

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 20 November 2003

Session 2

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 20 November 2003

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

Poverty in Scotland

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Good morning. The first item of business is a debate on S2M-625, in the name of Carolyn Leckie, on poverty in Scotland, and three amendments to the motion.

09:30

Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP): This is not the speech that I wanted to be making this morning. I wanted to say that no one cared about low pay this morning because Scotland were through, but unfortunately we were gubbed, so I am not able to make that speech.

More seriously—the matter is very serious—the top-paid businessman in Britain earned £564 million last year. Is it right that a single oil trader is worth the same as 51,000 hospital workers? I think not. The top earners' wages increased by 33 per cent on average last year, whereas public sector pay increased by less than 3 per cent. Members should take as examples people such as Margaret, who inputs complex data in the NHS and earns less than £11,000 a year; or Jim, a porter who just clears £180 a week basic and works for 60 or 70 hours a week to supplement his dire wage.

There are twice as many women in low-paid work as there are men and 30 per cent of workers in Scotland are below the Low Pay Unit threshold. The biggest growth area in this country is poverty in work. Even Buckingham Palace, which has a recruitment and retention problem that allowed a *Daily Mirror* journalist to secure a job, pays staff only £11,000 a year.

Women spend 90 per cent of their earnings on child care and other services that help them stay in work. Only one fifth of the poorest children in our country—the destitute poor—have parents in work.

We hear endless chattering from the four big parties about how to grow the economy; the usual solution is to give money to big business. The Scottish National Party plans to cut corporation tax, if it ever gets its hands on it, to 13 per cent. It wants to put more money into the hands and bank accounts of rich shareholders in New York, Tokyo and London. Surely it would be better to put the

money into the hands of public sector workers—which it is possible for the Scottish Parliament to do—and give them money to spend.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It is not for me to defend the SNP's economic policy, but is not it the case that cutting taxes is not so much about giving money to big businesses as it is about just not taking it away from them?

Carolyn Leckie: I am sure that Brian Monteith knows that big business is already well endowed in the money department. Putting money into the hands of people who do not have money means that it is more likely that it will be spent in the economy rather than used to top up already-swollen bank accounts, as I am sure Brian Monteith realises. What I suggest would surely be better.

However, that is not enough. As members know, the Scottish Socialist Party wants an independent socialist Scotland that has control of all our resources, all taxation and so on. It is not enough merely to increase the minimum wage for public sector workers, although that is possible within the powers of the Parliament. I ask the Executive, "Why not?"

That takes me to the 35-hour week, which would free people up to contribute to and enjoy life and contribute to the economy. People would make a greater contribution by spending more on recreation, such as going to the cinema and so on. A 35-hour week in the public sector would create 24,000 jobs and boost the whole economy. Forty years ago, Harold Wilson—a Labour Prime Minister—promised us that in the year 2000, at the start of the 21st century, we would have a 20-hour week. He justified that by saying that technology would mean that we had a growing economy such that we could afford to pay high wages and have a 20-hour week. We are still waiting; in fact, the working week for public sector workers and others has lengthened since then.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Can the member tell Parliament how much the creation of 24,000 additional jobs in the public sector will cost each year?

Carolyn Leckie: I can, if Stewart Stevenson holds on for a minute—I have the figures here. It would cost £350 million. That is the same as the whole budget of Scottish Enterprise or half of last year's underspend. That spending would create jobs and boost the economy.

Poverty is the word that dare not speak its name in the chamber. Poverty is not only about the people who beg on the streets outside Waverley station; it is about the single parent who is trying to bring up two, three or four children and who goes without food at the weekend, without a warm coat,

without a decent pair of shoes or without a power card over the weekend. That is poverty; that is the general experience of one third of children in Scotland. That is a great shame on Parliament.

If any member tells me today that a hospital porter, a hospital domestic or someone who does administration or clerical work is not worth the Council of Europe decency threshold—which is £7.50 an hour—I ask them to justify that statement. I ask them why it is acceptable to pay people only £5 an hour and why it is acceptable to force porters and domestics to work 60, 70 or 80 hours a week so that they can afford a power card at the weekend.

MSPs are on £49,000 a year. How much does that work out at as an hourly rate? Can members tell me? A 35-hour week would be nice for us because we work extremely hard, but we do all right on the pay.

I ask members to consider seriously what it is possible to do within Parliament's powers. It is possible to transform hundreds of thousands of lives. Do not give excuses and do not say that we cannot afford it—it is not money that is absent, but the principle and the political will to deliver. I want Parliament to send to all the public sector workers in Scotland today the message that we genuinely value them and that we will not pay them lip service, patronise them or just tell them what a great job they do; rather, we will pay them at a level that acknowledges that we value them.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that only in an independent socialist Scotland will the obscene poverty and inequality that scars our nation be permanently tackled; recognises, however, that the limited powers available to it currently must be utilised fully to tackle the root causes of poverty as effectively as possible; accepts that it has complete power over pay and conditions in the public sector which involves almost 500,000 workers; resolves, in order to eradicate low pay and improve working conditions, to introduce a public sector minimum wage set at the internationally recognised European decency threshold and a maximum working week of 35 hours to tackle the socially destructive long hours culture which currently pervades too many Scottish workplaces; believes that a £7.50 per hour minimum wage and 35 hours a week policy funded by the abolition of Scottish Enterprise and full utilisation of existing block grant will eradicate low pay in the public sector and help increase wages in the private sector, and resolves to continue collectively the push for full independence and democratic control over Scotland's vast wealth and resources to improve the standard and quality of life of all Scotland's citizens.

09:38

The Minister for Communities (Ms Margaret Curran): I am pleased to be in Parliament again debating poverty, because it is an issue of such importance to Scotland. It is vital that we lay out our strategies to tackle poverty and disadvantage.

I am proud that the Executive has made social justice, closing the opportunity gap and ending child poverty central to our vision for a fair and equal Scotland. We have been honest with the Scottish people: we have said that it will take a generation to eradicate child poverty, with significant gains along the way. We have been open with all stakeholders in Scotland: we have published our milestones and targets and we map and publish progress as we continue.

We are interested not in a list of demands or in short-term fixes, but in a long-term sustained strategy to end the scourge of poverty in Scotland for ever.

As Father Joseph Wresinski said:

"Wherever men and women are condemned to live in poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty."

The fight against poverty underlines all that we do.

It is those who live in poverty and disadvantage who tell us that the causes of and solutions to their problems are complex. They ask not for one or two policies, but for many. It is Parliament's duty not only to state the case, but to come up with the solutions, and I argue that the Scottish Socialist Party has not listened to and, therefore, does not adequately represent poor people. If it did, it would not claim that two or three soundbite policies would work.

Carolyn Leckie: I agree with Margaret Curran that many policies are necessary to address poverty, but will she address the simple question of whether a £7.50 an hour minimum wage in the public sector—which the Scottish Executive can deliver—is one of her policies? If not, why not?

Ms Curran: The minimum wage is extremely important, and I will address it later on. However, everyone who is engaged in the poverty debate—particularly the victims of poverty—appreciates that the minimum wage does not take into account the hours that are worked, the size of the family or, for example, disability within the family. To tackle poverty, we need to target measures much more effectively, which is exactly what the Government's strategy on tax credit does.

There are no quick fixes: one policy will not address the whole problem. It was quite nostalgic to hear what seemed to be the old-style Militant talk and approach—a list of demands being knitted together as if that somehow presents a solution—that I have not heard for quite some time. From memory, the only thing that was missing was the demand to nationalise the top 200 or so companies, but perhaps the SSP is new Militant and has dropped that demand.

The SNP, too, talks about poverty but it cannot tell us what it would do: it cannot say whether it

would end poverty, what it would do to end it or how it would do that. The SNP gives us no definitions, no measures and, in fact, no policies.

We also have the Tories, who were in power for almost two decades but did not even accept that poverty existed. We must never forget the devastation and waste of human lives that they left after two decades in power.

Mr Monteith: Will Margaret Curran give way?

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will Margaret Curran give way?

Ms Curran: Oh, gentlemen—of course I will give way.

Murdo Fraser: I do not necessarily accept that measures of relative poverty are always the truest assessment of poverty, but does the minister accept that disparities in income—the Executive's own measure—have increased rather than decreased since new Labour came to power?

Ms Curran: I will talk about relative measures later, but I tell Murdo Fraser that the one trick that we have pulled off that the Tory Government never quite managed is a sustained increase in incomes of 19 per cent since Labour came to power. We are tackling poverty and improving the conditions of ordinary working people and other people throughout Scotland, but we are also managing to lift the level of prosperity of everyone in Scotland and Britain.

The minimum wage has been discussed. Let us remind ourselves that Michael Howard claimed that it would result in the loss of 2 million jobs and that the policy would be a disaster. However, what has happened is not quite what Michael Howard suggested.

The Tories would scrap the winter fuel allowance, end the new deal and end the child tax credit, which would leave young people, pensioners and families with far fewer resources. At the end of the Tory policies, once all those measures had been taken away, what would we be left with? We would be back to the Thatcher years, which is exactly what Michael Howard proposes.

It is the Executive that is on the side of poor people, because it understands that poverty must be tackled in all its complexity. We have to understand the impact on children of growing up in workless households. We have to understand that that means lower aspirations and lower educational achievement for children who should do much better, and that it means that families will be burdened with debt, will struggle to heat damp houses and will have to live with ill health or care for someone who is in ill health. That is what the Executive is focusing on, and we have a range of policies to address it. We understand that work is

the best route out of poverty; if one policy has crucially altered working people's circumstances, it is what we have done to tackle unemployment. The SSP has no policies that could address that, and members should remember what the Tories did to unemployment levels in Britain.

Fuel poverty has been halved from 35 per cent to 17 per cent and we have made significant cuts in the levels of absolute poverty. We have sophisticated homelessness strategies and we are tackling youth unemployment systematically. There have been systematic improvements in the level of rises in income. We have focused on those who live in severest poverty, which is where our policies should properly be focused, but we are not complacent: we know that there is more to do and we know that it will take a generational shift to do that work. We want continuing and faster reductions in the level of low-income poverty among children and pensioners. We want a step change in life expectancy and we want health improvement for disadvantaged groups. We want to improve educational prospects for disadvantaged children and to widen access to higher education. We also want regeneration of disadvantaged communities to continue.

I say categorically to the Parliament that the poor in Scotland do not need the tired old policies of the past, the confused policies of the SNP or the slogans of the SSP, who would do nothing for the poor in Scotland.

I move amendment S2M-625.3, to leave out from first "recognises" to end and insert:

"welcomes the Scottish Executive's commitment to tackling poverty and disadvantage; notes the Executive's work towards increasing opportunities through growing the economy including delivering on *A Smart, Successful Scotland*, delivering excellent public services, particularly in education and health, and through supporting strong communities through community regeneration and focusing on the interests of the individual."

09:45

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): There is a shared belief in the Parliament—perhaps with the exception of the Conservatives—about the importance of tackling poverty, and I congratulate the SSP on using its first debate in the parliamentary session to raise that important subject. However, although the SNP shares an analysis with the SSP, we share little in our solutions. My colleagues will develop the SNP's approach to solving poverty; I will focus on the SSP.

I will quote from Tommy's Trots' manifesto for the election in May this year:

"The election of a group of Scottish Socialist MSPs would electrify Scottish politics. It would ignite a bonfire of debate about the future of Scotland and the feasibility of socialism."

We got the group, we are 203 days on, and we have our first SSP debates, but Guy Fawkes night has been the only bonfire. The SSP's participation record has been woeful. Rosie Kane promised us mayhem and madness, but she has been at just over half the meetings of Parliament and at only one of the eight meetings of the Local Government and Transport Committee. She has spoken fewer than 5,000 words since becoming an MSP, and the cost of those words is £5.59 per word.

Carolyn Leckie: I do not know which disgraceful remark I will address first. Stewart Stevenson ought to check with members before he makes personal remarks about them. That is all that I will say on that, but I have a question about "Tommy's Trots": will Stewart Stevenson explain to me what a Trot is, because I do not know?

Stewart Stevenson: I think that it was Corporal Jones who said:

"They don't like it up 'em".

The cost of every word that Rosie Kane has spoken in Parliament is £5.59, and here are some of the subjects that she does not think are important: police pensions, bus services and taxis for disabled people.

Carolyn Leckie: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Rule 7.3 of the standing orders is about treating members with a bit of dignity and respect, but the personal remarks in Mr Stevenson's speech were outrageous.

The Presiding Officer: No—they are part of the normal rough and tumble of the debate.

Stewart Stevenson: I have in my hand the list of subjects that the committee has discussed and the attendance record. Rosie Kane does not think that local railway stations or taxis for disabled people are important.

Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP): Will Stewart Stevenson give way?

Stewart Stevenson: She did not even turn up to debate the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill—Tommy Sheridan had to turn up even though he is not a member of the committee.

Rosie Kane: Will Stewart Stevenson give way?

Stewart Stevenson: The debate is not about Rosie—

Rosie Kane: Will Stewart Stevenson give way?

The Presiding Officer: It is clear that Stewart Stevenson is not giving way.

Stewart Stevenson: I will give way.

Rosie Kane: Would Stewart Stevenson speak to me about a matter outside the chamber, please? *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Rosie Kane: What Stewart Stevenson has said is extremely personal, and I resent very much such personal attacks on me in what is supposed to be a debate about poverty. He clearly has a poverty of decency.

Stewart Stevenson: What I am saying is about the poverty of ambition and ideas in the SSP. Tommy Sheridan claimed that his policies were popular, practical, radical and deliverable, so I will talk about some of them. He would nationalise trains, buses and ferries. How much would that cost? We could have a free public transport system tomorrow for the money that nationalisation would cost. Constituents of mine would love to have public transport—they do not care about its ownership. What about rural areas? Would the introduction of £100 million of special road tolls for heavy goods vehicles help the poor in our rural areas?

Miss Leckie's motion proposes a minimum public sector wage of £7.50 an hour and a working-week ceiling of 35 hours. She tells me that the 24,000 jobs that would thereby be created would be paid for by abolishing Scottish Enterprise and would cost £350 million, but page 11 of the SSP's manifesto says that it has already spent that £350 million in raising the public sector minimum wage. The actual cost would be £328 million, plus £120 million for additional costs, plus offices to accommodate 24,000 people, which would cost £750 million.

We have already spent £1 billion but have considered only two of the 200 commitments in Tommy Sheridan's manifesto. By the time we get to the bottom of it, we will find that we have doubled the spending in the Scottish budget and have hardly touched poverty.

A high-cost economy is an unfair economy. The evidence from high-cost economies everywhere is that they cause impoverishment of the masses. My colleagues and I will develop that subject. It is abundantly clear that Tommy Sheridan's people have yet to step up to the bar in the Parliament to make a meaningful contribution that will help the people of Scotland. Tommy's plans would damage our economy and would do nothing to ensure that more resources reached those who are in greatest need.

I move amendment S2M-625.2, to leave out from first "recognises" to end and insert:

"believes that the implementation of many of the proposals in the Scottish Socialist Party manifesto would only ensure that the unacceptable poverty of the poorest in our society would come to be shared by more of our citizens than at present."

09:51

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): We are seeing some unusual alliances in the chamber this morning.

I was somewhat surprised to find that the Scottish socialists were proposing a debate on poverty because, if there was ever a political ideology that has caused human misery and poverty throughout the globe, it is socialism.

Let us consider the example of a few socialist countries. North and South Korea share the same peoples and the same geography; the only difference between North and South Korea is political ideology—North Korea is a socialist state, while South Korea is a democratic country with a free-market capitalist economy. Gross domestic product per capita in North Korea is a mere \$1,000 per annum, whereas it is \$19,400 in South Korea. Infant mortality in South Korea stands at a mere 8 per 1,000 live births, whereas it is 27 per 1,000 live births in North Korea. North Korea has a miserably low growth rate while South Korea is booming. The whole of North Korea is in extreme poverty and is dependent on foreign aid from the rest of the world to avoid starvation of its people, who are oppressed and miserable. In contrast, South Korea is a prosperous country that is reliant on market economics to grow business, create private sector jobs and generate wealth, which all contribute to the elimination of poverty.

Carolyn Leckie: Does the member accept that it is not necessary to look that far to find such discrepancies in life expectancy and mortality rates? One need only compare Drumchapel and Bearsden to find differences in life expectancy of 10 years and differences in mortality rates for children. Glasgow has the four poorest constituencies in Britain, which is the fourth richest country in the world. Will the member explain that and say what he would do about achieving a £7.50 an hour minimum wage—in other words, will he speak to the motion?

Murdo Fraser: I will be happy to address some of those issues in a moment. I merely observe that for many years the party that was in power in this country and in many of the local government areas to which the member referred has been the Labour Party—not my party.

I appreciate that the socialists find the comparison with North Korea uncomfortable. Let us take another example—Cuba, which is Mr Sheridan's favourite holiday destination. GDP per capita in Cuba is only \$2,300 per annum, whereas it is more than \$25,000 in the United States. Cuba is a recipient of foreign aid to the tune of \$68 million per annum; the UK, on the other hand, is a foreign aid donor to the tune of \$4.5 billion per annum. Far from being attracted to a low-poverty

utopia in Cuba, people are desperately trying to leave the country to escape poverty and political oppression. Every year, hundreds, if not thousands, of Cubans risk death trying to escape Cuba—and the evil Fidel Castro's regime—by boat to reach the United States, with its free economy and political system.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): I thank the member for his selective statistics. He mentioned life expectancy earlier. Life expectancy in Cuba is 76 years of age; it is 73 in New York and only 74 in Glasgow. Can he explain how a country as poor as Cuba has managed to produce a health service that results in a life expectancy of 76?

Murdo Fraser: If life expectancy in Cuba is so great, why are people risking their lives to avoid the socialist regime there? Why are they getting on boats to sail across the channel to the United States? Things cannot be that great in Cuba if they do that.

Tommy Sheridan: They go to America because America continues to impose illegal economic blockades on Cuba.

Murdo Fraser: Exactly—they go to get the freedoms that are available in the United States but not in Cuba.

I am probably way over time.

The Presiding Officer: You have a minute to close.

Murdo Fraser: It seems that the socialists would prefer everyone to live in misery and on low incomes, provided that there were no disparities of income. We believe that the Scottish Government should be seeking to create wealth in our country and to reduce the burdens on businesses, such as high business rates and water charges, and to reduce the whole range of business regulation. By freeing the economy, we will create economic opportunities, which will create jobs and spread wealth. In that way, we will raise living standards for all and help to reduce poverty.

It was the great American President Abraham Lincoln who said that we do not help the poor by pulling down the rich and that we do not help the weak by attacking the strong; that is a lesson that the socialists have yet to learn. A socialist recipe will simply cause in Scotland—as it has caused elsewhere in the world—more human misery and poverty. Instead, what Scotland needs is a dynamic free economy that creates wealth and opportunity for all.

I move amendment S2M-625.1, to leave out from first "recognises" to end and insert:

"notes that socialism has caused more poverty and human misery than any other political ideology in modern history; further notes that socialist policies, where implemented, have singularly failed to remedy the lack of

economic growth that is the root cause of poverty; believes that the best way to tackle poverty is to create a strong, dynamic, free enterprise economy with opportunity for all, and therefore calls upon the Scottish Executive to reduce business rates and ease the burden of water charges on Scottish business thereby taking the first steps towards improving the Scottish economy."

09:55

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I am happy to support the Executive amendment and to speak against the SSP motion. I think that the SSP has a genuine concern about poverty, which is shared by most members, but I honestly do not think that some of the debate so far has done the Parliament much credit.

I agree with the SSP's concern about poverty, but I think that its proposals would not succeed in reducing it. That is why I am happy to speak against the motion. The Executive amendment is correct to stress the Executive's commitment to ending poverty—that commitment does exist. It is the job of coalition back benchers to keep up steady pressure on ministers and the whole Government machine to deliver such policies as fast as possible. In any system, there is a certain amount of inertia, which needs a great deal of energy to overcome it. The Executive's intention is leading in the right direction and some of its policies are right. For example, this afternoon we will debate fuel poverty—an area in which there has been definite progress.

The only long-term way of ending poverty is not through grants and hand-outs and so on, although they may be necessary at some stage, but by helping individuals and communities to develop their own activities and incomes. It is necessary to strike a balance between the individual and the community, but both have an important part to play.

Although we cannot create initiative, we can create a system that encourages initiative and allows it to flourish. If, for example, we could somehow harness the energies and talents of the people who go around selling drugs and turn them into something more useful, we would transform our communities. Such people have great abilities that are totally misplaced and are doing great harm. There is a lot of ability that we are not using.

The whole Co-operative movement, to which many members in the Parliament have a special commitment, has a great role to play at local level. If people come together, they can do something that is worth while. In the matter of community enterprise, we have kept the voluntary sector in a sort of isolation. The voluntary sector and communities can set up commercial companies—a few have already done so—to create genuinely profitable activity in communities.

From our point of view, it is unfortunate that many of the issues to do with dealing with poverty are issues that are reserved to Westminster. The Scottish Parliament and the Executive have debated debt several times. We want to do what we can to reduce the mountain of debt and to make lenders more sensible, but that is basically a Westminster issue, as are benefits and pensions. The Liberal Democrats want to help 16 and 17-year-olds to share in benefits; such issues are important. On tax, we believe that the highest earners should pay a bit more and that the lower earners should be removed from the tax system. On all those issues, we can at least apply pressure on our colleagues in our various parties at Westminster.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): The member mentioned the tax and benefit systems, power over which is obviously reserved to Westminster. I understand that some Liberal Democrat members believe that we should bring those powers back to Scotland. Does the member agree that if, in so doing, we were to integrate the tax and benefit systems, we would tackle the high marginal tax rate that some of the poorest people in our society face?

Donald Gorrie: There are two points to be made. For a long time, we have argued about harmonising the tax and benefit systems and bringing them together so that they are coherent. At the moment, we have to accept that tax and benefits are Westminster issues that must be made to work as well as possible.

We must aim at having a humane and acceptable form of capitalism. We have a capitalist or market system, but we must make it work in such a way that the rich do not pull ahead and the poor do not fall further and further back. One way of achieving that is through education and creating more people with skills. We must build up our indigenous industries. Electronics and call centres and so on illustrate that buying in other people's industries is not the answer.

The amendment sets out a fair position, but the Executive must deliver on its commitments.

The Presiding Officer: We move to open debate. Speeches should be of four minutes plus time for interventions.

10:00

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): The subject matter of today's debate has bypassed many contributors so far. Perhaps that is because it is uncomfortable for the other parties to address the main fact, which is that we have the power, even in our limited Scottish Parliament, to address poverty pay within the public sector.

None of the other parties has yet been able to justify why we continue to pay poverty wages in the public sector. We have the opportunity not only to pay the European decency threshold of £7.50 per hour but to introduce a 35-hour week to tackle head on the long-hours culture that, unfortunately, destroys many families and communities across Scotland. We have that opportunity because we have the finance available to pay for it. If Scottish Enterprise's £450 million annual budget was deployed in the creation of a £7.50 an hour minimum wage across the public sector and the introduction of a 35-hour week—

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Will the member give way?

Tommy Sheridan: I ask Phil Gallie to give me just a wee minute so that I can develop this point.

According to the Scottish Parliament information centre, which took advice from the University of Stirling economics department, introducing the £7.50 per hour minimum wage and the 35-hour week across the public sector would create 24,000 new jobs. Margaret Curran and others asked what would happen to jobs. Our policy is not just an anti-poverty policy but a job-creation policy. Stewart Stevenson asked about the costs. The wage and labour costs attached to the creation of those jobs would be £328 million, which is less than any of the underspends in each of the previous four years of our Parliament.

That is the problem. Time and time again, people say that we do not have power over pensions and benefits—

Mr Monteith: Will the member give way?

Tommy Sheridan: I ask the member to give me a wee minute.

People say that we do not have powers over other areas of our economy. We should have those powers, because to tackle poverty permanently we require an independent socialist Scotland with the full powers of a normal country. However, if we want those new powers, let us use our existing powers. Let us use the powers that we already have to tackle poverty pay.

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): Will the member take an intervention?

Tommy Sheridan: No thanks.

Let us try to give the workers who deliver our public services a decent standard of living. If it is good enough for the public purse to be able to afford £49,000 a year for MSPs, it should certainly be good enough for it to afford £25,000 a year as a minimum wage for public sector workers.

It was interesting to listen to the remarks that Stewart Stevenson made today on behalf of the SNP—perhaps that is the new SNP. He said that,

under this socialist ideology of ours, we would have public railways, public ferries and public buses. Not so long ago, that is what his party stood for. Perhaps he should read his party's recent documents.

Stewart Stevenson rose—

Tommy Sheridan: Sit down, my friend.

Stewart Stevenson brought into the Parliament language that he should be ashamed of. I would be interested to hear what the SNP women members think of phrases such as "Get it up 'em." That is great—that really raises the level of debate. He has disgraced his party this morning. It would have been much better if he had attacked us on our economic policies rather than try to personalise the debate. However, when people have lost the argument, they always have personal assaults and personal attacks in reserve. That is what Stewart Stevenson is good at—unfortunately, that is all that he is good at.

