that this afternoon will not be one such occasion. That is not because I think that everything in the garden is rosy when it comes to public transport, but because I believe that, on the whole, the new Executive appears to be putting in place realistic and achievable plans to make progress and build on the previous Administration's achievements in public transport.

Access to public transport is fundamental to many aspects of people's lives. As Pauline McNeill said, it is related closely to developments in health, education and leisure and to allaying environmental concerns, placing social inclusion and the overall standard of living at the heart of any strategic development.

Recently I spoke to an elderly man in my constituency who told me of the simple pleasure that he gets from receiving his concessionary bus pass, which saves him enough each week for him to have a few extra pints and a couple of extra bets on the horses. That is good, because it has enhanced his quality of life and, more important, he is getting out of the house more and for longer. He is able to be in the company of others and catch up with his friends, breaking up the loneliness of sitting at home watching the rubbish on daytime television.

**Alasdair Morgan:** I wonder how the idea that getting out of the house to go to the pub and the betting shop fits into the Government's development of a healthy Scotland.

**Michael McMahon:** My constituent has a social life and concessionary travel has encouraged him to participate in an active life, which gets him out the house and keeps him healthy. There is no harm in having an extra couple of pints if it keeps someone going.

What I described might seem a simple, and possibly questionable, benefit, but it is shared in different ways by the 350,000 elderly people in Strathclyde and the more than 1.1 million elderly and disabled people throughout Scotland who have gained from the concessionary bus pass. It is a good thing, and we in the Labour party are justly proud of it. The benefit will be increased when the Executive announces more spending over the coming months and years.

**Mr Macintosh:** Does the member agree that although the concessionary fares are welcome, we now have to work on making bus companies more receptive to the needs and wishes of the users of the service? They do not respond to them at all just now.

**Michael McMahon:** I agree entirely. We have to strike a balance between the private sector and the public sector. We have to consider our road-building programme. Far too often, we see areas resembling car parks rather than free flowing areas that help our commercial sector—the Raith interchange, the Shawhead junction and the Auchenkilns roundabout in Lanarkshire, for example. We cannot have a repetition of the situation in Bellshill some time ago when a delegation of representatives of a large American company packed up and went home after being stuck in a traffic jam outside their hotel on the Bellshill bypass, taking with them the possibility of 200 jobs, because they could not see the infrastructure supporting their needs.

There are major issues to consider. We have to build on the A8 and extend the M74, because we must create wealth to finance our public services.

16:34

**Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP):** Somebody said earlier that our roads are overcrowded. I feel sad and irritated that the chamber is not overcrowded today, given the importance of our transport and how we get about and the impact on our lives.

**Tricia Marwick:** Where is Tommy Sheridan?

**Rosie Kane:** I address my remark to everyone.

The importance of sensible progress in relation to how we get about—

**Tricia Marwick:** Where is Tommy Sheridan?

**Rosie Kane:** Can we not do "Where's Wally" and just get on with it, please?

The importance of sensible progress in relation to how we get about should never be understated. If any other activity caused as much havoc, difficulty and ill health as does the ever-increasing traffic, there would be a furore. There can be no excuse for getting our transport system even slightly wrong, given the hindsight and the information that are available to us.

Ever-increasing car use blights and divides our communities and pollutes our country and the rest of the planet. Long-term harm should be treated as an emergency for us to deal with right now. The facts and figures make scary reading and it would appear that, tragically, the health aspects are neglected. Health and the environment are inextricably linked and the Parliament should treat them accordingly.

This morning we debated Europe. In Europe, traffic accidents result in about 120,000 deaths and 2.5 million injuries a year. In Scotland, the figures pan out to about 347 deaths and more than 19,500 injuries. One accident that results in death or injury is too many; those figures are diabolical.

Air pollution is also a problem. We must play a part in reducing global greenhouse gases. A range of pollutants comes out of cars and into our communities; I am sure that members are well aware of them. According to the "Six Cities Study", residents of polluted towns face a 37 per cent higher risk of developing lung cancer than residents of less polluted areas. That higher risk has already been mentioned. Ozone irritates the eyes and can affect the respiratory system, lead can impair our children's mental development and benzene is linked with cancer.

Children who live near heavy traffic suffer most and are at greater risk of being involved in accidents. Such children live in built-up communities or play in playgrounds or go to schools that are near busy traffic and motorways.

We need to consider how we can create a shift in mode. Half of all trips cover a distance of under 2 miles and 70 per cent of them cover a distance of under 5 miles. A quarter of car trips cover a distance of under 2 miles and 56 per cent of them cover a distance of under 5 miles. A catalytic converter would not even kick in over such distances.

Traffic divides and wrecks our communities, degrades our environment and is neither helpful nor useful. It is inevitable that poorer people are being forced into cars because of bad and inappropriate planning.

The minister should look at the past, consider the present and address the future. We should consider cycling and walking projects, safe routes to schools, greener planning and home zones. The 20mph zones and the "twenty's plenty" campaign have been mentioned. I suggest that we move to make those limits mandatory rather than advisory because as soon as motorists realise that they do not have to do something, they no longer do it. Those zones are in the most vulnerable areas where our children play.

I hope that many members will join me in supporting the idea of a sustainable transport fund, which would enable money to be spent sensibly on the situation on our streets, rather than be used to contribute to their overcrowding.

I return to the M74 northern extension. If members think that the area is like a car park now, they should go to Pollok to see what has happened as a result of congestion on the M77 and surrounding roads. That will show them that the future is more car parks. An injection of part of the £500 million that is intended for the M74 would be an excellent beginning and a great gift to our children.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Before we move to winding-up speeches, I apologise to those members who were not called. Sylvia Jackson has four minutes.

16:38

**Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab):** I welcome Nicol Stephen to his new post and I welcome two of the statements that he made. The first was about access from Stirling to Edinburgh airport and the second was about the investment of £30 million in the Kincardine-Alloa-Stirling rail line. However, I hope that, as the relevant bill progresses through the Parliament, he will be sympathetic to the community concerns in my constituency and in Ochil about the number and timing of the trains that will carry freight along those lines.

**Mr Raffan:** I am grateful to the member for giving way. Will she join me in paying tribute to our former colleague Richard Simpson, who, together with George Reid and me, campaigned steadfastly to bridge the funding gap? The reason for the Tories' churlishness might be their failure to turn up for any of the meetings in Clackmannanshire, where the local council was the lead authority, or for the seminars on that important line.

**Dr Jackson:** Keith Raffan makes a good point. Indeed, I remember those meetings. Thanks must go to Richard Simpson.

Other important commitments in the partnership agreement build on what has happened. Mention has been made of the concessionary fares scheme, which is to be extended. The expansion of the rural transport initiative was also mentioned, but I think that the minister did not have time to give details of how that will happen, so perhaps he could include that in his summing up. The scheme for 20mph zones around schools is also to be extended, as is the safe routes to schools initiative. Rosie Kane made a good point about some councils being a little apprehensive about introducing the 20mph zone. Perhaps the minister will comment on that.

