

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 1 October 2003
(*Afternoon*)

Session 2

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 1 October 2003

(Afternoon)

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 14:30*]

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is the Rev Erik Cramb, co-ordinator of the Scottish Churches Industrial Mission.

The Rev Erik Cramb (Co-ordinator of the Scottish Churches Industrial Mission): At about half past six on Christmas Eve in 1969, I was in a bus queue in Argyle Street behind a wee woman—she wasn't very big; five foot nothing of pure Glasgow aggression. I remember it well. I was trying to buy Christmas presents and was skint. She was loaded up to the oxters with bags and parcels. The bus came along. It was one of what everyone in those days called the new-fangled, one-man-operated buses; it was not a kneeling bus. This wee woman struggled up the high step and she turned round and said to nobody in particular—you know how Glaswegians can mutter out loud—"Good grief, it's a sin tae be born wi short legs nowadays." We all laughed.

She started to make her way into the bus with all these parcels when the driver said, "Yer fare, missus."

"Ma fare?" she said in utter disbelief, "How in the name o the wee man am Ah supposed to get ma fare oot? Dae ye think Ah'm a bloomin octopus?"

"Ah cannae help it," the driver said apologetically.

"Ach, Ah know son," she said. She dropped her bags and parcels to the floor and started fishing in her purse. She turned to everyone behind her and said, "Ah bet the guy that designed this bus disnae travel in it. Ah bet he's probably the guy in that Jaguar at the back!"

Again, everyone laughed, but I have never forgotten that wee woman's insight. It is a truth that the people who design our buses do not travel in them, like the people who designed our high flats never lived in them.

At the heart of the Christian faith is the notion that, in the life of Jesus the carpenter of Nazareth, God has walked in our footsteps. I think that that is a challenge to those of us, like me, who

sometimes get into pulpits and talk from 10ft above contradiction—you would love that. It is also a challenge to you up here on this hill who legislate. How much do we walk in the footsteps of, or share life with, those whose lives we profoundly affect? If I may say so, the Public Petitions Committee is a wonderful tool for keeping in touch with daily life. Thank you and God bless you.

Mainstreaming Equality

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-411, in the name of Cathy Peattie, on behalf of the Equal Opportunities Committee, on its report, "Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities in the Work of Committees of the Scottish Parliament".

14:34

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): I thank Kate Maclean and everyone who served on the Equal Opportunities Committee in the first session of the Parliament. Special thanks also go to the Scottish Parliament information centre and to our wonderful clerking team.

The United Nations, the European Union, the Commonwealth and the International Labour Organisation all support equality mainstreaming. Mainstreaming shifts the focus away from equal opportunities as an add-on, towards considering it as an integral policy and legislative process.

Equal opportunities is defined in schedule 5 to the Scotland Act 1998 as

"the prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions."

Although equal opportunities matters are generally reserved under that act, there are two exceptions. The first is

"The encouragement (other than by prohibition or regulation) of equal opportunities, and in particular of the observance of the equal opportunity requirements."

The second exception allows duties to be imposed on any public authority that has

"mixed functions or no reserved functions, to make arrangements with a view to securing that the functions of the office-holder ... are carried out with due regard to the need to meet the equal opportunity requirements,"

which are the requirements of United Kingdom law.

Mainstreaming aims to build in equality issues from the beginning, rather than bolting them on as an afterthought. The report of the consultative steering group, which was unanimously agreed by the Parliament, states:

"Equal opportunities should be mainstreamed into the work of the Parliament, and through the demands of and scrutiny by the Parliament, into the work of the Executive."

During the first session of Parliament, the Equal Opportunities Committee carried out a lengthy inquiry into how to mainstream equality in the work of the Parliament. The committee report recommends that the Parliament should adopt the following definition of mainstreaming:

"Mainstreaming' equality is essentially concerned with the integration of equal opportunities principles, strategies and practices into the every day work of Government and other public bodies from the outset, involving every day policy actors in addition to equality specialists. In other words, it entails rethinking mainstream provision to accommodate the equal opportunities categories as identified in the Scotland Act."

The committee views its work on mainstreaming in parallel with the on-going work of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body and the Scottish Executive.

The central recommendation of the Equal Opportunities Committee's report on mainstreaming is that all committees should adopt equality guidelines with regard to primary legislation, the information base and consultation. In proposing those guidelines, the committee welcomes the overwhelmingly positive response in support of the development of equality guidelines in all 45 submissions that were received. The Commission for Racial Equality Scotland stated that it is

"crucial that all committees of the Parliament take ownership of equalities matters".

The committee welcomes the Procedures Committee's statement that

"all committees should attach the highest priority to implementing"

the equality guidelines.

The Equal Opportunities Committee is not a policing committee, but rather a catalyst for equality issues. The committee will consider producing implementation notes, but those will not be exhaustive and it is expected that committees will develop processes further. Equality guidelines are a resource for committees to apply in their routine practice.

All parliamentary committees have heavy work loads and the committee recognises the need to minimise the impact of mainstreaming on resources that are already stretched. However, external research commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Committee suggests that, following an initial implementation phase,

"Equality Guidelines should not produce additional work for MSPs or lengthen the process of legislative scrutiny or other committee functions".

Furthermore, the committee recognises that mainstreaming equality is a long-term strategy, which, in many respects, requires a cultural shift as much as a review of processes.

Equality guideline 1 relates to primary legislation. Under the Parliament's standing orders, policy memoranda that accompany Executive bills must include an assessment of the effects of the bill on equal opportunities. In its report on the guiding principles of the Scottish

Parliament, the Procedures Committee recommended that the lead committee on a bill should take greater responsibility for equal opportunities in relation to the bill. The aim of the guideline is primarily to aid subject committees in checking that the bill sponsor has considered equality issues effectively.

It is suggested that, at a minimum, the lead committee write to the sponsor with the six questions that are listed in annex C, which were developed by the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission. In addition, a committee may wish to raise issues that are specific to individual bills. To allow enough time for a written response and further consideration, the lead committee may wish to write to the bill sponsor at the beginning of stage 1. All stage 1 reports should include a section that is specific to equal opportunities.

A number of common themes emerged from the Equal Opportunities Committee's analysis of Executive legislation. The first concerned consultation. The committee found encouraging signs that the Executive is consulting more effectively both statutory and other equality groups prior to the introduction of a bill. However, a lack of information sometimes makes it difficult to assess that. One approach would be to invite the Executive to provide a list of consultees along with its response to the lead committee and to consider the extent to which smaller and less well-resourced groups have been consulted.

The second theme concerned the issue of accessible formats. There should be a commitment in all relevant bills to provide information in accessible formats.

The third theme concerned the recognition of differential impact. All lead committees should check that the bill sponsor has laid out clearly, under the heading "Effects on Equal Opportunities", how any differential impact has been assessed, including such evidence as disaggregated statistics. For example, with the Community Care and Health (Scotland) Bill, the Executive noted the benefit to women, who make up 58 per cent of carers.

The fourth theme concerned the lack of detail contained in a bill. The committee was concerned about how much detail—especially on equality provisions—is left to regulations or guidance rather than included in the bill. That makes it difficult to assess how well the policy process has mainstreamed equality.

The fifth theme concerned the effect of legislation on equal opportunities. The committee noted the marked increase in detail relevant to equal opportunities that the Executive provides in its policy memorandum.

The final theme concerned the idea of an overarching equality statement. The committee recommended that the Executive include an overarching equality statement in all its bills. That would show commitment to the mainstreaming of equality and would highlight the intent to deliver all provisions with due regard to equal opportunities.

Equality guideline 2, on the information base, highlights the need for committees to have access to relevant sources of up-to-date information. A list of data sources may assist committees in deciding who to include in consultation exercises or in defining inquiry remits. The committee recommended that the Parliament develop a database of equal opportunity contacts and consultees, which would be accessible to all committees. In the meantime, the Equal Opportunities Committee's clerking team has developed and is maintaining a database of contacts who have expressed an interest and given permission for their details to be held.

The third equality guideline, on consultation, encourages committees to build in equality considerations in considering consultations and inquiries. I note that the Procedures Committee's MORI survey indicated MSPs' concern that proceedings should take account of the views of excluded groups. In selecting witnesses, consultees and groups or individuals to invite to specific events, committees should seek to include as wide a range of people and organisations as is practicable, not just previous contacts or the usual suspects. The group that is invited should reflect the diversity of the target population.

The committee felt that training was very important and welcomed the fact that, in line with its equality framework, the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body has introduced two training courses for Parliament staff. The committee suggested that there should be further training for staff who support the work of committees and MSPs. That training should focus more specifically on mainstreaming equality in the work of parliamentary committees.

The committee believes that its recommendations in relation to mainstreaming equality in the work of the Parliament's committees are both practical and deliverable. In particular, the committee recommends that all the Parliament's committees should adopt the equality guidelines and the accompanying implementation notes.

We recognise that mainstreaming equality is a long-term policy and that our recommendations are simply a starting point. The Scottish Executive, the SPCB, the Procedures Committee, the consultative steering group and the Equal Opportunities Commission have all expressed a clear commitment to mainstreaming equality. That

is not a commitment to which we can all say “Aye”, and then file away with other papers. Success depends on an active commitment to mainstreaming equality by all committees of the Parliament. I trust that members will give a real commitment to mainstreaming equality.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the recommendations contained in the Equal Opportunities Committee’s 1st Report 2003: *Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities in the Work of Committees of the Scottish Parliament* (SP Paper 817).

14:45

The Minister for Communities (Ms Margaret Curran): It is actually 5ft 2in of Glasgow aggression. If members were not here for an excellent time for reflection, my initial remark will mean nothing to them. They will have to read the *Official Report*.

I am pleased to be speaking in this debate and want to put on record my warm welcome for the Equal Opportunities Committee’s work, which is an important contribution to the development of equality in Scotland. Like Cathy Peattie, I want to put on record our tribute to the previous Equal Opportunities Committee’s work. I commend Kate Maclean and all the members of that committee, who served it so well. I hope that we can have a continuing relationship of partnership and accountability with the present Equal Opportunities Committee. I appeared in front of the previous Equal Opportunities Committee many times—it was an interesting experience. We had robust exchanges and the members demonstrated strongly their commitment to accountability. I am sure that that work will continue under Cathy Peattie’s guidance.

Equality is one of the Parliament’s founding principles, so the subject that the Parliament is considering today is important. From the outset, there has been an expectation that the Parliament would address inequality and injustice, counter the effects of discrimination and prejudice and seek to bring social justice and social inclusion to Scottish democracy. Indeed, the fact that so many women were elected to the Parliament was regarded as the modernisation of Scotland.

We recognise, however, that more ground must be made up and the Executive has made an equal commitment to meet those expectations. Our vision is of a just, inclusive, fair and equal Scotland. It is fitting that equality should be debated so early in the new parliamentary session, just as it was at the start of the previous session.

Yesterday, the report of the study on discrimination that was undertaken by the National

Centre for Social Research Scotland, in collaboration with the Executive, the CRE, the EOC, the Disability Rights Commission and Stonewall Scotland—I take it that we are all familiar with the acronyms—demonstrated clearly why it is right for the Parliament and the Executive to give equality such a high profile. The report was timely for this debate.

Of those surveyed, 68 per cent said that the country should do as much as it can to get rid of all kinds of prejudice. In addition, prejudice against people on the grounds of race, disability, gender and sexual orientation was recognised to varying degrees. That is a significant finding. Of course, it is still of concern that 26 per cent of those surveyed thought that there is sometimes good reason to be prejudiced. There is a need to continue to tackle prejudice and discrimination. That is why the Executive will continue with its “One Scotland. Many Cultures” campaign, challenging racism, promoting respect for diversity and encouraging greater recognition of what we have in common. We are pleased that we have just started a joint project with the Scottish Trades Union Congress to tackle racism in the workplace and that we are funding a development worker for the show racism the red card campaign in Scotland and continuing our support for the equal futures project, which raises awareness about race equality among young people.

The social attitudes survey flung up other interesting points. For example, people think that disabled people and women experience less prejudice than gays and lesbians, or those from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, we know that disabled people and women experience discrimination and prejudice. Disabled people are three times more likely than non-disabled people to have no qualifications. Over two thirds of households with a disabled person have an income of less than £10,000 a year and the unemployment rate for disabled people is almost double that for non-disabled people. That is why we are taking a range of initiatives to support disabled people. We have worked with disability organisations around the European year of disabled people and will continue to support measures to improve the lives of disabled people in Scotland.

Women make up 52 per cent of the population, but we still do not have equal pay, despite 30 years of equal pay legislation. We know that women are more likely to live in poverty, earn low wages and be poorer in old age.

The social attitudes survey recognised that people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender can experience discrimination. The Executive is totally committed to LGBT equality and to tackling homophobic discrimination and

prejudice. Older and younger people, as well as Gypsy Travellers, can also experience discrimination and exclusion. Some people might experience discrimination on the grounds of their religious beliefs and observances.

Equality is not a marginal issue, and we know that discrimination and prejudice exist across the range of equality interests, but we can do much to change the experiences of many in our communities. That is why the debate is so important. The Parliament is well placed to take the equality agenda forward, because the Scotland Act 1998 contains a broad definition of equal opportunities, allowing scope for activity across a range of areas.

As Cathy Peattie has ably demonstrated, the Equal Opportunities Committee has a key role in considering and reporting on matters relating to equal opportunities and on the observance of equal opportunities within the Parliament—in the Parliament's structures, its work and its impact. The Executive recognises the Scottish Parliament's commitment to equal opportunities and warmly welcomes the Equal Opportunities Committee's inquiry on mainstreaming equality in the work of the committees of the Parliament.

The Equal Opportunities Committee's approach to mainstreaming is the concern of all committees, and mainstreaming is central to the Scottish Executive's approach to equality. Our work has developed in parallel with the advances made by the Parliament and its Equal Opportunities Committee. The Committee's report and recommendations will be helpful in developing our own approach, and I look forward to developing that shared agenda and to working in partnership.

We should be confident that there is widespread support in Scotland for the mainstreaming of equality. We all recognise the diversity of our population, but we recognise less readily the consequent diversity of its needs and aspirations and the varying impact of decisions and policies on different groups. If we look around our constituencies and the people living in them, as we were encouraged to do during time for reflection, we will see that women and men, disabled people, people in minority ethnic groups—all sorts of different people—have very different experiences of the world and have very different needs.

Mainstreaming equality means recognising and taking those differences into account, not just as a tokenistic gesture, but throughout our work. It means that equality issues will be integrated into policy making, legislation, spending plans, service design and programme development. It means addressing equality issues from the start, not as an add-on or afterthought.

People now expect their needs to be catered for in the mainstream of policy, and not just through sporadic initiatives or short-term projects. We can make a difference to the lives of so many people in Scotland if we bring that perspective to our daily business. The Executive's equality strategy, which was published in November 2000, represents a decisive and significant commitment on the part of the Executive, and it remains central to our work on equality.

We have rejected the attitudes of the past and the belief that inequality is embedded in the natural order and is not a matter for intervention by the Government. That time, thankfully, is at an end. We are now delivering a framework through which we will find the means to combat intolerance, tackle prejudice and overcome discrimination. Today's debate offers a way to take that forward, to exchange views, to share experiences and to look ahead to how the Parliament and the Executive can work together more effectively to bring real, long-term change to the culture and approach of Government.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): How does the minister view current progress on producing a gender-proofed budget?

Ms Curran: We have discussed the matter many times in committee. I think that I am on record as saying that I regard the gender proofing of spending plans as critical to mainstreaming policy. Mainstreaming policy will allow us to follow spending plans appropriately. In the first session, we thought that we had only to say, "Let's gender proof the budget," and the rest would follow. Having looked at other models, we now understand that policy has to be mainstreamed, and that we must create the means to obtain the necessary information to deliver a properly gender-proofed budget. Otherwise, we end up with a fairly superficial approach. We are committed to ensuring that a gender-proofed budget is achieved. I can assure the member that I intend to move forward decisively on that in the coming period, and I will happily work with the Parliament and the Equal Opportunities Committee on the details of that. That falls within the principles of the Executive's equality strategy, and it is consistent with the other major policy initiatives of modernising government and social justice.