Today, we are saying that we should use the limited powers that the Parliament has to be serious about tackling poverty. The biggest growth area in poverty is low pay. Let us show by example and lead from the front. Let us have a minimum wage of £7.50 an hour and a maximum working week of 35 hours to raise the public sector workers out of the scourge of poverty and set an example for the private sector.

10:05

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): I agree with Carolyn Leckie on one thing, which is that the Labour and trade union movement has a fantastic tradition of focusing on poverty and finding effective means to deal with it. From John Wheatley's vision of developing affordable public housing to Aneurin Bevan's creation of the health service and to the work done by successive Labour Administrations at national and local level in making educational opportunity accessible to those previously excluded, tackling poverty has been at the forefront of our aims, intentions and policies. What Carolyn Leckie did not say is that she and her party have stepped out of that tradition. They are apostates. They have moved away from our goals and have adopted a nationalist agenda. I will return to that point.

The most effective anti-poverty interventions are a consequence of Labour's making employment the top priority across the United Kingdom. We now have the lowest levels of unemployment in Europe. We have made paid work accessible for many more women by dramatically increasing child care provision. Many of those who were excluded from employment because they lacked skills or confidence have been supported on their journey into work. There are 1.5 million more

people in jobs and 350,000 fewer children living in workless households than there were before 1997. Those are real achievements and real efforts. They have been achieved not easily, but by the co-ordinated work of Labour Administrations.

Margaret Curran is well aware that I believe that there is more to do. Targeted intervention is necessary to ensure that more people in West Dunbartonshire and in constituencies such as hers benefit from what has been achieved elsewhere in Scotland and across the UK. All that the SSP has to offer are false promises and a denial of rights to people. In my constituency, the SSP opposed the building of new schools for the people of our area. The SSP has opposed the modernisation of health services and has resisted moves to provide better protection for vulnerable elderly people through the provision of community wardens and other measures to deal with antisocial behaviour.

For the people whom I represent, poverty is not an academic debate or a slogan to be cast up on the wall. They have seen too much of it over a long period. They know that the £200 heating allowance makes a difference, as does free concessionary travel. They know that the pensioner credit will help many people who have small occupational pensions, such as many of my constituents in Clydebanks. The increases in child benefit and the introduction of education maintenance allowances and modern apprenticeships are all practical measures that we have delivered to tackle poverty effectively.

The minimum wage that is derided by the SSP is pitched at a level that is close to the minimum wage levels in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Ireland. Tommy Sheridan gets his European decency threshold only from his fevered imagination. We are delivering real positive change that affects the poorest people. All that he offers are false promises that are based on a complete fallacy.

The Scottish service tax would discriminate against working families and would risk the loss of huge sums in council tax—£276 million—that are currently paid through the benefits system.

Carolyn Leckie: Will the member take an intervention?

Des McNulty: I would take interventions if the SSP had given enough time for us to debate the issue seriously. That is the SSP's fault.

It seems strange that a party that claims to be socialist wants to shift the burden of taxation from property to earned income.

However, it is no less inconsistent that the red nationalists, who sit on the same benches as the green nationalists and their yellow counterparts, are prepared to put poor people on the front line

by taking us down a path that would tear apart our links with the rest of the UK. The rainbow coalition that we can see taking shape across the chamber includes those who want to improve competitiveness by going down the George Bush route of reducing business taxes in a bizarre and unwinnable game of beggar my neighbour, while Tommy Sheridan's approach is to say that we can massively increase wages. Both those approaches cannot be right. They do not sing from the same hymn sheet but, fundamentally, they say that the same mechanism will deliver those irreconcilable goals.

At the end of the day, the Scottish socialists have to be serious and say what they believe in. If they believe in tackling poverty and the things that the Labour movement has always stood for, they have to stand with us and engage in real politics. If they want only to posture—which I believe to be the case—they can carry on being red nationalists and working with their colleagues. Let us then see what the voters think, but the voters have been pretty decisive every time up to now.

10:10

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): I want to join Stewart Stevenson in welcoming the choice of debate, but I do not want to join in his personal attacks.

How bad is poverty in Scotland? All of us have heard the figures. According to the most common definitions, one in three people in Scotland grows up in poverty and one in four households in Scotland suffers from poverty. Many of them are the working poor who are in poverty because of a low-income job. Poverty is endemic in Scotland. The long, slow decline that we have seen in the heavy industries that attracted people to the central belt has created urban poverty. There is also the problem of rural poverty, the severity of which is often not recognised.

The Scottish Parliament was created because Scottish problems are different. We need to create distinctive Scottish solutions in an independent Scotland that can take control of our economy and our social policy. We need to move towards integrating the tax and benefits systems, creating a new safety net of a citizens income scheme, which would not create the poverty trap that exists under the current benefits system.

Let us look at the motion. The 35-hour week for public sector workers, which has not been discussed in any depth so far, is an important initiative that needs to be addressed in Scotland now. The French have experimented with the introduction of the 35-hour week and, according to the latest figures, 200,000 new jobs have been created in France as a result. The 35-hour week

was introduced in France to improve working conditions for workers and to end the situation in which one third of French society was underworked and the two thirds who were overworked suffered from the stress caused by that overwork. The aim of the French experiment was to change people's understanding of work and the balance between work and recreation.

That experiment has been tremendously successful. People claimed that it would lead to the collapse of the French economy, but the 35-hour week has led to a decline in unemployment and has produced a much better work-life balance across the board. There have been problems, including over-bureaucracy for small employers and how to fit overtime into a 35-hour week—that is a particular problem for many of the low-paid workers who depend on that overtime.

In some situations, the new flexibility of the 35-hour week has been used as an excuse for the introduction of the so-called flexible working practices that have undermined the work-life balance that the 35-hour week was designed to create. That said, I repeat that the experiment has been a tremendous success. It has made France richer in jobs, questioned the role of work and re-emphasised that what is important is quality of life for all in society rather than growth for growth's sake. That is why it is really important that the motion raises the topic of the 35-hour week. However, it is clear that the 35-hour week cannot be introduced across Scotland until we have an independent Scottish Parliament with full powers.

Phil Gallie: What would the effect be on patients of the imposition on the health service of the 35-hour week?

The Presiding Officer: You should begin to wind up, Mr Ballard.

Mark Ballard: It would mean more jobs. For far too long, we have tolerated the present situation of junior doctors working for 50, 60 and 70 hours a week. That system does not work—one cannot work people harder and expect to get the same productivity from them. We need to reduce hours so that people can be more productive during the hours that they work.

We need to end poverty pay in the public sector, move towards a more flexible understanding of work and tackle the underlying causes of poverty. That can be done only if we have the full powers of an independent Scotland. In the meantime, we need to tackle the issues of overwork and underpay in our society.

10:14

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I am very happy to speak in the debate.

However, I regret that the SSP motion does not refer to a large percentage of our population—the pensioners who live in poverty. I note what Des McNulty said about making a difference, but all that I can say to him is that we have had new Labour for six years at Westminster and four and a half years in the Scottish Parliament.

I looked again at a speech that I made in the chamber around the same time of year in 1999 and noted how little has changed for Scottish pensioners since then. At that time, the basic state pension for a single person was £66.75. Four years on, the figure is £75.50, which is an increase of a mere £8.75—or £2 per year for each of those years. When council tax rises, fuel cost rises, inflation and so on are taken into account, I would be surprised if Scotland's pensioners are even where they were all those years ago.

The statistics from Help the Aged and Age Concern Scotland on the subject are chilling. The number of pensioner households in the United Kingdom who receive means-tested benefit is expected to reach 57 per cent by the end of this year. Indeed, 23 per cent of those aged 60 and over who are entitled to income support will not claim it but will continue to live well below what is a living wage.

The figures also show that 41 per cent of single pensioners receive a net reported income that is lower than £6,000 per year. In 1979, 12 per cent of single pensioners were reckoned to be living in poverty. However the figures for 1995-96 show that the percentage increased by 33 per cent. Those are the financial circumstances in which many of our 1 million Scottish pensioners find themselves.

In 1999, I made a speech about access to health care, in which I said:

“social work cuts in East Lothian ... caused a home to close down, people to be dispersed, meals on wheels to be stopped and pensioners to be given two week's supply of frozen food.”

I also raised the issue of the day care centre at Broomhill in Penicuik, which provided respite care for the elderly and which was running out of money. The centre needed just a little bit of money to meet its needs, in comparison with the sums that the Executive was spending on all its shiny brochures. What has changed? The day care centre still struggles for money, homes are still being closed in East Lothian—indeed, a home in Cockenzie is struggling at the moment to stay the course—and pensioners are still being moved from residential home to residential home like bits of furniture in the back of a removal van. Nothing has really changed in all those years.

I turn to access to health care in the community. I commend members in the previous session of

the Parliament, including members of the Health and Community Care Committee, for pursuing the issue of free personal care for the elderly in the face of a resistant Executive. However, the delivery on the ground is not what we parliamentarians thought it would be. Instead we have cuts in district nurses and cuts in care. I saw that dreadful "Panorama" programme and I am sure that the way in which the elderly people were shown to be treated is echoed in some care homes in Scotland.

In my last few seconds, I want to repeat something that I said about travel in the same debate in 1999:

"The three important words in relation to transport and pensioners are: available, accessible and affordable."—*[Official Report, 2 December 1999; Vol 3, c 1181-1182.]*

I remember that Sylvia Jackson referred to a national concessionary fare scheme for pensioners. It was announced in time for the first Scottish Parliament elections but is it in place? No. Nearly five years down the line, we still do not have free transport for pensioners in Scotland.

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Christine Grahame: No, I cannot. I am in my last minute.

If a pensioner wants to travel from Penicuik to Peebles, they can get as far as Leadburn on their concessionary fare pass. However, from that point onwards, they have to pay £1.50 return to get to Peebles. That is the reality on the ground. I say to Des McNulty that—never mind what the Parliament can do, let alone what Westminster can do—nothing has really changed. It is time for Scotland's pensioners to get what they deserve, which is a decent life.

10:19

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): Today we have a rare chance to debate what the SSP would actually do in power. I want to start in a spirit of generosity. A lot of SSP supporters care sincerely about poverty. As Karl Marx said, in 1888 I think, the point is not to interpret the world,

"the point is to change it."

If one is going to change the world today, it is not about the ardour of one's adherence, the power of one's rhetoric or even the sincerity of one's soul; it is about the power of one's ideas. Let us talk about the power of the SSP's ideas.

Of course, all socialists know that the single greatest driver of poverty through the centuries has been unemployment—debilitating, depressing, impoverishing worklessness. So what will the SSP do about unemployment? We have only to look as

far as Comrade Sheridan's manifesto, which tells us that the SSP's first acts would be to nationalise Scotland's banks, to take over the North sea and to take control of our power stations. Not quite the top 200 companies, but fear not—the backsliding, according to the SSP's one published book of ideology, is that some sections of the economy would most likely remain in private hands. So whatever the protestations about poverty, the SSP would put thousands upon thousands of Scots on the dole.

Twenty years ago, when I first knew Tommy Sheridan, Frances Curran and Colin Fox, they were all proudly revolutionary socialists. Indeed, they were all Trotskyists. Of course, to Trotsky, mass unemployment was not part of the problem, but part of the solution—an opportunity to ferment revolutionary socialism. We do not hear much about revolutionary socialism today—the reasons have already been alluded to in the chamber—because the only two self-styled revolutionary socialist states are North Korea and Cuba.

Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Ms Alexander: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

Here is the rub—it is reformist governments, rather than revolutionary governments, that actually bring about change in people's lives. What the revolutionary socialists do well is rhetoric, but they do not realise change in people's lives.

I end with one more lesson for the self-styled socialists of the SSP. Their central policy for tackling poverty in Scotland is the Scottish service tax, but it was the French socialist Proudhon who, in 1840, came up with the wonderful socialist soundbite, "Property is theft." But what does the SSP want to do in this land of Balmoral, Glamis, Inverary and Dunrobin? It wants to abolish domestic property taxation all together. For Scotland's sake, the SSP should go homeward and think again.

The issue for the six SSP MSPs is that they cannot tell us whether their programme is one of revolutionary socialism that is designed to precipitate the collapse of capitalism under its own contradictions, or whether it is a reformist strategy. That matters, because the Scots are not daft. Over the centuries, they have seen every shade of socialism sell its strategy—so much so that they have learned to judge parties not by the power of their rhetoric, but by their record of delivery. Of course, what the SSP does best is not real change, but popular, anti-establishment rhetoric, which is why this debate about changing lives will be subordinated by the more populist headline-grabbing Bush baiting, to which we are about to come.

10:23

Campbell Martin (West of Scotland) (SNP):

The Minister for Communities began her speech by saying that she was pleased to be here talking about poverty again. I am not pleased that we are here talking about poverty again, because the fact that we are doing so means that poverty is still a real and living thing in Scotland. It means that successive Labour and Tory unionist Governments have failed to tackle the poverty that affects far too many people in Scotland.

I have mentioned before in the Parliament that some of the people I grew up with and went to school with unfortunately have not worked for 20 years. Their children have grown up and moved into the family business—unemployment—which means that they are moving into poverty. The reality for far too many people in Scotland is that they cannot see any way out of that poverty, because politicians have failed to deliver a way out.

Sarah Boyack: Will the member give way?

Campbell Martin: No, thank you.

We have heard the statistics and political theory, but I want to have a wee reality check and tell politicians in this chamber what poverty actually means to people out there, and particularly what it means for children living poverty, because they have not asked to live in poverty. Children have no control over their predicament; they learn to cope with what they are living in. Children in Scotland today have had to learn to cope with being hungry. They have had to learn to cope with being cold. They have had to learn to cope with going to school in old clothes. They have had to learn to cope with having holes in their shoes. They have had to learn to cope with not being able to go on school trips. They have had to learn to cope with lying about why they cannot go on school trips, because they do not want to tell their pals that their parents are poor and cannot afford it. That is what poverty means. We should be talking about that today, and about how we eradicate poverty in Scotland.

For adults in poverty, the reality is that they must sell anything of value that they have, although they probably get very little—next to nothing—for anything that is of value. For single parents, poverty means that they do not eat so that their children can have a meal of some sort. They do not go to Tesco or Sainsbury's; they go to the local shop, because that is the only place where they can get stuff. That means that what they buy is usually at inflated prices and usually of poor nutritional quality, and that their kids do not get fresh produce. That is poverty. That is what we should be talking about.

Poverty also means the re-emergence of loan

sharks in towns and cities throughout Scotland, because when people are poor they cannot get access to money. Banks will not give them money when they need it—banks only give people money when they do not need it—so they cannot get a bank loan. They cannot get tick in most shops, because they know that they cannot pay it back. The reality is that loan sharks have re-emerged. In Ayrshire, there is a man who gives single parents a lift to the post office on Monday morning, but not because he is a nice person. He hands them their Monday books, lets them collect their benefits, then takes their Monday books back off them and takes half their benefits. That is part of the reality of being poor in Scotland today.

A phenomenon that has emerged fairly recently is that of the working poor—that is, people who are in employment, yet who are still so poor that they are living in poverty. We have to eradicate low wages and get rid of the people who perpetuate them. I have with me a printout of North Ayrshire Council's website to show to Labour members. I ask whether they are ashamed of the Labour councillors in North Ayrshire, because on the council's website today they advertise the fact that in North Ayrshire the level of wages

"is 12% below the UK level".

They advertise as a selling point the fact that the people in North Ayrshire are poor. Do Labour members know how the Labour councillors in North Ayrshire describe that? They say:

"North Ayrshire, therefore, has a very cost effective labour supply."

That means, "Our workers are exploited. Come and join in. Come and exploit our workers." That is what Labour councillors say, and it is a disgrace. I hope that Labour members are ashamed of them.

10:28

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): I am not sure whether Campbell Martin subscribes to the same philosophies and solutions as Stewart Stevenson but, like a number of other speakers in the debate, he was high on analysis and low on solutions. This is a serious debate about a very serious subject, which deserves a serious analysis of the issues. Unfortunately, that is not something that we have had today. The main reason for that is the flawed and highly damaging proposals of the SSP that are outlined in the motion.

The bulk of members in the chamber could perhaps agree on two things, the first of which is the importance of investment in high-quality public services, to provide the social services—health, education, transport and all the rest—on which poor people depend more than others, and which help to improve the life chances of all our citizens.

The second is the importance of productive work in building individual and community confidence, in providing income and raising the quality of life, and in providing the taxes to pay for those crucial public services. Good public services and economic prosperity are linked, which is why Liberal Democrats support both a progressive taxation system and a huge emphasis on education and skills creation—building on Scotland's academic capacity, encouraging innovation, and supporting small businesses, but also abolishing taxation on incomes of less than £10,000, increasing the rate to 50 per cent for incomes of more than £100,000, raising pensions, and bringing back proper benefits, as Donald Gorrie touched on, for people under 25. That is a progressive and radical programme that is based on partnership between the Scottish Executive, Westminster and Europe, but which supports, rather than threatens, business.

The SNP used to offer us one panacea; now we get two from the SSP—not just an independent Scotland, but an independent socialist Scotland. Give us independence, and the powers of a normal independent state, and magically all will be well. That is not so much rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic as launching a little lifeboat into the icy waters of the Atlantic and hoping for the best.

The most normal constitutional arrangement is not independence but federalism in one form or other—a partnership between central government and national, regional and provincial authorities, as exists in Germany, Spain, Switzerland, the United States of America, Australia and Canada. Federalism is a sophisticated, modern, pluralistic and liberal approach, which combines the advantages of substantial self-determination with the extra resources and clout of the larger state.

The SSP, however, offers us a second panacea or, as I would describe it, a second suicide note. The SSP presents not only the risks of constitutional upheaval but a set of policies that would destroy the Scottish economy, eliminate much of the tax revenue that is needed for public services and plunge far more people into poverty and despair. Scottish Enterprise may not be perfect, but its abolition, as proposed by the SSP—and indeed siren voices in other parts of the chamber—would strike a mortal blow, particularly in Glasgow, where the concentration of poverty is worst. Funding to restore contaminated land: gone. Funding to develop the Clyde: gone. Funding for the economic development companies: gone. Projects to create jobs and wealth throughout Scotland: gone.

The SSP's policies would also require full utilisation of the block grant—we now know that that means end-year flexibility, which is one-off

money, not repeat money; the money to deal with winter sickness in our hospitals; and money that is earmarked for all sorts of key social services.

The reality is that the Liberal Democrat-Labour Executive is tackling poverty, with long-term, effective solutions, which are helping more and more people out of poverty. The socialists will entrench and increase poverty, and it would be a total and utter disaster for Scotland if they or their ilk ever had their hands on the levers of power.

10:32

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): This has been an interesting and revealing debate. It has been interesting because it has given members of the various parties the opportunity to say how they would tackle poverty—that is an important debate to have in the Parliament. It has been revealing because of the line of attack that has been taken by the various parties: the bitter attack by the SNP on the SSP and the bitter attack by the minister on Conservative views. That reveals the very nature of the political threat to the SNP, which is worried about the erosion from the left by the SSP. The minister is worried about the threat from the Conservative party, so she attacks the Conservatives for a change, rather than the supposed Opposition. How revealing was that?

We must, however, stick to the debate rather than simply the nuances that come out of it. It is important that, in such a debate, one does not disparage one's opponents. I will not seek to disparage my opponents, but I shall certainly disparage their policies. I, like my colleague Murdo Fraser, have considered the international circumstances of many countries and the many ways in which poverty is tackled. I recommend to members a book called "Index of Economic Freedom", which shows clearly that it is those countries that travel down the road of giving people economic freedom that tackle poverty the best. They ensure that wealth is created and spread throughout their societies. Members will find—and it will not be a surprise to them—that countries such as Cuba, Yugoslavia and Belarus, which were once part of the Soviet empire and chose not to give their people more economic freedoms, have been left behind in tackling poverty by those countries that have gone for economic freedoms. Some of those are economic freedoms that we take for granted in this country and in this chamber and some of them are economic freedoms that are being threatened and eroded.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): Does the member agree that, when we consider the level of poverty and deprivation throughout Europe, the countries that are the richest and have least

poverty are the small economies of Scandinavia, such as Denmark and Norway, and countries that are independent and able to pursue policies that suit them?

Mr Monteith: While there are some small countries at the top of that table, one should also mention Australia and the United States, which are not known for their smallness.

What has epitomised the approach by socialist parties—be it the SSP, which believes in socialism max, or the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, or indeed the SNP, which believe in socialism lite—is the belief that to tackle poverty we must tackle wealth. Under that approach, wealth, not poverty, is the scourge of the world. We should take wealth away from people and stop people having wealth, because then no one will be poor.

Carolyn Leckie: Will the member take an intervention?

Mr Monteith: No, I am in my last minute.

We, in this party, believe in a different approach—an approach that has worked in places such as Estonia, and could certainly work in Scotland and the rest of Britain—which is to spread wealth, and to give more opportunity for wealth so that it pulls up people and their families and gives them opportunities in life in order that they can then build a better society. We in this party are not ashamed to support wealth—that is the way to tackle poverty.

10:36

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): The motion may be long, but I thank Carolyn Leckie for lodging it, as it has allowed us to debate this important subject again. Christine Grahame mentioned that we spoke about poverty in 1999; we also had a debate on the subject on 14 December last year. It seems as if poverty is continually being debated, but what has actually happened out there? I agree with Carolyn Leckie that only with independence can we truly eradicate poverty.

I am sure that all members, regardless of their party, would agree that it is a national disgrace that children are still living in poverty. It has been mentioned that one in three children live in poverty, but one in five working adults and one in five pensioners also live in poverty. The minister said that she was happy to take part in the debate, but she also said that things were changing for the better. If members listen to the figures that are presented by myself and others, they will recognise that it does not matter how much spin is put on the issue or how many targets—or whatever the buzzword is—are proposed, things are not changing. People are still living in poverty

and people are still struggling. Things are simply not changing.

Robert Brown mentioned the Lib-Lab Executive—perhaps it is the Executive that is suffering from poverty: poverty of ambition. The Executive has poverty of ambition for our country and our people. We should tackle that. If the Executive had more ambition and spoke more to its Westminster colleagues about tax credits and so on, we may not eradicate poverty but life would be a lot better for people out there.

The minister spoke about the minimum wage and family tax credits. I do not need to tell the minister that we do not have control over those issues.

Sarah Boyack: What about the SNP's policies—not a word about them?

Ms White: Somebody has already mentioned the policies.

We must take control over the tax and benefit systems. I believe that Westminster is using the systems to keep people unemployed. There is no point in sitting in this Parliament and tinkering around the edges.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Ms White: No, I am sorry but I will not.

We will not eradicate poverty by tinkering around the edges. I quite enjoyed our little tour around the world with Murdo Fraser. We were in North Korea and South Korea and we went to Cuba and America, but I do not remember him mentioning Scotland. Perhaps if he took more interest in his own countrymen, people in this country might start to listen to him.

Des McNulty can always be relied upon to stick up for Labour policies. He is a loyalist. I was going to call him a red, white and blue man, but perhaps I will change it to just a unionist man, considering that he called us a mixture of yellow, green and red nationalists. Des McNulty constantly talks up the policies as if everything is marvellous in the Labour Party, but everything is not marvellous or all roses. He said that the Labour Party is socialist and Wendy Alexander gave us a lovely wee history lesson on socialism. Perhaps she should speak to her colleague Bill Butler, who told school kids and me last week that the Labour Party has never been a socialist party. I was surprised when he said that. Wendy Alexander mentioned socialism and socialists so often that that must be her mantra. Perhaps one way of keeping her roots would be for her to remind herself that, one day, the Labour Party might be a socialist party.

Ms Alexander: Will the member give way?

Ms White: No. I am sorry; I am in my last minute.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): The member is past her last minute.

Ms White: I commend Campbell Martin for saying it all about the reality of living in poverty in Scotland today. We know what it is like to live out there in the sticks. It is about time that the Labour Party and the Lib-Lab Executive went out there and spoke to and listened to the people, instead of repeating to us the mantra that everything in the garden is fine and rosy.

10:41

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Mrs Mary Mulligan): I will deal with Mr Monteith's remarks later.

I welcome the opportunity to close the debate on the Executive's behalf. Before Mr Martin leaves the chamber, I will say that I welcome the opportunity not because I enjoy standing in the chamber talking about poverty, but because the debate provides an opportunity to discuss ways of resolving the problems of poverty. Unfortunately, although Stewart Stevenson promised that we would hear about ways in which the SNP would resolve those problems, no SNP members provided solutions. We heard a critique about poverty, but no solutions. That shows the dearth of ideas from the SNP.

Members have heard about the Executive's commitment to combating poverty and delivering social justice to the people of Scotland. However, we must not become complacent about poverty or think that we can deliver a quick fix. The problem is complex and cannot easily or quickly be solved by introducing one or two policies or initiatives.

Carolyn Leckie opened the debate. I welcome our debating poverty, but this is not the first such debate. We held a debate on poverty in September, which Ms Leckie must have missed. She suggested that we could resolve some poverty issues by increasing the minimum wage in the public sector, which she said would cost £350 million. Unfortunately, that figure does not take into account knock-on effects on property costs and additional working hours.