I also want to highlight the maintenance of non-trunk roads, which has been one of my issues over the past four years. Forgive me for raising this, but I know that the survey from the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland will soon be available. I also know that the partnership agreement commits us to

"Ensuring sufficient resources are available for the non-trunk road network".

I gather that we will know the full figures from the SCOTS survey when it is made available via the web browser next week, so I urge the minister to put into action a long-term plan as soon as possible. For 2001-02, the bill for bringing the roads in the Stirling Council area up to standard was £60 million.

The second road maintenance issue that I want to raise is service tracks. Considerable difficulties are caused by the fact that utilities and statutory



undertakers do not leave the roads in the proper condition, which contributes to the general deterioration in the condition of roads. At the moment, it is difficult to impose penalties and centralise control of utilities that want to enter a local authority area, so I call on the minister to consider how the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 might be revisited.

In conclusion, three important points have been made today. First is the important aspect of sustainability, which both the Green party—obviously—and Bristow Muldoon highlighted. I know that Stirling Council is undertaking a programme of sustainable employee transport initiatives to encourage council employees to walk, cycle and so on. Secondly, members mentioned the importance of monitoring and evaluating initiatives. Thirdly, emphasis has been placed on the need for genuine consultation, which Pauline McNeill mentioned in her speech.

16:43

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. It is disappointing that there are not more members present, but it is rather churlish for people to point the finger at Rosie Kane's leader for not being here. It is clear that members of all parties, including my own, have not attended the debate. Indeed, as 50 per cent of the SSP group is in the chamber, the SSP has a higher proportion of members attending than any other party group, including my own.

**John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP) rose—**

**Mr Monteith:** Sorry. Mr Swinburne is a party group all of his own—long may it stay that way.

I welcome the minister to his new post. For a number of years, we have debated with each other in education debates, but I assure him that I am not dogging him. I was disappointed that we did not manage to reach question 14 at question time, but perhaps this is not the time to press that matter.

I have listened to the debate with interest, but I have found it a rather surreal event. It has been an almost out-of-body experience—which is something, considering my body. There have been so many commitments but so little money to back them up. At times, the Parliament seems to live in another world and in a parallel universe in which transport can be delivered without any expectation of how the costs will be met.

We have had commitments without funding. The details of the Borders rail link need to be explored, pinned down and defined. A number of members have mentioned Waverley station, yet it is clear that the Waverley station project has been

shelved. I see no prospect of the project coming back to us under its previous guise; it will have to be started again. The proposals for the shopping mall that would have helped to subsidise the overall project have been written off. When we talk about supporting the changes at Waverley station, I feel that we are kidding ourselves—unless we have proposals before us that we know are genuine, have a time scale and can be funded. We need something that will look far more substantial and that will stand up to greater analysis than, for instance, the Scottish Parliament project.

There are many significant areas to deal with in transport, including walking and cycling. We have to consider whether people on motorbikes should be able to access bus lanes. We have public and private transport—cars and railways and buses—but it strikes me that there is often confusion over what is private and what is public.

Forgive me, but I am an old trainspotter and I see benefit in trains. I support the Borders rail line and I support the Stirling-Alloa-Dunfermline rail line. There—I have said it. I actually want more railways. However, the way to achieve more railways is through partnership and by acknowledging that companies that earn profits must be part of that partnership. They can and often do provide better transport facilities for the public and individuals—as long as they work within the regulatory structures and the subsidy structures that are set up by Government on behalf of the public.

If we are to achieve the transport system that the public want, we must recognise that for-profit companies are part of the transport future. They respond to the market and to what customers want. They can help to deliver the improved infrastructure that we need. I will support my colleague David Mundell's amendment to the motion.

16:47

**Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP):** We agree with the Executive's commitment to put in place an integrated transport system. The difficulty is that our public transport networks are still very far from being integrated, reliable or efficient. Many people's experience is of disintegrated, unreliable and inefficient public transport.

For an example of the absurdity of the current system, I refer Brian Monteith to Perth railway station. Companies involved in activities in and around the station include ScotRail, Traincare, Network Rail, Spacia, Network Rail train operating company estates—which may or may not be about to go into Spacia—First Engineering and Serco. At

a very basic level, that means that it is impossible to get the pigeon mess cleaned up or a broken window fixed because no one knows for sure whose responsibility it is and no one wants to take responsibility. How on earth does that reality mesh with either Brian Monteith's vision of a wonderfully privatised service or with the promises that the Executive makes? The truth is that it does not.

**Mr Monteith:** I was not being especially idealistic. It is clear that, after privatisation, freight transport by rail improved and numbers went up, and private transport by rail improved and numbers went up. Investment in the railways also improved and the number of accidents actually decreased. That is what happened. I share Roseanna Cunningham's concern that there were flaws—the way in which railway stations are managed was one of them. However, let us agree on something: the flaws can be picked up on and amended, but privatisation was working.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** With respect, the reality of the experience was quite the opposite.

Another disincentive is the timetable mishmash. During the debate on the Executive's programme for government, I highlighted the apparent impossibility of achieving a truly integrated transport system when the major operators are prepared to assert openly that they take no account of one another's timetables when drawing up their own. That means that buses do not feed into railways in any sensible way, a fact that extends total journey times considerably. The timetable mishmash is a major barrier to use of the system and, as Michael McMahon said, it also impacts directly on economic development.

Despite the Executive's commitment in the partnership agreement document to timetable integration, I am still waiting for a clear indication of how that is to be delivered in reality. Perhaps the minister will enlighten us on the matter before the end of business today.

Of course, transport is one of those policy areas for which some responsibility has been devolved to the Scottish Parliament and some has been reserved to Westminster. If the Executive parties will allow me to give them the benefit of the doubt, I think that that might be where the problem lies. Scotland's transport network needs a strategic overview and a decent level of investment, neither of which can be provided properly by the Executive with the current powers of the Scottish Parliament.

The reality is that the United Kingdom invests less than the European Union average of its gross domestic product in transport infrastructure. The UK is the worst in the whole of the EU in respect of support for public transport. That means that the UK has among the highest public transport fares in

the EU, with a typical trip in the UK costing 15 per cent more than in Germany, 60 per cent more than in France and nearly three times as much as in the Netherlands. That is hardly indicative of a move towards a sustainable transport system. No wonder the latest statistics show that bus use fell by a quarter in the preceding decade and that rail numbers are down by 2.4 million on the previous year. Meanwhile, year on year, there were 3 per cent more cars on the roads.

Although the commitments that the Executive has made are all welcome, the vast majority of them are urban based. That is a concern for those who live in the vast rural areas of Scotland. There are many, mostly rural, communities in Scotland that actively seek the reopening of passenger railway stations. Indeed, the Highland Rail Partnership is undertaking an appraisal of four such stations in my constituency, only one of which relates to a line with a current service. I assure the minister that he can look forward to further communications on the subject from me.

It will be a major challenge for the Executive to respond to that demand, because any response will have to involve new track. I do not see where the investment for new track in the rural part of Scotland will come from, yet that is where it is needed most.