The principles and approaches of the strategy were endorsed in wide-ranging consultation and received strong support from the Parliament. There are benefits to Government of doing this work. It means that our policy will reflect better the needs of Scotland's diverse population and will deliver services that are more accessible and inclusive, and therefore more effective.

It must be recognised that our strategy is long term and overarching. At its core is a commitment

to mainstreaming, which is underpinned by strong commitments to consultation and stakeholder involvement, improving research and data and raising awareness. Cathy Peattie made interesting and telling points about how we consult and how we ensure that some smaller, less included groups are part of the consultation process. We will take on board the pointers that the committee has given us about consultation.

It is our intention that work on equality, particularly on mainstreaming, should go with the grain of departmental work. We have learnt many lessons from the work that was done during the first parliamentary session and we are beginning to apply those in our current work programme. Departments are receiving support in mainstreaming equality. We are working to develop guidance and training. The equality unit is working closely with bill teams to drive forward on our commitment to mainstream equality in legislation.

We also look to the Parliament, with its key role in the scrutiny of bills. The lead that the Equal Opportunities Committee took during the previous parliamentary session and the measures that are recommended in the committee's report should help us to make significant progress on mainstreaming equality in legislation. The recommendations will drive the mainstreaming of equality in the work of all the committees and help me in my discussions with Cabinet colleagues to ensure that they have the same commitment to equality—I am not implying that they do not. We look forward to engaging with all the committees of the Parliament on the equality agenda. We all have a responsibility for that.

However, legislation is only part of our work. The Executive wants to embed equality in policy making, including in spending plans, from the start. We are working to develop consultation and communication with equality groups, to improve research and disaggregated data and to raise awareness of equality issues across the Executive and beyond. We note that the report of the Equal Opportunities Committee chimes with our approach.

The successful mainstreaming of equality requires from ministers a strong and positive lead, and from the Executive commitment to and ownership of the task. I assure the Parliament that that will be delivered. In the Parliament, mainstreaming equality requires ownership across committees and commitment across parties. There is much positive evidence of that. Effective liaison between the Executive and the Parliament is also crucial. As I said at the beginning of my speech, there will be times when we can work together effectively and times when we may pull in different directions. However, I am sure that we can maintain a constructive relationship.

We welcome very much the committee's report and its work during the first parliamentary session. We look forward to engaging positively and enthusiastically with the committee's work to drive forward the equality debate. We all believe that that will make real differences to the lives and quality of life of the people of Scotland.

14:58

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I, too, congratulate Kate Maclean and all members of the Equal Opportunities Committee during the first session on their work, as expressed in the report. The successor convener of the committee, Cathy Peattie, has given us a strong signal that she is equally determined that the Parliament should move forward on this subject and that everything that we learned in the first session should be worked on and delivered in the new one.

It will come as no surprise that my Scottish National Party colleagues and I are happy to support the nine recommendations in the report. However, like today's motion, I simply note the content of the report. In part that has to be our approach, because some of the recommendations are directed to the new Equal Opportunities Committee, which is sovereign and entirely responsible for deciding whether to accept them. However, if committee members dinnae accept them, I may be around with a grip to persuade some individuals—certainly my political colleagues—that they should.

Over the past week, I have acted in an entirely non-discriminatory manner and have sought to share with as many colleagues and friends as possible the cold that still afflicts my throat. That explains the absence of Campbell Martin, who was originally scheduled to open for the SNP. He has seized the opportunity offered by my cold a little more enthusiastically—and more equally—than have others.

We know that we will have succeeded on this subject when there is no Equal Opportunities Committee in the Parliament and no reports on the matter. However, although progress has been made and continues to be made, the absence of such a committee seems a rather distant prospect. That is partly because as we develop as individuals we become more aware of the lack of equality exhibited in our personal behaviour. Parliament operates in a much wider context. We are not just a little introverted body of people. We are here to set an example and to get things right as far as we can by our own processes. We are also here to encourage and to hold to account the Executive's activities in that regard.

In the wider world, 1 January 1975—some time ago—was a key equality date, because it was on that day that discrimination against women in employment became illegal. On 31 December 1974, my then employers were offering discounted mortgages only to men, not to women. Until very recently, my mortgage continued on the same pre-equality terms. The post-1974 terms were equal for men and women, but they were not equal to those for the men such as me who were lucky enough to have borrowed money before the legislation came into force. The point of that little story is that when the committee's research states that

“mainstreaming requires tenacity ... to sustain commitment to equality over a significant time period”,

it is 100 per cent spot on. Given that the effects of the 1975 change in the legal framework have yet to work their way through the system and through society, we can see the reality of that statement. Two generations have passed and we still do not have the equality promised in that legislation. Women who were not yet born in 1975 are today in employment and, as likely as not, remain underpaid, under-rewarded and undervalued in comparison with their male colleagues.

My wife had the grave misfortune to work for a while for the merchant bank Hill Samuel. She worked at a senior level and on her various trips to the head office in London had to attend meetings in the boardroom. There was not even a ladies' toilet on the same floor as the boardroom—and that was in the late 1980s, not 1975—so she used just to go to the male toilet.

Equal opportunities is not just a male-female issue. As Cathy Peattie said, it is not even wholly within the Parliament's power. Last week, my political colleagues and I met in Inverness and we agreed that

“The SNP will positively pursue an equal opportunities agenda to ensure that pension rights, property rights and inheritance rights are brought into the 21st century.”

The context was that we were revisiting and trying to bring up to date legislation on partnerships, on which the Executive is consulting.

We must do what we can. We must encourage others by example and by persuasion to play their part. We have made progress on male-female equal opportunities. The men are outnumbered in the chamber today, but I do not think that that is a good thing, given that we are talking about equal opportunities. We have to reduce discrimination.

In the Communities Committee meeting this morning, Elaine Smith said that disability issues come up a wee bit less frequently and with considerably less passion. Is that because we do not have any members with a disability?

Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD):

The member will find that my colleague Mike Pringle is registered as disabled.

Stewart Stevenson: I thank the member for that information, which I accept entirely. I did not want to assume that he has a disability and that he views himself in that way.

Let us ask ourselves some questions. Have we in the Parliament done well? In the new Parliament building, we would have failed in our duty if we had not ensured that whoever was First Minister could, if in a wheelchair, go from their office, through the members' lounge and into the chamber, thus not losing out on the banter and chat in the corridors that is an essential part of fixing the wee problems that we often have. I understand that there will be markings on the floors that blind members will be able to feel through their feet, thus enabling them to navigate safely round the Parliament. That is good. However, do people with disabilities know that we aspire to having a new Parliament building—one that we think we will see—that will be world class in its ability to support people who are disabled and are discriminated against in too many places?

Are we doing better on ethnicity? Last August, I asked a question on that. It transpired that the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body employed 402 people. Two were Asian and one was black. Three more were non-white. Eight employees had a disability. In each of those categories, the numbers were well under what would have been a representative share of the population. We have much to do and I think that all of us in the chamber want to do it.

In all that we say and do, are we doing well enough? Are we guilty of inflicting our prejudices—residual as I hope they now are and even when we are trying very hard to be inclusive—on people whom we continue to think of as “others”. Paragraph 58 of the committee's report states that responding organisations suggest that the phrase “mainstreaming equality” should be replaced with the word “integration”. I could not disagree more fundamentally. I absolutely agree with the idea that people should have the opportunity to integrate, free from discrimination. However, I believe in the absolute right of an individual to remain separate, if that is their free and informed choice. It is not up to us to make decisions for people; they have to make their own decisions.

Being part of the community, in its widest sense, must not require rejection of any other community. It must not preclude people from having allegiance to multiple identities. As Stonewall Scotland says, people cannot be categorised by the group of which some of us might say that they are a member. Being black, being gay, being female or having a disability is not necessarily the most

important thing for an individual. That is why I probably had not been aware of Margaret Smith's colleague's disability: it was not the most important thing in my relationship with him. We must put people before labels and individuals before groups.

The Equal Opportunities Committee has made much of the need for training parliamentary staff and, indeed, parliamentarians. The Parliament has started a course of training. I do not think that all that many of us have been on it yet, but there is still time. I hope that we will take part. If we do not get trained and improve our sensitivity—and paragraph 72 of the committee's report warns against the use of tick boxes—we may not have the deep understanding of how we fail to create equal opportunities; all that we will have is a non-comprehending list-based approach that will deliver very little.

We cannot list all the discriminations that we, as individuals or as a Parliament, may be party to. Let me choose one that members have almost certainly never encountered or thought of. More than 20 years ago, I was at a wedding. That, in itself, is not an unusual event, but one of the couple getting married was photograph-phobic. I do not know the word for that; I do not think that there is one. The person could not bear to be photographed; they had an absolute loathing of it. In all the wedding photographs, there is only one of the bride and groom. The person could not get a passport because they could not be photographed, so there was no foreign honeymoon. If they were elected to the Parliament, would the cameras around the chamber be able to exclude them so that they did not have to have their picture taken? Would they be able to have a parliamentary pass without a picture? Would we tease them because we thought that their phobia was a wee bit funny? It is not the slightest bit funny for that individual. I choose that case to illustrate the extra miles that we will always have to travel.

As the report notes, the equality guidelines will enable committees to stop and think. Let us hope that we have all received the wake-up call about equal opportunities in the chamber, in the committees and in every aspect of our public and private lives. I congratulate the committee.

15:10

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): As a new member of the Equal Opportunities Committee and as a fairly new MSP who is attending my first debate on a committee report, I am somewhat diffident about making the lead contribution for my party on a report that I had absolutely no part in formulating. I am still, of course, near the bottom of a steep learning curve,

given the work that lies ahead for the committee. However, I add my appreciation for the hard work that was undertaken by Kate Maclean and her committee in the first parliamentary session.

Let me digress for a moment. Two things surprised me more than a little at my first Equal Opportunities Committee meeting. At the outset, I was expected to take the chair until the convener was chosen because I am the oldest committee member. That tradition—if there can be such a thing in an institution of four years' standing—follows on from Winnie Ewing's convening of the first meeting of the Parliament until the Presiding Officer was in place. That may have been positive discrimination for Mrs Ewing, but I confess that, in my case, it felt somewhat negative.

The other thing that surprised me was the composition of the committee, which has eight female MSPs and one solitary male. That is not quite a reflection of the gender balance of the Parliament. However, it is perhaps not so surprising given that, until fairly recently, in most local authorities equal opportunities issues were discussed by women's committees rather than by equal opportunities committees.

I studied the mainstreaming equalities report with great interest, especially the *Official Report* of the evidence-taking sessions. I was particularly struck by Cathy Peattie's comments:

"It always seemed to me that the equal opportunities policy was something that people talked about but put in a filing cabinet and did nothing about."—[*Official Report, Equal Opportunities Committee*, 14 January 2003; c 1705.]

She added that it was her strong belief that, to mainstream equal opportunities policy and to make it work, more is needed than "tools and experts". To work efficiently, hearts and minds must be won. Only then will we get away from experts having to make decisions and from equal opportunities issues being marginalised to people who are interested in them or for whom that is their job.

At a subsequent meeting, Cathy Peattie asked:

"Have hearts and minds been won? Are people signing up to equality issues without being given a hard kick?"

The minister replied:

"there is political commitment to equality issues at the top of the Executive, throughout the Cabinet and from other Executive ministers."—[*Official Report, Equal Opportunities Committee*, 4 February 2003; c 1764-65.]

I am delighted to hear that. I hope that the Executive will take on board the Equal Opportunities Committee's recommendations.

I also hope that all committees will adopt the equality guidelines in the planning of their work programmes and that they will use an equalities checklist as they consider legislation. Training

should be provided for MSPs as well as parliamentary staff and the Equal Opportunities Committee should have a continuing role in monitoring the implementation of the draft equality guidelines.

There is no doubt that, over time, many disadvantaged groups have felt left out. They have felt that their views were not taken into account and that the issues that they faced were not addressed. As the minister said, the Executive introduced its equality strategy to deal with that. The strategy gives ministerial support to the incorporation of equality in policy and in the working of all departments.

The strategy's long-term aim is to ensure that policy making is fully sensitive to people's diverse needs and experiences. It seeks to achieve improved policy making through better information, greater transparency and openness in the policy process. It involves effective consultation among groups and individuals who experience inequality and discrimination so that they can inform policy making. It encourages wider participation among disadvantaged and excluded groups. As Margaret Curran will know from my recent questions to her, I am concerned that not all consultation is meaningful or effective.

The strategy also tackles structures, behaviours and attitudes that lead to inequality and discrimination. It tries to avoid policies and programmes that perpetuate or worsen existing inequalities. As the report states, mainstreaming

"complements lawful positive action designed to address"

the long-term historic disadvantage that is experienced by specific groups as a result of discriminating practices and strategies. Those are fine words, but I repeat that mainstreaming is a long-term process. Hearts and minds will not be won overnight.

My party is happy to accept the report's recommendations on mainstreaming equality in the work of parliamentary committees. We believe that scrutiny is necessary to ensure that no section of society will be disadvantaged by whatever legislation is enacted. We welcome the recommendations of the Equal Opportunities Committee and we hope that the Executive will ensure that committees get enough time to implement them.

I end on a cautionary note. I am a passionate believer in equality—when I say "equality", I mean equality and not discrimination, whether it be positive or negative. I was brought up with the adage that we are all Jock Tamson's bairns and I believe that people are people the world over.

Many equality issues centre on employment, an issue about which I feel strongly. I believe that

people should be employed on merit and that the choice of employee should be based solely on their ability to do the job effectively. The best people should be selected, be they able bodied or disabled and whatever their ethnic origin, gender, age, sexual orientation or beliefs.

Sometimes in people's attempts to overcome disadvantage there is evidence of positive discrimination, which is as bad as the reverse. For example, my party has not gone down the road of having all-female candidate lists—thank goodness. Whether it is right or wrong, I am here today because my party members thought that I was fit for the job, not because I am female, middle aged or white, or for any reason other than the fact that I wanted to be here and my party members thought that I was up to it.

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Mrs Milne: I am sorry, but I am on my final sentences.

For me, equality means equality and nothing more or less than that. On that note, I give my support to the Equal Opportunities Committee's first report of 2003.

15:16

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): The previous Equal Opportunities Committee is to be congratulated on the hard work that it did on the report. To offer any criticism on what has been achieved already might seem churlish, but my concern is about the implementation of the report and the extent to which the ethos of the report is mainstreamed throughout the hearts and minds of everyone in the Parliament.

To have the structures in place to create the opportunities for equality is one thing, but to change the way in which people think is quite another. Awareness of and training in the issues are vital. Attendance at the training sessions that are taking place this week ought to have been mandatory for everyone. The willingness of MSPs and their staff to acknowledge the issues and to address them might be measured by examining the number of people who took part in the training sessions.

Although the present round of training sessions is oversubscribed, the number of participants is a fraction of the total number of people who work in the Parliament. When I scanned the list of participants, I could see only five MSPs' names. There must be as many sessions as necessary to ensure that everyone can attend. Alternatively, perhaps awareness sessions should be part of the induction process. After the training session this morning, I can carry the information back to my

staff and colleagues, but there is nothing like being there, listening to the instructor and taking part in the exercises, which were quite challenging. Those who do not attend will miss out on all that.

It was interesting to find out this morning how even simple things can be overlooked. The two trainers arrived to lead the workshops and had difficulty just getting out of their car. We were at the St Andrew Square offices, for which the car park is part of the Sainsbury's car park. The space allocated for disabled drivers does not allow the car doors to be opened wide enough for the driver to get his wheelchair out.

As the trek round to the front of the building is quite long, the trainers had to drive. There was a chairlift folded against the wall beside the steps. Although there were several people there who could help the trainer to get into the building, other people trying to get in might have to sit outside on the pavement, buzz the buzzer and wait for someone to come and operate the chairlift. That is not the best way of entering a building.

During the session, the instructor in our group wanted the flip chart lowered to a height that she could use comfortably, only to find that there were only two positions—too high and too low. We had a good laugh about that, but it highlights some important issues. She used the writing board instead.

Monitoring the progress of the report will be important in ensuring that the Parliament is seen to be the leader in the field of mainstreaming equality throughout a whole organisation, but that means examining the facilities in all our buildings, even if they are rented. Any improvements that the Parliament can implement in the buildings that we use will surely be of benefit to all the other users who come after us.