Mr Monteith: Will the minister give way?

Mrs Mulligan: In a minute.

Stewart Stevenson referred to those knock-on effects. I commend Carolyn Leckie for suggesting how the move would be paid for—by the abolition of Scottish Enterprise—but abolishing Scottish Enterprise would deny an investment of more than £500 million to deliver economic growth for Scotland. Moreover, such a move would have a

devastating impact on nearly 25,000 of our vulnerable young people, as it would remove £73 million for investment in schemes such as skillseekers, modern apprenticeships and the get ready for work programme.

It will come as no surprise that business would also suffer from such a move. Not only would the training for work programme end, but Careers Scotland would disappear. Such initiatives help people into work, yet the SSP would risk losing them.

The peripheral and fragile communities in the Highlands and Islands would also suffer badly from the loss of £89 million of investment in their economies. Do they not matter?

Tommy Sheridan: Will the minister give way?

Mr Monteith: Will the minister give way?

Mrs Mulligan: I give way to Tommy Sheridan.

Tommy Sheridan: The minister is sadly mistaken, because Highlands and Islands Enterprise was not mentioned. The proposal relates specifically to Scottish Enterprise. Does the minister agree that the 32 local authorities in Scotland could easily perform the function of bringing together businesses and colleges to provide the training and resources that she talked about?

Mrs Mulligan: Mr Sheridan would still have to fund that.

Mr Monteith *rose*—

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

Mrs Mulligan: I am sorry, I cannot give way.

Carolyn Leckie: Will the minister give way?

Mrs Mulligan: No, I cannot.

Mr Sheridan said that extra jobs would be created if we reduced the length of the working week to 35 hours. How would we pay for that? A 5 per cent increase in the number of Scottish Executive staff would be an additional 200 staff, and accommodation for them would cost us at least £1.2 million. The facts and figures do not add up.

As I am in my last minute, I will move on to the Scottish Tory party, because we should not let it get away in the debate. Murdo Fraser talked for two and a half minutes of his four-minute opening speech about foreign economies, but we want solutions for people here in Scotland. The only solution that the Scottish Tories have is to reduce business regulation, but that must be considered as part of an Executive package that includes investing in transport infrastructure, skills and training. The biggest single cause of poverty is

unemployment, which the Tory party used for most of its 18 years in power as an economic tool. The Tories must answer for that to all the people of Scotland.

The way to remove poverty is to ensure that people have employment. The Executive is committed to supporting our people into employment. That is how we will tackle poverty.

10:46

Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP): I am disgusted by some of the input to the debate. I thank Sandra White, Campbell Martin, Christine Grahame and Patrick Harvie for talking about poverty and for bringing the debate back to some kind of sense, instead of attacking, prodding and being personal about some of our colleagues. That was disgusting.

Carolyn Leckie said:

"Poverty is the word that dare not speak its name in the chamber."

Did she not hit the right note when she said that? We saw the reaction: we dare not discuss poverty. Many examples exist of the poverty that people in our communities live with. Campbell Martin gave excellent examples from the community in which I, too, live in North Ayrshire. We know about that because we live in those communities and they are real to us. Perhaps Wendy Alexander has a conscience when she talks about socialism. Perhaps she remembers her earlier days and perhaps that is the problem.

Ms Alexander: Will the member give way?

Ms Byrne: I do not have time to take an intervention.

Carolyn Leckie gave the example of a hospital porter who earns £180 a week. I would like to see people in the chamber living on £180 a week. Today, 30 per cent of Scottish children still live in low-income households and still live in poverty. The Executive has been in power for four years and is in its second term, but expresses disgusting rhetoric.

Of dependent Scottish children, 14 per cent live in homes where no one works. We have third-generation unemployment. In addition, 42.4 per cent of the Scottish population aged under 16 are children of parents or carers who claim key benefits. Those children live not in wealth, but in poverty.

We listen and are in touch, unlike Margaret Curran, who is certainly out of touch. There are now working families who have discovered that work does not pay. In Scotland, 40 per cent of households on low incomes include a working adult. One in 10 babies born in poverty in this

country is underweight and up to 12 times more likely to die in the first year of their life. Death rates in the most deprived 10 per cent of areas are more than twice as high as those in the least deprived 50 per cent. Pupils who receive free school meals form just under half of all exclusions, and 48.6 per cent of Scottish applicants who are accepted at UK higher education institutions are from social classes I and II, but only 9 per cent are from classes IV and V. I could go on and on. Those are examples of poverty. I tell Margaret Curran to go out into communities and find out what that is like.

Ms Margaret Curran: Will the member give way?

Ms Byrne: No.

It is clear that Stewart Stevenson did not understand that the debate was about poverty. I am sure that the people of Scotland will appreciate his concerns about the poorest in our communities.

Murdo Fraser took a poke at socialism and quoted several examples from throughout the globe. He needs some lessons in understanding the differences. It is obvious that he needs to take a class in economics and politics. Scotland is a wealthy country. Shame on us for not caring properly for our elderly. We cannot pay our carers or nursery nurses a decent wage, but we can pay fat cats obscenely large wages.

There are unmet child care needs, so the situation is not as wonderful as Des McNulty would like to portray it. In 2000, more than a quarter of parents reported that their child care needs had not been met in the past year. Even the number of three and four-year-olds attending nursery schools does not help the problem. Carolyn Leckie spoke of the fact that parents who are working are paying a huge amount of their wages on child care. People cannot get to work because they cannot get child care, and Des McNulty must realise that we have a long way to go on that.

The SSP recognises—as does Unison, which represents 140,000 public service workers in Scotland—that large staff shortages across the public services are evidence of the need to address low pay if services are to be reformed. There are gaps and shortages in social services. Last week, sadly, we had a debate about child protection at which we highlighted the shortage of social workers. We also have a shortage of nurses and of other health professionals. If we are to attract those people, we need to give them a decent wage. Producers are also consumers, and we seem to forget that. They are consumers of public services, and a buoyant public sector means money being spent in the economy, which helps to support small businesses.

How sad it is that Stewart Stevenson was so busy attacking Rosie Kane that he was unable to make the case for independence. The Scottish Parliament has no powers to prevent Scotland from being pushed into George Bush's illegal war. It has no powers to welcome refugees who are fleeing persecution. It has no power over our vast oil reserves, our electricity, our gas or the nuclear power plants in Scotland. It has no power to increase the pitifully low state pension or to end the degrading means tests that are faced by our elderly. We must restore the link between earnings and pensions, but we have no power to do that in this Parliament; nor do we have any power to combat exploitation in the private sector by raising the disgracefully low level of the national minimum wage.

Patrick Harvie outlined the case for a shorter working week and the need to end poverty in the public sector, particularly among workers who are overworked and underpaid. A shorter working week would give parents time to spend with their children instead of being herded into casual work where, if they are asked to work a night shift, they have got to do it or they are up the road. That is the reality in my community. It may not be the reality in Margaret Curran's community, but it certainly is in mine. This Parliament has the power to make that change for the public sector. A wage of £7.32 an hour is hardly a huge income, but it is the European threshold. Almost a third of full-time workers in Scotland are paid below the national average wage.

If Mary Mulligan is asking for a resolution, here is one: no more illegal wars in our name. Billions could be saved that could go into our economy. Those billions could improve public services and provide for our nursery nurses and other low-paid workers. I ask those members who have entered sensibly into today's debate to think carefully and to support our motion.

Karen Gillon: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Will you rule that members cannot have it both ways? They cannot say that there must be no personal attacks on themselves and then resort to making a speech that is a personal attack on a minister.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I think members will recognise that that is a useful debating point, but it is scarcely a point of order.

It would also be appropriate to ask for the *Official Report* to show that Ms Byrne's references to Patrick Harvie should in fact be to Mark Ballard, who made the speech in question. [*Interruption.*] I would be grateful not to have any other suggestions about misidentification; I did not notice any.

World Peace

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The next item of business is motion S2M-618, in the name of Tommy Sheridan, on world peace. There are three amendments to the motion and an amendment to one of the amendments.

10:54

Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP): If I sound hoarse, it is probably because I have been on one demonstration too many this week.

Our motion is strongly worded, because George Bush is being wined and dined and flattered and fawned over in London, and we want to counter that view of George Bush with the truth. The truth is that George Bush has blood on his hands—the blood of many hundreds of Americans and of tens of thousands of Afghanis and Iraqis. This is the man who, as governor of Texas, executed 152 people. One of the last of his victims was a grandmother with learning difficulties who was found guilty of murdering her abusive husband. This is the man who used his privileged family background to dodge conscription in Vietnam and arranged to do his military service in the national guard—the equivalent of Dad's army—while thousands of young Americans of his generation were being killed in the jungles of Vietnam.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

I thought that, according to the party's last speaker, the SSP was against personal attacks.

Frances Curran: I take it from that remark that Alex Johnstone is a fan of the man—the man who has now sent 400 young American soldiers to their deaths in the desert of Iraq and has not had the common decency to turn up at any of the funerals or memorial services for those service personnel.

In May 2001, George Bush gave \$43 million to the Taliban—yes, the Taliban—just months before he dropped the bombs and pulverised their regime. He continues to give money and weapons to dictatorships, but only to dictatorships who are the good guys, we must understand. For example, he gives money to the feudal dictatorship in Saudi Arabia, which carries out public beheadings for witchcraft, stones women to death for adultery and—by the way, let us be clear about the fact that it is a freedom-conscious capitalist country—bans music, cinema, theatre and art. Let us hear it for capitalist democracy in Saudi Arabia.

Our motion is not against the Americans. George Bush was elected by just 25 per cent of the American electorate. In the future, when Michael Moore is President of the USA, we in the Scottish Socialist Party will be delighted to invite him on a state visit to an independent, nuclear-

weapons-free, socialist Scotland. Members should get on his website and find out the truth. We are not against the American people. We are against the warlords in Washington who exploited the death and misery of the events of 11 September to unleash the dogs of war against the ordinary people of Afghanistan and Iraq to serve their own economic and political interests.

Our motion condemns Tony Blair for war crimes because of his complicity, his deceit of the Scottish Parliament, his deceit of the Westminster Parliament and his deceit of the people of the United Kingdom. In March, this Parliament voted narrowly and reluctantly to support the bombing and invasion of Iraq. Most of the MSPs who voted for war—they can speak for themselves in the debate, because they all put their hands up and supported it—did so because they believed Tony Blair. They believed that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction that could be used within minutes. I am sure that they believed that the war would make the world a safer place. They will have their judgment day. They put their hands up and they can give their views in today's debate.

Now, we know—and I hope that other members will acknowledge in today's debate what the Scottish Socialist Party said all along—that there are no weapons of mass destruction.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. In this very important debate, there is nobody on the Government front bench.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is not a point of order, but it is a matter that the Executive will doubtless wish to consider.

Please continue, Ms Curran.

Frances Curran: Thank you, Presiding Officer. It is obvious how important the issue is to the Executive. It is national headline news and on the front page of every newspaper, and the Scottish Executive does not feel able to participate in the debate.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Will Frances Curran accept an intervention?

Frances Curran: I am afraid that I have to carry on as I am in the last minutes of my speech.

We know that there are no weapons of mass destruction. I hope that members will agree that, instead of creating a more peaceful and more stable world, we have stirred up a cauldron of hate in the Muslim world, which stretches from the Mediterranean to the Indian ocean. Generations will live with the consequences of the decision to go to war in Iraq.

I ask this new Parliament, which is supposed to

stand for freedom and democracy—if we listen to the front-bench members, who are not even here today—to send a message on behalf of the Scottish people that reverberates across the world: that we support the mass demonstrations that are assembling in London as we speak to demonstrate against George Bush. Let us hope that the demonstration is 100,000 or 200,000-strong, or bigger. Let us also hope that the Scottish Parliament dissociates itself from Tony Blair and the Labour Government's decisions in Westminster. The Scottish Parliament sends a message that we stand for peace, solidarity and co-operation with the people of the world. Let us make our voice heard in a world that is clamouring for war.

I move,

That the Parliament opposes the State visit to the UK by George W Bush; deplores the complicity and subservience of the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who now shares the responsibility for the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqis and dozens of British service personnel; considers that the UK Parliament and the Scottish Parliament were deceived into backing an illegal, immoral and unjustified war; believes that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have turned the world into a more dangerous and unstable place than ever before; agrees to send messages of support to the many thousands of protestors participating in the "Stop Bush" UK national demonstrations in London, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and recommends that the International Court of Justice should place George W Bush and Tony Blair on trial for war crimes.

11:01

Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): The prospect of achieving world peace by means of a 75-minute Scottish Socialist Party debate in the Scottish Parliament seems a little optimistic. As I have just five minutes in which to open for the Labour Party, let us take it as read that the commitment to peace and justice is one of the Labour Party's fundamental principles—it always has been and it always will be.

Indeed, I sincerely hope that every member of the Parliament supports the principle of world peace. Perhaps we should give a special welcome to the opposition to violence that was expressed by Frances Curran and in the motion lodged in Tommy Sheridan's name. The SSP draws its political inspiration from one Leon Trotsky, who was famously committed to the achievement of his objectives by

"revolutionary, that is, violent means".

If we have moved on from that position, we should welcome such progress.

Frances Curran has just spoken to a motion that proposes some kind of moral equivalence between the elected Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the likes of Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein. On reflection, even Tommy

Sheridan might acknowledge that that proposition is rather silly.

A lot of us might like to see regime change in the United States of America. A lot of us are very worried about the US Administration's position on climate change and extremely disturbed by the detention of prisoners in Guantanamo bay. However, the United States is a democracy. Next year, the American people will have an opportunity to elect a new President. It is a good thing that the people of Iraq should soon be able to elect their own Government at long last.

I thank the Scottish services personnel who have fought—and it is tragic that some have died—to make it possible for the Iraqi people to exercise that right. I take this opportunity to express our support and sincere gratitude to the men and women of the British armed forces and the police officers and others who are engaged in that difficult and dangerous mission. Just last week, soldiers of the Royal Scots regiment, who are recruited in the Lothian area, left Edinburgh to be deployed in Iraq. I salute their professionalism, their courage and—dare I say it—their indefatigability. Above all, we want them all to return safely to their families at the end of their tour of duty.

Incidentally, I say to my Liberal Democrat colleagues that I noticed that Mike Rumbles's amendment would, in amending the amendment that I lodged, leave out the expression of support for British troops. I hope that that is an oversight; if it is not, it is deplorable.

The big question that underlies this debate is whether it can be justified for democracies to deploy military power against tyrants who are oppressing their own people or threatening their neighbours. I accept that there is a perfectly respectable pacifist position that military action can never be justified, but I disagree with that position. I believe that military action can be justified and I am extremely grateful to my father's generation for taking up arms against Nazi Germany.

I spent some time doing relief work in areas of Bosnia that were under siege by Serb forces. I will never forget the suffering that I saw during the long wait before the United States agreed to deploy with NATO against those oppressors.

Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP): Will the member take an intervention?

Mr Home Robertson: I am sorry. I have only a couple of minutes left and this is an important debate.

How many citizens of Srebrenica might be alive now if NATO had deployed sooner? Perhaps the victims of poison gas at Halabjah would have had

a chance if the west had not turned a blind eye to Saddam for such a long time.

Yes, war is hell—I know; I have seen it. Yes, it would be infinitely better if we had an effective United Nations to take responsibility for these matters. Yes, it is a deplorable fact of realpolitik that it is not possible to tackle each and every rogue state immediately. However, I suggest that it would be a counsel of abject despair to use that fact as an excuse for a refusal ever to intervene against any tyrant anywhere.

The SSP motion is, in effect, a condemnation of the presence of British and other coalition peacekeepers in Iraq and it is a call for them to be withdrawn. That is exactly what the people who bombed the United Nations and the Red Cross in Iraq want us to do. If our forces were withdrawn, a bad security situation would become catastrophic, reconstruction would become impossible and the plight of Iraq's people would become even worse. Saddam Hussein would probably return to power and I do not think that that would be a good idea. If Saddam returned to power, what message would that convey to the rulers of Zimbabwe or Burma, and what hope would there be for the implementation of United Nations resolutions on Palestine?

The trouble with the SSP's world view is that it would make the world a safer place for dangerous tyrants. No thank you, Tommy. I want real criminals to be brought to justice in The Hague and I want Britain to use its influence to tackle the underlying causes of terrorism and to achieve a just resolution in the middle east. I strongly support the case for peacekeeping and peace-making intervention forces, preferably under the auspices of the United Nations. I express the Parliament's gratitude to and support for Scottish service personnel in Iraq.

I move amendment S2M-618.3, to leave out from "opposes" to end and insert:

"supports all those who are working for world peace and the extension of democracy; reasserts its support for the route map to peace in the Middle East; believes that the contribution of UK service personnel, including those from Scotland, should be commended, and expresses its sympathy to the families of those members of the armed forces who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country and in the pursuit of world peace."

11:07

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): In stark contrast to the extremist and intemperate motion from the Scottish Socialist Party, the Liberal Democrat amendment not only reflects the public mood but identifies the three main issues that must be addressed if we are to make real progress in our efforts to make the world a safer place.

My amendment aims, among other things, to strengthen the search for peace in the middle east, which is why it starts at the point in John Home Robertson's amendment that it does. I believe that I am the only member in the chamber who has been on active service in the fight against terrorism, so I trust that John Home Robertson and other members will accept that my amendment to his amendment would not, and does not, devalue those members of the armed forces who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Liberal Democrats, both in the Scottish Parliament and at Westminster, made our opposition to the Government's position absolutely clear. We argued most strongly that military action against Iraq should take place only as a last resort and that more time should be given for the weapons inspectors to do their job. The Government, however, justified military action on the ground that the threat from weapons of mass destruction was too great for the inspectors to be given any more time and that the UN had previously authorised such action. The facts are that no weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq and that the UN has been marginalised and ignored. I wish that it was otherwise.

Our amendment makes it clear that, although we believe that initiating military action in Iraq without a clear mandate from the UN was wrong, President Bush's visit provides an opportunity for us in the United Kingdom to press him to take action on three important fronts.

First, Iraq must not be abandoned. Those who went to war have a moral duty to make Iraq safe and give the people of that unfortunate country the opportunity freely to choose their own form of government. Self-determination of the Iraqi people must be a fundamental principle of the occupying powers.

Secondly, the British citizens who are imprisoned by the Americans at Guantanamo bay must be charged and receive a fair trial or be sent home to face justice here in the United Kingdom. The Americans must realise that they risk losing all moral authority in their war against terrorism. How can they achieve their aims of upholding the rule of law, defending democracy and preserving freedom if they fail to uphold those great ideals in their treatment of the people whom they imprison at Guantanamo bay? Those prisoners are held without charge; they are seemingly non-persons who are outwith the protection of any legal system. Our Government must act on its duty to protect the British citizens who are held there. The Liberal Democrats believe that action must be taken either to charge our citizens with an offence prior to a fair trial or to bring them home to face justice. The status quo is simply not an option.

Last, but certainly not least, the source of injustice that feeds the cancer of international terrorism must be addressed. The US President must honour his promise to continue his unremitting search for peace in the middle east through providing security for Israel and justice for the Palestinians.

I urge members to support the Liberal Democrat amendment, which would send a clear and constructive message to our American allies, and to a wider audience, that is designed to achieve movement towards a more peaceful world in the months and years ahead.

I move, as an amendment to amendment S2M-618.3, amendment S2M-618.3.1, to leave out from "reasserts" to end and insert:

"acknowledges the deep feeling aroused by the State visit of the US President George W Bush; believes that initiating military action in Iraq without a clear UN mandate was wrong, and recognises the opportunity presented by the visit to make clear the public's wish that those who initiated the war have a duty, under the supervision of the UN, to make Iraq safe and give its people the opportunity of a democratic future, that the British citizens in Guantanamo Bay are either charged and receive a fair trial or are sent home to face justice within the UK, and that the promise to continue the unremitting search for peace in the Middle East with security for Israel and justice for the Palestinians must be honoured."

11:11

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): The pictures on television last night of George Bush being fawned over in London must have been painful for the families of service personnel who lost their lives in his illegal war and for the families of those who are still in Iraq and who risk their lives every day. The present situation in Iraq is connected to the nature of that war. We cannot take unilateral action in defiance of the international community and then expect other countries to help us to pick up the pieces. Is it any wonder that Iraqi people now view the US and the UK not as allies on the road to democracy, but as an occupying force in their country?

In London yesterday, George Bush defended the use of measured force. A war that involves the use of thousands of cluster bombs, tonnes of depleted uranium and 30 canisters of napalm and that killed up to 10,000 innocent Iraqi civilians could be described as many things, but measured is not one of them. Other countries must become involved in the rebuilding of Iraq, but that can happen only if the United Nations is put in charge, as that would allow the international community to start to lay the foundations of democracy and to work to return the country to the Iraqi people. That should be done when it is in those people's interests, not when it suits George Bush's reelection prospects.

The anger that people feel about Iraq is huge and tangible, but it is only the tip of the iceberg. The debate is about world peace, which will always be an elusive dream without the positive contribution of the United States. Right now, one of the threats to world peace is the way in which the US Administration chooses to wield its military and economic might, which, whatever George Bush says, is rarely to further democracy or human rights or to lead the charge against world poverty and disease. What George Bush does and says is in America's interests, or rather what the neo-cons—the disciples of the pre-emptive strike and the full-spectrum dominance school of politics—perceive to be America's interests.

Many American citizens are as appalled by that as the rest of us are. Bush and his cronies are not representative of the majority of decent American people. Bush and his cronies are not leading the world, but putting the United States at odds with the world. They reject the Kyoto treaty and the International Criminal Court and turn a blind eye when Israel breaches the road map to peace. They preach free trade to the impoverished third world, but engage in blatant protectionism of their industries, oblivious to the fact that nearly 3 billion people in the world live on less than \$2 a day. They lecture the world about human rights, while presiding over the most appalling abuse of human rights at Guantanamo bay.

More than 600 suspected Taliban fighters—five of whom are children—have been held in Guantanamo bay for nearly two years without charge, access to lawyers or any prospect of a fair trial. It is a little known fact that, under US environmental law, iguanas on Guantanamo bay have rights. However, it seems that, under the US Administration, foreign children have no rights. That situation is justified in the name of fighting terrorism. Clearly, we all want to combat international terrorism, but understanding some of the factors that cause terrorism might be a good place to start. It is a sobering thought that, although al-Qa'ida was not active in Iraq before the war, it is now.

Bush said last night that Britain is America's best friend in the world; the problem is that Britain is one of the American Administration's only friends in the world. If Blair were a true friend of the United States, he would tell Bush today in no uncertain terms that he is on the wrong course. Sadly for all of us—not just members, but people throughout the world—no one should hold their breath for that to happen.

I move amendment S2M-618.2, to leave out from "opposes" to end and insert:

"regrets the State visit to the UK by George W Bush at a time when civilian and military casualties in Iraq continue to rise; condemns the decision by George W Bush and Tony

Blair to pursue an illegal war in Iraq on the basis of false and misleading information; considers that US military command in Iraq should be passed to the United Nations and that the process of handing over control of the country to a democratic government should be accelerated in the interests of the Iraqi people rather than the re-election prospects of George W Bush; believes that the total disregard of the current US administration for the views of the international community, as illustrated by its stance on Iraq, the Kyoto Treaty, the International Criminal Court and its abuse of human rights at Guantanamo Bay, poses a threat to world peace, and calls on Tony Blair to raise these issues in the strongest possible terms with George W Bush during his visit to the UK."

11:16

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): I congratulate John Home Robertson on his amendment and on the way in which he spoke to it. I do not agree with everything that he said, but I agree with much of it. I emphasise that Conservative members support his unamended amendment, should ours not be agreed to. I also agree with something that Frances Curran said—I believe that this Parliament and the UK Parliament were misled by our Prime Minister at the outset of the Iraqi war. However, I contrast that with the actions of President Bush, who was honest about seeking a regime change, which we backed. I do not believe that the war was illegal; I believe that United Nations Security Council resolution 1441 covered our involvement in the war.

The United States has been Britain's greatest ally in striving for worldwide peace. The partnership dates back through the entire 20th century and in no period was stronger than when the United States entered the 1939-45 war, when Britain stood alone against the fascism that had been imposed throughout western Europe by Nazi Germany. Since that time, we have been through the anxious years of the cold war, when Conservative support—both in government and opposition—for nuclear deterrence was key to sustaining peace between the major power blocs and, ultimately, to bringing freedom to the eastern European countries, some of which are now at the point of entry into the European Union. I pay tribute to the many Scottish workers who worked at Holy Loch, Faslane and Rosyth in support of that programme.

The protesters who operated under the banner of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament are back on the streets today for another reason. However, on this occasion, those people will not be supported by former CND members such as Tony Blair.

As we cast our minds back to the war years, no member can fail to deplore the waste of life—50 million people died in the second world war and as many again, if not more, carried their wounds into the remainder of their lives. Anyone who

supported war along those lines would need to have their heads examined. I am sure that no member would wish that to happen again. I suspect that no one in 1939 wanted the war that followed, but this nation was forced into it.