In the face of demand, we continue to read about the threat of wholesale cutbacks in rural Scottish rail services. The Executive must commit to opposing such cutbacks at every opportunity, even when the cuts emanate from the Department for Transport down south. To be frank, to do anything else would make a mockery of any commitment to increase the use of public transport and to decrease the reliance on cars.

16:52

**Nicol Stephen:** The debate has been very valuable albeit all too brief. I look forward to a full debate on transport in which all members who want to contribute have the opportunity to do so.

I start by thanking Kenny MacAskill for his welcome support and for his many positive words. However, my focus over the next four years will be on improving public transport and not on reopening and renegotiating the Scotland Act 1998. My efforts will be focused on delivering our current priorities, using our current extensive powers and our current significant and growing funds.

David Mundell talked about funding commitments and made comments about rail services and the importance of public transport projects. I ask him whether the Conservatives delivered any of that. Was our rail network safe in Conservative hands? Does he believe that, if the

Conservatives were to return to power, his party would deliver on public transport, given its background and track record on the issue?

**Mr Monteith:** Will the member give way?

**Nicol Stephen:** I will mention Brian Monteith later in my remarks and I might give him the opportunity of intervening at that point.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** Will the minister give way?

**Nicol Stephen:** Surely.

**Elaine Smith:** The opening of Gartcosh railway station has been substantially delayed. Given that final confirmation of full Scottish Executive funding is critical to the project's progress and that a request for additional challenge funding has been sitting with the Scottish Executive for some time, will the minister assure me that the funding will be forthcoming to allow the station to open—I hope—early next year?

**Nicol Stephen:** I cannot give the member a funding commitment this afternoon. However, I assure her that I expect to be able to take a decision on the matter very soon.

Tricia Marwick raised various issues, among which the Fife rail service was key. The Scottish Executive is investing in rolling stock that will allow longer trains to run on that route and tackle overcrowding. Furthermore, the Executive and the SRA are working together to ensure that necessary platform extension work is delivered on the Fife circle line.

As for the Levenmouth branch line, it is up to the promoter of a local transport project to develop and promote the reopening of such a line. That applies to some of the other proposals that have been mentioned this afternoon. The Scottish Executive considers each local transport project on its merits on a case-by-case basis.

Alex Fergusson's anecdotes helped to prove the point that we need more reliable and integrated public transport services. He mentioned an interesting proposal to move ferry services to Cairnryan instead of to Old House Point, which would make it easier to extend the railway line. But—[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Minister, I want to interrupt you for just a moment. If members are holding any conversations that absolutely have to take place, they should take them outside the chamber.

**Mr MacAskill:** Will the minister give way?

**Nicol Stephen:** Surely.

**Mr MacAskill:** Given the minister's intimation that he will not seek any more powers from the

Parliament, will he tell us how much has been guaranteed by the SRA for investment in rail infrastructure?

**Nicol Stephen:** I am convinced that there will be very significant investment from that source. Indeed, we have existing commitments from the SRA. I will meet Richard Bowker next Monday to make the case for additional funding and will continue to press for it.

I thought that Kenny MacAskill's intervention was going to be about the Cairnryan rail link. However, on that subject, I should make it clear to Alex Fergusson that it would up to Dumfries and Galloway Council to develop any such proposals.

I agree with Pauline McNeill that choices are important. Indeed, investment in bus services and, in particular, park-and-ride services is also important, which is why we are spending £80 million on grants and subsidies for bus services and another £100 million on concessionary fares.

In the impassioned final second of her speech, Pauline McNeill mentioned ScotRail and problems with the trains. The number of rail passenger journeys that originate in Scotland grew from 55 million in 1991 to 65 million in 2001. We need to improve services and expand capacity, and are committed to the biggest-ever investment in new rolling stock. In fact, that investment is significantly ahead of anything that the Conservatives delivered. Over the next 18 months, 22 new Turbostar trains will come into service along with six new trains that we have helped Strathclyde Passenger Transport to fund.

Roads are important not only to car users but to bus passengers, cyclists and others. I am determined to deliver vital road projects, particularly where real safety or environmental improvements can be made. This week, we received good news about a significant decline in the number of deaths and serious injuries on our roads. Compared with the mid-1990s, there has been a 27 per cent fall in that figure for adults and a 38 per cent fall for children. Despite the increase in car use that we have witnessed, the total number of deaths and serious injuries has fallen from more than 10,000 in 1970—

**Rosie Kane:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I never thought that I would say this, but I really want to hear the minister.

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Well, that is helpful. I ask members to be a little more quiet.

**Nicol Stephen:** I will keep going. As I was saying, despite the increase in car use, the total number of deaths and serious injuries has fallen from more than 10,000 a year in 1970 to just over 3,500 in 2002.

I say to Chris Ballance that I recognise the importance of making representations about the Royal Mail's decision. I believe that that decision is extremely disappointing and I will make representations on the matter.

On Rosie Kane's point about local authorities having the power to make the advisory 20mph speed limits mandatory, I say that those powers exist. We are working at ways of having such limits more often and in more places. Those mandatory powers need to be encouraged and I want to see that happen more often.

I will mention how pleased I am to see Brian Monteith participating in yet another debate. All that would be needed to seal my delight would be to have Cathy Jamieson sitting to my left and Mike Russell up in the gallery.

Investing in public transport will deliver improvements for passengers and provide the capacity and a quality service to attract new passengers. One of the aims of our investment is to break down the barriers that prevent people from using public transport. Many people tell us that they would like to use public transport more, but—and there are lots of reasons why they do not do so. We are determined to make the choice easier. It will be easier for the elderly person, who now has access to concessionary fares. It will also be easier for parents to let their child cycle or walk to school because we will have safer routes to schools.

Reopening railway lines will make rail travel a much more convenient option in all parts of Scotland. Reducing the cost of flights to the Highlands and Islands will give people better access to essential services and boost the local economy. Similarly, the introduction of new ferry services will help to bring the islands closer to vital markets. If we want a thriving Scottish economy, strong communities and a sustainable environment, we need an efficient, safe and reliable public transport system. I want the Parliament to be remembered for delivering on those issues.

## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is consideration of a Parliamentary Bureau motion. I ask Patricia Ferguson to speak to and move motion S2M-127, on the deputy convener of the Subordinate Legislation Committee.

17:02

**The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Patricia Ferguson):** Parliament will perhaps recall that last week I moved a motion, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to allow committees to be formed and to indicate to Parliament the political affiliation of the convener and deputy convener of each of the committees.

It is worth putting on record that, in order to accommodate the involvement in the committees of the Scottish Green Party, the Scottish Socialist Party and the independent members of our Parliament, every party in the chamber made sacrifices towards a package that was aimed at maximising the inclusiveness of our committee structure. My own party relinquished the deputy convenerhip of the Environment and Rural Development Committee to the Greens and the deputy convenerhip of the Subordinate Legislation Committee to the SSP. As I am sure that members will recognise, those are both important committees.