A major obstacle to the Parliament's promotion of equal opportunities has to be the lack of crèche facilities. That lack means that, in our office, a couple who are job sharing so that they can share the care of their children cannot both attend the weekly briefing meetings. It was pointed out to me that some nursery groups provide staff and toys on a roving basis, so all that would be required is for a room to be made available on specific days. It occurred to me that that could be tied into committee days, which would enable parents who wish to attend or be witnesses at Parliament's meetings to come and leave their children at the temporary facilities. Given that the Parliament's stay on the present site has been extended for yet another year, I urge the appropriate authorities to consider seriously making such facilities available, albeit temporarily. If there is the will and the facilities, and if a group can provide the staff, we should consider doing that.

Another issue about which I am concerned is human rights. In most respects, that issue should be at the top of any equal opportunities agenda and all forms of discrimination should be tackled in that context. In mainstreaming equality throughout the Parliament, we must ensure that the goods that the Parliament sources from abroad are produced without any exploitation of the labour force and without the use of child labour. We have a duty to the worldwide community as well. In seeking to achieve greater justice at home, we must not compromise that ideal in the wider world.

15:22

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): As we have heard, the report is the culmination of a process initiated by the Equal Opportunities Committee in 2000 to provide the Parliament with valuable guidance on the mainstreaming of equal opportunities in the work of our committees. I put Stewart Stevenson's mind at rest by telling him that the current Equal Opportunities Committee endorsed the recommendations on 23 September.

The report signals the beginning of an important stage in the Parliament's development. We have been fortunate that devolution has allowed us to create a Parliament for Scotland that has equality of opportunity at the core of its founding principles. The report offers practical suggestions on how we can utilise the political will in the chamber to encourage a process whereby equal opportunities permeate every aspect of the Parliament's working. Although the Scottish Executive must be commended for its continual efforts over the past four years to mainstream equalities in its legislation development process, we cannot leave the responsibility for that process solely to the Executive. As members, we must be constantly aware of our responsibility to ensure that equal opportunities pervade the everyday working of the Parliament and, through the demands and scrutiny of our committees, inform the work of the Executive.

Mainstreaming equality in the development of public policy and service delivery is one of the biggest operational challenges to face almost every modern democracy. However, as Sheffield Hallam University pointed out, the Scottish Parliament is at the leading edge in mainstreaming equality within a parliamentary setting. We should be proud of that, but we should also aim to build on it. Despite the progress that has been made, inequality remains a reality in this country, as we have heard from the minister and other members.

I want to consider gender. Women in Scotland still make up a disproportionate number of the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. The majority of single-parent households are headed

by women. Positions of societal power and influence—for example in law, business, trade unions and public life—remain on the whole in the hands of men. In Scotland, only 23 per cent of local councillors are women, compared to a still inadequate 28 per cent average throughout the United Kingdom.

To pick up on something that Nanette Milne said, when we consider such figures and how long those trends have persisted, it is clear that we need to take positive action. Women in my party were selected as candidates via a rigorous process involving application forms, interviews and twinning, which took advantage of the fact that there were no incumbents. That levelled the playing field between men and women. Does the gender balance among the Conservative members mean that Conservative women are not up to the job in some way? I very much doubt it. Positive action might produce a different result in the Parliament's Conservative group.

In my work as the gender reporter on the Equal Opportunities Committee, I have been fortunate in the past few years to have met a wide range of women's organisations. The constant theme is the continuing battle for equality, whether at home, at work, in education, at leisure or in access to positions of influence. The exchanges that I have had highlight the fact that every decision that is made in the chamber impacts on women and should be considered in terms of what that impact will be. Women and men in Scotland have different needs and they frequently have different social and family responsibilities, different levels of access to education and public services, different employment patterns and different experiences, for example in health. The concept of gender equality is therefore not isolated to issues such as equal pay and child care—important and essential though those issues are, they do not solely represent women's experiences in Scotland.

The equality perspective should inform every aspect of our work, from social justice to education, to tourism, transport and the environment. Every facet of our devolved remit does, and should have, an equality dimension. Crucial to that is the role of the budget, an issue that I raised with the minister. The budget exercise is one way in which the mainstreaming of equality in the policy process can be linked to the distribution of resources to ensure that the required changes are properly funded and delivered. The role of committees in scrutinising spending proposals with equality eyes is crucial.

By implementing a mainstreaming strategy in the work of all our committees, we can promote an equality perspective and help to ensure that it is consistently applied throughout the legislative process. By ensuring that every piece of

legislation that comes before the Parliament is considered from an equality perspective, we can effectively shift the focus of the Parliament's work from reactive policy making to a more proactive approach. We have made important inroads; the issue is no longer merely about special initiatives, but about taking an holistic approach seriously to address equalities issues.

I wanted to talk about education but I do not have time. However, I will say that members' offices—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): You do have time.

Elaine Smith: Oh, I do have time.

Members' offices are often the first point of contact when people want to access the Parliament, so it is hugely important that members' staff are included in the equal opportunities training—we have a responsibility to ensure that staff working at every level in the Parliament have adequate training. If we are going to take that responsibility seriously, we should ensure that the funding is available for that purpose. At the moment, it is left up to individual members to decide whether to fund training or what training their staff can access. That is not good enough.

We must continue our equalities work by taking the next step, which is to persuade all members, on all committees, of the importance of scrutinising legislation from an equalities perspective. The Equal Opportunities Committee is an important and integral part of the Parliament. However, as I pointed out, the committee, like the Executive, does not have the sole responsibility for ensuring the promotion and delivery of equal opportunities in every aspect of our work. That aim can be progressed through a positive commitment to mainstreaming equality across all our committees.

I have been a member of the Equal Opportunities Committee from the beginning of the first session of Parliament. I am pleased to commend to the Parliament the recommendations in the report. I urge fellow members to make a genuine commitment to addressing the issues that are raised in the report.

15:30

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): In his excellent time for reflection, Mr Cramb told an amusing story about buses, and buses played an important part in bringing home to me the issue of equality of opportunity. A few years ago, the national health service kindly gave me two new hips. My ultimate test of fitness was to ascertain whether I could climb up the stairs of our Edinburgh buses. Someone is fit when they can go up and down the stairs when the buses are

slowing down or speeding up. That experience brought home to me the problems of people who are not fit, about whom I had not thought adequately before that time.

I welcome the report. Although I have not been involved in the Equal Opportunities Committee, I was a member of the Procedures Committee. In the first session of the Parliament, we spent quite a lot of time examining equal opportunities, which is one of the four principles that the Scottish Parliament is supposed to address. The Procedures Committee made some useful proposals on mainstreaming equalities, in addition to those that we are debating today.

Those of us who see ourselves as back benchers might want to consider the issue of equal opportunities for back benchers. In the Scottish Parliament, just like in every other organisation, there are those who get more and more power, and there are such-as-those—the back benchers—who get squeezed out. The Parliament should consider the issue of equality of opportunity for back benchers.

Let me consider the issue more widely. Margaret Curran referred to the survey of Scottish public opinion on discrimination. There is a positive side to the survey findings, but there is also the serious negative finding that a lot of people are prone to serious prejudices. We have to examine the issue of prejudice and try to do what we can about it.

I understand that important legislation is coming in our direction from Europe via Westminster on discrimination in the workplace on age grounds. One of the first cases that I tried to pursue as an MP was the case of a perfectly fit and not very old man who was to be booted out of his job as a chauffeur at the Scottish Office, as it was at that time. It was alleged that the man was over the age at which he had to retire. It is important that people do not have to slave away at jobs that they do not like for ever and ever, but if people enjoy what they are doing, they should be allowed to continue doing it.

Employers and voluntary bodies should take a positive look at how to use the talents of older people, people with disabilities, people of different racial backgrounds and so forth. Employers and voluntary bodies should not have a quota system under which they say, "Oh, gosh we have got to have a woman," or, "We have to have someone with a disability." Employers and voluntary bodies need to see the positive impact that somebody with a particular problem, nature or gender can offer. We need to stress the positives as well as the negatives that are involved in such prejudice.

Two basic issues are involved: ignorance and prejudice. The report contains a good phrase about people needing to question their "values,

assumptions and stereotypes". I have a trivial example of the stereotyping that is prevalent today. In one voluntary sector canteen, although the male volunteers are put in charge of the money or sometimes serve out the food, they are never put into the kitchen. It is pathetic that people still think that men should not be in the kitchen. I am sure that we all still have stereotypes that we need to question. As a result, the training that we offer is very important.

Prejudice exists. I had a slightly amusing experience a few years ago when some Edinburgh politicians and I were invited to an equal opportunities march, which sounded like a good thing to go on. I later discovered that the equal opportunities in question related entirely to gender, homosexual and sexual-orientation issues, and one or two other politicians and I appeared on the front pages of various newspapers with some groups' extremely lurid banners behind us. I went back to the march in subsequent years, because I thought that it was important to support the issue.

Finally, on the issue of girls and women, we have some very strong women in the Parliament who do not need any more self-esteem. Indeed, some of them possibly have far too much. [*Laughter.*] Seriously, there are some very strong women here.

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): Does the member agree that when one is in a hole one should stop digging? [*Laughter.*]

Donald Gorrie: I will divert my hole towards Dundee, where Elaine Smith and I spoke to various people on behalf of the Communities Committee. Among them were three excellent young men who told us about wandering the streets in groups. I noticed that no girls were present and asked, "Can you speak for the girls? What do they do?" The young men said, "They follow us." That does not seem at all satisfactory. We have to address the serious lack of self-esteem among many young Scots, especially young Scots women. It all starts in the head. If one has reasonable self-esteem—not arrogance—one will sort things out; if that does not happen, the inequalities that we are all against will persist.

15:37

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I apologise to Cathy Peattie for not being present when she began her opening speech. Unfortunately, I was at another meeting and had to wait before I was let into the chamber.

I am involved in drafting a member's bill that has gone out for consultation, and am very grateful to the non-Executive bills unit for drawing my attention to the difficulties of mainstreaming equality. As a result, I have been looking at what it

means to mainstream equality—in particular the groups that I have to contact and the language that I have to use in covering letters about my bill. I will not tout the bill, because I think that everyone knows what it is. NEBU drew my attention to particular areas that, as an MSP, I was not aware of. Indeed, I do not think that many people are aware of just how deep mainstreaming equality goes and I am eternally grateful to Cathy Peattie and the committee for producing this report.

Cathy Peattie and others have mentioned mainstreaming equality in the committees and I wholeheartedly agree that mainstreaming must take place, not only in committees but throughout the parliamentary process. I also agree with Elaine Smith that we must monitor the situation to find out how mainstreaming has been carried out and to gather any results that pertain to it.

I suppose that we are embarking on a programme of reform, because such mainstreaming has never taken place before. We must realise that, as far as equality proofing is concerned, there must be greater transparency and accountability. Indeed, transparency and accountability should become the norm when, as we hope, mainstreaming equality becomes the norm for the parliamentary process. That is why I think that monitoring is very important—we must ensure that mainstreaming is carried through.

Equally important is our commitment to engage the many groups that feel disengaged from the Parliament. As many members have pointed out, lack of access is one of the main barriers not just to mainstreaming equality but to people's involvement in the parliamentary process and we need to reach out to the groups that have been very much neglected. I want us to consider not only access but other areas where equality mainstreaming will help and where people will be consulted and enabled to take part in the parliamentary process.

It is important to consider physical access. Most members think that we have gone some way towards making the Parliament more accessible, as well as making it easier to reach polling stations, but I assure them that there are plenty of places in the area that I represent where access is not easy. If that access is not forthcoming, we will have to consider how people can get to such venues, which means looking at transport. People who have children will need some form of child minding, and carers' responsibilities will also have to be considered. If people vote in a different way—electronically, for example—we will have to consider that too.

We must ensure that information is accessible because it is central to any good consultation process. Where there are language barriers, for example, we must provide interpreters.

Presentation barriers are also covered by equality mainstreaming.

We have to think about small groups that might not have the finances to contribute their ideas to a consultation process. Perhaps we should consider providing financial support as well as other types of support.

Appropriate training for staff has been mentioned. In my opening remarks I said that I did not realise how wide ranging equality mainstreaming was, so perhaps MSPs should also receive training.

Feedback is important. If we want people to engage in and be serious about equality mainstreaming, we need to give them feedback on all the consultation documents that they have looked at or with which they have been involved. The Deputy Presiding Officer Trish Godman and I were involved in the previous Local Government Committee, and when we took the consultation process out to the people, they were most concerned about the lack of feedback that they received. The Local Government Committee rectified that situation by giving out feedback. That is an important point: people participate in consultation, but they do not get any feedback. We must give people feedback and make accessible any information that pertains to them.

I congratulate the Equal Opportunities Committee on the report and I look forward to seeing its recommendations mainstreamed throughout the Parliament.

15:42

Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP): From my experience of the Parliament so far, I believe that the Equal Opportunities Committee, of which I am a member, is a different kind of committee—although I am not a member of other committees, I have seen them on telly. It is different in the sense that every member of the committee agrees that we are in favour of equal opportunities. The committee does not tend to divide along party lines and no one from any party would be caught saying that they were not in favour of equality. When we had our away day, there was agreement on the ways in which we should tackle the underlying issues of gender, race, sexual orientation and disability. We agreed on the need for a culture change and on the type of society we live in and the impact that we want to make on it. It is a positive and progressive committee.

I want to live in a society that is free from prejudice, where there is no exclusion of certain sections of society and where people do not feel alienated from society because they do not represent what is portrayed as the main stream.

That will take a lot of work. The mainstreaming equality report is an excellent, if hefty, document. If the authors were university students studying equality, they would get an A+ for the policy that it contains. The Executive will have no difficulty signing up to the policies, and the Parliament should welcome the report.

The report contains screeds of policies to which we aspire. The report is aimed at policy makers, but the question is, "Who is going to read it?" I know that voluntary organisations, charities, MSPs and—I hope—members of the Parliament's committees will read it. However, from the point of view of the Parliament's public face, I am dismayed by the attitude of the Executive and the way in which it responds to issues that go to the heart of equality—issues that are not in the report, but which are in the press, on the telly and, perhaps, debated by people at their work. Those issues reach all sections of society.

What is the response from the Executive? It has two choices: to tackle issues that are concrete and that people can understand, or to publish reports full of jargon. What signal are the Parliament and the Executive sending? I am dismayed about that. Since I have been an MSP, I have encountered a number of issues on which the Executive has had an opportunity to send a signal about what it thinks and where it stands regardless of where anybody else stands, but it has not taken those opportunities.

Let us look at Dungavel, for example. The issue of asylum seekers always affects an ethnic minority section of the population. If children are being locked up in Dungavel, the signal that is sent is that it is okay to lock up children who are from those communities. If I happened to be in Spain or somewhere else abroad and was arrested and detained with my four-year-old son, I hope that there would be an almighty hue and cry. It is not acceptable to lock up children, and the Dungavel regime does not send the right signal on that issue.

There may be equality of pay in this Parliament, although some of us take home less pay than others. On the whole, women earn less than men do—women's earnings are 80 per cent of male earnings. That is a key issue. We have been presented with the nursery nurses' dispute, which goes to the centre of the issue. It is about child care—women look after children—and low pay, and about qualifications and professionalism not being recognised. Europe recognises that with "Bridging the Gap" funding, but what do we do? We just wash our hands of the issue and say that it is not important. Are we saying to Europe that we want that funding? Are we saying that those are valuable jobs? Are we saying that women in those jobs should be paid more money and should

be treated as professionals? There is a real opportunity to make the concrete statement to a section of women who are on low wages that the Executive stands for equal pay and a recognition of the skills that women in that profession have.

Child care is another important issue. Do members have any idea of the signal that is sent by the fact that the Parliament does not have a crèche? I agree with Shiona Baird about that. I am on the Equal Opportunities Committee and I am going to be late for every other committee meeting because I have to drop off my son in Glasgow at quarter to 9 or 9 o'clock, get to Queen Street, get on the train and get here, and I cannot make it for 10 o'clock. If the Scottish Parliament had a crèche, I would not have to do that. What does that say about the culture of the Parliament? We are four years in, beginning a new session, and we still do not have a crèche. That is absolutely unacceptable. If the Executive were to take up that small issue, it would not cost very much money, but it would send a signal to women everywhere.