Inevitably, the war in Iraq produced casualties, but the death toll of Iraqis does not exceed the number of people who were murdered by Saddam Hussein's brutal regime. More Iraqi lives have been saved than were lost. The deaths of British servicemen and all others who have lost their lives as a consequence of military action are a heavy price to pay for our intervention in Iraq. However, so too were the deaths in action in the Falklands, Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, Kosovo and Bosnia. I say to Frances Curran that we went into Bosnia to protect Muslims, not to fight them, which is often forgotten these days. I well recall criticisms that were made of the Tory Government for failing to take action in Rwanda and the Congo. Those criticisms came from many of those who will be marching today over Iraq.

George Bush is a democratically elected leader of the world's only remaining superpower. He has great responsibilities on his shoulders. For us to turn our backs on him at this time would be criminal. We should remember that, for the present time, whether we like it or not, he is the voice and physical presence of every United States citizen. I deplore the way in which the Scottish socialists and Greens, among others, have attempted to stir up animosity. Given the debate on poverty that we have just had, I remind them all that many jobs in Scotland could be affected by our actions at this time.

I move amendment S2M-618.1, to leave out from "opposes" to end and insert:

"welcomes the State visit to the UK of the democratically elected President of the United States of America, recognises the close ties that have existed between governments and peoples of the UK and USA in times of world war, cold war and peace, and believes that without that level of co-operation there would be no free world as we know it today."

11:21

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): As a long-standing member of CND, I was looking forward to this debate. To me, world peace is the most important issue that we can debate. The world has been torn apart by wars for far too long. Anything that we can do to promote peace is well worth our time and we should not miss such an opportunity.

I did not support the war in Iraq and I reject war as a solution to any of the world's problems. That comes from my belief in non-violence. I have difficulty even with the statement that war should be used only as a last resort, because the

inevitable consequence is people dying. That, to me, is a good enough reason to reject war as a solution. Today's conflicts have complex roots and some have been caused by previous wars. We will not solve the problems or address the disaffection that is felt in communities and societies by recourse to violence.

However, state visits between countries are part and parcel of the communications between nations. Although we can condemn the detail of Bush's visit, the real issue is how we can promote world peace. I believe that we should seek non-violent solutions.

Over the weekend, Bush contended that the fact that we have the democratic right to demonstrate and freedom of speech is a justification for going to war. However, lots of us have taken part in demonstrations and marches and I am sure that we would have chosen to stay quietly at home if we had believed that not marching and not demonstrating would save a life or stop a bomb.

We often hear talk of a lack of interest in politics. However, once again, the demonstrations yesterday and today show that there is a deep, heartfelt interest in the politics of the world and, particularly, in the promotion of world peace.

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): Will the member join me in welcoming the large number of young people who came to demonstrate in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and throughout the UK, yesterday, giving the lie to the line that young people are apathetic about politics?

Marlyn Glen: Yes. That is exactly the argument that I am making.

I have always believed that what we do as individuals has an effect on the wider world and I am pleased that so many members have taken this issue so seriously and come together to debate peace. What we do and say individually has an effect on how we are seen in the wider world. Scotland and the Parliament need to take their place in striving for world peace. It is a pity that we are not debating a wide-ranging statement on world peace that the majority of members could have supported easily or perhaps that we could have agreed to unanimously. Instead, the public see and hear us argue and fall out. I sincerely hope that we can look forward to a more peaceful world and that each of us will do what we can individually to promote peace in our own circle of influence.

11:24

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green): Last night in the UK, George Bush said that violence was necessary to bring peace—what a philosophy of despair. The protests against the

war in Iraq were the biggest protests ever held in the United Kingdom. More than 1 million people were out on the streets. That is the democratic will of the people—it is democracy in action—whereas the visit of George Bush is not. Where is the peace in the middle east that his foreign policy was supposed to bring? I will concentrate on one aspect of that policy.

The Daily Telegraph of 24 September reported that 2,000 tonnes of depleted uranium were dropped on Iraq during the recent war. The UK Government refuses to give figures, but that figure has been suggested by other researchers. The DU-coated weapons explode on contact, turning the DU into a fine radioactive dust to be blown around in the winds of Iraq—a dust that will be radioactive for the life of this planet. That is a moral outrage. Those weapons are tested here in Scotland, at Dundrennan, where some 5,000 DU-coated weapons have been fired. If their use is morally unjustifiable, so is their testing in Scotland.

If the Executive has any claims to decency, it must make representations to its English leaders to stop the testing and use of DU weapons. I am deeply disappointed that the Executive has so little interest in world peace that it could not send even one minister to the debate.

Christine Grahame: I suspect that the situation is worse than that. I think that the Executive is boycotting the debate.

Chris Ballance: I thank the member for that.

DU emits predominantly alpha radiation, which poses little external risk. However, if alpha radiation is ingested into the lungs or stomach, it is more lethal than either beta or gamma radiation. Paradoxically, low levels of alpha radiation can cause more damage than high levels can, because cells that are simply killed by high-level doses can survive low-level doses and mutate into cancers. Alpha radiation particles that are lodged in the body can stay there for life. The United Nations environment programme has warned of the risk of inhaling DU dust during the Iraq war.

It gets worse. It has been suggested that the DU that has been used was not clean. DU is a waste product from the enrichment of uranium in the nuclear industry. It is now claimed that the DU that was used in Afghanistan also contained enriched uranium and even plutonium. The process is not clean.

The European Green parties helped to ensure that the members of the European Parliament voted on 13 February for a moratorium on uranium weapons. A third of the US troops who were active in the first Gulf war are now on disability pensions with Gulf war syndrome. The European Committee on Radiation Risk recently published a report showing that previous risk models for DU

exposure are incorrect by a factor of up to 1,000. In other words, DU is up to 1,000 times more carcinogenic than was previously thought.

On impact, DU explodes into a fine radioactive dust. That dust will blow in the winds of Iraq for all time for the children to breathe. That is an environmental crime. These are the weapons of mass destruction that have been used in the Iraq war. The use of depleted uranium weapons is a crime against humanity and the testing of such weapons on the beautiful Galloway coastline is an outrage.

I congratulate Mr Sheridan on securing this debate to highlight the crimes that have been committed by the Labour Government in the Iraq war and I call on the Executive to stop the testing of DU weapons in Scotland forthwith.

11:29

Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP): Wendy Alexander slagged us off this morning for Bush baiting. While Bush is baiting the rest of the planet, we will continue Bush baiting on every possible platform and the Scottish Parliament will be no exception. I will pass my speech to Stewart Stevenson later, as he and his researchers seem to have loads of time to be my political stalkers.

I support what Chris Ballance said about the Executive ministers, who clearly could not be bothered to come to the chamber. I agree with Christine Grahame that they seem to be boycotting the Parliament. Is that not extreme? It is a pity that they do not boycott, behave badly and express themselves in direct action like that when that is required in the streets or in the Parliament.

We have had Pinochet and Putin, so why not go the whole hog and have George Bush as well? The UK is fast becoming a red-carpeted safe haven for every bloodthirsty killer on the planet. When innocent people come here fleeing poverty and war or seeking a better future, they are fingerprinted, photographed, cross-examined, humiliated, frightened and detained, yet the warmonger can come freely and is wined and dined at the taxpayer's expense.

This morning, we talked about poverty and heard that we have no money for services, wages, free school meals or hospitals. However, it seems that we have an open cheque book when it comes to death and destruction. Let us look at what we get for our blood money. Since the second world war, the USA has been involved in the deaths of at least 86 million people, mainly from countries in the southern hemisphere. The majority of victims of armed conflict are women and children. Rape is routinely used as a weapon of war, yet rape victims are rarely granted asylum. It cost £6.6

billion to attack and invade Iraq while 1.5 million people die of malnutrition every year.

Having worked in the area, I know that many soldiers are either conscripted or join the military to escape poverty or to get training or employment. I also know that our job centres are now full of army recruitment officers soaking up young people who have no other opportunities and who are then forced to kill people who are even less well off than they are. When those young people return sick from the effects of pollution and traumatised by the terror of killing, they are ignored by their Government.

The USA's war on terror enforces economic, political and military domination on behalf of the oil industry and multinational corporations. Capitalism and the arms industry wander freely throughout the planet, their way paved by war, while the victims and asylum seekers are treated with cruelty and suspicion.

Tony Blair has no friends other than the warmongers any more. His invitation to George Bush is an insult, given that people on all sides are dying daily as a result of the attacks, which were based on lies. More than \$900 billion has now been spent on military budgets worldwide instead of on caring for everyone on the planet.

Earlier, we talked about poverty—at least, some of us did. When Gordon Brown was asked how much he was prepared to spend on war, he replied that he would spend as much as it takes. That is the Brown principle. I ask members to imagine what would happen if that principle could be applied to poverty.

The Washington warlord is not welcome and the Scottish Parliament should and must distance itself from his visit in the way that the Scottish Executive has distanced itself from this debate.

11:33

Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP): This debate is primarily about US foreign policy and the fact that the UK Prime Minister has given his blessing to it. The world faces a dilemma in that we cannot achieve world peace without the backing of the US but neither can we achieve it with the current US leadership in place.

I remind the chamber that yesterday was the 13th anniversary of the signing in Paris by the members of the Warsaw pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation of the treaty that signalled the end of the cold war. However, in this new millennium, few people in Scotland or internationally would think that the world has become a safer place in the past 13 years. We all know that, thanks to the USA's short-sighted foreign policy, the world is a much more dangerous place.

As an indication of the changes that have taken place over the past 13 years, I draw the attention of the chamber to the fact that, last week, a survey revealed that 53 per cent of Europeans think that the USA is a danger to world security. That places the USA on a par with North Korea and Iran. Of course, George Bush has become unpopular throughout Europe not only because of Iraq, but because of his back-peddalling on the environment and his opposition to the International Criminal Court.

Previously, the cold war united Europe and the USA, but now America is the only huge economic and military superpower on the planet. It has decided to use that might to become the archetypal playground bully, thinking that the only way in which it can do things is by using that economic and military might.

What happened on 11 September should have been a wake-up call to the USA but, instead, it seemed to view it as some sort of call to arms. After 11 September, we were all united behind the USA in the fight against international terrorism. However, America moved the agenda away from that and towards weapons of mass destruction and, later, regime change. In the meantime, other issues that it could have tackled, such as world poverty, famine and the issues that feed terrorism throughout the world, have been completely neglected, particularly the crisis in the middle east, which seems to have fallen off the USA's radar screen.

Surely our strategy must be to isolate the terrorists. However, the current USA policy, to which Blair gives his blessing, isolates America and the UK, not the terrorists. Further, it gives terrorism a worldwide recruiting sergeant and it undermines the UN.

The challenge facing Scotland, the UK and the rest of the international community is somehow to persuade the USA that international interests are also America's interests. At the moment, the USA is trying to persuade the rest of the world that its interests are the same as international interests.

Bush has to start learning how to make friends and not just create enemies. Yesterday, the UN put out an appeal for aid to help in the 21 crises throughout the world that have been neglected because of what has happened in Iraq and, previously, in Afghanistan. The UN wants \$3 billion to that end, which is a tiny percentage of the \$87 billion that Bush asked Congress for to deal with the situation in Iraq. What would the world be like today if Bush had thought that it was in the USA's interest to ask Congress for \$87 billion to tackle world poverty and famine? Think of the bridges that that would have built and the resentment towards the USA that would have been eliminated.

Scotland should be confident of being able to make a contribution to the process that I have described. We should remember that, back in the early 1990s, Norway helped the middle east peace process and that, as Ireland takes over the European Union presidency, it has put on the EU's agenda a range of issues relating to international development and world peace. If a small nation such as Ireland can make that sort of contribution, Scotland should be able to do so as well. It is despicable that the Scottish Executive ministers have not appeared for this important debate.

The message from this chamber today should be that the USA's leaders must change their foreign policy and that, if they will not do that, the people of the USA must change their political leaders.

11:37

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): This debate has provoked some genuine and strong speeches. Two or three members have noted that no Executive ministers are sitting on the front bench. The reason for that is quite clear: there is no Executive position on this reserved matter and the two Executive parties, Labour and the Liberal Democrats, are here today to state their own views.

Mike Rumbles expressed the Liberal Democrat case in relation to war. We argued passionately that the weapons inspectors should have been given more time to do their job in Iraq. We believed that war should have been undertaken only as a last resort and that action should have been taken only with the clear authority of the UN.

I believe that Prime Minister Tony Blair was sincere when he argued in the foreword to the February dossier that Saddam Hussein's

"military planning allows for some of the WMD to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them."

That is the case for war that was put by his Government and for which he won parliamentary backing. However, the fact that the USA-led survey group has failed to find any evidence whatever of weapons of mass destruction shows that that premise was fatally flawed and, therefore, that the war was wrong.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Would the member also like to put on record the fact that no evidence has been found of any linkage between Iraq and al-Qa'ida or the attacks on 11 September?

George Lyon: That is well recognised and I take that point.

There are many who suggest that George Bush should not have visited the UK. I believe that we must give him the respect that he deserves as the democratically elected President of the USA and

that he should be welcomed.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Is George Lyon seriously suggesting that George Bush got more votes than his rival?

George Lyon: We could spend all day discussing that matter. Whether we like it or not, he is the elected President of the United States. Although his visit might be ill-timed, it presents us with an opportunity to make clear to him the public's wish that those who initiated the war have a duty, under the supervision of the UN, to make Iraq safe and give it the opportunity of a democratic future. The timetable for bringing the troops out of Iraq and handing over power must be driven by that goal alone and not by George Bush's re-election campaign.

George Bush must also be told that British citizens imprisoned at Guantanamo bay must either be charged by the American authorities and receive a fair trial or be returned here to the UK to face justice. Either way, President Bush must make a decision on the matter. I understand that, when Charles Kennedy, the Liberal Democrat leader, met President Bush yesterday, he was given an indication that progress would be made on the issue. However, we need an announcement today, before President Bush leaves the country.

I put on record the Liberal Democrats' tribute to our troops in Iraq and to those who have lost their lives, making the ultimate sacrifice for their country. The troops have done us proud in their conduct during the war and in their attempt to manage the peace since the war's conclusion.

The visit of President Bush offers a real opportunity to drive home to him the deep concerns that the British public have about his Government's foreign policy and about his intentions on Iraq; to reinforce to him the desperate need to continue to pursue a solution to the running sore in the middle east; and to demand action on his treatment of British citizens at Guantanamo bay. I hope that all members will take the opportunity of tonight's vote to send a clear message from the Parliament to George Bush that we want action. Support our amendment.

11:42

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): I welcome this opportunity to say a few words on world peace. It is useful to remind ourselves of necessary priorities in our attempts to make the world a safer place. If Tommy Sheridan and his colleagues had been in Iraq and had opposed Saddam Hussein's regime in much the same way as he opposes the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, it is unlikely that he and they would have lasted long. That is a point that is very much in

favour of British democracy. However, I defend absolutely the right of Tommy Sheridan and his party to speak their minds forcefully and to the point.

We support peace and peaceful developments, but not at any price. That has been a Scots tradition since the declaration of Arbroath.

Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP): Will the member take an intervention?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am not giving way. I am entitled to freedom of speech as much as SSP members. The SSP has allowed only one hour for a debate of the greatest possible magnitude and I regret very much that the whole morning was not provided for it, in which case I would have given way repeatedly.

The declaration of Arbroath stated:

"For it is not glory, it is not riches, neither is it honour, but it is liberty alone that we fight and contend for, which no honest man will lose but with his life."

That was a wholly honourable and worthy sentiment.

As we near the 40th anniversary of his assassination, I cannot help recalling the words of President John F Kennedy in his inaugural address:

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

That, again, was a wholly honourable and worthy sentiment.

The reasons why freedom can protect peace are the very ones that President Roosevelt gave when he set out the four central human freedoms: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. Where there is lawlessness, disorder and indiscriminate murder of civilians, there is no freedom of peace of mind for those in the vicinity, because the rights and freedoms of those concerned have been violated. Communities throughout the world have the right to survival against such threats of violence.

In the course of the debate, a number of less-than-complimentary remarks have been made about President George W Bush. As it happens, I hold in my hands a letter that he sent to me shortly after his election. In that letter, he commented on the theme of this morning's debate, namely peace. As he cannot be here this morning, it is only fair that I report to the Parliament what he wrote. He said:

"We will undoubtedly face a number of challenges in the years ahead. I am confident that, with a spirit of mutual respect, co-operation, and open dialogue, we can successfully meet these challenges. The future also

presents enormous opportunities. Together we can use these opportunities to advance the peace, freedom and prosperity of our peoples."

I commend his words to the Parliament.

11:45

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): I welcome today's SSP debate on world peace. Many members have been saying that it is ridiculous to debate world peace in only an hour and a quarter. We cannot solve the problem in an hour and a quarter, but if we and people round the world stopped talking about ideals, ambitions and dreams, we would never get anywhere.

The SSP has the right to use its debating time for the subjects that it wishes to debate. We hear all the time from the Scottish Executive that everyone has rights and responsibilities. The SSP has the right to discuss world peace and I believe that the Scottish Executive should at least have the responsibility to turn up and listen to the debate. George Lyon gave us a reason why the Executive ministers are not here: it is because they have no position on world peace. Will that same Executive display absolute hypocrisy by turning up at 5 o'clock this evening and pressing their buttons to vote against—

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): World peace.

Linda Fabiani: Yes, against world peace—on which they do not have a view. That would be purely so that they do not embarrass Tony down the road by the Parliament saying that it totally opposes what he and his friend George Bush are up to.

Instead of hearing from the Scottish Executive, we heard John Home Robertson, speaking on behalf of the Labour Party. He is no longer in the chamber either—unless he is creeping round the back somewhere. John told us that the commitment to peace and justice is fundamental to the Labour Party. He should tell the Executive that, and ministers should be here to listen. He should also tell Tony Blair that, because he seems to have forgotten about that fundamental commitment of the Labour Party.

John Home Robertson went on to salute the Scottish soldiers, which I think everyone does. He noted that the Lib Dems did not include that in their amendment, and said that that was deplorable, unless it was an error—which George Lyon cleared up. It is also deplorable that the Scottish Executive is not represented here to salute the Scottish soldiers, in line with an amendment lodged by a member of the Labour Party.

The debate moved on. Nicola Sturgeon, Richard Lochhead and others were at pains to express the

fact that we are not against the Americans or American ideals; we are against how those ideals have been traduced by the right-wing cabal that now has power in America. We heard references to the American President being democratically elected. Is there anybody here who really believes that, after the debacle that was the last presidential election in the USA? We are against the apparent unquestioning acceptance by the Prime Minister of this country of everything that that right-wing cabal in America says, which has led us into a disastrous war, with disastrous and continuing consequences.

I thought that Chris Ballance's contribution on gulf war syndrome and depleted uranium and its effects was very interesting. It would do everyone good to read his speech in the *Official Report* tomorrow and to come to a view on how we can protest about that particular element of policy. That leads me to the weapons of mass destruction that are located down on the Clyde. If we are seriously talking about world peace, then let us talk seriously about ridding our country of nuclear weapons.

The debate obviously goes much wider than Iraq. The problems of Iraq are not the only ones in the world. Let us do some of that talking, dreaming and real radical thinking and move towards looking at world peace. Let us start with a debate on the arms trade and the fact that, for as long as western Governments prop it up, we will never achieve world peace. Please support the SNP amendment.

11:49

Ms Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): In my four minutes I will add my voice to the voices of many Scots who have strong emotions about the current situation in Iraq and the visit of President Bush. The motion in Tommy Sheridan's name asks us to condemn the visit by President Bush and indict Bush and Blair for war crimes. I have no trouble supporting the first part of the motion, but I do not think that the second part in any way attempts to pull in a broad-based position. I believe that it is Saddam Hussein and his ministry who should be brought before a war crimes tribunal. I cannot welcome Bush's visit on any count, not just because of his dishonesty over the war, but because of the human rights violations in Guantanamo bay, which cannot continue, and his failure to sign the International Criminal Court agreement and the Kyoto agreement. There are numerous reasons why I do not welcome his presence in the United Kingdom.

Mr Monteith: Will the member give way?

Ms McNeill: No. I do not have time.

Frances Curran said that perhaps we should have Michael Moore for president. He is a funny

guy, but he is making lots of money, so I do not think that he is a socialist.

We have had a mature debate this morning, as we have had mature debates on this subject in the past. It is crucial that that level of dignity continues. If we do not have a level of dignity around debates in which we disagree, we are not representing seriously our constituents, who have a variety of views to which they come in a considered way. I am working with Scottish universities that are working with institutions in Baghdad to help the Iraqi people in some way. We should all consider what we can do.

I turn to the amendments to the motion. The SNP amendment is fair, but I will not support the Tory amendment tonight. I have a couple of words to say on the Liberal Democrats' position. I do not believe that it is a fundamentally antiwar position, although I understand where the Liberal Democrats are coming from. This is the second time that they have called for peace in the middle east and I support that; however, if they really believe in peace in the middle east, they must join others in the Parliament and in the cross-party group on Palestine and add their voice. I have said that before.

Mike Rumbles: Will the member give way?

Ms McNeill: Only if it is to hear the member say that he will come to the cross-party group. I am sorry that I do not have the time.

Prime Minister Blair and President Bush have claimed that they want to achieve world peace and that they want a solution for the Palestinian people.

Frances Curran: Will the member take an intervention?

Ms McNeill: No. I do not have time, because I want to talk about the Palestinian cause.

Frances Curran: It is just a short intervention.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The member is not taking an intervention.

Ms McNeill: Prime Minister Blair and President Bush's words on that are weak, because there has been little action on it. It is important to recognise that the reason why we need a solution for the Palestinians is that there will not be peace in the world or the middle east unless we resolve the matter.

I want to put on record why that is important. Palestinians are a people without a country; they are displaced in the middle east. Some people might say that they are a people too many; I say that they are a country short. To be an ordinary Palestinian today means having experienced half a century of conflict, being deprived of the

elementary right to live in one's country and being forcibly removed from one's house to allow one more Israeli family, who might not have been born in the region, to settle. Palestinians have no means of identity, unlike every other citizen in the country. They have no Palestinian passport and they are denied the national expression and national identity that every other person in the world—with notable exceptions—has.

It is important to recognise the balance of power in the conflict. I hope that the Liberal Democrats will join me in condemning what is happening with the building of the so-called security wall, which is further isolating poor communities in the west bank from their water supply, and the crippling checkpoints that mean that ordinary Palestinians cannot get to the doctor or attend a funeral. That is the reality of life in the occupied territories. I know that there is consensus about getting peace, but we need action from everyone to ensure that we get it.

11:54

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): I might have to raise my voice as the sound of some members of the Executive making their way to their seats at long last might be problematic for members' hearing what I have to say.

Pauline McNeill said that she was glad to join us in condemning the visit of the warmonger George Bush to the United Kingdom but that she is not prepared to support our call for him and Mr Blair to be present in an international court to answer the accusation of war crimes. Last night, one of the key members of the defense policy board, which advises the United States Department of Defense, Mr Richard Perle, made a speech in London. In that speech he said about the invasion of Iraq:

"I think in this case international law stood in the way of doing the right thing."

The reason why we want Mr Blair and Mr Bush tried for war crimes is that they have broken international law. I find it absolutely offensive for members such as Phil Gallie, John Home Robertson and others to compare in any way, shape or form the threat of Adolf Hitler in 1939—the real and urgent threat of the Nazi regime—with the phoney web of deceit and lies that was fabricated to justify the invasion of Iraq and which has led to the deaths, according to Medact, of between 22,000 and 55,000 people in Iraq, at least 11,000 of whom were innocent civilians. That is four 11 Septembers. That is what happened in Iraq on the basis of a fabricated tissue of lies and deceit that the Iraqi regime posed any threat to either the US or Britain.

The reality is that the Iraq regime was odious and tyrannical and the people of Iraq should have

been supported with international solidarity in overthrowing it. I say to James Douglas-Hamilton that I will take no lectures from a Tory, because in government his party supported, financed and armed that odious, tyrannical regime throughout the 1980s. I say to John Home Robertson that I will take no lectures from him, with his selective amnesia. When he was having a go at Milosevic and Hussein, why did he leave out Suharto and the regime that was given 100 arms deals by his leader, Tony Blair, before the people of Indonesia—not bombs or foreign invasions—overthrew that odious regime? It is a pity that John Home Robertson forgets how odious it was.

The whole world is now a more unstable place than it was before the bombs were unleashed in Afghanistan and Iraq and before more and more people began to say, "What about Osama bin forgotten and Saddam who?" The war was supposed to be about them, but it had nothing to do with that, and everything to do with the United States of America securing a cheap oil supply and ensuring its domination across the globe. It is a great pity that the Executive, which wants to talk day in, day out about the neds, the thugs and yob culture, is not prepared to come here today to defend the biggest ned on the world stage, George Bush. That is the problem that the Executive faces.

It is a pity that the Executive is willing to have the courage to vote to send servicemen and women to an early grave, as well as innocent children in Iraq and Afghanistan, but does not have the courage to sit on the front bench and defend its position in this morning's debate. That type of behaviour is absolutely reprehensible.