I am sorry that I have to come back to Parliament today to move a further Parliamentary Bureau motion to allow the deputy convenerhip of the Subordinate Legislation Committee to revert back to the Labour party, mainly because of the unwillingness of the SSP to fill the post. Given the protestations that we heard last week from the SSP about its involvement in committees, it should be a matter of great regret that a committee that in its short life has had some illustrious members—Margo MacDonald, Bristow Muldoon and Kenny MacAskill, to name but three—should not be regarded as important enough to merit the time, commitment and participation of members of the SSP.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the Deputy Convener of the Subordinate Legislation Committee be appointed from the Labour Party.

**The Presiding Officer:** Carolyn Leckie has asked to speak. That is at my discretion and I allow her to speak briefly.

17:04

**Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP):** I think that it is for the Scottish Socialist Party to determine how best to represent the people who voted for us and how best to achieve the vision of the independent socialist Scotland for which we are campaigning.

I support Patricia Ferguson's motion. I am happy for the Labour party to have the deputy convenership of the Subordinate Legislation Committee and I am sure that the member who will perform that role will also be happy.

17:05

**Patricia Ferguson:** I wonder whether Ms Leckie's happiness—as she put it—to give the deputy convenership of the Subordinate Legislation Committee to a member of the Labour party has anything to do with Ms Kane's comment in court yesterday that she hoped that her community service would be on a Thursday afternoon so that she would not have to come to the chamber.

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

## Decision Time

17:05

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** At present, there are eight questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S2M-124.4, in the name of Tavish Scott, which seeks to amendment motion S2M-124, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on Europe, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Mr Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)

Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Mr Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Mr Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 61, Against 36, Abstentions 15.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** In that case, amendment S2M-124.2, in the name of Phil Gallie, and amendment S2M-124.3, in the name of Frances Curran, fall. Therefore, the next question is, that motion S2M-124, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on Europe, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Mr Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)

Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Mr Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Mr Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 64, Against 36, Abstentions 16.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

#### *Resolved,*

That the Parliament welcomes the many benefits that the European Union (EU) has delivered for Europe and for Scotland; continues to believe that the EU should seek to become more effective, efficient, democratic, transparent, accountable and easier to understand; notes the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe towards these objectives; further welcomes the submission to the convention of the proposals on Europe and the regions drawn up by the Scottish Executive in conjunction with Her Majesty's Government and the Welsh Assembly Government; further notes with approval the references in the draft Constitutional Treaty under consideration in the convention to the role of the regions, and to mechanisms for consulting them; welcomes the intention of Her Majesty's Government to involve the devolved administrations in the operation of the subsidiarity mechanism proposed by the convention, and calls on the Scottish Executive to continue to work with other sub-member state administrations and Her Majesty's Government to ensure that Scottish interests are fully taken into account during the forthcoming Inter-Governmental Conference.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S2M-130.3, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, which seeks to amend motion S2M-130, in the name of Nicol Stephen, on investing in public transport, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Mr Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Mr Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

#### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Mr Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)

Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 33, Against 82, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S2M-130.1, in the name of David Mundell, which seeks to amend motion S2M-130, in the name of Nicol Stephen, on investing in public transport, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)



Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Mr Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Mr Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)

Mather, Mr Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 22, Against 66, Abstentions 26.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S2M-130, in the name of Nicol Stephen, on investing in public transport, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Gibson, Mr Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)

Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Mr Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Mr Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 89, Against 26, Abstentions 1.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament welcomes the proposals set out in *A Partnership for a Better Scotland* for a reliable, safe, efficient and sustainable transport system to connect Scotland and encourage economic growth; recognises the importance that the Scottish Executive attaches to delivering improved public transport services by increasing investment and establishing a strategic authority, and recognises that the public transport system must serve the environmental, health and educational needs of people of Scotland.

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S2M-127, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the deputy convener of the Subordinate Legislation Committee, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Deputy Convener of the Subordinate Legislation Committee be appointed from the Labour Party.

## Animal Welfare Centres (Closure)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-34, in the name of Shona Robison, on the closure of animal welfare centres.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament is concerned about the possible closure of at least seven of the 13 animal welfare centres across Scotland owing to financial difficulties being experienced by the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA); believes that this would be detrimental to animal welfare; notes with relief that the SSPCA board of management has postponed making a final decision on the closures of the centres for a further six months, and considers that the Scottish Executive should hold urgent discussions with the SSPCA to try to find a way of keeping the animal welfare centres open.

17:12

**Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP):** The debate is not about cute kittens and fluffy bunnies, although I might have a soft spot for both. It is about the hard realities of animal welfare provision in Scotland and how seriously the Parliament and Executive take animal welfare.

The Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is facing a financial crisis that is not of its own making but is due to realities of the marketplace. The crisis arose because of a combination of rising costs, higher insurance costs after September 11, higher water and council tax charges, the loss of income from stock market investments and a deficit of £2 million in the society's pension fund that had to be made good to protect staff pensions.

Those are the facts and their impact will be immense. The SSPCA has already cut some of its services, including its 24-hour service that allowed animal emergencies to be reported at night. Many members will have received the same letter from the society that I received in March, which highlighted the further financial cuts that are under consideration. The letter proposed closure of seven out of 13 animal welfare centres, a reduction in the society's education department and a cut in the number of ambulance drivers. It is likely that there will be up to 60 redundancies.

It is fair to say that those proposals provoked a strong reaction from the public and from MSPs. That public pressure secured a stay of execution until October. We must use that time wisely in order to turn the situation around.

Members are concerned about the loss of their local centres and will no doubt want to say something about that during tonight's debate. The

cross-party interest in doing something to save the animal welfare centres is a great strength of the campaign. I thank everyone across all the parties who signed my motion. I also pay tribute to the campaign that was launched by the *Scottish Mirror* newspaper to raise public awareness about the issue. However, let us be clear: if some form of assistance, even in the short term, is not forthcoming, there will be a serious reduction in animal welfare services in Scotland.

The work of the animal welfare centres is crucial in a number of ways. My own centre, at Petterden, just outside Dundee, is a good example. In the year ending 2002, the centre cared for 63 dogs, 51 of which were rehomed, and 156 cats, 134 of which were rehomed. A further 279 other animals were cared for at the centre. I was struck by the dedication of the staff who work at Petterden, many of whom have worked there for a great number of years.

Everyone locally knows where the centre is, and they go there if they are looking for a new pet, hence the good rehoming rates. People also know where to take injured animals, which they do frequently. The work that the centre does with local schools is important in teaching children how to be responsible and how to treat animals well. Last year across Scotland, nearly 28,000 pupils were taught about animal welfare by the SSPCA. Given the levels of animal cruelty in our society, we cannot underestimate the value of the work that is being done with children. Much of that local work is at risk if the animal welfare centres close.