I realise that I do not have much time left, but I would like to make one last point, about Patrick Harvie's bill on civil partnerships, which would include same-sex partnerships. That goes to the heart of a layer of prejudice that we are going to come up against. We have already seen that in the press. What is the Executive doing? Is it saying, "Right, either we'll take over the legislation or we'll support it and try to see it through, but we'll take on the issue and the prejudice that exists"? No. It is running for cover and hiding behind the skirts of Westminster. That is a mistake and sends the wrong signal.

My very last point—I really am running out of time and I am surprised that the Presiding Officer has not told me to wind up—is on a wider issue about the type of society that we live in. If we send out the signal that our society is based on the free market and that every decision we take is measured against how much money we will make or how much something costs, we will have a real problem in delivering social equality. Why are there not more workplace nurseries? Why can we not mainstream in schools? The answer is that it would cost too much. If we measure every decision against the question, "How much is it going to cost?" we will have difficulty implementing equalities initiatives.

For me, it is a much wider issue about the type of society that we live in, but I welcome the report and I hope that, when I get there, I will make a positive contribution on the Equal Opportunities Committee.

15:49

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I, too, welcome the document and I congratulate

the Equal Opportunities Committee on the work that it has done. I accept the point that Cathy Peattie made in her speech that the equality targets are long-term ones.

Stewart Stevenson said that we cannot address all those who may be discriminated against, which is a very good point. I would like to give an account of my experiences in Lossiemouth yesterday, where we took evidence on the antisocial behaviour bill. One young girl at Lossiemouth High School told us that she was being bullied. I asked her why she thought she was being bullied, as we have to try to understand those issues. She said, "People keep telling me to go back to where I came from." Bearing in mind the fact that she lives in Lossiemouth, I innocently asked her where she came from. She said that she came from Elgin—5 miles down the road. She explained that the problem was due to the long-standing historical thing—whatever one wants to call it—that exists between Lossiemouth and Elgin, and seems to accept that she will always be picked on because she comes from 5 miles away. I raise that point because I think that it is impossible to consider all those who may be discriminated against.

Football is another issue that comes to mind—Donald Gorrie usually raises these issues. I know that we will never convince Inverness Caley Thistle supporters that Ross County supporters are equal; they simply are not.

When we were in Lossiemouth yesterday, Stewart Stevenson and I visited a Darby and Joan club. It turned out that there were 50 Joans and no Darbys, if I may use that expression. Stewart Stevenson was the only male in the room. I could not help thinking that we should not be too prescriptive and say that if we speak to more than 50 females over the age of 60 we have to go round Lossiemouth to try to find 50 males. We have to be more flexible and use more discretion when we are talking about equality. If the women are willing to turn up and give us their views, that is good enough for me.

Having a statement on mainstreaming equality into the policy process is extremely helpful, not only in the context of the report but in raising awareness. The fact that we are discussing the report today is also helpful. I very much welcome the intent of the report, but it cannot by itself change attitudes and prejudice throughout Scotland. Our own attitudes and value judgments, which form attitudes and prejudices, will eventually help to achieve change and equality.

When I started work, I remember older women saying, "She is leaving her child to go to work—she does not deserve to have a child," or, "She's farming out her children—she doesn't deserve to have children." Such comments were made during

my lifetime, and it is not long ago since women in Scotland put up the greatest barriers to women going to work. I am pleased—indeed, delighted—that those attitudes have changed, but they did not change because someone produced a document. Attitudes changed because women stood up, decided to pursue their careers and were unwilling to accept that form of prejudice.

I note that the equalities checklist in the committee's report states:

"What is the policy for? Who is the policy for?"

Given that the antisocial behaviour bill will probably be one of the most controversial bills this session, I think that we must also go out to listen to neds and to those who indulge in antisocial behaviour. If we want to understand the issues, we cannot listen only to teachers, social workers and people who behave well. If we are to understand the issues, we must speak to people who indulge in antisocial behaviour. We must be equal in our understanding. We should listen to the experiences of the Airborne Initiative project. Whether the project is right or wrong, it is worth listening to its experiences.

I noticed that mental health was not covered in the attitudes survey that was published yesterday. I commend the approach of the Health and Community Care Committee because I think that we went out of our way to listen to people with mental health problems when we considered the Mental Health (Scotland) Bill. We did not listen only to psychiatrists, social workers and so on. If we are talking about equality, we cannot always look at the issues top-down. If we want to change behaviour and include people, we must consider those who are affected by legislation. We could learn much from the Health and Community Care Committee's experience.

I am concerned about the Equal Opportunities Committee's recommendation that there should be a database of equal opportunities contacts and consultees that would be accessible to all committees. We do not need just one list of consultees; instead, committees must be flexible and use their discretion. Consultees will depend on committee business, such as the bill concerned. Equality of opportunity applies to a wide range of issues, not just those of sex, race and disability.

As Frances Curran said, members should set an example by accepting viewpoints. The Executive often thinks that ideas must be wrong if they come from an Opposition party, but no one has a monopoly on good ideas. If we want equality out there, we should start by treating one another equally and with respect.

15:56

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): At time for reflection, Erik Cramb reminded us that we frequently make pronouncements or even legislate on matters of which we have little practical or personal experience. We get our evidence for what we do from those who have experience. However, no matter how good such consultation might be on issues of inequality, I guarantee that none of us will ever fully understand the range of discrimination and practices that affect those who are prevented by discrimination from taking part in the social, cultural and economic life of Scotland.

Although many of the members present are women, I emphasise that it is not only women who have problems with discrimination. People who are old or young, those who are of a different ethnic background, those who have the wrong address—or none—those who are disabled or illiterate or those who look for work in a sector that is dominated by a different gender are likely to suffer from discrimination or lack of opportunity. Prejudices are frequently so deeply seated that those who hold them do not recognise that they do so. One of the key points in the report is that we must challenge deep-seated prejudice.

I will tell members an anecdote from when I first became an elected representative in 1988. When I said something to which a colleague objected, he managed to offend me on two grounds. He invited me, with expletives—which I will delete—to go back home to my country of origin and pick potatoes. He then told me that I should be glad that the men had allowed me to stand and I should consider myself lucky to be elected. He said that the best thing I could do was to sit and listen for the next four years to those who knew better than I did. Needless to say, I declined to take either piece of advice.

Margaret Curran and others have referred to the attitude survey that was published yesterday, which shows that Scots accept that prejudice exists and, more worryingly, that they feel that legislation on equalities issues has gone far enough and that there is little need to do more in some areas. We are elected to show leadership in Scotland. I want the Parliament and the Executive to say to Scots, “We may understand why you say that, but we do not agree with you and we will not stop our programme of ensuring that every Scot has equality of opportunity and does not suffer from discrimination.”

For economic, if no other, reasons, the evidence shows that we need to upskill Scotland. We must improve educational attainment, health and Scots’ participation in the work force. I have some experience in the application of the European social fund—which is now called objective 2 structural funding—one of the strands of which is

to ensure that equality is mainstreamed through all activities that are performed to help build work force and community capacity.

As the report says, the issue is about mainstreaming the equalities process into policies, practices and procedures. It is about ensuring that nobody is discriminated against on any of the grounds that have been well rehearsed here this afternoon. All the projects that are funded by European social funding must show how they are mainstreaming equalities. There is a national adviser on equal opportunities who has produced a very good toolkit—as it is called—for use by various groups. There are also champions who come together from each of the areas, so that people can benefit from shared expertise.

It is important that mainstreaming equalities is seen not just as the prerogative of specialists. We cannot leave it to the folk who sit on the Equal Opportunities Committee; it must be something that we all do and that we ensure that ministers take account of when they bring matters before the Parliament. We must realise that—as the social attitudes survey of yesterday showed—people come to equal opportunities from different perspectives and starting points. As I have said before, although we recognise that, it is not good enough to say that it is so and just leave it at that. We need to ensure that we do what we can to change attitudes.

Others have spoken about areas of skill shortage and the pay gap. It is interesting to note that the industries that are experiencing the greatest skill shortages are those that have the fewest women working in them. There is also a need for positive action to encourage men and other under-represented groups to participate in non-traditional sectors of the economy. If a man is a single parent with child care responsibilities, he is likely to suffer far more discrimination from an employer in carrying out the duties of child care than many women are, and that is seen as acceptable. Many consider it not natural for a man to have to look after kids and still get to work, as that is women’s work. That is not good enough.

The key issues that apply to gender mainstreaming in European social funds apply equally to the Parliament and the work of its committees, to the work of the Executive and to our collective decisions. We must take a dual approach, stressing the benefits of mainstreaming and the need for positive action. The aims and objectives on equality need to be translated into action plans, not just left as statements of intent. I agree with Frances Curran. All the fine words in the world do not make something reality. The hard work is in achieving that reality.

How will we know that we have achieved equality of opportunity? What monitoring

systems—which are just as important—are we putting in place? How will we evaluate? How will we report back? We will have to do it as slowly as is necessary, but we must be determined to do it. Let us learn from others. Other parts of the world have mainstreamed equality to a greater extent than we have. How did they do it? Let us ensure that we look at that.

Mainstreaming equality is not just for the experts, but for every one of us. We must not just develop good policies; we must look at implementation strategies. Let us have a clear remit and a clear programme of action. I hope that the Equal Opportunities Committee's report is the beginning of further debates on how we may implement good practice and mainstream equalities throughout Scotland.

16:03

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): The Scotland Act 1998 defined equal opportunities as

“the prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions”.

It is because of that commitment that the Parliament has an Equal Opportunities Committee. That is a precious, on-going commitment, and we should all deem it important.

The Equal Opportunities Committee recognised early on that the existence of the committee should not allow complacency among others. All members of the Scottish Parliament must share the responsibility for ensuring that the spirit of the Scotland Act 1998 is recognised and that policies and practices are put into place to enact that spirit. Therefore, the committee's report and its recommendations on mainstreaming equality will be crucial for spreading the commitment of the Scotland Act 1998 and the Equal Opportunities Committee across the Parliament and the Executive.

I would like all nine of the report's recommendations to be acted on. The equality guidelines that are recommended for use by all committees in their work will be extremely useful, as will the equalities checklist for lead committees. The training facility that the report recommends be taken on board by the SPCB would also be useful, because it is often those who believe most strongly that they do not require training who, in fact, need it most. If it were possible, I would go as far as making training compulsory for everyone who is elected to, or works for, the Parliament.

Recommendations 7, 8 and 9 refer to monitoring, to which Christine May just referred.

The monitoring refers to both parliamentary committees and the Executive. I would like the monitoring to be formalised so that progress and outcomes can be assessed. During the consultation exercise, Dundee City Council raised monitoring as a specific issue and noted that local authorities and other public sector bodies have to make progress reports on equality matters. The council asked why that should not apply to the Parliament. Why not indeed? Victim Support Scotland and Greater Glasgow Health Council suggested provision for a grievance procedure if a committee were felt not to have addressed equality issues adequately. Again, why not? Perhaps Cathy Peattie and the Equal Opportunities Committee can consider that in the future.

Recommendation 6 asks the Executive to include an overarching equality statement in all bills. The Equal Opportunities Committee has been pushing for that from day one, as I remember. However, the report includes a copy of a letter from the then Minister for Social Justice to the Equal Opportunities Committee, in which the minister stated that she thought it would be difficult to do what recommendation 6 wants. I hope that that matter is looked at constantly so that the recommendation can be met in the future.

I refer back to the definition of equal opportunity in the Scotland Act 1998 as it is reflected by the committee's recommended definition of mainstreaming. Sadly, we know that discrimination exists in every category that is mentioned in the act's definition. For example, it exists in relation to gender, about which much has been said in the debate; marital status; the rights of cohabitantes; race; disability; age; and sexual orientation—the list goes on.

The report's introduction quotes the Council of Europe paper on gender mainstreaming:

“The greatest hurdle ... can be the absence of political will.”

I believe that most members of the Parliament have the political will, but I am not personally convinced that without the statutory powers from equal opportunities legislation we can make the necessary difference in the foreseeable future. It is possible to have that right to legislate in a devolved settlement—the Northern Ireland Assembly has it. After all, many of the discrimination issues that have been mentioned in the debate relate to reserved matters.

I welcome the report and I will work towards its implementation, but I am seriously concerned that it may be an uphill struggle. Marlyn Glen referred to hearts and minds. How long will it take before we see results? I feel that it is necessary sometimes to do more—for example, to be

aggressive in making demands for what is right. To paraphrase an old saying, grab them by the nose and the hearts and minds will follow.

16:08

Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): It gives me great pleasure to speak in this important debate, which allows us to focus on two key issues that are of real importance: equal opportunities for all Scots; and the primacy of the parliamentary process in our democracy. The importance of today's debate rests on the Parliament's founding principles. The mace that was presented to the Parliament in 1999 is inscribed with the pillars of "Wisdom", "Justice", "Compassion" and "Integrity". Of those principles, I believe that justice—for all our citizens regardless of race, religious belief, sexual orientation and so on, and in our parliamentary process—is of fundamental importance.

The principle of justice in equality is enshrined in the Scotland Act 1998, which led to the creation of our Parliament. The commitment to justice was sustained by the consultative steering group's commitment that

"equal opportunities should be mainstreamed into the work of the Parliament, and through the demands of and scrutinising of the Parliament, into the work of the Executive."

Having had the privilege of serving on the Equal Opportunities Committee in the first session, I was proud that, in taking forward its agenda, the committee recognised the requirement to provide guidance to ensure the mainstreaming of equality issues in the work of the parliamentary committees. Our work began on 24 October 2000, and our task was

"to devise a means of ensuring that equality was 'built in' from the beginning, rather than 'bolted on' at the end",

as had arguably been the case in the past.

That recognition of a requirement for process improvements is a good example of how our young Parliament has grown and matured. Having served on the Equal Opportunities Committee in the first session, I am happy to reiterate Margaret Curran's recognition of the particular role that was played by Kate Maclean, and of her leadership in taking forward an inclusive consultation process. I know that Cathy Peattie will build on that work.

I welcome the encouragement and guidance that has come from a variety of civic bodies, such as the CRE, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the governance of Scotland forum. I particularly welcome the opportunity that we had to engage with stakeholders from the north-east during our visit to Aberdeen in April 2002. During a civic participation event that the committee held on the subject, the committee noted representations

from more than 55 individuals from organisations operating throughout the north-east.

The committee report made nine recommendations for action, many of which will be familiar to members. They include the provision of equality guidelines for committees and a need to equality proof Scottish Executive legislation. The committee noted:

"The greatest hurdle to starting the ... mainstreaming process can be the absence of political will".

I am pleased that, in the committee's judgment, the Parliament had an

"unwavering commitment of political will towards mainstreaming equality."

I welcome the conclusion of researchers at Sheffield Hallam University, which were highlighted by Elaine Smith. The researchers said:

"The Scottish parliament is at the leading edge in mainstreaming equality".

With mainstreaming commitments in place, it is important that we examine where specific process improvements can be made, and that is what the report does. In particular, education is key to delivering a mainstreaming strategy in our committee processes. The need for members and staff of the Parliament to be fully aware of equality issues was recognised under recommendation 3, which states:

"The Committee recommends that the SPCB agree to the provision of training on mainstreaming equality which will complement existing training on equal opportunities within the Parliament."

Such a desire was raised by a number of consultees, including Fair Play and the Disabled Persons Housing Service.

The introduction of two training courses in the Parliament has been a welcome outcome. However, the education process must go beyond that. Ensuring that all members, their support staff and those who participate in the policy process are aware of our commitments in that regard is key to mainstreaming. With that in mind, the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body should consider how it can broaden the availability and awareness of such courses to all members and to their constituency staff, who are essential in aiding members deliver for their constituents. Training must go beyond SPCB staff, and consideration should be given to the production of material highlighting the importance of mainstreaming equality in the policy process. Those resources must be made available via the Parliament's website.

It is important for members to recall that a mainstreaming strategy is not, in itself, a guarantee of equality; rather, it guarantees that equality issues will be considered. The principle of

delivering the mainstreaming of equality in the policy process should be a priority for all those who believe in the importance of equality of opportunity in the Parliament. Education and training, both for internal use and for external audiences, are key to targeting delivery.