This country might not have been united in its opposition to the war in Iraq, as many people had their doubts and thought, "Maybe they know something that we don't; maybe we should give them the benefit of the doubt," but there is now a mood throughout the country as people realise that the case for war was a complete and utter fabrication to justify the invasion of Iraq. Tony Blair lied to the people of this country, and he should be ashamed of that.

If we are talking about friendship, perhaps we should invite George Bush to Scotland; however, the only reason why we should invite George Bush to Scotland is so that we can put him in one of the Trident submarines and send him back to America with his nuclear weapons. If he is not willing to come to Scotland, perhaps he will come to Hartlepool and get on board one of the toxic ships that we can send back to America as well.

In this Parliament, we should express nothing but solidarity with the American people, but we should express complete and utter contempt for the American Government and Administration.

They should be in court, in the dock, for their international war crimes, which have made our world less safe to live in.

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Before we move to First Minister's question time—*[Interruption.]*

I suspend the meeting for three minutes.

12:01

Meeting suspended.

12:04

On resuming—

First Minister's Question Time

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Like everyone else, I regret that interruption—and I deplore members of this Parliament applauding people in the public gallery who interrupt the Parliament.

Before we start First Minister's question time, members will want to join me in welcoming to the gallery Lynne Brown from South Africa, who is the Speaker of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament. *[Applause.]*

Cabinet (Meetings)

1. Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S2F-358)

Will the First Minister also join me in condemning the attack on the British consulate in Istanbul this morning?

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Obviously, I condemn any attacks.

I start the afternoon by expressing the collective disappointment of the chamber at last night's football result. However, I also praise the more than 20,000 Scottish football fans who, yet again, have been superb ambassadors for their country. I am sure that, for the team, we would all wish for a repeat performance of Saturday's game at some point in the future.

At its next meeting, the Cabinet will discuss progress on implementing the partnership agreement and our legislative programme.

Mr Swinney: I associate myself and my party with the remarks that the First Minister has just made.

On three occasions in March 2003, the First Minister told Parliament that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and that war was required to remove them. Why did he mislead Parliament?

The First Minister: I do not think that I misled Parliament at that time. I believe that the events that have taken place since March, which is what we should reflect on in all the debates and discussions this month and in the future, have shown that the troops from Scotland and from the rest of the United Kingdom—who have served their country and the rest of the world so well in recent months—are doing a good job. They should

have been supported by everybody in the chamber and I hope that, as the months go on, they will be.

Mr Swinney: The question was about the statements the First Minister made to Parliament about weapons of mass destruction.

On 13 March, the First Minister stated that Iraq

“is not willing to give up its weapons of mass destruction”—
[*Official Report*, 13 March 2003; c 19436.]

On 19 March, the First Minister stated that the United Kingdom stood ready

“to disarm Saddam Hussein of weapons of mass destruction”—[*Official Report*, 19 March 2003; c 19659.]

On 20 March, the First Minister stated that we had to meet

“the clear objective of ensuring that Saddam Hussein no longer has access to weapons of mass destruction.”—
[*Official Report*, 20 March 2003; c 19799.]

Given all the water that has gone under the bridge and in the light of what the First Minister has just said, it is clear that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction when the First Minister made those remarks in March. What possible justification can the First Minister have had for making those misleading statements to Parliament earlier this year?

The First Minister: Given the events of recent months, I for one am delighted

“that Saddam Hussein no longer has access to weapons of mass destruction”

because he is no longer in power in Iraq. The international community recognises that and Mr Swinney should recognise it. The most evil dictator in the world has been removed from office, his people are now free and I believe that we have an opportunity—our Scottish soldiers are playing a prime role in achieving this—to rebuild Iraq as a democratic and prosperous country. We should welcome and support that opportunity.

Mr Swinney: The question is still about the fact that the First Minister stood in front of Parliament and misled it about the existence of weapons of mass destruction. Not one weapon of mass destruction has been found. There were warnings at the time that no weapons of mass destruction would be found.

The President of the United States came to London yesterday and delivered a speech about international policy and about Iraq. Not once did he put the words “Iraq” and “weapons of mass destruction” in the same sentence.

Does the First Minister accept that it is time a clear message was sent to President Bush: all of us in this country who have deep reservations about what has gone on in the international

community expect control of Iraq to be handed over to the people of Iraq and security in Iraq to be handed over to the United Nations, to ensure that we can deliver the security and peace that the United States has been incapable of delivering in the international community?

The First Minister: Some pretty stupid questions have been asked over the past two years while I have been First Minister, but that one takes the biscuit. If Mr Swinney thinks that the United Nations would have been able to take over the running of Iraq and to build a democratic Parliament with Saddam Hussein still in power, he has a crazy way of looking at the rest of the world.

The British Government has been trying to find the weapons of the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland for at least 30 years. We run that country; it is part of our own country. It would be relatively easy for us to find those weapons if it were easy for us to find weapons in Iraq.

Mr Swinney should recognise that in the months since Iraq was liberated, Scottish troops have played a fantastic and superb role at the front line in difficult circumstances: reopening more than 1,500 schools; reopening 70 of Baghdad’s 90 sewerage plants; setting up again the power supply in Iraq—it reached a post-war high on 6 October; and, crucially, enabling something that we enjoy, sometimes uncomfortably, in this country—a free press.

Iraq now has a free press: 170 different newspapers are on the streets and satellite dishes are legal and flourishing. The people of Iraq now have a chance to express their opinions. Our Scottish soldiers are helping them to achieve that, which is something we should welcome and be very proud of.

Mr Swinney: That still leaves the original question: where are the weapons of mass destruction—the First Minister was determined to persuade the Parliament to support a war to rid the world of them—and why did the First Minister mislead the Parliament?

The First Minister: Mr Swinney might not have noticed, but Saddam Hussein has not been found either. Iraq is quite a big place. Perhaps Mr Swinney should at some point visit that country and see where Scottish men and women, who are serving their country, are rebuilding schools, hospitals and roads, turning the water and power supplies back on, protecting the local population and creating a democratically based Iraqi army, the first battalions of which are now on the streets, and a police force with thousands of local officers who, in due course, will enable the country to be run by Iraqis, for Iraq, in the safety of the international community.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands)

(Con): To ask the First Minister when he next plans to meet the Prime Minister and what issues he intends to raise. (S2F-363)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I plan to meet the Prime Minister on at least two occasions before the end of the year. I am sure that we will discuss a number of important issues. In particular, I plan to raise with him the importance of direct routes in and out of Scotland by air. I would be happy to inform him about the success of our route development fund, which this morning announced its first direct route out of Glasgow—a regular flight from Glasgow to Dubai, which will be very good for Scottish tourists and for the Scottish economy.

David McLetchie: That is interesting. The First Minister should encourage the route development fund to support a flight from Glasgow to Baghdad and let Mr Swinney go to see what Iraq is really like.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister's friends in the Scottish Labour Party delivered a Scottish solution to his English problem with foundation hospitals. As we know, Westminster retains the ability to legislate on any devolved area it chooses and could therefore establish in Scotland the foundation hospitals that we know Scottish Labour MPs to be keen on. Does the First Minister agree that such apparently English solutions to Scottish problems would be a constitutional outrage and, accordingly, that the idea is equally outrageous the other way round?

The First Minister: I believe that the elected members of a democratic Parliament have a right to vote in democratic votes in that Parliament. It is also right and proper that those who are responsible for the health service in England—the Westminster Parliament and the Whitehall Government—take decisions that are appropriate for that health service and do so in the full knowledge of the running of the service and of its aims and objectives and that, in Scotland, this Parliament and Executive take responsibility for decisions on the Scottish health service. That is the right and proper arrangement, but it is one that Mr McLetchie's party opposed for an awfully long time.

David McLetchie: The thing about the new constitutional arrangement and, given the experience of the last 24 hours, the difference between the Conservatives and the Labour Party, is that we accept the logic and reality of the institutions but the Labour Party is bringing them into disrepute. The First Minister would do well to remember that the United Kingdom is a union founded on consent and that, ultimately, that

consent depends on equity and being fair to all. Does the First Minister agree that his colleagues' actions play into the hands of nationalists and separatists on both sides of the border and that true unionists would not behave in such a constitutionally cavalier and irresponsible manner?

The First Minister: It is interesting to see—it was clear last night in the shape of Tim Yeo in the House of Commons—that the anti-Scottish bias that ran through the Tory party and Government for 18 years still exists under the leadership of Michael Howard, who was so much a part of it.

I believe that if this Parliament has a right to have a view of the health service that is different from that of our colleagues in Westminster, it is clear that that should also be the case in the Conservative party. I notice that, in spite of the fact that Mr McLetchie's party opposed foundation hospitals in the House of Commons last night, just six months ago in this Parliament, he spoke about the benefits of foundation hospitals and asked why they were being denied to the people of my constituency. He has a right to be different from his colleagues south of the border and we have that right, too.

In the meantime, we will get on with the business of building a health service of which Scotland can be proud, by increasing the number of operations that take place and the number of doctors, nurses and other professional staff and by ensuring that modern techniques deliver patient care as close to the patients as possible. We have set those objectives and that is what we will work for.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): In light of this week's lobby by hundreds of multiple sclerosis sufferers, including those from Stirling, will the First Minister outline what action is being taken to improve care for people in Scotland who are suffering from MS?

The First Minister: Members of all parties in the Parliament identified care for MS sufferers as a concern very early on, given the high rate of MS that exists in Scotland. It is important that we do something about that, and we have—broadly, with all-party support. We have increased the number of MS nurses and we have increased the number of neurologists in Scotland by 40 per cent over the past six years. It is clear that much more still needs to be done. Malcolm Chisholm continues to meet those who have an interest in the area, to ensure consistency across Scotland and a decent quality of care.

Cabinet Sub-committee on Sustainable Scotland (Meetings)

3. Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): To ask the First Minister what issues were raised at the

last meeting of the Cabinet sub-committee on sustainable Scotland. (S2F-371)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): The Cabinet sub-committee on sustainable Scotland met for the first time on 5 November and discussed a number of issues, including its remit and working arrangements, the appointment of external members and its forward work programme. It was agreed that our principal objective is to embed sustainable development and environmental justice across policies and programmes. A summary of the issues that were discussed at the meeting has been posted on the sustainable Scotland website today.

Robin Harper: I thank the First Minister for the commitments that he made in that reply. However, it is just over a year since he and I took part in the United Nations environment summit in Johannesburg. In April 2002, before the First Minister went to Johannesburg, the Executive published a document that included suggestions for ways in which the sustainability of our society could be measured. Although I welcomed those indicators of sustainability at the time, I pointed out that the list of indicators was far from complete. There was no target for the recovery of fish species or for reducing the amount of electricity we consume, for example. Does the Executive intend to complete its list of indicators and targets and does the Cabinet sub-committee on sustainable Scotland intend to make that task one of its priorities?

The First Minister: Yes. In fact, one of the issues that we addressed at the first meeting of the Cabinet sub-committee was the way in which the Sustainable Development Commission is looking to improve the indicators that are used at a United Kingdom level and its move towards appointing a Scottish vice-chair, to give a specifically Scottish input to its decisions and a better relationship with us. In the light of that movement, the Executive is reviewing progress not only on our indicators, but on the way in which we measure progress in the area as a whole. We will report back to the Parliament on that in the future.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Harper can ask a supplementary, provided that it is brief.

Robin Harper: One of the biggest challenges is to reduce our global ecological footprint. Given that, at present, our footprint is about three times its fair share, will the First Minister give a commitment that, when the full set of indicators is finally published, he will include a footprint indicator and a target for reducing Scotland's global footprint?

The First Minister: We have not yet agreed to go down that road. There are several different

points of view on the best way to measure progress on sustainable development. We need to take account of those points of view and to ensure that we choose a solution that allows us to make an immediate impact in Scotland and to make progress in the right direction.

Our objective is clear: it is to ensure that sustainable development and environmental justice are at the heart of our policies and programmes and that we measure our progress to ensure that Scotland makes a more significant contribution to a world in which we do less damage to our environment. We must ensure that, in what we use, what we make and the way in which we conduct our business, we perform in a much more sustainable way.

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): Does the First Minister agree that, if we are to deliver our policies in a more sustainable way, we need joined-up thinking between different bits of the Government? On issues such as tackling pensioner poverty and eradicating fuel poverty, we can see the benefits of doing that. Will the First Minister agree that the real challenge now is to make the policy links between economic prosperity and environmental and social justice? Will he have a look at this week's recommendations on waste management from the Environment and Rural Development Committee, which would let us do precisely that?

The First Minister: I am always keen to look at those committee reports and to study them carefully and respond positively.

We take this issue seriously. I have said on a number of occasions that we need to move away from the old argument, which said that we could have either economic prosperity or environmental protection. In the modern world, I believe that Scotland can benefit from having an environmental concern at the heart of our economic policy. We have the ability and opportunity to develop new industries in renewable energy, waste management and a number of other areas. If we seize those opportunities, we will not only make Scotland a cleaner and healthier country; we will ensure that we are more prosperous as well.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): Does the First Minister agree that we cannot have a sustainable Scotland and sustainable communities in the west Highlands of Scotland unless people continue to enjoy access to consultant-led acute hospitals, such as those in Fort William and Oban? Will he urge both local health boards to bring forward proposals that allow those aspirations to be met? Does he agree that the phrase "Lochaber no more" is fine for part of a song by the Proclaimers but should not be a proclamation of the upshot of the Scottish Executive's health policy?

The First Minister: The matter will be addressed by the Minister for Health and Community Care when we receive proposals from the health board.

Further Education (Funding)

4. Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what support is being provided for further education colleges attempting to meet the Scottish Further Education Funding Council's requirements for achieving financial security by July 2006. (S2F-357)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): We are continuing to increase, to record levels, our funding of the further education sector. That provides real evidence of our commitment to boosting skills and lifelong learning for all. In each of the next two years, funding will increase in cash terms by over 8 per cent and, by the end of the current spending review period, annual support for further education in Scotland will exceed £0.5 billion for the first time. That level of funding is designed to support both the financial recovery plans of colleges and quality enhancement across the sector for the students concerned.

Elaine Smith: I very much welcome the increase in funding that the First Minister has outlined, but given the different factors that affect colleges throughout Scotland, does he agree that the July 2006 deadline could risk overstressing colleges such as Coatbridge College that are currently facing financial difficulties? Coatbridge College's recent decision to incorporate the closure of its leisure centre into its recovery plan will affect the health and well-being of students and the wider community. Does the First Minister agree that greater support is needed to ensure that such colleges are not forced to cut valuable services in order to meet the deadline?

The First Minister: It is important that colleges are well managed. It is also important that they recognise their obligations to the wider community. But their primary responsibility is to deliver quality teaching to the students they serve. Those decisions are essentially for college management rather than for politicians, but I hope that in Coatbridge and elsewhere the management will take all the factors into account.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): Is financial security and governance part of the remit of the current Executive review of college governance? Will a review of the funding of higher education students in the college sector be included?

The First Minister: The purpose of that review is essentially to look at the governance of the colleges concerned rather than the current financial circumstances. However, I am sure that, in looking at governance, those responsible for the

review will want to ensure that the financial arrangements deliver further education in Scotland as efficiently and as effectively as possible.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Given the fact that programmes such as the modern apprenticeship scheme are administered by Scottish Enterprise but delivered by further education colleges, would it make more sense and assist the finances of colleges if the schemes were administered by the colleges themselves? We would thus cut out a tier of bureaucracy and cost.

The First Minister: That is not a ridiculous suggestion and I am sure it deserves debate. It is certainly a lot better than Mr Fraser's previous suggestion, which was to abolish Scottish Enterprise.

Fluoridation

5. Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): To ask the First Minister when the Scottish Executive will announce its decision with regard to the fluoridation of water supplies. (S2F-369)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Our consultation document "Towards Better Oral Health in Children" set out the facts around Scotland's poor oral health record and invited views on a range of measures, including water fluoridation. We plan to publish a report on the analysis of that consultation, and our response to it, shortly.

Nora Radcliffe: Does the First Minister agree that although fluoridation is presented as one way to tackle Scotland's oral health, the priority should be to ensure that every man, woman and child in Scotland has access to a dentist on a regular basis? What is the Scottish Executive doing to train and retain enough dentists to ensure that that happens throughout Scotland?

The First Minister: Absolutely. I agree entirely with that. Mr McCabe is about to make a statement on the matter in the chamber. I refer the member—Mr McCabe will also do so—to the important commitments that the Executive has made. Not only have we made a commitment to train more dentists and to provide financial incentives to encourage more dentists to practise across Scotland—particularly in rural Scotland—we have, significantly, made a commitment to encourage the population of Scotland to register with a dentist, to ensure that their kids are registered with a dentist and that their kids learn how to brush their teeth.

Conference of European Regions with Legislative Power

6. Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what matters were discussed at the conference of European regions with

legislative power on 11 and 12 November 2003. (S2F-366)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): The regions with legislative power meet as a network to pursue matters of common interest. In particular, we contribute to the development of constitutional arrangements in Europe and, individually, we add to the status of member states.

Nicola Sturgeon: I am sure that we all wish the First Minister well in his presidency of Regleg. In his quieter moments, does the First Minister wonder why Ireland, with a population that is less than that of Scotland, is up to the task of leading Europe and why tiny Malta, with a population of less than that of Edinburgh, has a seat at the top tables of Europe when Scotland has to make do with membership of a regional body that has no power and little influence? Is it not time the First Minister raised his ambitions for Scotland and started to argue for our place at the heart of Europe; a place that would allow us to fight our corner and start to defend our vital national interests?

The First Minister: Given her new remit with responsibility for Europe, perhaps Ms Sturgeon should do some reading about the new arrangements. She needs to find out exactly what the new arrangements are.

The reality is that, in the new constitutional arrangements in the European Union, the votes of countries including Ireland, Denmark and others that Ms Sturgeon and others are always happy to quote in the chamber, go from being a third of the equivalent vote of the United Kingdom to being a quarter of the equivalent vote of the United Kingdom. The point is that Scotland has the very big vote of the United Kingdom.

Our membership of these European Union channels means that Scotland enjoys the best of both worlds: we have the power of the United Kingdom's vote, which is increasing in size and influence, and we have the right to make direct representations. That right has been welcomed—*[Interruption.]* SNP members should wait for the rest of the answer. That right has been welcomed by the acknowledged and experienced European politician, Professor Neil McCormick, the SNP member for Scotland in the European Parliament. I welcome the fact that he has been nominated yet again for the European politician of the year award in next week's Scottish politician of the year awards ceremony.

Professor McCormick has made it absolutely crystal clear that the new draft constitution

"should require European laws to leave as much scope for local decision-making as is consistent with securing the legislative aim".

He has also argued:

"The Treaties should make clear that the Commission has an obligation to consult in relation to forthcoming legislation with all legislative authorities at whatever level within the Union".

He welcomed the new measures, one of which we have for Scotland. If he is gracious enough to do that, Ms Sturgeon should be, too.

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): Rather than invite the First Minister to speculate on what he might do if constitutional arrangements were different, I ask him to give the chamber an assurance that he will continue to press the European Commission on flexibility in the new EU constitution. Will he argue for a greater voice for the regions, particularly regions such as Scotland?

Members: We are not a region.

The First Minister: SNP members regularly make abusive remarks about our "regional colleagues" in the European Union. They seem to forget that nations such as Salzburg had an independent Parliament long after Scotland did, and that Bavaria had an independent Parliament even later than Salzburg did. Those are nations with histories similar to ours, and they work with us to secure not only the maximum benefit from the involvement of their larger member state in the European Union, but their own involvement as well.

We should be proud to stand side by side with them, but we should also ensure—and this is what is important—that the decisions of the European Union are more relevant for us here in Scotland. That should apply not just in fishing—although that is critically important at this time—but in other areas, particularly in the criminal law. We have our own legal system, and the European Union should recognise that. Getting that diversity inside a Union of 25 member states is very important for Scotland and for this devolved Parliament—and we will continue to fight for it.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): The First Minister did not make clear in his response to Christine May whether the proposed European constitution was discussed at his meeting. Can he say whether it was and, if it was, what reservations, if any, were expressed about it?

The First Minister: Yes, of course it was discussed: it was the central item for discussion. The main focus of that discussion was to ensure that we defend the proposed article on subsidiarity—which would guarantee that decisions are made at the right level in Europe and are not unnecessarily centralised—so that it goes through in the final version.

The second focus was to ensure that the way in which the European Commission makes decisions

and produces proposals guarantees consultation not just with the 25 member states, but with the recent and ancient regions and nations of the European Union, which are not member states, but deserve to have their say heard as well. Scotland stands with them, and we are certain that we will win the argument to get the European Commission to give us that right to consultation.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes questions to the First Minister. There will be a brief pause prior to the statement from Mr Tom McCabe.

Dental Services

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is a statement by Tom McCabe on modernising dental services in Scotland. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement; therefore there should be no interventions.

12:33

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe): The purpose of my statement today is to advise of the Executive's intention to undertake a consultation on the future arrangements for primary care dental services in Scotland. Consultation is required to deliver the undertaking in the Executive's white paper "Partnership for Care" that we would take forward, in discussions with the dental professions and the general public, proposals for changes to the system for rewarding primary care dentistry, in order to promote prevention, improve access to services, and improve recruitment and retention.

I recognise the growing concerns of patients, practitioners, national health service boards and MSPs about the current system. It is clear to me that we need to take a fundamental look at how dental services are provided in Scotland. The dental health of the people of Scotland is poor, and is strongly related to deprivation. In national surveys, a small minority of children—often the poorest—were found to experience the majority of dental decay. For example, in 5 year olds, 50 per cent of decayed surfaces were found in just 9 per cent of children. Currently, only 45 per cent of children have no experience of tooth decay on starting school at 5 years of age. Adult dental health also remains poor. Forty one per cent of dentate adults in Scotland reported having some dental pain in the previous 12 months.

Although the number of dentists has been increasing incrementally in Scotland, there is evidence that we have an inadequate supply for NHS services. Fifty-one per cent of adults and 35 per cent of children are not registered with a dentist, although some of those do still access NHS services on an occasional basis. NHS boards have reported that an increasing number of dentists are deregistering patients from continuing care and capitation arrangements and increasing their percentage of private work. The hospital dental service is under pressure, as it is picking up a number of patients on an emergency basis who were previously seen by general dental practitioners. The community dental service is facing increased pressures from reduced availability of NHS dentistry, either as a result of failure to recruit dentists to a particular area or the reducing commitment to the NHS of existing

practitioners. Problems of access to NHS dentistry in certain areas have been the subject of legitimate public and media interest, and I have received representations on the subject from many MSPs.

The remuneration system for dentists and the consequent charging system, which patients find opaque, have remained largely unchanged since the establishment of the NHS. In conjunction with the dental professions, we have already introduced a number of measures in Scotland in the past two to three years, aimed at addressing access and recruitment issues. While those measures have had some effect, I have concluded that the present delivery system is unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term and that a different form or forms of provision will be necessary to sustain an acceptable level of service and secure the improvements in oral health that we so badly need.

In the partnership agreement, we have undertaken systematically to introduce free dental checks for all by 2007. We also recognise the need to increase the number of dentists and dental graduates in Scotland and we will expand the capacity of dental training facilities in Scotland by establishing an outreach training centre in Aberdeen.

Notwithstanding those commitments, I consider that it would be appropriate to consult interested parties on the future form of primary care dental services in Scotland. To take forward the process, the Executive is today launching a consultation on possible options for the future. The consultation document, "Modernising NHS Dental Services in Scotland", sets out the background to oral health and dental services in Scotland, provides a summary of what has already been put in place to support NHS dental services, describes the pressures and the need for further change, and puts forward options for changing the current system, including patient charges. The consultation process will include discussions with interested parties, including representatives of the NHS, the professions and the public. We will undertake in the new year a number of consultation meetings around Scotland. It is recognised that any substantial change to the current system will require legislative change. Following consultation, we will consider bringing forward legislation at a suitable opportunity.

Substantial changes may take some time to implement and it is important that we continue to develop short-term measures to address the current problems. In that regard I am pleased to announce some changes to existing Scottish initiatives and the introduction of several new measures. Some of those measures will contribute to the recruitment of dentists from the European

Union. With regard to existing initiatives, we will double the remote area allowance from £3,000 to £6,000, we will double the allowance for vocational trainees in designated areas to £6,000, and we will double the allowance to recent graduates entering general dental services to £10,000, and double it again to £20,000 for designated areas. We will double the access grant for new NHS practices to £100,000 and double the grant for extending existing practices to £50,000.

In addition I am happy to announce a new range of Scottish initiatives: a new allowance for vocational trainees in non-designated areas of £3,000; a new allowance of £5,000 for joining a dental list for the first time or for re-entry after a five-year break—that allowance will double to £10,000 for designated areas; a new allowance of £10,000 for salaried dentists employed within three months of completion of training—that allowance will double to £20,000 for designated areas; and a new allowance of £5,000 for dentists who join the salaried dental service for the first time—that allowance doubles to £10,000 for designated areas. The increases to existing allowances and the introduction of new allowances will take effect from 1 April 2004.