The total running costs for Petterden are less than £80,000 a year, which does not seem much in the bigger scheme of things when we consider the work that it does, yet in the current financial crisis it is beyond the means of the SSPCA to continue with the centre. So what can be done? First, the public have a key role. In addition to the obvious way of giving support through donations, we need to ensure that donations go to the right place. Too often, donations are lost to Scotland as a result of confusion with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which is a completely separate organisation. Recently, a legacy of £250,000 from a regular donor to the SSPCA was lost as a result of its being left, almost certainly in error, to the RSPCA. Members of the public need to know about that, and I support the awareness campaign that is being launched by the SSPCA. The public can do other things. For example, they can sponsor a space in an animal welfare centre, which I encourage them to do.

MSPs can help too, by putting pressure on the local authorities in their areas to enter into discussions with the SSPCA about the local services that they provide. As is often the case, there are 101 varieties of contracts and

arrangements between the SSPCA and councils. Those discussions could centre on the varied and numerous statutory functions that the society performs, for which at present it gets little or no assistance from public funds.

The society has 58 uniformed inspectors who investigate alleged cruelty cases and report offences to the procurator fiscal. They carry out routine monitoring of animal premises, such as farms and pet shops. They are involved in incidents of neglect or disease on farms, and are trained in humane destruction techniques. They investigate cases of badger baiting, dog fighting, illegal snaring and much more. They also have to respond to calls from local authority departments to care for animals that have been left due to elderly people being unable to remain at home and to care for animals that have been left abandoned in empty houses, and to many other requests. It is fair to say that every local authority makes use of the society's services, but financial assistance is inconsistent and patchy. I hope that MSPs will use their influence to improve that situation.

All that will take time to take effect, though. The immediate crisis will require assistance from the Scottish Executive. This is not just a plea for funds—although it is a plea for funds—but a plea for recognition of the statutory functions that are performed by the SSPCA, and a test of how seriously the Executive takes animal welfare.

There is some confusion over which department has responsibility for animal welfare. It seems that the Minister for Environment and Rural Development has responsibility, but so do the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Finance and Public Services. That makes it difficult for negotiations to take place. That the society has been calling for the creation of an integrated animal welfare portfolio since 1999 is worthy of further consideration. The Executive must also recognise that some financial burdens that have contributed to the society's financial difficulties have originated from the Executive itself—increased water charges since the removal of charitable relief is a good example.

What I am asking for is simple: a commitment from the minister to meet the SSPCA to discuss ways in which assistance could be given to the society through a difficult period. There is light at the end of the tunnel. The society is working hard through fund-raising efforts to move forward, but a helping hand at this stage would allow it to get on to a more secure financial footing so that it can continue to provide Scotland with an animal welfare service of which we can be truly proud. I hope that the minister will listen to what is said in the debate and respond positively. I look forward to hearing what he has to say.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We are pretty pressured for time and I am grateful that a couple of members have pulled out on that basis. If we keep to three minutes, I should be able to call all members who wish to speak.

17:21

**Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab):** I thank Shona Robison for lodging the motion. The issue certainly caused a great deal of concern, and did so particularly at a difficult period during the election campaign. I am pleased with the efforts that have been made—Shona Robison mentioned the *Scottish Mirror* campaign, but there has also been action by the Transport and General Workers Union, of which I am a member, and MSPs. Such action has led to a reprieve from the board until October, for which we are thankful.

The SSPCA's work does not have to be highlighted. The society is involved in many areas other than animal welfare centres. I could mention inspectors, education, training, campaigns and so on, but the financial situation that Shona Robison spoke about is the key issue that we must consider.

So far, there has been no lack of effort in considering ways to get a funding package together. During the election campaign, I wrote to Ross Finnie and asked him whether he would be willing to consider how financial help could be given. To be fair to him, he said, rightly, that he had not been approached by the SSPCA at that time. I have also written to the Minister for Justice Cathy Jamieson and asked for what Shona Robison has asked for today—a meeting involving SSPCA representatives, the minister and her department to discuss ways forward. There have been several meetings in my locality in Stirling and the chief executive Ian Gardiner has been in attendance. Others—Jackie Baillie and no doubt Shona Robison in her area—have had meetings. Latterly, I chaired a meeting that brought together as many of the parties as possible, including the SSPCA and the Transport and General Workers Union—we hoped to get a member from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, but unfortunately they could not be there. The meeting was fruitful in considering the type of funding that we need to get together. Such funding would include, for example, lottery and European funding, funding for training, Scottish Executive funding—which has been mentioned—and local authority funding. I have also written to Stirling Council, which is willing to consider putting money into the local centre or the SSPCA.

That is the final point that I want to make, but we may have to address other issues. Perhaps one such issue would be some form of devolved management to local centres; many people are

enthusiastic about giving money to their local centres, but sometimes do not like their money going into a main central pot.

17:24

**Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** I should register an interest—there is an animal welfare centre in Ayr, which provides a good service. I think that the motion was originally entitled “Animal Welfare Centres”, but I recognise that its implications go much deeper than that.

It came as something of a shock to me to find out that funding of the SSPCA is purely voluntary and that no Government money seems to be going into the organisation. I am not one to ask for Government money to be spent higgledy-piggledy, but the SSPCA provides a national service. The inspectors perform duties that I see as responsibilities of a Government that is committed to animal welfare. The Government has a responsibility to ensure that animal welfare is sustained at a high level in our country.

The issue goes even deeper than that. Cruelty to animals affects our society in the most hideous ways. Both young people and older people are responsible for it. The task of the inspectors is to create a bridge—to pull people back so that they recognise the problems that cruelty to animals creates. The inspectors provide vital services for which the Government has a responsibility.

Sylvia Jackson made a number of constructive proposals for alternative means of funding. I would like all those suggestions to be investigated. I would like the minister to say tonight that the Scottish Executive has a responsibility for this issue, as part of its justice remit, and perhaps to give the SSPCA some well-deserved relief.

17:26

**Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD):** I congratulate Shona Robison on securing this debate and thank her for bringing this issue before the chamber this evening. I am the constituency MSP for the headquarters of the SSPCA, but I know that the society has centres around the country and that a number of MSPs take an interest in this matter. MSPs from all parties, including Shona Robison, Sylvia Jackson and Jackie Baillie, have exerted considerable pressure to ensure that we deal with the funding crisis that the SSPCA faces at the moment.

It is welcome news that seven animal centres have been reprieved from closure. However, it is important that we use this debate as an opportunity to safeguard the longer-term funding of the SSPCA and to ensure that all the partners with which the SSPCA works on a regular basis are brought into the loop in the way in which Sylvia

Jackson outlined, so that services are paid for by the people who ought to pay for them.

The SSPCA is central to animal welfare in Scotland. It receives 90,000 calls from the public, attends 40,000 incidents and conducts 9,500 investigations. It has already been said that its work is not about picking up cuddly little chicks and fluffy little bunnies. Rather, it is about dealing with serious incidents related to animal welfare—sharp-end stuff. It is about education in our schools and keeping people such as us informed on a range of animal issues that we are considering—for example, wildlife crime and animal cruelty. One of the SSPCA’s most interesting roles in recent times was to highlight, through the first strike Scotland campaign, the link between cruelty to animals, cruelty to children and violence against other human beings.