Mary Scanlon and Christine May mentioned changing attitudes and challenging prejudices, and I was recently reminded of how important that is. The west of Scotland forensic steering group has attempted to consult on the siting in my constituency of a medium-secure unit for people with mental disorders. I understand the prejudices and fears that people have in that respect, but I cannot understand why four MSPs—four people who should know better—would join together to issue a press release supporting a campaign that builds on those prejudices. In that press release, people with mental health problems were called “unsavoury characters”. It was argued that the secure unit should not be sited at the proposed location because it would be too near schools. The press release suggested that we should be saving the health service money, as the people concerned should be locked up in Dungavel. That came from an MSP. What an absolute disgrace! The press release goes on to suggest that to locate the secure unit in my constituency would “create stigma” for people with mental health problems.

I hope that those four MSPs are ashamed of themselves for pandering to prejudice, rather than confronting and challenging it. Perhaps the secure unit should not come to my constituency, because it may not be the right location—that is what the consultation is about. It is not about targeting people with mental health problems and allowing campaigns to be run against them. The four MSPs concerned should take the first opportunity to come to the Parliament to apologise for what they have done. Only then can we genuinely believe that we are challenging prejudice and only then will this debate mean something.

16:15

John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP): I did not intend to speak today, but the quality of the debate has been excellent and there have been some superb speeches. Occasionally, one stumbles across a debate that is way above the level of the usual turgid debates that take place here. This is one such debate, and it has been a privilege to listen to it.

My first point relates to ethnic minorities. The Scottish Senior Citizens Unity Party is the only party in the country that has made positive discrimination part and parcel of its outlook. The first thing that struck me when I came to this place was the lack of a black face. That situation should

be rectified sooner rather than later. We will have to wait until the election of 2007, but we will get there.

Donald Gorrie touched on the issue of age discrimination. I say to all members that we should get our own house in order. Three MSPs are being discriminated against because they are over 65—I am one and there are another two. Unlike other members, we are excluded from the Parliament’s pensions policy—we cannot buy years and so on.

The Corps of Commissionaires is a very prestigious organisation. We see its members standing outside prestigious buildings and football matches, wearing their uniforms and proudly displaying their medal ribbons. However, the Corps of Commissionaires is discriminating on the basis of age. It has called in all commissionaires who have passed their MOT but are over 75 and told them that they are finished. I do not know whether that applies to Her Majesty the Queen, who happens to be the organisation’s patron and is over 75. She, too, may get a little shock from the Corps of Commissionaires. I hope not, because I do not believe in age discrimination.

I come to the issue that Michael McMahon raised. I must differentiate between those unfortunate enough to suffer from mental problems, which is very sad, and the criminally insane. Michael McMahon was referring to the plan to build a £7 million secure unit, which may be sited in Bothwell, Uddingston or Paisley. The unit is intended for the criminally insane—

Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab): Will the member give way?

John Swinburne: Margaret Jamieson should hold on until I have finished. The aim of the unit is eventually to integrate people back into the community. The proponents of the project have admitted that the people in this institution or secure unit may be murderers, people guilty of attempted murder, rapists, arsonists and paedophiles. Once a psychiatrist says that they are safe to be released into the community, they will be able to go out, initially with a nurse or care worker. Eventually they will be allowed to integrate into the community.

Kate Maclean (Dundee West) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

John Swinburne: I will take an intervention from Kate Maclean in a minute.

I would not like the unit to be sited beside my house and for my grandchildren to be confronted with this problem when they go out. I must differentiate between do-gooders and—I have a good expression for this—the people who want to do well in the community. Frankly, there are some people who should be locked up securely, because it is not safe for the community—

Michael McMahon: Will the member give way?

Kate Maclean *rose*—

John Swinburne: Do not all jump up at once.

I ask members to come along to the next meeting in Bothwell or Uddingston and express their opinion. At the last meeting, the doors had to be shut, because 1,000 people from those small communities turned up. Those people are concerned about their children and I think that they have an argument. The people in question should be in a secure unit until they are designated as safe to come into the community. Once they are, let us give them every sympathy, but there is a dangerous line to draw and I would not like to be the psychiatrist who draws it.

Kate Maclean: Does the member accept that anybody who is a danger would be in Carstairs and that the unit is for people who are not perceived to be a threat? Does he accept that the reason why communities become terrified of such establishments' being located near them is the popular fascism of some politicians who wind up communities and turn their fears into hatred against groups of people who, as Michael McMahon said, have a mental illness and are not the monsters that the member described?

John Swinburne: I accept exactly what the member said. However, she has to accept that I was at the meeting and the psychiatrist admitted that the unit could accommodate people who have committed murder. They are only two tablets away; if they have missed their medication for two days, they can flip. That is an accepted fact.

Frances Curran: John Swinburne does not want a secure unit beside him. How does he think that people with a mental illness should be treated in a civil society?

John Swinburne: I do not want it beside me and I do not know many people who would like it beside them. I have the utmost angst about people who have mental problems.

Margaret Jamieson: Will the member take an intervention?

John Swinburne: Hang on. I do not know what the answer is, but it is not to allow them, once they have been integrated into the community—in the near future—to go into pubs, clubs and libraries unattended. The people who are being put in the unit have committed crimes; they are not normal run-of-the-mill people with a mental problem. Members should think about that.

Margaret Jamieson: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I think that the member has finished.

16:23

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): In answer to Elaine Smith's comments about Conservative ladies, I have to say that we are proud of our female Conservative MSPs. I remind Elaine Smith that we had a female leader once and that is something that the Labour party has never had. She did not recognise glass ceilings as an impediment and she got to the top of her profession through merit alone. She did not like to be patronised either.

I congratulate Cathy Peattie and the Equal Opportunities Committee on the report. I was on the Equal Opportunities Committee in the first session of the Parliament and I remember that we had an equalities checklist that was developed by the Commission for Racial Equality in partnership with the governance of Scotland forum at the University of Edinburgh. The first questions on the checklist were: what is the policy for, who is the policy for and what are the desired and anticipated outcomes? When we are discussing mainstreaming equality in committees, it is necessary for us to identify who suffers from inequality in Scotland and why.

As my colleague Bill Aitken said in his response to the Scottish Executive's equality strategy for Scotland:

"A real equality is not going to be achieved by politically correct and trendy thinking, but rather by giving people genuine equality of opportunity. The Executive's policies in housing, education and health alone are denying people equality of opportunity and they should recognise that it is the policies that need to change if inequality is ever to be properly addressed."

In education, many people are restricted to catchment areas and do not have a proper choice of schools for their children. There should be more equality of choice. Recently, I heard Mr Blair calling for fairness, but there is still no sign of the delivery of fairness. Until the Government can do something about creating reasonable discipline in schools, there will be no equality for the pupils who wish to take their studies seriously but are unable to do so. The inequality gap in schools is extraordinary and is demonstrated by the enormous gulf in attainment between Scotland's best-performing and worst-performing state schools. In 2001, in the top 10 per cent of state schools, 45.3 per cent of the total secondary 4 roll had achieved three highers by the end of secondary 5. The figure for the bottom 10 per cent of schools was 4.5 per cent. That is an astounding difference. That is where inequality is starting.

In health, people are stuck with postcode prescribing. People can get certain medicines in Glasgow but not in Edinburgh, and vice versa. Where is the equality in that? It is the poorest and most vulnerable in society who are suffering from the decline of our health services.

In housing, the Government's failure to deal with the problem of antisocial neighbours is taking away the right of people to live equally in peace and harmony. As it is the poorest and most vulnerable who are most likely to suffer from ill health and most likely to be the victims of crime, the only way in which the Executive can truly offer more equality to those people is by reforming the key public services that I have mentioned.

In the Equal Opportunities Committee's report, a key part of mainstreaming is for committees to assess whether policies will have a different impact on different groups. I agree with that. However, if the policies currently in place are failing some sectors of society, those policies must be changed. I agree with another key point of the report, which is that training for decision makers and policy makers is very important. That means practical training for MSPs, by which I mean visits to the areas of concern and interviews with the people who are affected. An ounce of practical knowledge is worth a pound of theory, in my very humble opinion.

Christine May: The member has referred on a number of occasions to the need for policies to change. Does he agree that it is not only policies that need to change but attitudes? There is no evidence that attitudes in his party have changed in the past 40 years.

Mr McGrigor: Attitudes have to change, but the way to do that is probably through a change of Government.

Recommendation 1 in the Equal Opportunities Committee's report suggests a definition of mainstreaming, which includes

"rethinking mainstream provision to accommodate the equal opportunities categories as identified in the Scotland Act."

I agree that the principles of mainstreaming equality should always be considered by committees in their deliberations. I was a member of the Equal Opportunities Committee in the previous session of Parliament, and I remember taking part in the report on Scottish Gypsy Travellers and visiting many sites where we uncovered some distressing inequalities. On one site, people were not allowed keys to get in and out of their site with their vehicles. The key was with a man who was miles away down the road and who was available only two hours a day. That was changed immediately after we went there. I also remember, at the site near Dumbarton, that the access was unbelievably bad and no normal car could have been expected to get in. I hope that that has now changed. I ask the Scottish Executive whether it has taken up the recommendations of our report.

In housing, often people with disabilities can easily be accommodated if certain elements—

such as electrical fittings, and bathroom and kitchen fittings—are used in new-build housing with disabled people in mind. It is no hardship to the enabled to use many disabled facilities. It is just a question of thinking about what we take for granted. A general shift of thought is required so that we do not miss out on providing equal opportunities for all. To disabled people, an infrastructure that enables them is of enormous advantage. As our population lives longer, many more of us may be very grateful for well-thought-out provisions for the elderly and disabled in our housing and transport infrastructure. That is also true of our older railway stations, which I know disabled people find particularly difficult.

As Cathy Peattie said, equal opportunities should be built in at the beginning rather than tagged on at the end. The previous Equal Opportunities Committee recommended that the Parliament adopt the mainstreaming of equality issues. We agreed with that. We know that that will involve training and a good information base so that the issues can be recognised and, above all, prioritised. However, the real inequality is not within our committees but out there, in the cities and in the country. The policies that have caused that disadvantage are what need to be changed.

16:30

Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP): I join others in welcoming the committee's report.

I want to start by referring to the survey of Scottish public opinion that Margaret Curran mentioned. It is of concern that 26 per cent of people think that it is okay to discriminate. That shows all of us that Scotland has some way to go if we are to change the situation. However, that requires political leadership, which must challenge attitudes towards asylum seekers or any other group that is discriminated against. The good news is, I suppose, that 68 per cent believe that it is wrong to discriminate in any way. If a similar survey had been carried out 10 years ago, I do not believe that the figure in that category would have been as high, so we should welcome the progress that has been made.

We need to practise what we preach. As Stewart Stevenson highlighted, there is a lack of employment opportunities in the Parliament for people who are disabled or from an ethnic background. The figures speak for themselves. I also understand that we have a problem in the civil service, where a recent campaign that attempted to recruit more people from an ethnic background resulted in little progress being made, despite a rise in applications. We need to start from where we are and with what we all have responsibility for. The fact that there has been little change perhaps sends out a negative message. Let us get our own house in order.

Cathy Peattie laid out the substance of the report and why it was produced. She highlighted that much of the report is about long-term aims and that the situation will not change overnight. She said that a culture shift is as important as a change to processes, and I certainly agree with her on that.

Shiona Baird talked about the need to pay heed to equality in the wider world. That point was well made. The issue is not just about equality for citizens in Scotland but about the vast inequalities around the world and in the third world in particular. That was a pertinent point.

Elaine Smith mentioned the fact that only 23 per cent of our local councillors are women. That is an important point that should be addressed. Local councils are often the first stage at which people come into elected politics, so it is of concern that so few councillors are women. However, the question that I would pose is whether the introduction of the single transferable vote would help that situation. The Equal Opportunities Commission certainly believes that STV would be helpful in addressing gender inequality within local government and I hope that that is the case.

Donald Gorrie talked about equal opportunities for back benchers and the requirement to deal with age discrimination. I agree with both those points.

Sandra White was right to mention the need to monitor mainstreaming processes. How on earth will we know whether progress is being made unless we monitor?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): I am reluctant to interrupt the member, but there is a rising tide of conversation. We are at least 20 minutes from decision time, so members who are having urgent conversations could probably have them in the coffee lounge or in the corridors outside the chamber. I would appreciate it if we could have some order for the closing speeches.

Shona Robison: I hope that members will not all rush at once and that some will stay to listen to my speech.

Frances Curran made some very pertinent points about the need for the message that goes out about what we say and do to be as important as what is on paper; that is absolutely right. Whether we are talking about asylum seekers or equality of pay for nursery nurses, who are predominantly women, it is those issues that give the public a sense of what the Parliament and Executive think and we are found wanting in many ways.

I have a vested interest in agreeing with Frances Curran's comments about a crèche facility for MSPs and staff and, which is important, for the

public. Members of the public with children in tow have visited me and it is difficult for them to take part in the processes of the Parliament without such facilities.

Christine May reminded us that those who are prejudiced often do not recognise that fact. It is for all of us to challenge those who show prejudices. Linda Fabiani said that grabbing people by the nose means that their hearts and minds will follow and we should support that.

I agree with what Michael McMahon said about the comments made by some MSPs, no matter who those MSPs are. We are talking about political leadership. I say to John Swinburne with all sincerity that I understand why he has done what he has done, especially because it is tempting to take notice when people are clamouring at the door and wanting members to say one thing or another. However, for the long-term good, it is sometimes important to think first and act later.

John Swinburne: Will the member give way?

Shona Robison: No. I want to finish my point.

If the people and political leaders of Peterhead had acted in that way, we might not have a prison in Peterhead that is full of people who have committed sexual offences. They fought tooth and nail to keep that prison. That is what long-term political leadership achieves in the way of changing hearts and minds.

Equal opportunities is the business of the Parliament, of the committees, and of members in their constituencies. It should affect how we show leadership. I hope that all members in the Parliament can agree because equal opportunities should not divide us. I am happy to make the closing speech on behalf of my party.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that because this is a committee debate, there will be a closing speech from the Executive and then one from the committee.

16:38

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Mrs Mary Mulligan): I congratulate the members who have spoken today and the committee that prepared the piece of work that we are debating. I look forward to working with the new committee to ensure that we monitor the delivery of the proposals in the report.

I welcome the breadth of agreement that has been shown across the chamber. It is encouraging to hear how much agreement there is on several issues. However, it is our actions that will be the proof of that agreement.

We have debated the processes that the Parliament and its committees must adopt to deliver effectively the equality agenda. Elaine Smith and others said that that is not just about following the Executive's lead but about the Parliament and its committees taking ownership of the document and ensuring that equality issues are at the centre of all our deliberations.

We must not lose sight of why mainstreaming equality is so important and why it is a matter for all members and committees. We are mainstreaming equality because inequality, prejudice and discrimination can affect many aspects of people's lives such as employment, education, health, and housing. Transport was another issue that came up frequently in the debate. If we want to change and improve the situation for people who experience inequality and discrimination, we need to think about the impact of policies across the range of areas for which we have responsibility.

I think that it was Donald Gorrie who said that, as parliamentarians, we should question our own stereotyping and prejudice. Shona Robison has already referred to Mr Swinburne's comments, but I cannot let them pass without responding to them. The proposed provision for Lanarkshire is the same as that in four other areas in Scotland, including here in Edinburgh at the Orchard clinic. I live less than a mile from the Orchard clinic. I do not go around in fear, and neither do I fear for my children each time they step outside the door.

As Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care, I have visited Carstairs. There are people in Carstairs who should not be there, because it is inappropriate for them. Only by providing the kind of facility that is being suggested for Lanarkshire will we allow those people to move on with their lives and become more integrated in our society. That is what we want for our society, not to lock people away and forget about them. I invite John Swinburne to visit Carstairs and the Orchard clinic to see what is being proposed, because I think he would be pleasantly surprised. It is important that politicians give a lead. We know that people have fears, but we should answer those fears and tell people what the reality is, not feed their fears.

John Swinburne: I did not come here this afternoon to be chastised. I take on board Mary Mulligan's point. I am just trying to differentiate between people with mental health problems, for whom I have the greatest sympathy, and people who may have committed crimes before they were incarcerated. According to the health people who met other MSPs and me, the list of such crimes includes murder, attempted murder, rape, paedophilia and child abuse. Those people have problems that are beyond my comprehension. I am not saying that they are not good people; I just do not want them next to me.