So far I have announced our plans for the medium term, via the consultation process; and for the short term, via the new and enhanced initiatives. However, I recognise the urgency required in some areas. Consequently, I am pleased to announce, with immediate effect, £1.5 million to establish new emergency dental services provided by NHS boards and to support existing ones. That emergency capacity will minimise the risk that anyone will experience pain for an unacceptable time. That new money is in addition to the funding for such services that is available under the general dental services budget.

Substantial change will not happen overnight and it will be a challenge—because of the complexity of the issues and the importance of making dental service delivery more effective. I hope that we will be able to work together to achieve what I have set out and that, in doing so, we will produce a high-quality NHS dental service that delivers on the needs of patients and the aspirations of the dental professions and which makes a substantial impact by improving the health of the people of Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: The minister will take questions on his statement. I will allow until 1 o'clock for questions.

Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP): I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

I welcome much of his statement, but I will ask about the short-term measures that have been announced, many of which depend on an increase

in the supply of dentists. Where will the dentists to meet those short-term objectives come from? As the situation is urgent, what is the time scale for making proposals after the consultation period is complete? On the important matter of patient charges, will the minister say what proportion of dental costs the Executive thinks it reasonable for patients to pay and how the Executive will ensure that that is fair and equitable?

Mr McCabe: We have made it clear that the supply of dentists is important. Of course, there are about 120 dental graduates each year in Scotland. We are committed to increasing that number. That is why the partnership agreement contains a commitment to establish an outreach centre in Aberdeen. We are committed to examining the possibility of upgrading that to a full training centre if that is required.

As for time scales, we await a legislative opportunity. I have acknowledged in the statement and in previous answers to questions in Parliament that the situation is urgent. We recognise the importance of dental health, so I do not expect the Executive to want any undue delay in improving the delivery of dental services.

Patient charges are an issue that the consultation is designed to cover. As I said, we will discuss that not only with the dental professions, but with the public. We will take on board the views that we hear.

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con): I, too, thank the minister for advance copies of the consultation document and his statement.

I welcome many parts of his statement—particularly the consultation of patients and progress on the outreach facility in Aberdeen, which is welcomed in the north-east. I also welcome the comments in the consultation document on considering insurance-based dental plans, because of the huge funding implication, at which Shona Robison hinted. However, I hope that the proposed allowances are not only for relocation to new areas, unless they are intended to meet disabled access needs. I regret that the minister did not comment on upgrading the old-fashioned list of materials that are available for NHS treatment.

Why should free check-ups be given to those who are well able to afford them? I echo Shona Robison's question about where the Executive will find the bodies for the short-term measures. Extra people are required, not only to be salaried dentists, but to be hospital specialists. The minister commented little on that.

Why will the minister not implement support packages, such as interest-free loans, for European Community dentists while they complete

their short pre-registration training? That would be one of the easiest ways to meet some of the short-term difficulties.

Mr McCabe: I have said many times, and our partnership agreement contains a firm commitment on the fact, that we recognise that dental health in Scotland is poor. We are determined to make a substantial difference to that. People in Scotland have warmly received our proposal to make available free dental check-ups to all in Scotland by 2007, which will be part of the process of substantially improving dental health.

The consultation should also be part of that. I have acknowledged explicitly that delivery methods in the dental health service in Scotland are no longer appropriate and need to be modernised. I am confident that, in modernising those delivery mechanisms, we will make substantial progress on dental health in Scotland.

We have announced today a range of measures, both to upgrade existing provision and to support new initiatives. We are confident that those measures will make a difference to the supply of services and to the thinking of some of the dentists who have deregistered patients, allowing them time to consider, both in the context of the initiatives and in the context of the consultation that the Executive is now launching, whether it is still appropriate for them to spend so much time in private practice or whether they want to turn their attention once again to the national health service.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Introducing further financial incentives to recruit new dentists is really good news. The Liberal Democrats are pleased that the Executive has accepted that we need to train more dentists in Scotland, which is excellent. I have a specific question on the commitment in the partnership agreement for the outreach centre in Aberdeen. The minister previously announced that £100,000 would go towards funding the research work that is needed for that. Can he give us some idea of the time scale in which those plans will be complete and ready to take forward to the next stage?

Mr McCabe: Mr Rumbles has quite rightly identified the fact that we previously announced that £100,000 had been made available to establish the planning process that is necessary for that outreach centre. As I said at the time, we expect a conclusion to be reached within six months and we hope that, thereafter, the process will move ahead without any undue delay.

Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): I whole-heartedly welcome the quick response to representations that have been made to the minister on this important subject. He is

aware that NHS dental services have, in effect, been withdrawn from large numbers of communities around Scotland—most recently from Longniddry and Haddington in my constituency. I also had a letter from my own dentist in the Borders last month giving notice of imminent withdrawal of NHS services. Is it the Executive's intention that NHS dental services should be restored in areas where they have been lost, so that every citizen of Scotland will again have local access to dental treatment under the NHS?

Mr McCabe: That is exactly what our intention is. We recognise that the dental service clearly needs to be modernised. We are in the process of modernising a whole range of areas within the national health service, including junior doctors and consultants—the list goes on and on. Dentistry needs the same attention, as it plays such an important role in Scotland. It is very important for the general public in Scotland to know that when they need access to NHS dentistry, it is there for them, when and where they want it.

The Presiding Officer: As from now, I expect shorter questions and answers. I call Eleanor Scott.

Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I welcome the consultation document, because dental health has been a big issue up in the Highlands, where I come from. I seek an assurance that the consultation meetings referred to will take place in the most rural areas, so that people there who are really suffering from a lack of dental services will be able to make their views known. I hope that the absence of the F-word—fluoride—from the document means that the Executive is now abandoning the idea that that would solve our dental health problems. There is no substitute for dental services.

Mr McCabe: I can give an absolute assurance that the consultation meetings will take place in every part of Scotland. Given the problems that have been experienced in rural areas in the recent past, there will undoubtedly be a series of meetings in the Highlands of Scotland.

The Executive expects to respond to the children's oral health consultation in the near future, and perhaps Eleanor Scott will get the response that she is looking for at that time, or perhaps she will not.

Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP): I also welcome the minister's statement and thank him for responding to views expressed by MSPs from around the country. How many dentists will have to be recruited nationally before the minister can achieve his objectives? What discussions has he had with the Minister for Health and Community Care, Malcolm Chisholm, with regard to the shortage of specialist

consultants and theatre staff, whose work is also related to this important topic?

Mr McCabe: With regard to the number of dentists, our work force planning arrangements continue to keep such matters under review. That is why we are considering an outreach centre in Aberdeen and are prepared to consider the possibility of upgrading it if necessary. That is why we are consulting members of the dental professions: to hear their views on exactly what needs to happen. The thread that runs through the entire document is that nothing is ruled out.

I speak regularly to Mr Chisholm about a range of matters concerning dentistry and specialisms. We are both aware that the problems of dentistry require a wide range of solutions, and we are both continually working to deliver those solutions.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I acknowledge the excellent work that Paul Martin and the dental think-tank are doing in the Highlands and I hope that the minister will work with them, as many MSPs have done.

Will the minister include in the consultation the issue of free dental care for the elderly and for people who are on benefits who currently have to pay the full fees for dental treatment? If those people need their dentist to issue a prescription, they have to pay a fee to an NHS dentist and the full cost of the prescription to a private dentist. That leads to serious financial hardship.

Mr McCabe: A moment ago, I said that the fact that nothing will be ruled out will be the thread that runs through the consultation. Clearly, we will listen to whatever representations are made during the consultation and take on board as many of those as we can. As with any consultation, we will be able to accept some arguments and not others, but where we cannot respond to demands, we will be obliged to explain why we do not think it appropriate to do so at that time.

I have mentioned the commitment in the partnership agreement to the introduction of free dental checks for all by 2007. The Executive is examining how best to implement that commitment.

John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): Like the other members who have spoken, I welcome the minister's announcement of a substantial package of remote allowances and other incentives to encourage more people to go into dentistry. Of course, there will be a delay in the implementation of the whole package. That must be addressed.

Does the minister think that, as we encourage more students to go into dentistry, we should consider offering some sort of incentive to students, to ensure that after they qualify they are

retained within the NHS? As the minister knows, people who qualify as dentists do not always lend their services to the NHS.

Mr McCabe: Both the new and the existing initiatives that I have spoken about today encompass a realisation that when allowances are paid, some degree of commitment is expected from new graduates within the NHS, so there is a degree of tie-in in that regard.

Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): I note from the minister's statement that the most significant problems arise in areas of deprivation. How will the measures that he has announced ensure that we address that specific issue?

Mr McCabe: To reply in general terms, the modernisation of the dental service and the fact that we will allow the service to concentrate on specific issues—as it has been asking to do for a considerable time—will address that matter. It would be desirable for the service to concentrate on young people, to try to stop the rot—if members will pardon the pun—as early as possible. In areas of deprivation, a modernised dental service that offers more flexibility and frees dentists from the bureaucracy that has tied them down for far too long will provide opportunities to target specific groups in the community to improve people's dental health.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I refer the minister to the statement that he issued—rather than the one that he delivered—in which he names the designated areas, one of which is the Scottish Borders. Given that my constituents, from Hawick to Peebles, have like many other people been turned away from NHS dentists, and given that the allowances will not, as I understand it, come into effect until 1 April, can the minister give a time scale for when my constituents will again be able to access NHS dental services?

Mr McNeil: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I might be mistaken, but did Christine Grahame refer to a copy of the minister's statement? I would like to make the point that copies were not made available to other back benchers.

Christine Grahame: I seek your guidance, Presiding Officer. I was simply seeking to assist the minister, who referred to designated areas but did not define them, as he did in his statement as issued.

The Presiding Officer: There is a point here. I will consult the clerks and I suggest that we continue with questions in the meantime.

Mr McCabe: There is a complete list of designated areas and, as Christine Grahame will

know, it includes mainly rural areas, where access problems have been most severe. I understand her point; the new allowances and initiatives do not come in until 1 April next year. However, a range of initiatives are in place and have made a contribution. As I said earlier, the signal that we send today to the dental professions will give food for thought to dentists about the Executive's intentions and about what the future holds for them. I am confident that they will reconsider many of the decisions that they have taken.

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): Is the minister aware that no NHS or private dentists in my constituency have open lists? Will he assure us that the welcome measures will be monitored closely and regularly to ensure that they work in areas such as mine? Will the Executive consider making it possible for NHS boards to give people who are on low incomes financial assistance to enable them to travel to other NHS board areas to access dental health treatment?

Mr McCabe: NHS boards can contact the Executive and request our thoughts on a range of issues, one of which is travelling expenses. If a case is made for the provision of such expenses, we would, of course, consider it. I recognise the severe problems in the member's area. I recount again that, in my statement, I announced £1.5 million for enhanced emergency dental services, which, I hope, will reduce an awful lot of the pressure in the worst-affected areas. That £1.5 million is in addition to the money that is already available to NHS boards for the provision of emergency dental services.

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): Does the minister anticipate that dental services might increasingly be provided alongside primary medical services—in community hospitals, for example—to increase access to primary dental services for people of all ages in remote and rural Scotland?

Mr McCabe: I hope that that is the case and that that will be possible. As we modernise primary care services and consider how we can bring together a range of allied health professionals to deliver a more comprehensive local service, where the opportunity exists to do what Nanette Milne suggests, I hope that it will be taken up. I hope that our opening up of the question of modernising the dental health service will allow far more discussion between GPs, dentists and a range of other allied health professionals. That will allow them, on their own and in conjunction with health boards, to consider how best to arrange services to serve patients' needs better.

Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): I welcome the minister's statement. Will he confirm that, in proceeding with the package of work, he will seek radically to

reduce the bureaucracy and complexity of the existing fees and charges system? Will he seek to establish a fairer and more transparent system that is significantly more comprehensible to dentists and patients than the current one is? Does the minister agree that dentists would say that we must address both prevention and cure? Will he confirm that the dental professions are overwhelmingly of the view that fluoridation is the biggest single measure that could be taken to improve dental health in Scotland?

Mr McCabe: To address the final point first, we will respond to the consultation on children's oral health in the near future. I know that I risk giving a less than complete answer to Susan Deacon, but I do not want to pre-empt that announcement.

Susan Deacon has gone to the heart of the problems of dentistry in Scotland by mentioning bureaucracy and the charging system. Dentists are weighed down. I took the time to speak to a number of dentists throughout Scotland in the summer, who told me that the way in which they are monitored and the bureaucracy that affects their practices discourages them and encourages them to leave the NHS and consider private practice. As I said in my statement, the general public do not understand the charging system and it is time for a great deal of simplification. If nothing else comes about as a result of the consultation, I hope that we will make radical changes to bureaucracy and the charging system.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I welcome the minister's statement. He talked about the partnership agreement delivering free dental check-ups, but also about the difficulty of telling members when any changes will come about following the consultation period. Will he at least give members the assurance that changes to the provision of services will come about first, before the introduction of free dental checks? Surely it would be absurd to give something free that is not provided at all.

Mr McCabe: I do not think that there would be anything absurd about the provision of free dental checks to people throughout Scotland. The reaction, so far, to that commitment in the partnership agreement has been a wide and warm welcome throughout Scotland. Perhaps Mr Monteith's question reflects the jealousy of the Tory party because it did not come up with such a proposal.

We are going to talk to the dental professions and take their advice about how we can best honour the commitments that we have made. We want to stick to our commitments and will speak to the professionals about not only how we can implement those commitments, but how we can augment them, taking on board their experience and the political commitment that exists in the

partnership so that we can make substantial improvements to the dental health of people in Scotland.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): In view of the widespread dental ill health that exists in Scotland, which the minister has acknowledged, will he consider changing the rules so that, as happens with general medical services, health boards are required to find an NHS dentist when a patient cannot?

Mr McCabe: A series of changes are going on relative to the responsibilities that health boards have. In some of the forthcoming legislation, we will establish community health partnerships and, through those, a substantial range of alterations to the way in which things are done may take place.

I am not going to say that I can instruct health boards to wave a magic wand and produce people who do not exist in an area. What we can do, following the announcements that have been made today, is supplement what is available to NHS boards through the provision of emergency dental health services. We have allocated a substantial amount of money today, and that will make a contribution.

The Presiding Officer: I apologise to the seven or eight members who have not been called to speak.

In regard to the point of order that was raised by Mr McNeil, I still need some further information. However, I judge it to be fair for Christine Grahame to have referred to an advance copy of the statement if it was issued by the minister, whether or not he included it in his speech.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Presiding Officer, I seek your guidance on a matter concerning constituency members. Is it in order for regional members to use such a statement—which has been offered to the front-bench spokesmen of Opposition parties—to raise constituency cases when that is an opportunity that back-bench constituency members such as I do not have? Can you offer guidance as to how such statements are given out? If they are given to front-bench spokespeople, what are the rules regarding that?

The Presiding Officer: I can hardly be expected to give guidance immediately, Mr Purvis. However, I will reflect on the matter and will come back to you personally, or perhaps to the chamber.

Stewart Stevenson: It might be helpful if you were aware, Presiding Officer, that I was asked by my colleague about the list of designated areas, which is unchanged. I noticed that it was on the document that was in front of my front-bench colleague, which I passed back to provide the

information. It is therefore down to me, Presiding Officer.

Mr McNeil: I take that as confirmation that the minister did not give the statement to Christine Grahame. I do not have any great objection to the statement's going to Christine Grahame, as she is the convener of the Health Committee; however, it may be that every member should have been given a copy. We certainly were not.

Richard Lochhead: Presiding Officer, can you confirm that, as soon as a minister sits down, the statement is available to all members anyway at the back of the chamber, as previously agreed, and that every member had access to that statement as soon as the minister sat down?

Mr McNeil: The point is that Christine Grahame did not get it after the minister sat down. She had it and had been given privileged information. That needs to be looked into.

Christine Grahame: For clarification, I did not have the statement in advance. Statements are available to all members. The rule is that, once the statement has been given by the minister, written copies are available. As has been stated, I was clarifying the position with regard to designated areas. I glanced at the statement, after the minister had sat down, to clarify the position with regard to the Borders. I did not have the statement in my position as the convener of the Health Committee.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: Do you really want to pursue this, Mr Scott?

John Scott: I understand from my colleague David Davidson that copies of the statement were available from the Scottish Parliament information centre as soon as the minister had made the statement.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. I really do not want to pursue the matter now. We are in a situation of he said, she said. I cannot possibly make a judgment off the top of my head. I will reflect on the matter and come back to it when we return this afternoon.

13:04

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Point of Order

Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Further to the disruption of First Minister's question time, is it in order when such incidents occur for members in the chamber to applaud and congratulate those who are causing the disruption? Is it not the case that such antics from members encourage those who seek to disrupt the democratic process? Do you now believe that it is time to take effective action against members who conduct themselves in that way?

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): With reference to the Scottish Socialist Party this morning, Mr McNeil heard me say firmly that I deplore any action by members of the Parliament that encourages interruptions from the public gallery.

Members will all remember that the clear dividing line on conduct in the chamber falls between disrespectful and discourteous behaviour, which earns a rebuke, and disorderly behaviour, which may produce sanctions. I cannot think of anything more disorderly than members in the chamber encouraging disorder in the public gallery. I make it clear that, on any future similar occasion, I shall not hesitate to apply the sanction—members know what that means.

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Voting Systems

14:32

1. Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it intends to take on voting systems in light of the Electoral Commission's pilot schemes. (S2O-777)

The Deputy Minister for Parliamentary Business (Tavish Scott): The partnership agreement commits us to the reform of voting arrangements in order to increase participation, including the further investigation of postal and electronic voting. Local authorities can already put forward proposals for pilots. We are working closely with the Electoral Commission, given its experience of pilots elsewhere, to encourage and assist local authorities to do that.

Mike Rumbles: The minister will be aware that if next year's European Parliament election is to be conducted by post in Scotland while the rest of the United Kingdom uses the traditional method, people will need to post their ballot papers well in advance of voting taking place in the rest of the UK. What measures can the Executive take to ensure that the Scottish electorate does not miss out on any UK-wide efforts that are conducted in the last few weeks of the campaign to educate and inform the voters in order to increase turnout?

Tavish Scott: Mr Rumbles will be aware that the Electoral Commission's decision on the matter is expected on 8 December. If the decision is that Scotland will be a pilot area, the points that he raises will be brought to the attention of the Electoral Commission and, because the matters are reserved, the UK Government.

The responsibility for a media campaign in the context that Mr Rumbles describes belongs to the Electoral Commission. I will ensure that the points that he makes are brought to its attention.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the minister guarantee that any such new methods of voting will be fully proofed against any potential form of fraud before they are introduced as a pilot scheme?

Tavish Scott: Mr Johnstone makes a fair point about fraud. That is part of the Electoral Commission's on-going work. It held a seminar on the matter the other week at which those points were raised. I am sure that those matters will be taken forward actively.

Multiple Sclerosis

2. Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made in ensuring that the

same standard of care is available throughout Scotland for people with multiple sclerosis. (S2O-760)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm): We are funding the development of a managed care network in Forth valley for people with multiple sclerosis. That work includes developing standards for services in primary care and in hospital that are endorsed by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland. We wish to see those MS networks developed throughout Scotland. The Executive is also pleased to support the risk-sharing scheme, which makes disease-modifying drugs available to patients who are assessed as suitable for treatment. I am glad to report significant progress with that initiative.

Tricia Marwick: In October 2000, the Scottish needs assessment programme report referred to the facilities for people with MS in Scotland. The report stated:

"current care is substantially sub-optimal, inadequately resourced and unacceptably fragmented. ... There is an urgent need to develop properly resourced services in MS care."

A recent survey indicated that three quarters of people with MS believed that their standard of care depended on where in Scotland they lived. The minister knows that the National Institute for Clinical Excellence will produce guidelines for England and Wales that will set a national standard for care. Will he give a commitment today that a national standard of care will be developed for people with MS in Scotland?

Malcolm Chisholm: There has been some misunderstanding of the NICE guidelines. They are guidelines and are not mandatory in England. They can be used by the managed clinical networks that we want to see develop in Scotland, and I hope that they will.

In reality, we need a vehicle for delivering standards. We believe that managed clinical networks—or, even better, managed care networks, as in Forth valley—are the way in which to do that and I will be very active in promoting them. They must have a quality assurance framework that is endorsed by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland. That is the way in which to proceed towards national standards.

Tricia Marwick referred to a report that was published in 2000. She should also have mentioned the progress that has been made since then, which the Multiple Sclerosis Society has acknowledged. For example, nine extra specialist MS nurses have been appointed in Scotland since the 2000 report was published, including the clinical lead in Forth valley. I am very pleased that that post is held by a nurse specialist.

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con): In a letter that Malcolm Chisholm wrote to the Multiple Sclerosis Society under the auspices of our previous First Minister, he said:

“MS specialist nurses have enormous potential to improve patients’ quality of life.”

He also said:

“They are probably the quickest way to bring a demonstrable improvement for individual patients.”

Given that only nine of the 15 health boards have an MS nurse in place—and many of them must cater for more than 1,000 patients each—what positive action will the Scottish Executive take to improve access to that nursing facility throughout Scotland?

Malcolm Chisholm: I accept fully that there is much more to do. Equally, we must acknowledge the progress that has been made. I undertake to raise the issue with those boards that do not yet have a specialist MS nurse. However, we must acknowledge the progress that has been made—and not just in the appointment of nurse specialists. Since 1997, the number of neurologists has increased by 40 per cent. The MS Society has acknowledged that as an important reason why services have improved, although there is a long way to go.

Dungavel

3. Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress it has made in its discussions with national health service boards and local authorities over provision of health and education services for families held in the Dungavel House immigration removal centre. (S2O-772)

The Minister for Communities (Ms Margaret Curran): The operation of Dungavel House immigration removal centre is a matter for the Home Office. Useful discussions have taken place between the Home Office and the Executive, South Lanarkshire Council and Lanarkshire NHS Board on a range of issues affecting Dungavel.

Rosie Kane: Is the minister concerned, as I am, that a six-year-old child has told me that he was sent back to his room from his lessons because he sang a song over and over again, and that imprisonment was used as punishment? Is she worried, as I am, about the fact that a woman who was injected with a sedative miscarried as a result and was denied medical attention—here in Scotland?

Ms Curran: Rosie Kane seems to be suggesting that some serious incidents have taken place. I suggest that she takes them to the proper authorities. There is a great deal of misinformation about Dungavel that the SSP has reported and

that I have found subsequently not to be quite as accurate as was suggested. Before I comment on the claims that Rosie Kane has made, I want to know how accurate they are.

As we have made clear in the Parliament on a number of occasions, there are clear lines of responsibility. It is not in the interests of anyone continually to rehearse what those lines of responsibility are. There are democratic forums for dealing with this matter and I suggest that Rosie Kane takes the issues that she has raised to them.

The work of the Executive and the Parliament should be properly focused on the responsibilities for asylum seekers and refugees that we have. Much progress has been made. We have spent £2 million on assisting asylum seekers and refugees to settle in Scotland. We should welcome the efforts of all those in local communities who have worked to ensure that progress is made. We have spent a further £3 million on language services and on implementing the action plan that is associated with the Scottish refugee integration forum. All the refugee organisations in Scotland say that the Executive has done very good work. Let us focus on what we can do and ensure that we improve the circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland. That is our work and that is what we are doing.

Affordable Homes

4. Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how it intends to respond to the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations’ campaign for 10,000 affordable homes across Scotland. (S2O-798)

The Minister for Communities (Ms Margaret Curran): Our stated aim is that the right type of housing in the right place should be available to meet the housing needs of individuals and families across Scotland, whatever their circumstances. The Scottish Executive is committed to taking a leading role in delivering that aim and we have in place a significant investment programme to provide affordable social housing. However, we also require a major on-going input from local authorities, the voluntary housing sector, lenders, private house builders and the planning system. We are committed to working with all those partners to achieve our aim.

Sarah Boyack: I am sure that the minister will be aware that Edinburgh is approaching a crisis with the lack of affordable housing. The City of Edinburgh Council has done pioneering work to link planning and housing policies, but we need 1,000 new affordable homes every year, and a modest increase in public subsidy could lever in significant private investment. Will she examine the case for sustained additional support to deal with housing issues in the city so that people in Edinburgh can have decent housing choices?

Ms Curran: I will always examine the case for improving Scotland's housing stock. It is not just an issue of supply; it is an issue of quality, which we have made great efforts to achieve. During my time as the minister responsible for housing, I had many discussions with the City of Edinburgh Council about its housing issues. Edinburgh has received a 27 per cent increase in the development programme in the past year. That is a significant commitment on the part of the Executive and we look forward to continuing our partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council so that, together, we can resolve the issues that the city faces.

Murray Tosh (West of Scotland) (Con): I welcome the progress that the minister has made, but will she clarify the statistical basis on which the Executive has calculated that 6,000 houses per year is an adequate number to meet the outstanding need throughout Scotland?

Ms Curran: Yes, I will—I will be happy to provide more details. We commissioned the research from Heriot-Watt University and I have just had a detailed presentation from the researcher involved, who is a recognised authority in the housing field.