The SSPCA works constantly with the police and local authorities. It is time for the Executive and local authorities to sit down with the SSPCA and to put costs against responses to calls from local authority social work departments, caring for animals when prisoners are on remand and working with housing departments when inspectors are called in to deal with animals that have been abandoned in empty houses. Our briefing paper indicates that those animals include snakes and spiders, as well as dogs and cats. We must start to quantify the cost of that work, which is being done in our communities and council areas on behalf of us all.

It is time that the SSPCA received some central Government funding to allow it to continue doing the great work that it does. I put on record my appreciation of the work that is done by the staff, volunteers and supporters of the SSPCA.

17:29

**Mr Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP):** I congratulate Shona Robison on her choice of debate tonight. The speeches that we have heard have shown the tremendous depth of support for and good will towards the SSPCA. I want to talk about a centre in my constituency, but what I will say could apply to every centre in Scotland, because we have come to expect the highest standards from them all.

Over many years, I have seen at first hand the tremendous work that is done at Petterden animal welfare centre and the range of animals that are looked after. I have witnessed the exceptional care that is offered to ensure that abandoned or injured animals are nursed back to health, that ill-treated and scared animals are nursed back to confidence and that animals are rehomed with care and sensitivity. Sharon Comrie and her staff deserve the highest praise for their work, which is a great asset to our community.

At this stage, I should perhaps declare an interest. My Jack Russell terrier, Sam, was abandoned when he was six weeks old. I found him as he was wandering in the countryside near the village of Arbuthnott in Kincardineshire. It was during an election campaign and I was on my way to a public meeting with Margaret Ewing—then MP, now MSP—the late Dr McCartney and his wife. In the middle of nowhere, we saw an object at the side of the road that turned out to be Sam. Of course, being politicians, we knocked at the nearest cottage door and asked whether the people there had lost a dog. The answer was no. After putting word around about the dog, we called in at the nearest police station. The police were helpful but were simply not equipped to cope with strays or abandoned animals. In this case, the animal, Sam, found a home with my family and is still alive and well 13 years later.

Without Petterden and similar establishments, the story for other lost, injured or abandoned animals would be different. My cat came from the Arbroath and district branch of Cats Protection and my other dog came from a local estate. My daughter's pony is now retired and pampered. I care deeply about the superb service that is offered by Petterden and other animal welfare centres. I urge everyone to give the maximum support to the SSPCA in its crucial work. If Petterden closes, there will be no major animal welfare centre in the north-east of Scotland. Sending animals in need to centres in Glasgow or Edinburgh is absurd and must not be allowed to happen.

The stock exchange will not always be in the doldrums and I hope that, with greater Scottish emphasis in the SSPCA's campaign, the charity will receive support. Scots should support their animal welfare organisation. I hope that this debate will generate some of that support and that the Scottish Executive will be able to play a part.

17:32

**Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green):** Obviously, Angus has produced some good MSPs, because three of us who all live close to Petterden have spoken. Like Mr Welsh, I have been the recipient of several rehomed animals—or perhaps I should say the ducks and geese that have taken up residence on our farm pond.

I was staggered to learn that Petterden is the only SSPCA centre in the north-east. Once it closes, there will be nothing. I could not believe that such a situation could have arisen in an organisation that has the word "Scottish" in its title. We cannot allow it to happen. The SSPCA is a Scottish society that represents all of Scotland. Rather than closing centres, it should be opening centres further north.

I am relieved to hear that the inspectors' jobs are not at risk, but the planned redundancies of about 60 members of staff must be prevented. It was pointed out to me that, if the ambulance drivers become redundant, that would have an incredible knock-on effect on the replacement of inspectors. Ambulance drivers gain a great deal of experience in their time on the job and that allows them to move smoothly into the job of inspectors.

The wider role that the SSPCA provides in terms of the volunteering aspect of its work is never costed. Giving people the chance to feel that they are doing something useful with their spare time is extremely valuable. I wish that there was a mathematical way of showing the relationship between the boost to self-esteem engendered by volunteering and the lessening of demand on the national health service. If it were possible to cost that benefit, perhaps the support that we are asking for from the Executive would be offset.

The SSPCA does a lot of good educational work. All primary 4 pupils have been given a chance to learn about the activities of the charity. Furthermore, the centres provide useful work-experience opportunities. All that is provided free of charge. Therefore, that is another cost.

All those unsung aspects of the SSPCA's work, as well as its traditional role, must be supported and not allowed to fall by the wayside. I urge the Executive to consider an interim funding package to enable the SSPCA to continue in all its roles while it seeks ways of ensuring its future. Part of that money could be offset against the unemployment benefit that would have to be paid if there were any redundancies.

17:35

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** Like other members, I congratulate Shona Robison on securing the debate. As the chamber knows, the news at the end of March about the proposal to close seven out of Scotland's 13 animal welfare centres caused considerable dismay in communities throughout Scotland. However, it is important for us to understand the context of the SSPCA's closures proposal. The charity had an operating deficit of £3 million pounds at the end of the year and a declining return on stock market investments, whose value has dropped over time from £20 million to less than £12 million.

I think that all members accept the need for financial stability in organisations. The SSPCA is no different from other organisations in that regard. However, there is perhaps an opportunity to look wider than the original remit that the board suggested—which was simply to consider cost-saving measures—to a view that would encompass thinking about how the SSPCA can

maximise its income. Like other members, I am delighted that the board agreed at the end of April to consider that issue, as that has provided a six-month window of opportunity.

I, too, should perhaps declare an interest, because Milton animal welfare centre, which is one of the SSPCA's bigger facilities, is in my Dumbarton constituency. Milton, like the other centres, provides an essential and valuable service to a huge geographical area that covers Argyll and Bute as well as East and West Dunbartonshire. Milton provides a first-class service, working alongside local authorities, in rehousing abandoned and mistreated animals. I believe that about 16,000 such animals were cared for in 2002.

Like most voluntary organisations, Milton has several other strands to its work. Its education service, which was cited earlier, makes contact with about 28,000 children a year. It also provides vocational training for unemployed adults, which enables them to move into jobs. Another aspect of Milton—and, I assume, other such centres—is the critical support of volunteers. Hundreds of volunteers throughout Scotland—the young and the old, and the employed and the unemployed alike—assist not only with the work of the animal welfare centres, but with fundraising.

The centres are held in high regard. For example, in my local area alone 20,000-odd people signed a petition. That situation was replicated in other areas. There were also many spontaneous donations to centres. I, too, received an e-mail from a young primary school child, in which she asked whether she and her friends could assist with fundraising.

Members have made several suggestions. I want to focus on the role of the Scottish Executive, because I think that all members are clearly aware of the need to sustain animal welfare centres. I pay tribute to the *Scottish Mirror* newspaper for its campaign and to the *Dumbarton and Vale of Leven Reporter*, the *Helensburgh Advertiser*, *The Lennox* and Castle Rock FM 103 for their support for Milton.

The situation is urgent and I know that MSPs will do all that they can to assist. However, a commitment from the Executive—from its voluntary issues unit or the Environment and Rural Affairs Department—will sustain an important service and allow us to have a discussion about its long-term stability.