Mrs Mulligan: The advice from around me was not to give way to Mr Swinburne. I thought that I would give him the opportunity to correct the things he said earlier, but he just by-passed that. I am disappointed, because we can all learn. On this occasion, maybe he should have listened better.

I return to the debate which, as I said at the beginning, has been consensual, and I appreciate that. Within the Parliament we need to have the means to know and understand the different needs and experiences of our communities. Mainstreaming equality enables us to do that. One of the essential elements of successful mainstreaming is engagement and dialogue with external bodies and equality groups. I acknowledge that a number of members asked for a register to assist us in doing that. The Executive is examining that.

The Executive has developed work with the range of equality interests, from which our work has benefited enormously. We recognise that policy development is much more effective when it is informed by the views of those who are affected. We cannot all share their experiences, but we can listen to them. Good consultation is part of good policy making. Ensuring that account is taken of equality interests and perspectives must be an integral part of the process from the outset, not an add-on. Equality is not a marginal issue, so we should not marginalise it. That is why it is essential that equality is owned and addressed by all the committees of the Parliament.

We agree with Nanette Milne's observation that mainstreaming is a long-term process, but much can be done to explore it. The guidelines that the Equal Opportunities Committee has produced will assist in that regard.

Although the mechanisms and processes that we have debated today might, at times, seem to be technical and perhaps even tedious, without effective processes and a systematic approach to equality, we will be unable to make the changes that will improve the lives of the most vulnerable in our communities.

Today's debate is about ensuring that an issue that is fundamental to many people's lives becomes fundamental to our work. We should not underestimate the opportunity that the Parliament and the Executive have to make a difference. We should support the motion.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Margaret Smith to respond to the debate on behalf of the Equal Opportunities Committee. You have about 13 minutes.

16:45

Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD):
Any interventions will be gratefully received.

It is a pleasure to be able to respond to this debate on behalf of the committee and to recognise the work of our predecessor committee and its convener, Kate Maclean. It is also a pleasure to acknowledge the speeches made by members from all parties in what was, until seven eighths of the way through, a consensual debate. If Mr Swinburne did not come here to be chastised, he should not come here and make ignorant comments about things about which he knows little.

In the first session of the Parliament, I had the privilege of being the convener of the Health and Community Care Committee and of working with colleagues of all parties on the Mental Health (Scotland) Bill, which was a particularly interesting and complex piece of legislation. During our consideration of the bill, we visited the Orchard clinic. Mr Swinburne asked who would like to have people with mental health difficulties living beside them in secure units. I can tell him who: the people of Morningside. That is not exactly the kind of place where one would think of putting a secure unit, but the local people have accepted that people with deep-seated mental health difficulties need help and need that help to be given to them in somewhere other than Carstairs. The members of the Health and Community Care Committee also believed that it is wrong, in this day and age, that we do not have a full spectrum of services available to deal with people with mental health difficulties.

Mr Swinburne's comments would not be out of place gracing the front pages of *The Sun*. They were outrageous and I have no compunction about saying so.

Today, we are talking about the need fully to endorse the recommendation of the committee's report, "Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities in the Work of Committees of the Scottish Parliament". Mainstreaming equality means the integration of equal opportunities principles, strategies and practices into the everyday work of government and other public bodies from the outset, not as an add-on at the end. Mainstreaming equality must be worked through by all the players, specialists and partners involved and by consulting people who experience discrimination and prejudice every day of their lives.

There are a number of methods by which that can happen, but central to a positive equal opportunities and mainstreaming policy is political will. That is where we come in. We must show leadership, as Christine May and others have said. Each parliamentary committee must take ownership of equal opportunities.

The United Nations, the European Union, The United Kingdom Government and everyone else are moving towards improving equal opportunities and it is enshrined in the Scotland Act 1998 that we should do so too. That legislation gives us a duty to encourage equal opportunities, which is one of the founding principles of the Scottish Parliament. The Parliament's equal opportunities remit is so wide that the EU is only just catching up with us. However, we have many challenges ahead of us in relation to discrimination on the grounds of religion, sexual orientation, disability, mental health and a range of other issues.

We need to mainstream equality. Discrimination has always existed—as we can see whether we read the Bible or Shakespeare—and probably always will, but that does not mean that we should stop fighting it. In the famous words of Shylock:

"If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die?"

Mixing my Shakespeare and my Burns, I would say that we are all Jock Tamson's bairns.

I agree totally with Stewart Stevenson. We need to ensure that we change not only the policies but the culture. We need to see people as people and not as labels. We need to ensure not only that our policies are right but that the fine words are too.

Although I have been disappointed to hear some of the Executive's recent comments, I welcome whole-heartedly the comments that Margaret Curran made today about the LGBT community and the need for equal opportunities to be extended towards that group. What came through loud and clear from the social attitudes survey that was published yesterday was that, although progress has been made on discrimination against women and disabled people, there is a long way to go on discrimination against ethnic minorities, and an even longer way to go on discrimination against the LGBT community. I expect the Executive to stand up against not only racism, but homophobia, at every opportunity.

The social attitudes survey is a useful document. As many people have said, we have a need for data and information. We should be heartened by the fact that 68 per cent of Scots say that we should do as much as we can to get rid of all kinds of prejudice. However, we must be worried by the fact that 26 per cent of Scots think that sometimes there is a good reason for prejudice. No, there is not. The leadership that the Parliament and the Executive show will demonstrate that there is no place for discrimination and prejudice in Scotland.

Although we have a long way to go, the trends are quite good. The survey shows that five times as many over 65-year-olds as 18 to 24-year-olds say that they would mind if one of their relatives was to marry someone from a different racial

background. Our children are learning the right lessons; the fact that they are much more likely to be tolerant is a good trend. Therefore, that is not the most worrying aspect of the study.

Members might expect me to say that I was most concerned about the fact that 18 per cent of people said that they do not want to have an openly gay MSP, but the most worrying aspect of the study was not that finding, but the finding that 23.5 per cent of people think that they have nothing or very little in common with gay and lesbian people.

I was also concerned about the fact that 27 per cent of Scots said that they felt that they have little or nothing in common with people from ethnic minorities. I have to say that all of us use the same health service and schools. We ride on the same buses and have the same needs from our public services.

We need to mainstream equal opportunities in every single parliamentary committee and in the Executive. We need to consider the policies that lie behind all of our services. We need to ask questions about what people need and about why a service has to be delivered differently for this or that group. We need to ensure that people's needs are taken into account. If all that were to happen, it would improve policy making and the openness of the policy process. It would also mean that people who have not been consulted before were consulted and would ensure that equality is not tacked on at the end of the process but is embedded at the grass-roots level.

I agree whole-heartedly with the key recommendations in the report, which have also been backed up by the Parliament's Procedures Committee. How should each of us take forward the mainstreaming agenda in the work that we do? The Parliament's committees have a role to play in the scrutiny of legislation. We need to ask a series of questions about the impact of legislation on people from a range of different groups and on those of no group.

We need information and data. One of the things that came out of the survey was that we do not have enough data on the ethnic minorities in Scotland. Another community for which there is not enough data is the LGBT community. If a lot of people in the LGBT community do not say that they are part of that community, how can they be given the services that they need?

The same issue arises in relation to disability. Because disabled people do not want to be discriminated against in their workplace and elsewhere, they are sometimes not truthful about their level of disability. MSPs have an important role to play in consulting people across all the different groups.

We need to try to find out what people need from us. Sandra White made a good contribution in which she highlighted the thinking and intention behind the introduction of a bill. Whether a bill is an Executive bill or a member's bill, equal opportunities should be thought about at every stage: before the bill is introduced; during the scrutiny stage and in its implementation. Indeed, as Linda Fabiani quite rightly said, legislation should be monitored with that in mind to ensure that we have got it right.

I am pleased to be a new member of the Equal Opportunities Committee and very much concur with Frances Curran's comment that it is quite consensual. In the past, the committee has engaged with people in civic Scotland through the reporter system, which examines all strands of discrimination and gives people in disadvantaged groups or groups that have experienced prejudice and discrimination a contact point in the Parliament.

This Parliament should be about increasing accessibility, listening to people and bringing justice to people who have not experienced justice before. We should be serious about that when we accept and act on the committee report's recommendations. We must take ownership at every level and take the opportunity to show real leadership. Even when we do not agree with people on an issue or do not understand why they think that a certain issue is important, we should listen to them, try to understand what they need from us and put that into practice to ensure that the Parliament is for all Scotland's people, not just the few.

Committee of the Regions (Membership)

16:55

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of motion S2M-438, in the name of Andy Kerr, on the Committee of the Regions.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament notes the loss of electoral mandate to serve on the Committee of the Regions of Irene McGugan, Christine May and Hugh Halcro-Johnston; thanks these individuals for the contribution they have made to representing Scotland in the European Union, and endorses the proposal to nominate Mr Jack McConnell MSP, Nicol Stephen MSP, Councillor Corrie McChord and Councillor Keith Brown as full members and Irene Oldfather MSP, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Councillor Jim McCabe and Councillor Andrew Campbell as alternate members on the UK delegation to the Committee of the Regions for the remainder of the current session to 2006.—[*Patricia Ferguson.*]

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

Business Motion

16:56

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of a business motion S2M-436, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 8 October 2003

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Ministerial Statement

followed by Executive Debate on the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service—Proposals for Legislation

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 9 October 2003

9.30 am Executive Debate on Creating an Enterprise Culture in Scotland's Schools

12 noon First Minister's Question Time

2.30 pm Question Time

3.10 pm Executive Debate on Scotland's Contribution to Education in the Commonwealth—Past, Present and Future

followed by Motion on the Criminal Justice Bill—UK Legislation

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 29 October 2003

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Stage 1 Debate on the Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution in respect of the Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 30 October 2003

9.30 am Committee Business
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time
 2.30 pm Question Time
 3.10 pm Executive Business
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business—[*Patricia Ferguson.*]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

16:57

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of seven Parliamentary Bureau motions. The first four motions, S2M-428 to S2M-431, relate to the designation of lead committees.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the draft Victim Statements (Prescribed Courts) (Scotland) Order 2003.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 (Transitional Provisions) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/438).

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Victims' Rights (Prescribed Bodies) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/440).

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Victim Statements (Prescribed Offences) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/441).—[*Patricia Ferguson.*]

The Presiding Officer: The question on those motions will be put at decision time.

The next three Parliamentary Bureau motions, S2M-432 to S2M-434, relate to approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.9) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/409) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.10) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/410) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (Orkney) (No.3) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/429) be approved.—[*Patricia Ferguson.*]

The Presiding Officer: The question on those motions will also be put at decision time.

Motion without Notice

16:58

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): As we are two minutes ahead of time, I am minded to take a motion without notice to bring forward decision time.

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Patricia Ferguson): I am delighted to move a motion to bring forward decision time.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees under rule 11.2.4 of Standing Orders that Decision Time on Wednesday 1 October 2003 be taken at 4.58 pm.

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

16:58

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): There are nine questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S2M-411, in the name of Cathy Peattie, on mainstreaming equal opportunities in the work of the committees of the Scottish Parliament, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament notes the recommendations contained in the Equal Opportunities Committee's 1st Report 2003: *Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities in the Work of Committees of the Scottish Parliament* (SP Paper 817).

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that motion S2M-438, in the name of Andy Kerr, on the Committee of the Regions, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament notes the loss of electoral mandate to serve on the Committee of the Regions of Irene McGugan, Christine May and Hugh Halcro-Johnston; thanks these individuals for the contribution they have made to representing Scotland in the European Union, and endorses the proposal to nominate Mr Jack McConnell MSP, Nicol Stephen MSP, Councillor Corrie McChord and Councillor Keith Brown as full members and Irene Oldfather MSP, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Councillor Jim McCabe and Councillor Andrew Campbell as alternate members on the UK delegation to the Committee of the Regions for the remainder of the current session to 2006.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that motion S2M-428, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the draft Victim Statements (Prescribed Courts) (Scotland) Order 2003.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that motion S2M-429, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 (Transitional Provisions) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/438).

The Presiding Officer: The fifth question is, that motion S2M-430, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the

Victims' Rights (Prescribed Bodies) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/440).

The Presiding Officer: The sixth question is, that motion S2M-431, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Victim Statements (Prescribed Offences) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/441).

The Presiding Officer: The seventh question is, that motion S2M-432, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on approval of an SSI, 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)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 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)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 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)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (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)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 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

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (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)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 69, Against 19, Abstentions 23.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.9) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/409) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The eighth question is, that motion S2M-433, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on approval of an SSI, 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 (Dumarton) (Lab)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 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)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 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)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (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)

Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 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

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 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)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (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)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 69, Against 18, Abstentions 25.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.10) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/410) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The ninth question is, that motion S2M-434, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on approval of an SSI, 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)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 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)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 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)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (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)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD)

Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 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

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 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)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (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)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 69, Against 18, Abstentions 25.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (Orkney) (No.3) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/429) be approved.

Transport (Southern Edinburgh)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-348, in the name of Mike Pringle, on transport in southern Edinburgh. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes with concern the continued traffic congestion on main routes into Edinburgh from the south, including the problem of parking by city centre commuters in residential streets in southern Edinburgh; further notes with concern the proposal for an out-of-town football stadium at Straiton that can only exacerbate existing traffic problems; considers that improved transport infrastructure, such as the proposed park-and-ride site at Burdiehouse, is essential to help tackle the problem, and considers that the City of Edinburgh and Midlothian councils and the Scottish Executive should ensure that these transport problems in southern Edinburgh can be resolved with added benefit to the wider Lothian and Borders region.

17:04

Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD): I am glad to see members here tonight who are obviously interested in doing something about transport issues in south Edinburgh and Lothian. Transport in south Edinburgh is crucial for Edinburgh's economic and social development as a whole, and it impinges on the quality of life and the health and safety of many people. I have highlighted in the motion a number of individual issues that are of concern and I am pleased to note at the outset that, since I lodged the motion, the matter of the ludicrous ground-share proposals for Hearts and Hibs appears to have been put to rest. As the Straiton problem shows, travelling into Edinburgh is not just a weekday thing, and any decisions that are made on future transport infrastructure must take into account the fact that, for better or for worse, Edinburgh is now a seven-days-a-week city.

Let us consider some of the facts. Car ownership in Edinburgh has gone up by 77 per cent in the past 20 years, and more than 50 per cent of journeys of more than a quarter of a mile in the city are by car. Major infrastructure projects—such as trams, Edinburgh Park railway station and the airport rail link—are now under way to alleviate problems in the west of the city and will benefit the city as a whole. However, over the past 20 years, the major rise in peak-time traffic flow has been on the A702 into south Edinburgh, with an increase of 53 per cent during the morning peak compared with only 30 per cent on the A8 to the west.

It was satisfying to me, when I was a local councillor for North Morningside, to see improved bus lanes into the city centre starting to produce

an increase in bus use after years of decline. However, buses still account for only 3 per cent of vehicles during the rush hour; what would certainly reduce the number of cars coming into south Edinburgh are decent park-and-ride schemes to the south of the city.

Today's debate was partially inspired by the worrying news that Midlothian Council is to hold up planning permission for the park-and-ride site at Straiton until it has carried out a full review of transport. I cannot understand that—we have been talking about the site for years and we have had numerous transport reviews. I remember back in 1992 talking to the now transport guru, Professor David Begg, who told me confidently that Edinburgh would have three or four park-and-ride sites by 1996. Sadly, the site now at Newcraighall has proved not to be as successful as was hoped, but that site is of greater benefit to people coming from the east of the city. We urgently need the site at Straiton to go ahead.

I was pleased to see that the City of Edinburgh Council is considering putting its own site at Burdiehouse in my constituency. If the council feels that that site could be up and running before the desired opening date for Straiton, which was supposed to be in April next year, my view is that it should go it alone. I call on the Minister for Transport to support whatever site the council feels can be completed first. The delays are completely unacceptable; we must ensure that Edinburgh has another park-and-ride site to the south of the city as soon as possible.