I will meet the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, which is an important organisation in housing in Scotland. Let us not get lost in a debate about whether the figure should be 6,000 or 7,000; let us make sure that we use all the levers at our disposal to present Scotland's people with the range of housing options that meets their needs and aspirations. That involves working with the voluntary sector, local authorities and local communities; it is also about the planning system. We have to get all those factors to work together. I acknowledge that that is a key issue to be faced in future.

Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP): The shortage of affordable housing in rural communities has priced many young people out of their local communities, even if they want to continue to work and live where they have been brought up. For example, in Aberdeenshire—which is a small area—alone, there are 4,500 people on the housing list.

The rural home ownership grant scheme has attracted only five successful applications in Aberdeenshire, and not that many more elsewhere in Scotland. Does the minister believe that that scheme has been a success in helping people to buy their home? If not, is she going to replace it or do something else to promote it?

Ms Curran: There is a lot in that question. Rural communities face significant challenges, and the member will know that we have just announced £10 million to meet those challenges because we

recognise that there are pockets of acute shortage. I suggest that waiting lists are not always the best indicator of housing need; they are a blunt instrument. However, I acknowledge that there are issues that we have to face to meet people's aspirations for home ownership. We also have to ensure that good-quality stock is there when it is needed and meet the challenges of infrastructure investment.

To address Richard Lochhead's specific point, we are considering the range of levers that facilitate home ownership, and the scheme that he mentioned is one that we will be examining.

Hospitals (Vending Machines)

5. Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to remove all vending machines that sell unhealthy food from hospitals in Scotland. (S2O-799)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe): It is for individual NHS boards to lead and manage provision of food in hospitals. We expect NHS boards to set an example, as employers and service providers, given their key role in improving health in Scotland.

Shiona Baird: Is the minister aware that a recent report estimated the cost to the Scottish national health service of treating obesity-related disease at £171 million? At the same time, many disabled children cannot access treatment such as speech therapy and physiotherapy because of lack of funding. How does the Executive aim to reduce that largely avoidable spending on obesity and increase the funding available to treat unavoidable and distressing childhood conditions?

Mr McCabe: Our healthy eating strategy and the Scottish diet action plan are designed to make considerable inroads into the problem of obesity in Scotland. Obesity actually costs much more than that figure; it also leads to a series of other serious conditions, including diabetes. We are well aware of the massive challenge that we face and we are intent on achieving the targets that we have set and on taking the health improvement agenda in Scotland much further.

Social Housing

6. Ms Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made in respect of its house building programme, with particular reference to social housing. (S2O-811)

The Minister for Communities (Ms Margaret Curran): We have set a target of funding a further 18,000 warm, dry and affordable homes for families across Scotland by 2006, and are currently on track to deliver on that commitment.

Ms McNeill: The minister will be aware that in the west end of Glasgow and in parts of my constituency such as Partick, fewer than 100 houses are under the Glasgow Housing Association. Given that there is a serious lack of affordable housing and of larger accommodation for families, does she agree that we should strive to ensure that a range of housing tenure is available and that the guidance in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 should reflect the need for such a housing mix? Furthermore, given the proposal to build 3,500 houses in the Glasgow harbour development, should we not consider the possibility of making some of the housing in that development social housing? After all, it presents a key opportunity for our house building programme.

Ms Curran: I am sure that Pauline McNeill knows that, as a result of the community ownership programme that has been introduced in Glasgow, responsibility for the housing investment programme has passed from Communities Scotland to Glasgow City Council. I agree strongly that a range of housing tenure should be available to all communities in Glasgow. Any major regeneration developments of the sort that Pauline has highlighted should benefit all parts of and all income groups in the city, and certainly what she has suggested is integral to such projects.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I was interested to hear the minister's targets for house building in the social housing sector and the number of houses that will be built over the next period. However, independent surveys for the Highland area show a shortfall of 1,200 houses this year in the social rented sector. Basically, the allocation for the whole of Scotland will hardly meet even Highland's needs over the next 10 years. When will she increase the number of such houses? Moreover, is she going to start treating social housing as part of the infrastructure that is now a higher priority for this Government than it has been in the past?

Ms Curran: Although the Executive could be accused of some things—I would not say that we are quite perfect, although members should not ask me what those imperfections are today—giving no priority to housing is not one of them. Every housing association will point out that the one achievement of this Parliament is the focus that it has given to housing priorities, and I really think that Rob Gibson's accusation is unfair.

I acknowledge Rob Gibson's interest in the Highlands. I have had discussions with councillors in the Highlands and with the leader of Highland Council on how we can take forward some of the housing supply and other issues that they face in that area. Indeed, the issue crosses a range of subjects. When one considers the range of options

that we have provided to local authorities and different communities, it is clear that there are agendas that they can take forward. For example, I advocate that we consider community ownership and the current opportunities for investment that exist. I also think that we need to examine the planning system. The Executive is bringing all of that together, because it has made housing supply a key priority.

Fuel Poverty

7. Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made since the Scottish fuel poverty statement of August 2002 in meeting its target of ending fuel poverty. (S2O-769)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Mrs Mary Mulligan): We have made good progress. Our central heating and warm deal programmes are on track and making a difference. We are also working with the private and voluntary sectors to ensure that our measures continue to be as effective as possible.

Bill Butler: I welcome the minister's response and I am sure that the whole chamber will approve of the finding in the "Scottish House Conditions Survey 2002", which was published last Friday, that the number of households living in fuel poverty has halved since 1997. That is real progress for the people throughout Scotland whom we represent.

What is the Executive's view on extending free central heating and insulation to the disabled and the chronically ill, which I believe would be another progressive and necessary development?

Mrs Mulligan: As Bill Butler knows, the Executive used the previous house conditions survey in 1996 to inform its policy of installing central heating for older people. We now want to take the opportunity of the publication of the "Scottish House Conditions Survey 2002"—which, as Bill Butler said, happened last Friday—to consider further priorities to ensure that we target those who are most at risk from fuel poverty.

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Does the minister agree that enhancing home energy efficiency is the best way to tackle fuel poverty in Scotland?

Mrs Mulligan: That is one of the tracks on which we are engaged. The member might be interested in the energy audit project with Friends of the Earth Scotland, which is looking at the value that people place on fuel energy measures in homes and residences. We hope that that project will ensure that we make progress on tackling fuel poverty in the home.

Scottish Water

8. Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland)

(Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what powers it has to influence the actions and decisions of Scottish Water where such actions and decisions are supported by the water industry commissioner for Scotland. (S2O-787)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): The powers of the Scottish Executive with respect to the water industry, and those of Scottish Water and the water industry commissioner are set out in the Water Industry (Scotland) Act 2002.

Specifically, section 56 (3) of the Water Industry (Scotland) Act 2002 states that

“Scottish ministers may give Scottish Water ... general or specific”

directions

“as to the exercise of its functions”,

and section 1(3) of the act states that

“Scottish ministers may ... give the Commissioner ... general or specific”

directions on the exercise of his functions.

However, those powers of direction must be exercised in a manner that is consistent with the provisions of the act and ministers cannot use the powers to negate or amend specific provisions in the act, because to do so would contradict Parliament's intentions.

Alex Johnstone: I notice that the minister's answer is probably consistent with the statements that he sent to the *Greenock Telegraph* and the *Largs and Millport Weekly News*. However, his answer appears to be inconsistent with the views that were expressed by his deputy Allan Wilson and supported by the Deputy First Minister Jim Wallace in a meeting with the Forum of Private Business. Will the minister finally reiterate to whom Scottish Water is accountable?

Ross Finnie: I am delighted, as the editor of the *Greenock Telegraph* will be, about the wide readership that the paper has now gained. Mr Johnstone will be aware that it is in its second century of service to the community.

As Alex Johnstone well knows, Scottish Water was created by this Executive to try to achieve a different balance in how we deliver water services, which have traditionally been hopelessly underfunded and have not served Scotland well. Ministers have powers to set general strategic direction and we have the powers to set the amount that will be spent by Scottish Water after a strategic review of its capital requirements. That will then feed into the review of its charging regime, for which we have powers to set the

framework. That review will be conducted by the water industry commissioner.

We established the role of the water industry commissioner to look after customers' specific interests. The Scottish Executive sets the strategic framework and the water industry—Scottish Water—conducts the business. That is preferable by far to politicians trying to run an industry and meddle in its day-to-day affairs.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): Is the minister aware that domestic water charges in the Forth valley area have increased by 220 per cent since 1994, compared with an increase of only 26 per cent in the retail prices index over the same period? When will the Scottish Executive tell Scottish Water that such exorbitant charges are completely unacceptable and that they are causing considerable hardship to many people?

Ross Finnie: There are two parts to that question, as Mr Canavan knows. On containing and reducing charges, the essential feature that was highlighted by the water industry commissioner's report in 1998 was that the three previous authorities were 30 per cent less efficient than any comparable organisation in this country. The new Scottish Water has been set the task of achieving efficiency targets of up to 30 per cent. It is a challenging task, but it is the only way of ensuring that Scottish consumers will in the future get the highest quality water at the most competitive price.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): As the minister knows very well, there is considerable concern over the lack of water and sewerage infrastructure in rural parts of the Stirling constituency, particularly in Crianlarich and Tyndrum. Will the minister provide as soon as possible a progress report of the meetings that are taking place between Scottish Water and ministers to examine infrastructure needs in areas where there is a shortage of affordable housing?

Ross Finnie: I am happy to give Sylvia Jackson an undertaking to provide that information. As the member is aware—many members in the chamber are concerned about this—the initial assessment in 1997 or 1998 that was produced by the three previous water authorities, which resulted in the £1.8 billion capital investment programme that was approved by this Executive, allowed for only £240 million of infrastructure development that was not associated with meeting minimum quality standards. We have had meetings with the commissioner, the water industry and local authorities about a reassessment. I will be happy to provide the information as soon as it becomes available.

Speed Restrictions (Kinbrace Primary School)

9. Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive when suitable speed restrictions will be introduced at Kinbrace Primary School on the A897. (S2O-808)

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen): The Scottish Executive has announced funding of £27 million over the next three years for 20mph school safety zones. Highland Council's share is more than £1.2 million. Decisions on measures to restrict the speed of traffic on the A897 at Kinbrace Primary School are a matter for Highland Council.

Mr Stone: The minister will, I hope, be aware that Kinbrace is a small and remote village in Sutherland. Speed restrictions are a huge issue. In fact, this week the pupils and teachers of Kinbrace Primary School demonstrated. Highland Council led me to believe that the hold-up was with the Executive, but I do not doubt what he said. First, will he check that there is no possible glitch within his department? Secondly, if there is not, will he lean heavily on Highland Council to sort out the issue before somebody is killed?

Nicol Stephen: I will look carefully into the possibility of there being a glitch in my department. However, I am pleased to say that schemes are progressing throughout Scotland. It is worth mentioning that the Executive has informed local authorities that it would be prepared to give blanket authorisation across a local authority area to any authorities that wish to proceed with the new-style mandatory part-time speed limits. Glasgow City Council, for example, has already moved forward on that and has applied this week to the Executive; it intends to introduce part-time mandatory 20mph speed limits outside all 258 schools in Glasgow. Everyone in the chamber should welcome that good news.

The circumstances in relation to Highland Council may be more complex, because a number of authorities have a greater number of schools on roads on which the speed limit is greater than 30mph. There are problems in trying to slow down traffic from 70mph on a dual carriageway, or from 60mph on a standard trunk road or rural road. We have set up a working group, involving the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland and the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland, to look into those issues. I want to ensure that we tackle all schools in Scotland in terms of introducing 20mph speed limits, and I am determined that we continue to make quick progress in relation to that working group.

Wind Energy

10. Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive how it is ensuring that local

communities and manufacturing industry gain economic benefits from wind energy. (S2O-794)

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald): As far as communities are concerned, we are encouraging Highlands and Islands Enterprise to work up proposals for a possible community equity scheme, which would allow communities to hold a financial stake in renewables developments in their areas. As far as industry is concerned, recently I chaired the first meeting of the forum for renewable energy development in Scotland, which will seek to maximise the Scottish stake in manufacturing and in new renewables technology.

Nora Radcliffe: I thank the minister for that answer; it will be very welcome in the Highland area, to which my constituents do not belong.

I am particularly concerned by the difficulties and lack of support for communities in negotiating local benefits from developments in their area. Will the minister consider facilitating the setting-up of a new organisation, or the use of an appropriate existing organisation, to be a gateway for communities to access advice and guidance? Will he back that with a fund that could be drawn from to procure professional services in order to level the playing field between communities and development companies?

Lewis Macdonald: The proposals that HIE is examining could well be applied throughout Scotland. The best way for communities to obtain benefit from renewables developments on their doorsteps is through equity schemes. If we can do that in a way that gives communities a direct stake in developments, it would clearly be better than any position that involved communities negotiating across the table with the developer as if they were on different sides.

We recognise the importance of communities' obtaining benefit from developments—that is why we are at ease with the practice that has developed in the industry of putting a sum for community benefit towards funds that local communities are able to establish. A number of communities in the Highlands and the lowlands have obtained very reasonable additions to their community funding as a result of such arrangements.

Compulsory Entitlement Cards

11. Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with the Home Office regarding the proposed introduction of compulsory entitlement cards. (S2O-809)

The Minister for Finance and Public Services (Mr Andy Kerr): As the First Minister advised in his response to the member's question of 25

September, the Home Secretary consulted ministers in Scotland about the UK Government's proposals. The First Minister also confirmed at last week's question time that the Home Secretary and the United Kingdom Cabinet have accepted in full the Executive's position that identity cards will not be required for access to services that come under devolved responsibilities in Scotland.

Independently, as set out in the partnership agreement, the Executive is committed to supporting local authorities in a number of pilot projects to assess the desirability of developing a free, voluntary entitlement card to facilitate citizens' access to appropriate public services.

Margaret Smith: I thank the minister for his response, and the First Minister for his previous answer. Will the minister tell us whether the Home Secretary has publicly and on the record accepted the Scottish Executive's position to date? On devolved public services, will service users be asked to show identity cards—although they have the right to refuse to do so—or will they not be asked to produce the card in the first place?

Mr Kerr: The Home Secretary's position has been made clear on the record, but I will follow that up in writing to the member. In debates in the House of Commons—indeed, in the original consultation document—the position was clear. With regard to services related to our card in Scotland—*[Interruption.]* If the member cares to listen to the answer, she will hear that there will be a free card, which will be issued by local authorities. Such a card is making a huge difference in Scotland; for example, school children in Glasgow have a cashless system for school meals, thus avoiding bullying and stigma. That fits very well with the Executive's healthy eating priority. Previously one in two children were having chips with their lunch, but incentives based on the cards—which allow people to make healthy choices—mean that the figure is now one in 12. We want to encourage that card. People will flock to our card scheme in Scotland, which is on the cutting edge worldwide in relation to access to public services.

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): The First Minister said last week that the Executive opposed compulsory identity cards for access to devolved services, but will the minister tell us whether that means that the Executive will be happy for ID cards to be compulsory in Scotland for access to services such as social security? If that is not the case, will he give an undertaking today that the Executive will oppose vigorously any element whatever of compulsion associated with ID cards in Scotland?

Mr Kerr: As usual, Nicola Sturgeon is in the wrong place, but perhaps the SNP's members down south in the UK Parliament are not fit

enough to ask questions of the Home Secretary. As members know, those are reserved matters. Nicola Sturgeon would be the first member of this Parliament to complain if a UK minister sought to interfere in a Scottish devolved matter. She should either go to Westminster or align her questions to the responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament.

Textile Industry

12. Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it will take to secure the future of the remnants of the textile industry, given the recent announcement of the closure of Chilton Scotland Ltd, Girvan. (S2O-779)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Mr Jim Wallace): The closure of Chilton Scotland Ltd and the consequent loss of jobs are very much to be regretted. Despite a recent decline, textiles remains an important manufacturing sector in terms of employment, output and exports. We established the Scottish textiles forum to engage with the sector and, through the forum, will continue to work with the sector to develop measures of support.

Phil Gallie: I welcome the comments about the forum, but it was established some time ago. Over recent years there has been a decline in textiles industry employment, from about 21,900 to just over 11,000—a 50 per cent reduction. In addition, Scottish Enterprise provides gloomy forecasts of further reductions in the future. On that basis, what use is the forum?

Mr Wallace: I regret the most recent job losses in Girvan, which Cathy Jamieson has also discussed with me. We are identifying other ways to bring economic activity to the area. I accepted in my previous answer that the textile industry has declined, but it is important to point out that it still accounts for 6.3 per cent of manufacturing jobs. In 2002, its exports were valued at £483 million, which made it the seventh-largest export sector in Scotland.

The Scottish textiles forum is industry led and has a dedicated team in Scottish Enterprise that is responsible for delivering the forum's action plan on the industry's image, training and design. A national conference is being organised for next year, which I have happily accepted an invitation to address, so that I can engage directly with the industry and hear its views. The forum has taken a number of steps to support the industry and will continue to do that.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): The minister will be aware of the industry's importance to my constituency and to the rest of the Borders. He has visited people who are involved in the textiles industry many

times. Does he agree that many parts of the industry—particularly new textiles and industrial textiles—have a future? Does he agree that they should be the focus of support for Heriot-Watt University in Galashiels, for example, which is doing excellent work in the sector?

Mr Wallace: It is fair to say that Heriot-Watt in Galashiels has produced the kind of centre of excellence that will give the textiles industry a cutting edge in increasingly competitive markets.

The forum has identified design courses and arranges seasonal-trend presentations. That helps especially small and medium-sized enterprises to access market data.

As for Jeremy Purvis's constituency, I was pleased to be present at the launch of the 70th anniversary presentation for Isetan, the leading Japanese department store, where tartans from the Lochcarron of Scotland mill in Galashiels were the focal point. That showed that a Scottish company is prominent in a competitive international market. Such activities and such enterprise as Lochcarron and several other companies have displayed show that Scottish textiles have a future.

Street Prostitution

13. Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps are being taken to address the issue of street prostitution. (S2O-767)

The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry): The expert group on prostitution, under Sandra Hood's chairmanship, is examining the issues that relate to prostitution in Scotland, starting with street prostitution. We will give its report careful consideration.

Susan Deacon: The minister will be aware that the City of Edinburgh Council last week approved a report on prostitution in the Leith area, an issue that affects a number of my constituents. That report was produced jointly by the council, Lothian NHS Board and Lothian and Borders police. Will he ensure that the report is brought to the expert group's attention and that it considers fully the issues that the report raises—in particular, the report's views and respondents' comments on tolerance zones?

Hugh Henry: I am sure that the expert group will give that report due consideration and will examine tolerance zones closely. We have asked for work to be undertaken early on street prostitution issues and that is one of the first subjects on which the group will report. I am sure that the group will consider the evidence and experience of Edinburgh.

Zero-waste Strategy

14. Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive what assessment it has made of the benefits that the adoption of a zero-waste strategy would have on the environment, agriculture and employment. (S2O-802)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): Paragraph 7.3.3 of the national waste plan discusses the concept of zero waste and says:

"The concept provides a platform for challenging our current systems and radically reducing waste beyond even the ... current levels of achievement."

Mark Ballard: I welcome that response and paragraph 7.3.3 of the national waste strategy, but the strategy contains nothing that says whether the Executive agrees that the principle of zero waste—of minimising waste rather than dealing with it once it has been generated—should produce the change in products and packaging that will eliminate waste production. When will we see ministerial action to develop a zero-waste strategy instead of merely recognition that it exists, which is all that the national waste strategy contains?

Ross Finnie: As Mark Ballard will be aware, the concept is certainly gaining acceptance, but there is still much discussion, even among proponents of zero waste, as to precisely how best to achieve it. I have two further comments. Mark Ballard will be aware that the European Commission's recent green paper on the sixth environmental action plan develops and addresses the issue. More important, the recommendations of the recent report by our own Environment and Rural Development Committee on the national waste plan specifically suggest that

"Scotland ... begin to move towards the radical alternative of a 'zero waste' strategy."

I will obviously respond to the constructive statements in that report, which is generally very helpful. It recognises the base on which the national waste strategy is set and makes positive recommendations for taking it forward. My response to the green paper will obviously take into account both Mr Ballard's comments and the recommendations that were made in the Environment and Rural Development Committee's excellent report.

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): Will the minister say how the decision of the reporter in approving the appeal of Alba Developments Ltd, which will turn Westfield into one of the biggest landfill developments in Europe for the next few years, squares with the First Minister's policy of social justice, in relation to which he has said that he believes that the poorest and most disadvantaged communities should not be

dumped on? Will the minister agree to meet representatives from the communities that are involved to hear their concerns?

Ross Finnie: I understand Helen Eadie's disappointment from a local perspective at the decision of the reporter. The First Minister and the Executive remain committed to pursuing environmental justice, but in meeting Helen Eadie's constituents I would want to examine not only issues of location—which were presumably considered from the reporter's perspective on the appropriateness of land use—but also issues of licensing and how the site is to be managed. It is just as important that we examine the impact that the national waste strategy will have on reducing the amount of arisings that will have to be taken to that site. I am happy to arrange a meeting on that issue.

Fuel Poverty

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-627, in the name of Margaret Curran, on progress in respect of fuel poverty in Scotland, to which there are two amendments. The time for the debate is extremely short, so I ask those members who are leaving to do so as quickly as possible.

15:13

The Minister for Communities (Ms Margaret Curran):

I am pleased to be speaking in this afternoon's fuel poverty debate. Given that we were talking about poverty more generally this morning, it is apposite that we should now focus on the experience of fuel poverty.

Since the Scottish Parliament was convened in 1999, we have talked about the 738,000 households in Scotland in fuel poverty. That was the figure that we inherited from the last national housing survey, which was conducted in 1996. Last week, as many members know, we published the first new figures that reflect the work that the Executive and our colleagues in Westminster have been engaged in since 1997. As was said during question time, the figure for households in fuel poverty has halved to 369,000. Even after the changes that we have made to how the number is calculated, which have the effect of including more households, the figures are very positive. On a like-for-like comparison, using the same approach as was used in 1996, the figure falls to 262,000 households, which is 35 per cent of the 1996 figure. Those figures show what the Scottish Executive can achieve for the lives of Scottish people working together with Westminster and I call on all in this Parliament to welcome them.

Quite properly, we shall focus on the reality of fuel poverty. We are all now familiar with what is meant by fuel poverty and what impact it can have on vulnerable families. As we have said before, we know that fuel poverty can mean a choice between having enough for food for the week and being cold; it can mean a stark choice between staying warm and going hungry. That is one choice at least that is faced by a diminishing number of families in Scotland as a result of the work that has been done to improve incomes through tax credits, minimum income guarantees, the minimum wage, reduced energy prices and investment in our housing stock.

Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP): Does the minister share the concerns that Citizens Advice Scotland has expressed about the way in which household income is calculated? The calculation includes benefits such as free school meals and community care grants that cannot be

used to meet fuel costs. Is it time to review how such calculations are made?

Ms Curran: The approach that has been taken in Scotland and at Westminster is to ensure that appropriate benefits such as tax credits, minimum income guarantees and the minimum wage are targeted at those who are most in need. It has been demonstrated that such a package has radically tackled and reduced fuel poverty in Scotland.

The figures that I have mentioned do not take account of the full impact of the central heating programme, although that programme is well positioned to make an impact for the next survey. Further measures that will have an impact on fuel poverty figures are our high building standards, investment in energy efficiency by the Executive and energy companies and further tax credits that have been introduced, through the working tax credit, the child tax credit and the pension credit, which is new in 2003. We are confident that, with such measures and further work, the number of households in fuel poverty will continue to fall.

We all know that cold and damp housing can have serious health implications. Our climate can be severe at times and the elderly—one of the most vulnerable groups—are most liable to suffer during cold periods. Surely a component of a caring society is that the elderly should be well looked after. We know that much progress has been made under the programme, but we acknowledge that there is more work to do.

Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP): The “Scottish House Condition Survey 2002” states:

“20,000 ... occupied dwellings did not meet the Tolerable Standard. Of these, 84% failed on a single item ... The main reason for dwellings being judged Below Tolerable Standard was the absence of adequate heating, lighting and/or ventilation”.

Ms Curran: I am sure that Margaret Ewing is well aware of the concerns that we had in the previous session about housing in the private sector and elsewhere that is below tolerable standard. We addressed that matter through the work of the housing improvement task force, which has now reported. We are just about to respond to its conclusions, so we will deal with the problem directly. However, I take the significant point that I think Margaret Ewing is making—that the standard of housing has a direct impact on the issues that we are discussing.

The central heating programme is unique in the United Kingdom and is probably one of the most effective programmes in respect of the benefits that flow from it. It ensures that anyone who is over 60 and does not have any central heating is eligible to have a central heating system installed free of charge. However, the central heating

package includes not just the installation of a new central heating system.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): Will the minister take an intervention?

Ms Curran: I must watch my time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister has nine minutes. If she takes Cathie Craigie’s intervention, that should be the final intervention that she takes.

Ms Curran: Okay.

Cathie Craigie: I acknowledge the significant impact of the introduction of the free central heating scheme on many pensioners in my constituency. Will the minister advise members whether any progress is being made towards extending the scheme to pensioners who are below 80 and have a partial system?