17:39

**Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I, too, add my congratulations to Shona Robison on securing the debate. Indeed, I thank other MSPs who have been active on the issue.

I am concerned in particular by the potential closure of the SSPCA's animal welfare centre in Ayr and the adverse impact that that would have on the charity's good work in Ayrshire; that good work goes some way towards salving our collective conscience about mistreatment of animals. If the mark of a civilised society is the way in which it treats animals, we have a long way to go to come up to scratch on stamping out cruelty.

The closure of animal welfare centres and the inevitable reduction of the good work that the SSPCA is able to do in our communities would surely be a significant retrograde step, which all members must strive to ensure does not happen. We would be failing in our duty to promote animal welfare if we allowed the good work and services of people such as the Ayr centre's Marion Heaney and her assistants to be dispensed with. The people of Ayrshire certainly think so, going by the massive response to a petition and campaign that was organised by the *Ayrshire Post* to support the SSPCA presence in Ayr. I commend the *Ayrshire Post* for its efforts and wish it every success in the fund-raising events that it is organising for the Glasgow fair fortnight.

The annual running costs of the Ayr animal welfare centre are a mere £38,000. I, for one, do not believe that such a sum could not be generated from within communities that are affected by the proposals.

I do not want to be critical of the SSPCA in the debate—we need to find solutions, not to apportion blame—but might I suggest that there should be an overhaul of marketing strategy? The SSPCA should consider the impact that local newspapers such as the *Ayrshire Post* have achieved in a short time. Surely the way forward is to build from the grass roots and make a concerted effort to remove the confusion between the SSPCA and the RSPCA in the public mind. That confusion has lasted for far too long and has cost animal welfare in Scotland far too much lost revenue. That needs to be tackled now. I also urge the minister to respond positively to the many requests for help that we have heard tonight.

17:41

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP):** I thank Shona Robison for providing us with the opportunity to have this debate. It is genuinely a cross-party matter—I find myself agreeing with what Phil Gallie had to say and I will pick up on an important point that he made. Until the *Scottish Mirror* and the Transport and General Workers Union took up the campaign I, like Phil Gallie, had not understood that the SSPCA received no mainstream funding. I admit to my ignorance about that and must say that I find it sad that, in

Scotland, we do not mainstream fund our animal welfare centres.

**Dr Jackson:** I am not trying to target Tommy Sheridan. It could be—I think it is the case—that the SSPCA did not previously ask the Scottish Executive for money. It was quite happy with its funding situation.

**Tommy Sheridan:** I agree—I was going to come on to that point, because part of my contribution to the debate is to support the campaign to save the animal welfare structure and services that we have.

As a Glasgow MSP, it would be remiss of me not to mention the Cardonald cat and dog home near where I was brought up, which provides an excellent service. There is no doubt about that, because I have had occasion to visit it on several occasions. It is sad, however, that when I leave I think that some of the animals will not find homes and that some of their lives will be terminated. However, the staff and volunteers do the best that can.

I must say to members that, given the conditions in, and the size of, the Cardonald cat and dog home, the idea that the services in other parts of the country can somehow or other be transferred there is absolute nonsense. I hope that that is borne in mind.

I congratulate the SSPCA on the work that it has been doing and I want to try to increase campaigning to ensure that none of the 13 animal welfare centres is closed, but I also wonder whether it is time for an overhaul of the structure of animal welfare services in Scotland. When we examine the £8.9 million running costs and the fact that 32 local authorities throughout Scotland rely on those services, we must ask whether, at a cost of £300,000 per local authority, we could consider centralised funding and running of this essential service. My worry is that the service is viewed as a distant service that is not part and parcel of our society because it is seen as a charitable service. It should not be a charitable service; it should be mainstream funded.

Whether the service is fully or half mainstream funded, £300,000 for each of the 32 local authorities would give the service about £10 million, which would allow it to investigate even more of the 70,000 calls that are received. I wonder whether a call to provide that money could generate support throughout Scotland and throughout the Parliament—I do not think that there would be political opposition to that proposal. Even Phil Gallie said that such services deserve at least some mainstream funding. I argue that we should consider restructuring the service as a whole, so why not agree as a Parliament to fund that?

17:45

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie)**

**(Lab):** Like other speakers, I congratulate Shona Robison on securing the debate. There is widespread concern about the proposed closure of animal welfare centres. Jackie Baillie spoke about the closure of the Milton animal welfare centre, which serves not just the Dumbarton area but Argyll and Bute, the rest of West Dunbartonshire, including Clydebank, and all of East Dunbartonshire. Many people from my constituency and Dumbarton constituency have benefited from the centre's being there, and it would be a tragedy were it to close.

We should pay tribute to the many people in various parts of the country who have signed petitions on the issue and who have begun to pay attention to how the animal welfare centres can be saved. The *Clydebank Post* has run a campaign, and Jackie Baillie referred to the newspapers in her area. There is widespread public concern on the matter, and it is entirely right that we in the Parliament are discussing it and considering different approaches to securing the service that we have.

I take Tommy Sheridan's point that, in considering how we secure those services, we should not necessarily close our eyes to investigating ways in which the service can be improved or changed. We need to examine the financial circumstances as well as the animal welfare issues. We also need to assess the range of provision across geographical areas and gauge the appropriate balance to strike in order to meet the need that exists.

There needs to be an enhanced local dimension to the way in which the services are provided; I question whether the SSPCA has the balance right between its headquarters functions and the services that it provides locally. We should be trying to make it easier for people who wish to make donations to their local animal welfare centre to do so, with that funding not necessarily going into the organisation's larger pot.

There is an important role for the Scottish Executive to carry out along with the SSPCA and other organisations in identifying ways to improve the quality of fundraising and in managing the funds once they are gathered in. It is not necessarily the right solution for the Executive to assume the costs of providing the service; I think that the public are willing to make an increased contribution, as has been demonstrated through some of the campaigning that has taken place. However, the Executive still has a strategic role in improving the way in which such organisations as the SSPCA gather funding and balance their funds between various activities. If it turns out that there are matters that the Executive should be



examining, such as the question whether it should fund the SSPCA's headquarters function, it is only reasonable for the Executive to look into them.

Local authorities and interests should be given a greater role in assessing how local animal welfare centres can be secured. We have discussed the introduction of community planning; animal welfare services could benefit from community planning becoming a reality, with local interests and local authorities getting more involved in decision-making processes.

17:49

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** It is appropriate that I am speaking at the tail-end of the debate. I am an incorrigible pet owner—I have had one dog and six cats in my adult lifetime. The only animal I purchased was the dog; the cats were either rescued or were literally left on the doorstep. Contrary to my image in here, I am a kind person and a responsible pet owner. As we know, unfortunately, many people are not. Sometimes I cannot bring myself to look at the pictures that are sent by the SSPCA and other animal welfare organisations. The cruelty shown to the animals concerned is just too horrific.