Until the park-and-ride site is up and running, there will still be the problems of commuters using residential streets as unofficial park-and-ride sites. I was worried to see that some drivers are now using hospital car parks at the new Edinburgh royal infirmary, despite the huge cost of parking there, and at the Western general. There are also problems with motorists parking in streets around the new Edinburgh royal infirmary and the University of Edinburgh's King's Buildings, which is causing real problems for residents.

In Morningside and Marchmont, we have the daily problem of people parking in streets just outside the peripheral permit zone and getting the bus into town. The council has proposed extending the parking zone, but it proposes to give only one permit to each house. That has resulted in numerous complaints from many of my constituents who have real difficulties with that proposal. For example, I was contacted by one family in which the father is a doctor and the mother is a community nurse. Each has a car and both need their cars for shift work. I suggest that there should be more flexibility for allowing up to two permits for families who need them. Having a draconian one-permit-only limit is just daft.

Another suggestion for improved transport infrastructure that I wish to mention briefly is the possible reopening of the south suburban rail line through south Edinburgh. I completely accept that that proposal can be taken forward only in conjunction with improvements to Waverley and Haymarket stations, and I want to use this opportunity to call on the minister and on civil servants not to lose the long-term vision for Waverley. It is a redevelopment that will last for 100 years, and only with more through platforms can plans for a suburban railway in south Edinburgh come to fruition.

There also exists the option of a south suburban passenger line without the need to worry about Waverley. The line could be open from Newcraighall through to Gorgie, which would greatly encourage east-west traffic across the city. I noticed that back in 1999 the City of Edinburgh Council's local transport strategy proposed possible rail services from Midlothian to the west of the City, in particular to the Gyle.

No discussion of transport in south Edinburgh would be complete without mentioning congestion charging. The Liberal Democrat group on the council—me included until recently—has not wanted transport improvements to be linked to congestion charging. I support congestion charging in principle as a means by which to cut congestion, but the policy is being implemented by the City of Edinburgh Council executive as a money-raising scheme. Almost £1.5 billion of transport improvements are already coming to the south-east of Scotland. Those should be properly planned and implemented; they should not be promised on the expectation that there will be more toll revenue.

I would like to see a congestion-charge scheme that cuts congestion in Edinburgh dramatically but does not affect the economic growth of the city. A serious congestion charge has already been introduced in London, but it has not raised nearly as much money as was anticipated and the evidence is that it is causing real problems for theatres, museums, restaurants and bars in the centre of London. The congestion charge in Edinburgh needs to raise enough money to pay for itself. However, we will not get such a scheme because the transport improvements will not be in place by 2006, when the charge comes into force. I call on the City of Edinburgh Council to think again about the details of its scheme.

Transport in south Edinburgh is vital to the lives of all of my constituents. All the businesses in Morningside Road depend on it, all the visitors to the hospital at Little France depend on it and all the residents of areas from Kaimes and Gilmerton to Sciennes and Merchiston depend on it. It drives our whole lives, if members will excuse the pun,

and it is time that urgent action is taken to address many of the concerns that I have expressed today. If members will excuse another transport pun, let us get south Edinburgh's transport issues back on track and not pushed into a siding.

17:12

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): I should declare an interest, not only as the transport spokesman for my party and an MSP for the constituency, but as a resident of the locality that is involved.

As is usual, I congratulate the member on securing the debate. The issue is important not just for those of us who are residents of Edinburgh. Edinburgh is to some extent the economic dynamo of Scotland and if it is to continue to fulfil that function, it is fundamental that the city's infrastructure should allow it to do so.

The status quo is unacceptable. The problem is that matters have to some extent been superseded by the debate on congestion charging. It is thought that either opposing or granting congestion charging will somehow resolve matters, but that is not the case. We require short-term action, but we also require a long-term vision.

I accept that it is one thing to be critical of the Executive or the council, but quite another to propose sustainable and appropriate solutions. As MSPs or as councillors, we cannot always be critical without putting forward adequate proposals.

As Mike Pringle correctly said, transport is important not only because of what it does for the city but because of what it does for our society and for our economy. I think that all members recognise that Edinburgh is doing well, but if it is to do better and if we are to avoid running into pitfalls or potholes, it is imperative that we address transport issues. Members of the work force must be able to access the city if, as in many instances, they are unable to live there.

We must also recognise that we have to have a vision. One of the great problems is that we have been dealing with matters on a piecemeal basis and have been reacting to events. We must now ensure that we create a transport solution for Edinburgh from now until 2010 and far beyond that.

It must be a two-way process, because there is a high road and a low road. The high road is about where we want to get to. I will leave aside congestion charging—I take the view that to some extent trams are contingent on congestion charging, whatever Transport Initiatives Edinburgh may suggest. The fact is that no tram scheme in the United Kingdom pays its way, so how are we

going to fund trams if not out of the coffers of the rates, which is a restricted area, or from congestion charging?

Of course, we aspire to a tram scheme in the same way as we aspire to a south suburban line, the Borders rail line and other projects. Many of those are far bigger infrastructure projects, which will take time. We must ensure that we project forward and deliver them within a definable time scale.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD): The member mentions delivery of the Borders railway. Will he explain why the Scottish National Party neglected to put that matter in its manifesto in the recent elections?

Mr MacAskill: Our commitment has always been to infrastructure improvements in Scotland, but we have never got into the argument about one improvement against another. The Government decides which improvements should go ahead. I think that it is important that we upgrade the Aberdeen to Inverness route and that we introduce the Borders railway, but to suggest that we are agin one and for another is false. The matter comes down to governance, which is about priorities. Our view is that the Borders railway is essential, although whether it is our number 1 priority is debatable, given that we have other important rail links and the M74 north extension to consider. However, we view the Borders railway as important and to suggest otherwise is fallacious.

There is a low road. Not all public transport improvements need to be large sexy schemes or have to involve great investment. As Mike Pringle said, improvement in the existing bus network is a priority and money has already been put into that. The bus link to Edinburgh airport has shown us what can be done to change people's attitudes towards bus services. Investment in the bus network would enhance the situation. That ties in with park-and-ride facilities and with enforcement. We must take lessons from Transport for London on that. As well as ensuring that the measures are in place, we must have enforcement. For example, we must ensure that those who impinge on bus lanes are prosecuted.

We need a vision for the future, but we must also introduce relatively cheap and speedy short-term measures.

17:16

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): I, too, thank Mike Pringle for providing the opportunity to debate transport issues in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

I suspect that the problem of residential areas being used as unofficial park-and-ride or park-and-

walk facilities is prevalent throughout the city and is not confined to the south. The problem has led the City of Edinburgh Council to consider expanding the size of the current central parking zone to incorporate areas within Mr Pringle's constituency and elsewhere. Although that measure might bring relief to his constituents and others, it will negate the concept of a central parking zone and displace parking into other non-controlled streets and so on and so forth until parking throughout the city is controlled, regulated, priced and policed. Is that really the way that we want to go? Should we not devise a strategy to provide proper parking facilities for residents, commuters and visitors to the town?

There is a balance to be struck. As Mr MacAskill and Mr Pringle rightly acknowledge, Edinburgh has a vibrant economy. To sustain that economy and the neighbouring communities within Edinburgh's commuter area, we must work with the grain of human nature and behaviour by acknowledging that the car is the preferred, convenient and appropriate method of transportation for many people in their day-to-day lives. We must act accordingly in policy making, rather than adopt a simplistic and dogmatic anti-car agenda.

Public transport in the city can be improved and I hope that it will be improved. I speak as an MSP who comes to work every day on the bus. However, public transport is not the be-all and end-all. Policies that are based on providing people with choices and options rather than subjecting them to penalties are much to be preferred, given the high level of taxes that we already pay.

Like Mr Pringle, I am not keen on the prospect of an out-of-town football stadium at Straiton. I have spent three years avoiding shopping at Straiton and where Ikea has failed, I have no desire to see Sir Tom Farmer and Chris Robinson succeed. However, as Mr Pringle pointed out, perhaps the plan is already a dead letter.

One interesting absence from Mr Pringle's motion is any mention of the T-word—tolls—although he referred to the issue in his speech. It might be helpful if I remind Mr Pringle of highly pertinent events in the Parliament before his election to it. While he and his fellow Liberal Democrat councillors in the City of Edinburgh Council were running round telling people that they were opposed to tolls, his Liberal Democrat colleagues in the Parliament approved legislation that gave the City of Edinburgh Council the power to impose tolls. That was despite the fact that there was no doubt that empowering councils in general was the equivalent of empowering City of Edinburgh Council in particular, as only that council was seeking such a power.

Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): I take exception to the use of the word “impose”. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 gave councils—we knew, at the time, that that meant City of Edinburgh Council—the right to ask our constituents whether they wanted tolls. There is no question of City of Edinburgh Council, or any other council, being able to impose congestion charging on anybody without having satisfied certain key criteria in the 2001 act.

David McLetchie: There is a role for the minister and the Scottish Executive, which I shall come to in concluding my remarks.

Mr Pringle might have missed the recent pronouncements of Don Foster MP, who is the Liberal Democrat transport spokesman at Westminster. Following the first six months’ experience of congestion charging in London, Mr Foster urged ministers to work with councils throughout Britain to identify congestion hotspots and introduce similar schemes. Mr Foster is the MP for Bath. I have no doubt that, even as he delivered his ringing endorsement of tolls, somewhere in a ward in Bath a busy little Liberal Democrat was already organising an anti-tolls petition. However, consistency is the last thing that we would expect to find in a party that positively discourages consistency among its members.

Tolls would be a disaster for Edinburgh. They threaten the vitality and economic strength of our city—especially the city centre, as the chairman of John Lewis has pointed out. Tolls will not reduce congestion; they will merely displace it. They are a money-making scheme for the council and another tax on motorists who, only this week, have seen further increases in petrol tax. We have been saying that consistently in the Parliament for five years. If the Liberal Democrats and the SNP want to change their minds and acknowledge that we were right all along, all converts are welcome.

Fortunately for Mr Pringle and his Liberal Democrat colleagues, help may soon be at hand in the person of their very own Minister for Transport, Mr Nicol Stephen. Mr Stephen’s ministerial predecessor approved the Edinburgh tolls scheme in principle and, as a consequence, paid the price. If Mr Pringle and other Liberal Democrats do not wish to suffer the same fate, they should strongly urge Mr Stephen to reject the Edinburgh tolls plan forthwith and tell the Labour council not to waste any more time and money on this fruitless and expensive exercise and to concentrate its energies instead on developing a realistic transport plan that does not depend on tolls in partnership with its neighbouring councils.

17:23

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): I welcome Mike Pringle’s move to introduce this important

topic to the Scottish Parliament. It is important to note the amount of consensus that there is on the issue. Kenny MacAskill made one of the most positive speeches on transport that I have heard from the SNP. However, as ever, the consensus starts to fall apart when it comes to the Conservatives.

Congestion in Edinburgh is a problem. Nobody can deny that there are too many cars entering the centre of Edinburgh. Over the past 20 years, there has been a 72 per cent increase in the number of cars that come into the city centre. About 30 years ago, there was a proposal to build an inner ring road around Edinburgh—the classic solution to the problem of too many cars: build more roads. In my area of Edinburgh, that would have meant building a motorway on stilts along the water of Leith. That proposal was rejected. There was no way to build more roads in Edinburgh, which is a world heritage site and has many valuable buildings that need to be conserved. Those buildings cannot simply be knocked down to build ever-wider roads. Nevertheless, that is what the Tory line—David McLetchie’s line—would result in.

When I studied economics at the University of Edinburgh, one of the basic facts that I was taught was that, although most people have unlimited desires and wants, there have to be limits to resources. I am sure that every car driver would love to drive down a completely empty road straight from their house to a conveniently sited free parking point outside their place of work, but that cannot happen. Everybody cannot drive through a city such as Edinburgh—there is not enough room on the streets. Ultimately, we must have a solution.

Mike Pringle made the point that one of the problems with the London congestion charge is that it is not raising as much money as was expected. However, that can be turned on its head; we can say that the congestion charge is much more successful than was expected, because it is succeeding in reducing congestion much more than was expected. It concerns me that bar owners are reporting problems because of the congestion charge. I hope that people are not driving home from pubs in London’s west end, but are taking public transport or paying someone else to drive them home.

We must grasp the nettle. We cannot continue to build more roads. There must be a scheme that distributes transport costs more widely. In Edinburgh, about two fifths of households do not have access to a car and rely on public transport. We must have a congestion charge for Edinburgh to support those people. We must give them better public transport and attract people out of their cars and on to clean, efficient public transport, which so many European countries have.

I share Mike Pringle's concern about what is happening in Edinburgh. I was a community councillor who was responsible for environment and transport issues. We were bombarded with a multiplicity of different schemes: the closure of Princes Street; the trams; the extension of controlled parking zones; and congestion charges. All those will affect the centre of Edinburgh, but the City of Edinburgh Council has said little so far about how the various schemes will be reconciled and work together in practice. As Kenny MacAskill said, we need a vision from the council. We need to know what transport in Edinburgh will be like in the future. We do not necessarily need myriad different schemes that will impact on one another and which might undermine not only one another, but the schemes' desired effects.

We need a wider vision for transport in Edinburgh. We need to get beyond the small schemes—laudable though they are—to a wider vision of a city where we do not have to own a car and have a choice not to do so. We need a city that is not planned around the car and which does not continually invest in out-of-town shopping centres that are accessible only by cars, but which instead supports neighbourhood shops.

I hope that the proposal for a new, shared stadium at Straiton for Heart of Midlothian Football Club and Hibernian Football Club is on the back burner and does not go ahead, but I have a funny feeling that it will reappear in perhaps a slightly different form in a few years' time. That is the kind of scheme that drives up congestion, because people who would normally walk to Easter Road or Tynecastle would be forced into their cars. That is why we need a wider vision of how Edinburgh as a city will be planned and how we can get a decent, integrated public transport system for all Edinburgh's citizens.

17:28

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): I congratulate Mike Pringle on securing the debate, which is highly relevant and topical. It is extremely useful for us, as members of the Scottish Parliament, to focus on the issues that Mike Pringle's motion raises. As David McLetchie said, considering traffic in south Edinburgh means considering traffic in the rest of the city because the traffic that gets stuck and creates problems in south Edinburgh tends to weave its way into other parts of the city. Therefore, it is right to strive for an overview and a strategic vision that members across the chamber can share.

It is important to say that we are debating the issue in the context of record levels of investment. If we were having this debate four years ago, the context would be different. Then, the Waverley project was regarded as way out there and a

dream—it had been David Steel's dream for 30 years. The project was regarded as impractical. Work had been initiated by previous Scottish Office ministers, such as Gus Macdonald, but nobody really thought that the Waverley project was on the table. Similarly, a crossrail system for Edinburgh was regarded as a nice idea by transport planners but not as something that would happen on the ground. Things have moved along. Trams, too, were viewed as a nice idea for Edinburgh, but people said that we had missed our chance. Now, those big projects are being seriously examined. Money has also been allocated to assessing the feasibility of the south suburban line.

Despite the fact that big transport projects such as those are now being looked into, I agree with colleagues that we should not restrict ourselves to them. That is why the comments contained in the motion are absolutely appropriate. We need to consider park-and-ride schemes, for example. They are not so exciting, but they are fundamental to getting quick wins in public transport and to giving car commuters a real choice. We know that new park-and-ride facilities are demanded and used by drivers, and that drivers want that choice.

As the MSP for Edinburgh Central, my concern is not about whether a park-and-ride facility is located in Burdiehouse or in the Midlothian Council area; my concern is that the project goes ahead quickly. The City of Edinburgh Council and Midlothian Council should work together to ensure that the facility is secured. The proposal for Burdiehouse is an expression of our urgent need for such facilities, and the City of Edinburgh Council wants to get on with it without protracted delays.

I agree that having an out-of-town football stadium on the edge of Edinburgh will not improve our transport problems and that it could set us back to a huge extent. Let us hope that other solutions are suggested and will work.

I welcome the new investment that we have and that is coming, but I would not pretend for a minute that that investment will be available to use tomorrow. The agenda for investment is a long-term one—that is one thing on which we can agree. The city council is now proposing orbital bus routes. The investment of £7.5 million is huge, and would not have been made several years ago. The next routes to be put in place and quality bus corridors, which will cut from the south of the city up to Leith, will benefit from £9.5 million.