I put down a marker for Mellerstain in the Borders, the first SSPCA welfare centre, which was opened in 1992. It is a small place, but it is part of support services for animal welfare in the Borders. It supports the work of inspectors, so if it goes, there will be no central place for them. It takes in animals that are subject to cruelty and that are unwanted in the area.

**Dr Jackson:** Will the member give way?

**Christine Grahame:** I would love to, but I have only three minutes. Can I get a bit of extra time, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Yes.

**Christine Grahame:** I will take an intervention.

**Dr Jackson:** The member highlighted the fact that the centre that she mentioned is a small centre, similar to that in Stirling. Does she agree that there are issues with security cover in such centres?

**Christine Grahame:** Yes, I know that there are issues to be considered in small centres. I was going to mention the fact that the manager at Mellerstain, a lovely lady called Mary Thomson, is not well just now and that means that the animals have had to be decanted elsewhere. That is unfortunate, but there is a dependence on one person at the centre.

It is dreadful that 4,500 animals have gone through the centre since 1992. The centre has a policy—as, I am thankful, have many—of not

putting animals down just because they have nowhere to go. Some animals are difficult to rehome, because of the life that they have had.

I will finish with a little story, which cheered me up immensely. It just goes to show the little touches that there are in small centres. I was told the story of a dog that nobody would take, because it suffered from severe separation anxiety—I think I know the feeling. The centre eventually found someone to take it who suffered from agoraphobia—it was a marriage of animal and person made in heaven. It is those wee touches that make the small welfare centres worth while.

On a serious note, I support the mainstreaming of funding for the SSPCA. For goodness' sake let us educate people that an animal is not a thing; as they say, an animal is with you for the whole of its life.

17:52

**The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Allan Wilson):** I will try to deal with the points that members have raised and I am happy to take interventions and questions on anything that is not covered in the Environment and Rural Affairs Department's notes.

I congratulate Shona Robison on bringing the matter to the Parliament's attention. The debate has helpfully drawn attention to the SSPCA's recent financial problems.

The SSPCA has a long history and a substantial annual budget. There is something in the British psyche or—I say this with due respect to the nationalists—the Scottish psyche, if there is such a thing, that says that animals should be cared for when they are injured or abandoned. Every member who has spoken tonight has said as much.

The SSPCA came into being without stimulation from central Government and, as Tommy Sheridan and others have said, continues to this day to provide a comprehensive range of animal welfare services without central support. The SSPCA has always been robustly independent of local and central Government. Through its inspectors, in particular, it makes a substantial contribution to the fight against cruelty to animals. With increasing evidence that cruelty to animals is an important predictor of violent and callous behaviour towards human beings, the influence of the SSPCA's work cannot be underestimated.

Shona Robison asked whether there was a test for the Scottish Executive and Tommy Sheridan asked whether it was time to consider animal welfare in its widest sense. If there is a test for the Executive, it is one that I would wish it to pass.

Perhaps Tommy Sheridan is right that it is time to consider animal welfare in its widest sense.

This year we have joined our colleagues in UK departments in consulting on a more strategic approach to the welfare of animals that are kept by man. More recently, we circulated for consultation a draft protection of animals bill, which is designed to address the lack of power available to local authorities to remove livestock where necessary, for example.

We are concerned about the serious financial difficulties that prevail at the SSPCA, on which all members have commented. However, we are happy to note that the society has been able to defer closures of animal welfare centres for six months.

**Phil Gallie:** I emphasise that I was not looking for a handout for the SSPCA in my earlier comments; I was looking for a payment. The SSPCA already has contracts with some local authorities to carry out certain statutory duties. That is what I envisage from the Scottish Executive.

**Allan Wilson:** At this point, I should probably confess to not being an expert in the field, as I inherited the problem only recently. As I understand it, the SSPCA is not seeking a handout either. Local authorities have statutory responsibilities and must employ specialist staff. That applies especially to dogs, as others have mentioned.

At UK level, the Government has policies to ensure that the value of gifts—on which the SSPCA has been very reliant, historically—can be maximised. The society derives its principal income from public donations, subscriptions and legacies. The tax concessions that are available—which are a boon to all charities—enable those contributions to be maximised.

I share the concerns that have been expressed about the SSPCA's immediate situation, regardless of how it arose. I know that the society is looking hard at all the funding options. Many members—Sylvia Jackson, in particular—have engaged closely in discussions with the society on the options for maximising its income.

We understand that the society intends to make a further approach to the Executive for support. We would be happy to discuss funding issues with the society, but it must take the initiative. As the society is an independent body, it is not my job to manage its affairs.

**Dr Jackson:** A letter has been sent to Cathy Jamieson to ask whether she will liaise with the SSPCA, so I ask the minister to liaise with Cathy Jamieson.

**Allan Wilson:** I will be happy to do that; I hope

that we will be able to shortcut the process.

**Tommy Sheridan:** I appreciate that the minister cannot make commitments tonight, but is he open to the idea that, if the society's financial crisis becomes even more serious, the Executive has a responsibility on behalf of society to pick up that animal welfare provision?

**Allan Wilson:** I accept the member's point. My only caveat is that we have not yet received a formal request. If and when we receive such a request, we will have to consider it in the context of other demands for support. I sought some advice about how many charities are involved in the field. In addition to the SSPCA, we have organisations such as the National Canine Defence League, the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals and the Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home; I could go on. As always, the situation is not as simple as we might expect.

We would have to consider funding support in the context of long-term sustainable recovery plans, which would involve giving due respect to the organisation in any discussions. As I have said, I would be happy to take part in such discussions.

I stress that the SSPCA decided to make an application for funding from the Executive only recently—we have not been sitting on an application, waiting for a response or twiddling our thumbs. We have still not received an application, although we have a letter from Sylvia Jackson.

The situation is developing. I know that the SSPCA has decided to launch a public appeal for funds and to investigate the possibility of securing funding from other sources. It is considering imposing charges on local authorities for services that, until now, it has provided free. All those developments are commendable actions that ought to be pursued.

Perhaps the best way forward, as has been suggested, is for the Executive and MSPs to work together with the SSPCA to devise a strategy for new income so that the charity can safeguard its independence, which it presumably cherishes. Such a strategy must offer a long-term sustainable future, so that we do not have to return to the same unhappy subject two years later.

It is probably premature to draw any dark conclusions from the situation. As has been said, the SSPCA still has £12.5 million or thereabouts in preserved assets and its inspection service is, I believe, unaffected by the proposals. The SSPCA is also a highly regarded organisation in the British and Scottish psyche. I presume that some operational adjustments will be necessary, but I understand that some of the smaller animal welfare centres that have been referred to have problems that are a bit more complex and which

need more than simply additional resource. There is obviously a lot to be discussed. The Executive is concerned, but central funding per se may not be the sole answer.

Personally, I am in no doubt that the SSPCA will overcome its current problems and will prosper in the future. I give the assurance that every member has sought that the Executive will be pleased to sit down at the earliest opportunity with members and the society to discuss a sustainable long-term future for the service, which we all cherish and value and whose existence says something about us as a nation.

*Meeting closed at 18:01.*



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