Big changes are beginning to take place, but they are not here yet, and we need to ensure that they are delivered on the ground, in the same way that crossrail—which we know is beginning to make a difference—has been delivered, and that the new railway station in the west of Edinburgh will make a difference.

However, that will not be enough. We also require other measures. We are not at the stage of debating Edinburgh's plans for congestion charging, because those are about to be put out for consultation. If members are not happy with them, the onus is on them to come up with something better. They should come up with practical suggestions and not just say that they do not like the plan and might like something better in, say, 10 years' time—which is far enough away in the political distance not to cause any problems now. We will have to take decisions across the city, as will the people of Edinburgh.

I loved the bit in David McLetchie's speech when he spoke about Liberal Democrats in different parts of the UK. I was equally fascinated by the fact that he did not suggest his alternative. It is not good enough simply to say that we should not be anti-car. Members are not anti-car in any part of the chamber. However, we acknowledge the difficult issues to be addressed, and if we ignore the fact that traffic is projected to grow by 20 per cent, we are not doing our constituents any favours. We have a job to do in engaging in those tough problems. It will not be easy; such issues are not electorally popular. I hope that we will have a referendum, which will allow us to take a sober, mature look at the issues.

It does not help to tell people that the City of Edinburgh Council's potential solution is to charge pensioners £20 every time they enter the city, which is something that I heard last night at a meeting about local buses. We need to have proper engagement and an honest discussion about the issues and choices. If people do not want congestion charging, that is fine, but they should tell us how they would tackle congestion. While it is the city council that is driving proposals forward, every member in the area—whether they are a constituency MSP or a list MSP—will have to engage in the issue.

One thing that we need to focus on, but which is not in Mike Pringle's motion, is work between the Executive and the council, which is imperative. We need the allocation of £375 million from the Executive to make the trams work, and we will need the Executive to deliver improvements to Waverley and Haymarket stations.

The agenda is exciting and radical, and I congratulate Mike Pringle on securing his first members' business debate. It is work in progress and, although I am glad that we are able to discuss the subject in the chamber tonight, this is not the end of the debate. We need a long-term vision and short-term action. Perhaps medium-term action is required too, so that, when we debate the difficult parts of this agenda, we ensure that practical public transport improvements can be put in place.

The debate is not just about public transport; it is about issues such as 20mph zones around our schools, more pedestrian facilities and more cycling facilities. We must have an integrated approach and there must be real choices for commuters, regardless of whether they come into the city through Edinburgh South, through Pentlands or from the east. We know where they all want to go—to jobs, leisure facilities and shops in our city. It is our job to ensure that we get the resources and that the City of Edinburgh Council has the resources to deliver improvements on the ground.

17:35

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I heartily endorse one comment made by Mr McLetchie—like other members, he offered congratulations to my colleague Mike Pringle on securing parliamentary time to debate this important issue. The debate is important because it rightly recognises that transport policy in one part of Scotland impacts on other areas of the country. When that part of Scotland is the capital city, the implications are even wider.

Mike Pringle's motion addresses the interests of Midlothian and the Borders, the two local authority areas into which my constituency falls. I am delighted to make most of my comments this evening about the largest town in Midlothian, Penicuik, which is in my constituency. Any transport policy for the south of Edinburgh inevitably affects Penicuik, just as the housing needs and economic development of, and transport issues relating to, Penicuik and other towns in Midlothian affect the southern edge of Edinburgh.

Notwithstanding the current financial status of Hearts and Hibs and the proposal for a new football ground at Straiton, serious consideration needs to be given to the transport needs of the area. Regardless of the form of development that takes place there—it is clearly a development site, as office units are proposed and the extension of the retail park has been approved—urgent infrastructure improvements are needed to service the area.

I commend Midlothian Council for commissioning its latest multimodal study of the transport needs of Penicuik. The first part of the appraisal report, which appeared in September, makes for useful reading and is the first stage in developing a full strategic view of the town's future transport needs.

The area includes a world-class biotechnology resource at the Bush and at Roslin, tourist destinations and leisure sites. A significant number

of residential developments are expected across the strategic plan area. With all those proposed commercial and domestic developments, as well as the prospect of an increased number of workers travelling to Edinburgh, it is estimated that if trip-making patterns remain largely unchanged there may be an approximate doubling of traffic flows on the A701.

In that context, I warmly welcome the opportunity to debate Mike Pringle's motion. In my view, the best way of easing the burden on the roads from Peeblesshire, through Penicuik, to the bypass and beyond or to a park-and-ride facility at Straiton is rail infrastructure serving the town of Penicuik. Rightly, there is pressure for improved bus services. Those services are regular and largely efficient, but they suffer most during peak times. The discussions that have taken place between local bus operators and local councillors about renewed bus services between Penicuik and Edinburgh, perhaps enhanced by trolley services, newspapers and news bulletins, are very welcome. I understand that such a service is operated between Cumbernauld and Glasgow. However, such services do not have the potential to provide a long-term solution to the structural problems of the area.

The original passenger rail line to Penicuik was closed in 1933. Freight services were withdrawn and the track was lifted in 1968. Since then, there have been major losses in both track and structures. The route of the Waverley line has not suffered as much as the former route to Penicuik, but we should not discount totally the introduction of a heavy-rail service serving Penicuik from Waverley. The real issue, which other speakers have touched on, is capacity at Waverley station. The multimodal study estimated a journey time of less than 40 minutes for such a rail service and I hope that that option will be seriously considered. The study was also right to consider a light-rail scheme to serve the town, which would deal with many of the deficiencies of a heavy-rail service, provide the flexibility that is needed in Penicuik and offer the option of a faster turnaround of services.

Rightly, the Scottish Executive's transport strategy is built around the needs of the passenger but takes into account environmental and social inclusion considerations. Transport policy should also be linked with the regeneration of city or town centres. That is as relevant for development in Penicuik, where the town arcade has the potential to serve as a transport as well as a shopping hub, as it is for Waverley station.

There is a debate about the impact of the Waverley development on the rail service to Penicuik and on the Borders rail link, which is vital to the other part of my constituency. I am delighted

that, in the chamber this evening, we have a former Labour transport minister, who initiated the restoration of the line by commissioning the feasibility study, and the Liberal Democrat Minister for Transport, who is tasked with implementing the proposals for the line.

I was pleased to read in the briefing note for the debate from the City of Edinburgh Council that the Borders rail link is a priority initiative for the council. The easing of the burden on the road infrastructure in the constituency of my colleague Mike Pringle, especially in relation to the A7, will be welcome to his constituents, as it will reduce congestion and, crucially, pollution. Although I welcome the positive effects on Edinburgh, my colleague will forgive me if my priority is the provision of rail infrastructure to the Borders through the Waverley line, which will stimulate economic development and offer relief to the rural roads network.

I congratulate Mike Pringle on his motion, which highlights the positive effects on other parts of Scotland of improvements in transport in south Edinburgh. I hope that the minister will be able to address in due course the transport needs of Midlothian and the Borders.

17:41

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green): I congratulate Mike Pringle on lodging the motion. The problem is that road traffic is predicted to increase by 20 per cent over the next 20 years. That would leave us in an impossible position. We have to act now. Road traffic brings with it the accompanying problems of pollution, noise, lack of speed on vital journeys, congestion, health impacts and accidents. We heard just last week that, last year, 400 children in Scotland were injured in accidents when going to and from school. That figure is not acceptable. We have to do something to address the problem of road traffic.

As has been said before, the Green party is not anti-car. We are not for the abolition of road traffic; we are for the reduction of road traffic. I drive a car. I try to drive it only when that is absolutely necessary, but the problem is that our culture is geared towards putting us into cars and forcing us to drive. We are surrounded by adverts that tell us how sexy cars are when they are driven at top speed along empty roads and how successful we are if we have the best cars. We are surrounded by attitudes such as that awful statement attributed to Mrs Thatcher that, if someone over 30 is on a bus, they are a failure. We have to attack such attitudes towards public transport and the use of the car. We have to realise that public transport is the only acceptable way forward. We have to plan our cities so that they are geared

towards the use of public transport and not towards cars.

Currently, 40 per cent of families in Scotland have no access to a car. In a society that revolves around the car, those families are marginalised, excluded and suffer tremendous problems. We must change that.

I look to the minister to answer three questions. Will the Executive be able to put enough money into the development of Waverley station to allow for an expansion of services not just on the south suburban line, but to East Lothian? There is a pressing need for those services.

Euan Robson (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD): Chris Ballance mentioned two advantages to the development of Waverley station. There are clearly others. One is the connection to the Borders through the Borders rail link. A connection needs to be made to East Lothian and Berwickshire. Commuter services up and down the east coast main line can be developed only if Waverley has sufficient capacity. Does the member agree that it would be beneficial if Waverley were developed to ensure adequate commuting space for east coast main line trains?

Chris Ballance: I am not sure whether those questions were addressed to me or to the minister. I certainly agree with Mr Robson and I hope that the minister will agree with him, too. I thank Mr Robson for asking those questions.

I would also like from the minister a cast-iron guarantee that we will all be able to use a rail service into Edinburgh from the Borders in five years' time. Recent announcements from the Strategic Rail Authority have worried several of us. We therefore seek a genuine commitment from the Executive that the project will happen. I would be grateful to hear the minister's response.

For the final guarantee, I would like to hear whether the Labour and Liberal members of the Executive whole-heartedly support the concept of congestion charging. If the Executive supports the concept, I very much hope that it will support the introduction of such a scheme in Edinburgh. Proposals are now on the table; I hope that the Executive accepts that the principles of the proposals are correct and I hope that it will now engage in the debate on the exact details of the proposals. We need the Liberal members of the Executive in particular to take the lead. I have not seen such a lead being taken, either today or previously.

Mike Pringle mentioned the possible effects of congestion charging on the theatres, bars and restaurants of central Edinburgh. I have heard no suggestion that the theatres, bars and restaurants of central Edinburgh will be affected by congestion charging, regardless of what has happened in

London. Suggestions that businesses in central London have been affected have now, I think, been generally proven to be incorrect. The effect on businesses is the same on Saturday as it is from Monday to Friday. That suggests that the downturn has been caused more by the current state of the economy—and perhaps the knock-on effects of 11 September—than by congestion charging.

If the Executive can give us those three guarantees, this will have been a first-rate debate and a thoroughly worthwhile occasion.

17:47

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen): I, too, add my congratulations to Mike Pringle on bringing his motion before Parliament. I know that transport problems in the south of Edinburgh are a great concern of his.

Lest I forget later on, I immediately turn to Don Foster—the Liberal Democrats' transport spokesperson, to whom David McLetchie referred—and his constituency. Perhaps I should call this part "taking an early Bath". Mr McLetchie made up a fictional situation that seemed extremely speculative. The words "pot", "kettle" and "black" sprang immediately to mind when I thought about the Scottish Conservatives. Perish the thought that the Tories in Scotland would ever take a populist, unprincipled and opportunistic approach to any issue. Which party first championed the idea of road tolls? Which party built the Skye bridge and imposed the discredited road tolls on it? Members may recall that, during the election campaign, the party dressed up poor Lord James Douglas-Hamilton in his school-crossing-patrol outfit, gave him a lollipop and stood him in front of the cameras where he shouted "No road tolls!" The credibility of the Conservative party, on this issue as on issues such as student finance and free personal care for the elderly, is not high. Look not at what they say in opposition but at what they do in government.

David McLetchie: There is a tradition of charging tolls on bridges and, indeed, of financing such new facilities by that method. The Skye bridge—the tolls on which have yet to be abolished by the Executive—was erected only by virtue of that charging mechanism. However, the Executive is proposing to charge people tolls for driving on roads that have already been paid for by their taxes. There is a significant difference between charging tolls for a new facility, such as the Skye bridge, and charging tolls for roads that already exist.

Nicol Stephen: We have no such proposal. David McLetchie may wriggle and squirm, but he lacks credibility in the eyes of the people of Scotland not only on that issue but on others.

I have listened carefully to the speeches that have been made, and I welcome the wide range of views that members from across the parties have put forward. Congestion in Edinburgh South is a significant problem. I give credit to the parties that have made constructive proposals and suggestions about how to get to grips with the problem, but I do not see much sign of that from the Conservative party.

The Scottish Executive is committed to a first-class transport infrastructure for Edinburgh. We are supporting a number of transport schemes. Sarah Boyack referred to those—indeed, she instituted several of them—and I agree with her that such schemes were not invested in during the years of Conservative Government and over the decades. Those schemes would have been inconceivable when the new Scottish Parliament was being campaigned for and when it was first established.

Congestion is a great concern for many parts of Scotland. It hampers our economy and damages our environment. Our target must be to contain traffic growth, to invest in public transport and to reduce congestion. That is why we are sharply increasing the share of spending on public transport projects.

Provided that I have time, I will touch on some of the schemes in southern Edinburgh. Most of them have already been mentioned by Mike Pringle. Park-and-ride schemes are very important in tackling congestion and I want to see more such schemes moving forward more quickly. We have committed £2.3 million to the Straiton park-and-ride scheme as part of a wider package of improvements that will help to tackle congestion. The package includes the provision of real-time information, a quality bus corridor and public transport interchange points. I am aware of the issues surrounding the siting of that park-and-ride scheme, and I totally agree that they should be resolved quickly. I hope that the councils involved can work together to resolve those local problems as soon as possible.

A second park-and-ride scheme planned for the south of Edinburgh is the Todhills scheme, which will be located near Danderhall in Midlothian. I am pleased that that scheme, to which the Executive has committed around £2 million, is now progressing. I understand that Midlothian Council has recently gone to tender to deliver the project.

Let me touch on the south suburban railway line, which was mentioned in a recent debate in the Parliament. The line is currently used as a freight line and has been closed to passenger traffic since the late 1960s. I know that Mike Pringle is leading the campaign to help to deliver that scheme, so he knows that the Executive has already provided significant support. We funded to the tune of more

than £500,000 a study into comparative demand for passenger and/or light rail services on that line. I understand that the study is due to be completed shortly. It is clearly the responsibility of the City of Edinburgh Council to take the lead on developing the project, but the Executive stands ready to continue its support.

The new Borders rail link will, of course, run through the south of Edinburgh. The Scottish Executive is committed to supporting the reopening of the line. We awarded £1.86 million to enable the Waverley railway partnership to start the process of obtaining parliamentary powers to reinstate the line between Edinburgh and the central Borders. The private bill promoting the line has been introduced to the Scottish Parliament and we await the submission of the business case, which will be made shortly.

As I said earlier, congestion is not limited to southern Edinburgh. That is why we have invested in several Edinburgh-wide initiatives, some of which will clearly benefit Edinburgh South. The tram has a key role to play as part of a first-class transport infrastructure for Edinburgh. We have guaranteed the future availability of £375 million, which will secure the completion of at least the first tram line as soon as the council produces its business case. We have already invested in the development of proposals for the north tram loop, the west tram line and a tram line serving the south-east of the city. Private bills for tram lines 1 and 2 are likely to be submitted to the Scottish Parliament at the end of the year. I was pleased that the results of the tramtime consultation were published last Friday.

We are committed to the improvements that are required at Waverley station, particularly to increase capacity, which members have mentioned. We play a central role in the Waverley station working group that is considering the development of Waverley. The Executive is determined to ensure that we take a partnership approach with Network Rail, the Strategic Rail Authority, the City of Edinburgh Council and others to deliver a major upgrade of Waverley station.

Crossrail is progressing and is an important part of tackling congestion. Two new stations at Brunstane and Newcraighall have already been opened, and major progress has been made on Edinburgh Park station, which will open shortly.

I conclude with a brief mention of road-user charging. Congestion charging is one measure that can be used to tackle the problems that we face in many urban parts of the UK. We have made it clear that if any local authority presents an appropriate road-user charging scheme with clear evidence of public support, ministers will provide the necessary support. I know that Edinburgh will shortly be consulting on its proposals. We will return to the issue on more than one occasion.

I thank all members who contributed to the debate, which was worthwhile and touched on issues of significance to other cities in Scotland.

The Executive has made a significant commitment to investment in public transport projects in Edinburgh—more than £1 billion of investment that had not been committed at the time of the establishment of the Scottish Parliament. I take this opportunity to reiterate and underscore our commitment to working closely with everyone involved in order to proceed with those projects.

Meeting closed at 17:57.

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