Ms Curran: The scheme’s success is evidenced by the fact that people are asking for it to be extended to other groups—I notice that such a request is the substance of the SNP’s amendment. Obviously, I would be sympathetic to possible extension, as the programme is so successful and many people recognise the Scottish Executive’s success with it. However, substantial expenditure would be involved—I do not think that it has been properly costed by my opponents—and, given that such expenditure would be committed, we would have to be careful that we had enough resources and appropriate implementation schemes and that the scheme worked alongside other measures. I always try to create opportunities to improve the scheme’s benefits for vulnerable people in Scotland, but that must be done in a measured and sustained way.

Another aspect that perhaps does not receive enough attention is the fact that, under the scheme, people also benefit from insulation measures, such as cavity wall fill, loft insulation, the lagging of boilers and pipes and draft exclusion. In addition, safety features such as carbon monoxide detectors, smoke alarms and cold alarms can be provided and recipients are also offered a benefit-entitlement check. Those are significant factors in tackling some of the challenges that we face.

The central heating programme covers the private, local authority and housing association sectors. The private sector part of the programme will be completed in 2006; the local authority part will end this financial year; and the programme for registered social landlords will end during 2004. However, despite the significant success of the programme, we cannot be complacent about tackling fuel poverty in Scotland. In answer to Cathie Craigie’s question, I can say that, from April 2004, the programme will be expanded to include

people who are over 80 who have a partial central heating system or one that is not efficient. We have set aside the substantial sum of £10 million to upgrade or replace those systems.

Furthermore, under the Scottish Executive's warm deal programme, householders can have a combination of works carried out to the value of £500 from a package that includes cavity wall insulation, loft insulation and a variety of other energy efficiency measures. We have announced this year's allocation of £3 million for local authorities to carry out warm deal work, which represents a threefold increase over the past year. In addition to local authorities' normal warm deal work, we have given them the flexibility to replace or upgrade partial central heating systems or to use the resources for other measures that will address fuel poverty. That combination of measures is a major step forward in tackling fuel poverty.

I would have liked to mention a variety of other measures, but I will move quickly on to better targeting on fuel-poor households. Our programmes are concerned with the impact that we can make on fuel poverty. Early indications from the first year of the central heating programme show that we are targeting high numbers of fuel poor and that those who are fuel poor are nearly always lifted out of fuel poverty.

We want to ensure that we address all the factors that relate to fuel poverty. The big three energy companies have participated in fuel poverty schemes and in the energy efficiency commitment, which is a scheme that operates throughout the United Kingdom. They have contributed to improving the energy efficiency of thousands of homes in Scotland—we have seen much advertising for EEC schemes lately.

However, one thing that those companies do not advertise is the fact that Scottish customers who have switched supplier pay on average 9 per cent more for their electricity than English customers who have done so and that, among customers who have not switched suppliers, Scottish ones pay 12 per cent more. One reason for the higher prices north of the border might be that companies feel that they can charge their customers more because Scottish customers are less likely to switch than their English counterparts are. Lowering the price of electricity would benefit the fuel poor, especially those who are not connected to the gas grid and who rely on electric central heating. I call on the companies to lower their prices and I assure members that I will pursue that issue.

I ask all the companies to continue to participate fully in our debt arrangement schemes, because we are concerned about the number of disconnections in Scotland. The companies have

participated in discussions with officials and I encourage such engagement. We are all interested in helping people to pay back their debt and to get themselves off prepayment meters—which often have the highest charges—and on to affordable tariffs. We see that as a priority in the coming period.

We cannot tolerate fuel poverty in 21st century Scotland and we are on target to eliminate it. It is unacceptable for people to have to choose between heating and eating. With our partners, we have made much progress in the past six years and I am confident that we will eradicate fuel poverty by 2016.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the new fuel poverty figures from the Scottish House Condition Survey 2002 as good news for Scotland; endorses the Scottish Executive's current fuel poverty programmes, and reaffirms the commitment to eradicate fuel poverty as far as reasonably practicable by 2016.

15:23

Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP): As Scotland generates so much fuel energy, warm housing should be a basic right here. The SNP recognises that the best way in which to take everybody out of fuel poverty would be to have control over that fuel energy.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Shona Robison: Let me get going, please.

Although the SNP welcomes the figures in the "Scottish House Condition Survey 2002", which show a reduction in the level of fuel poverty in Scotland, we must be cautious if we are to get a true picture of the extent of fuel poverty in Scotland. Before the Executive gets too carried away, we should remember that a full analysis of the figures can be undertaken only after the release of the survey's complete data, as Energy Action Scotland has highlighted. The report will be published in March 2004 and will contain information on the extent to which fuel prices and income levels have affected fuel poverty figures. Fuel price and income are two of the three fuel poverty factors and so have a major impact on fuel poverty figures. We should remember that fuel prices could go up again, which would have a huge impact on the fuel poverty figures and the Executive's targets.

We should be cautious about the figures for another reason. As I said in my intervention on the minister's speech—and the point has been well made by Citizens Advice Scotland—the current definition of fuel poverty underestimates the number of low-income households that are suffering fuel poverty. That is due to the way in

which the house condition survey calculates overall household income, including benefits such as free school meals and community care grants. Those benefits cannot be used to meet fuel costs—in fact, it is illegal for community care grants to be used to pay for fuel—yet they are included in calculating whether someone spends more than 10 per cent of their income on fuel and can, therefore, be defined as being fuel poor. Clearly, if those benefits were not included as income, far more people would be defined as fuel poor. We should be cautious about setting targets against the current definition, as it cannot give us an accurate picture of the number of people who are suffering fuel poverty. We must address that.

Despite the progress that is being made, which is recognised in the latest survey, fuel poverty remains a significant and deep-rooted problem. There is no room for complacency when one in six households is still living in fuel poverty—a national statistic that is compounded by the observation that I made in my opening remarks. Scotland is such an energy-rich nation that it is a scandal that we have unacceptably high levels of fuel poverty, with 17 per cent of Scotland's houses still affected by dampness and condensation. Although conditions have improved, too many people in Scotland still have to live in unacceptable housing conditions. Shelter's figures say that at least 102,000 families with children and 98,000 households including an older person are living in houses that are affected by dampness or condensation, with all the associated problems of respiratory difficulties, depression and the many other ailments that we know are directly related to people's housing conditions.

We know that fuel poverty remains common in homes that have no central heating—especially those in the private sector—despite the central heating programme, the warm deal and other worthwhile initiatives. The SNP believes that the central heating programme should be extended to include families with young children, people with disabilities and pensioners with inadequate heating who are suffering fuel poverty. I look forward to receiving Bill Butler's support for my amendment at decision time. The main beneficiaries from that extension would be households in the private sector. We welcome the fact that local authority and housing association properties are being fitted with central heating through their improvement programmes. However, the huge gap in the private sector needs to be addressed.

We should take the opportunity to be ambitious and seek to extend the central heating initiative to the groups that I have mentioned. If we do not, many families with young children, disabled people and pensioners who at the moment do not qualify for the central heating programme will still

have to make the choice between eating and heating. That is unacceptable in this day and age.

I move amendment S2M-627.3, to leave out from "endorses" to end and insert:

"recognises that in energy rich Scotland one in six households are still suffering fuel poverty, and believes that in order to help meet the Scottish Executive's commitment to eradicate fuel poverty by 2016, the central heating programme should be extended to families with young children, people with disabilities and pensioners with inadequate heating."

15:28

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

On behalf of the Scottish Conservatives, I welcome the reduction in fuel poverty that is shown in the "Scottish House Condition Survey 2002". I have many friends who have benefited from the warm deal and free central heating and I know that those initiatives have transformed their lives. Although I fully welcome the progress that has been made, I think that it is right to put on record the fact that the warm deal scheme replaced the highly successful Conservative home energy efficiency scheme, which the Executive took over in 1999. The framework was in place and many people were benefiting from it, so we welcome the Executive's extension of the Conservative scheme. We also support the priority that is being given to the provision of central heating for pensioners. There could be a case for extending that scheme to other groups in the fullness of time, once measured and costed proposals have been produced and the full needs of pensioners have been met.

The biggest contributor to the reduction in fuel poverty has undoubtedly been the privatisation of the utilities. That policy was wholly opposed by Labour, which threatened renationalisation when it got back into power. Seven years, later, however, I am delighted that Labour recognises that the Conservative policy was right.

Cathie Craigie: Will the member give way?

Mary Scanlon: I have only four minutes and I will struggle to fit in everything that I want to say.

The Scottish Labour manifesto in 1999 stated that fuel poverty would be eliminated over two sessions of the Parliament. The target has since been moved from 2007 to November 2016, which is a delay of nine years. Moreover, the aim, as stated in the motion, is now to

"eradicate fuel poverty as far as reasonably practicable".

Fuel poverty is a complex issue. The reduction of bills is a huge factor, but the situation is also helped enormously by energy efficiency. However, the increases in other household bills, such as council tax and water rates, leave less disposable

income to meet fuel costs. A household could spend less than 10 per cent of its disposable income on fuel, but the rises in council tax and water rates—which have been 80 per cent more in Scotland than in England—could lead to debt and difficulty in buying other essential goods. The 10 per cent figure might be appropriate for most people, but I note in the survey that 35 per cent of households include at least one member with a long-term illness or disability compared with 29 per cent in 1996. Moreover, pensioners and disabled people are less mobile, less likely to go out and more likely to be greater users of energy than other people. Help the Aged's briefing paper states that, in ordinary households, rooms are heated for an average of nine hours daily, compared to 16 hours daily for the house of an elderly person, who will also require a higher temperature.

I always like to advocate joined-up services, so I will say a quick word about occupational therapists. In the Highland Council area, 924 people are waiting for an occupational therapist to make an assessment with regard to aids and adaptations to make home living comfortable. There are 290 people on the list that is classed as urgent, which includes those with a terminal illness. They have to wait up to 11 months for an appointment with an occupational therapist.

Before making my final point, as I am running out of time, I will simply state that I welcome housing stock transfer.

At the Energy Action Scotland conference last week—Margaret Ewing, the vice-chairman of the organisation, was also in attendance—I was delighted to hear Martin O'Neill, a Labour MP, talking about genteel and hidden poverty. I hesitate to mention the problem, because I do not know how to measure it, but I would like the minister to keep the issue in mind.

I move amendment S2M-627.2, to insert at end:

"and recognises that the single biggest contributor to a reduction in fuel poverty was the privatisation of the utilities by Conservative governments at Westminster."

15:33

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): The Executive and its supporters can take genuine satisfaction on this occasion. Often when Governments of all descriptions make announcements relating to great new projects and funding for them, nobody ever sees any improvement on the ground. However, in respect of fuel poverty, there has been quite clear improvement. Although there is still a long way to go, the system is clearly delivering for many people in Scotland.

From the briefing materials that I have read and

the meetings that I have been to, I know that there are a number of suggestions to make the system ever better. First, it has been said that funding for advice as well as equipment is important. A lot of people might find that the subtleties of the thermostats and controls of the central heating systems that they are given are hidden from them. Visits from dedicated workers who are trained to explain the systems would ensure that much greater benefit was derived from the investment in the equipment.

Another point relates to the fact that many of the private firms that do the installation work naturally head first for the towns and cities, where it is easier to do a lot of work, and neglect the rural areas. We must make sure that the rural areas, where there are a lot of housing problems, get their fair share of attention.

The minister mentioned disconnections and the debt arrangement scheme. It is important for us to keep up pressure to stop the steep and unfortunate rise in the number of disconnections. The minister has her eye on the ball, but she has to kick it rather straighter than the Scotland football players can.

There are various suggestions for widening the scheme, although, as the minister said, money is not unlimited. The extension of the grant to private sector houses with partial heating—a lot of older houses have a bit of heating and could benefit from full heating—should be in the queue somewhere. An intelligent suggestion has been made that we could combine working on energy efficiency, income support and market savings. Examples of collective efforts were cited, whereby people have benefited from a lower tariff. A lot of poor people are hit by a higher tariff. If all those areas of work were brought together, people could benefit from enhanced energy efficiency and cheaper fuel.

We need to consider the obstacles to progress. Sometimes, landlords are not helpful and human problems are always the greatest. There are also EECs. When I first read about those, I thought that they were an old European scheme, but they are in fact energy efficiency commitment schemes. In those schemes, there is no possibility of top-up and, in some instances, the grant is not high enough to attract people to take up the scheme. It might be worth considering having slightly higher individual grants. Fewer people would be helped as a result, but the help would be genuine, unlike in a scheme that many people will not take up.

We have made good progress and the Executive and all the other people involved deserve some credit. There are a lot of interesting ideas around. On no other subject have I had more bumf or heard more suggestions, so I know that a lot of people out there have ideas that we can pick up.

15:37

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Fuel poverty is a critical issue and is perhaps more of a problem for Scotland than it is for any other nation in Europe. Fuel poverty does not discriminate between the young and the old. Cold, damp homes mean low resistance to illness among the elderly and an increased likelihood of winter deaths. Cold and dampness can also force young families who cannot afford to heat the rest of the house into a single room, causing tension and making homework more difficult for young people to do, which can lower their academic achievement.

We are aware of many of the problems around fuel poverty. However, how we define it is important in enabling us to realise the extent of the problem. The definitions that we have been using, which relate to the expenditure of 10 per cent of household income on fuel, ignore the fact that there are differences in fixed expenditure among households. We need a more stringent, inclusive definition, which must incorporate disposable income.

What affects fuel poverty? The Executive has already spelled out three factors: household income, fuel prices and energy efficiency standards. All three are important, but unfortunately the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament have genuine control over only the last one.

Let us turn to income. The benefits system is extremely important and should be more streamlined. The Green party would introduce a universal citizens income, which would cover basic needs, including fuel, and would be payable as a tax credit for those in work or as a benefit for those out of work.

The problem with the Tory amendment is that fuel prices can go up as well as down. Therefore, poverty can increase.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): Once the Green party has abolished oil, gas and nuclear power, what will the average increase be in the price of fuel for the ordinary Scot?

Mr Ruskell: We already know about the heavy subsidy of the nuclear industry. If that cost is anything to go by, I think that fuel prices will remain roughly the same.

We need to focus on energy efficiency because focusing only on income and fuel price will lead to increased consumption. That would be bad for sustainability, but it would also mean that there would be no improvement to housing stock.

The house condition survey found that the average house in Scotland had an efficiency score

of only 4.5 out of 10 in 2002, which was a small increase from the score of 4.1 in 1996. If we compare that score to the score of average house in Norway, which is around 8, we can see the magnitude of the task that we face. Moreover, one in six houses in Scotland still suffers from dampness and condensation, so there are issues about the state of our housing stock. That is the area over which we have the most control, but it is also the area in which there seems to be the least improvement.

I realise that the Executive has set itself an extremely difficult task. However, it has said that it is prepared to set milestones on the way to meeting its target for 2016. It should set specific milestones to take account of some of the difficult problems that we face in relation to the improvement of housing stock such as older, stone-built properties, non-traditional post-war housing and housing in the private rented sector. The Greens' concern is that the Executive will focus only on the easy gains of public sector housing. I would like the minister to say how the Executive might set the milestones.

The Executive has made some good first steps and its work in setting a target has been useful. However, we need a comprehensive legislative approach to tackle fuel poverty; we need a warm homes bill to be introduced in the Scottish Parliament.

15:41

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): I, too, welcome the results of the Scottish house condition survey, which shows that the amount of fuel poverty in Scotland has halved. To reduce the number of fuel-poor people by nearly 400,000 while widening the definition of fuel poverty is a hugely significant achievement. It represents vital progress for the many vulnerable Scots who have lived for too long in cold, poorly insulated homes in a cold climate. That progress has been made not by accident, but through a well-thought-out strategy and a concerted effort by the Executive.

I was fortunate enough to be at the launch of the Executive's free central heating programme three years ago, while I was working for Help the Aged Scotland. That charity welcomed the programme because it had been involved in highlighting the particular misery that is suffered by older people as a result of fuel poverty. Help the Aged Scotland ran a high-profile national campaign called "Heating or eating", which highlighted the stark choices that some older people have to make. Following that campaign, the chancellor introduced the winter fuel allowance, which has also been an important factor in reducing fuel poverty because it addresses the key point—let us provide older people with free central heating, but

let us ensure that they can afford to use it. That is why we should welcome today's announcement by the Department for Work and Pensions that, for the first time ever, about 2 million households that contain someone aged over 80 will automatically receive £100 on top of the £200 winter fuel payment.

Another campaign by Help the Aged highlighted Scotland's excessive winter death rate, to which Mr Ruskell referred. Scotland's rate is worse than that of colder European countries; last winter's rate was higher than the normal rate by about 2,500 deaths, about 500 of which were in the Grampian and Tayside areas. Those figures are lower than in previous years, but they show that we still need to make progress. Of course, cold homes are one of a number of factors in such deaths, but older people are affected particularly badly by every aspect of fuel poverty and our winter climate. Three quarters of excessive winter deaths are in the over-75 age band, and 239,000 pensioner households live in fuel poverty—that is 65 per cent of the total number of households that are in fuel poverty.

The progress that is being made shows that the Executive and the Government are targeting the correct groups of people in tackling fuel poverty, and that they are offering an holistic approach to the problem through a package of measures including warm deal grants and the central heating scheme.

The Executive is helped in its efforts by other organisations; one notable scheme is SCARF, the save cash and reduce fuel campaign that was set up in Aberdeen in 1995 to offer education and advice on energy issues. That addresses the crucial point that people who are worried about fuel costs need to be given effective advice on how to use fuel efficiently, as Donald Gorrie said.

It is important to monitor our progress in tackling fuel poverty and that is why I welcome the broad representation on the Executive's Scottish fuel poverty advisory group, which includes the power companies and voluntary sector groups. Vigilance is required to ensure that the free central heating scheme runs well. It is an excellent programme that has made a significant impact by lifting households out of fuel poverty, but I have come across a couple of cases in which people are unhappy with the standard of installation by contractors.

Not only must we monitor the performance of Executive schemes, but we must monitor fuel poverty in general. We are moving ahead in leaps and bounds; that has been assisted by lower charges for household fuel consumption. However, we all know that prices could rise in future.

I am sure that the Executive is well aware of the challenges. I hope that it will take further successful measures to make progress towards its stated aim of ending fuel poverty in Scotland by 2016. That is a bold target but, on the evidence of recent progress, it is one that we can achieve.

15:45

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):

I welcome the actions that the Executive is taking to eradicate fuel poverty in Scotland. However, I have said before, and it is worth saying again, that the central heating scheme does not go far enough. When the Executive introduced the scheme, I argued that families with young children should be included. Children are the one group for whom a dry, warm home can truly be life enhancing. I welcomed the minister's statement earlier today that we should examine how to extend the central heating scheme to other vulnerable groups. Cold, damp homes lead to bronchitis, asthma and other respiratory diseases; much work is being done in various research programmes to investigate the links.

For children, cold, damp homes can mean poor health and absence from school. That, in turn, leads to poor educational achievement. I urge the minister to include families in the scheme. Doing so could make a real difference to the 102,000 families in Scotland who live in cold, damp homes.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): Does the member mean all families, or will she give a definition of the vulnerable families who would be targeted?

Tricia Marwick: I mean the 102,000 families with children who are living in cold, damp homes. That figure is from the "Scottish House Condition Survey".

As others have said, fuel poverty is determined by three factors: poor energy efficiency; low household income, where more than 10 per cent of income is used on fuel costs; and the price of domestic fuel. The minister has not dwelt on some issues in the "Scottish House Condition Survey". For example, 88 per cent of all houses in Scotland fail to meet the standard for energy efficiency that was set for new homes way back in 1991. Although I accept that the Executive has made progress, I think that it is disingenuous to suggest that the reduction in the number of fuel-poor families is all, or mostly, down to Executive and Government action. Most independent commentators accept that the drop in fuel poverty has happened mainly because of changes in income and fuel prices—both of which are outwith the control of the Executive. If the Executive does not accept that, I must warn—as others have done—that, with fuel prices, what comes down will

inevitably go up. That will lead again to an increase in the level of fuel poverty.

Will the minister confirm that a further Scottish house condition survey will be carried out in 2007? Will she advise how, in the years up to 2008—when that survey will, I presume, report—the Executive will measure fuel poverty in Scotland? How will that information be reported to Parliament?

15:48

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I still have vivid childhood memories of fuel poverty in the late 1940s in immediate post-war Aberdeen. Of course, it was not called fuel poverty then; indeed, it was the norm that families huddled around the coal fire in the living room, which was the only warm place in the house. I remember getting partially dressed under the bedclothes and shooting downstairs away from the ice-covered bedroom windows to complete the exercise. I can still see and feel my red and painful toes, which had chilblains for most of the winter. Thank goodness that time has moved on and that fewer and fewer people have memories such as those.

The latest “Scottish House Condition Survey” shows a considerable decrease in the total number of inadequately heated households. However, there are still 239,000 pensioner households—that is, more than one third of such households—where people cannot afford to heat their home properly. Those people spend a lot of time indoors and they need a higher temperature than younger people to sustain their body warmth. Every winter, they have to make choices between food and adequate heating. Sadly, each winter we are reminded of the statistic that hypothermia is a factor in three times more deaths among the over-65s in Scotland than it is in England and Wales.

Few would disagree with the Scottish Executive’s fuel poverty statement of last year, which aimed to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, fuel poverty is eradicated in Scotland by November 2016. Efforts to improve the home conditions of less affluent families have been going on since the early 1990s, when the Conservative Government introduced the home energy efficiency scheme. Between 1991 and the replacement of that scheme by Labour’s warm deal programme, 3 million households had been helped to install energy-efficient measures such as loft or cavity-wall insulation in their homes. As Mary Scanlon said, the warm deal scheme is really a continuation, with modifications, of Conservative policy.

The Executive’s five-year central heating programme is set to benefit 140,000 homes, of which 40,000 are in the private sector. That is

commendable, but there is still a significantly high level of fuel poverty, particularly in the private rented sector. There is certainly no room for complacency.

As the minister said, the number of households that are being disconnected from their energy supply due to debt is a serious concern. That leaves people without heating, lighting, warm water and cooking facilities because they cannot afford their bills. That is happening against a background of a real-terms decrease in energy costs for consumers, since the Conservative Government privatised the utilities and drove down prices. The only soaring cost to consumers today is the cost of water, which we did not put into the private sector—the sooner that that industry is in the hands of its customers, the better.

Mrs Ewing: What does Nanette Milne think of the decision that means that we will lose the subsidy for the Highlands and Islands, which will send costs soaring by 10 per cent? Does she agree with her colleague Murdo Fraser that that is a very unfortunate attitude to take?

Mrs Milne: I did not hear what Murdo Fraser said. I will discuss the matter with him after the debate.

The proportion of households that are being disconnected is still quite small, but the number is increasing. More must be done to help and advise people before they reach the stage of having their supplies cut off, because that experience is utterly devastating.

It is a well-known fact that those who are most in need, particularly older people, are often the least likely to seek help. I agree with Energy Action Scotland that the Scottish Executive and its partners should increase their efforts to raise public awareness of both fuel poverty and energy efficiency and to encourage co-ordinated effort between the health, housing and energy-efficiency sectors in the battle against fuel poverty.

It is a case of so far so good. The Scottish Executive is making steady progress along the road to eradicating fuel poverty in Scotland, but the journey is not yet over and the pace will have to quicken if the destination is to be reached by the target of 2016.

15:52

John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): A feature of the Parliament over the past few years has been that we have had an annual debate on fuel poverty. In this year’s debate, we can welcome the good news that the number of people who suffer from fuel poverty has dropped considerably, but we still have a long way to go to eradicate fuel poverty completely.

There is no doubt, as other members have said, that the Executive's policy and the partnership objectives of reducing fuel poverty are laudable. However, the problem is not the objective; it is the implementation of the objective. I refer to the free central heating schemes for pensioners that are being delivered by the Eaga Partnership. I am in no doubt that many people have benefited from the scheme, but there are also a fair number who have not. The problem that the Executive must address in implementing the central heating programme is the delivery of the expectations that the scheme has created.

Firms that were employed to install the new heating systems in qualifying homes chose to install the systems in urban homes due to ease of access and the concentration of jobs. They have concentrated on those areas, which has left most rural communities at the end of the list for the roll-out of the scheme despite the fact that rural properties are subject to worsening factors, such as exposure, which might necessitate the swifter upgrade of their heating systems. It is not clear that that problem has yet been solved.

Fergus Ewing: Not for the first time, I agree with every word that John Farquhar Munro has said so far. Does he agree that the difficulty with Eaga is that it does not have enough staff and surveyors to carry out the work that it has to do and that that is causing much of the delay?

John Farquhar Munro: Yes. The difficulty to which Fergus Ewing refers is very evident in rural parts of the Highlands. Through my constituency work, I have encountered many people who have been left very unhappy with the service that Eaga delivers. Unfortunately, I have been left with the feeling that work is often not completed to a satisfactory standard because the people receiving the benefit are elderly and on low incomes and that they are therefore treated as second-class citizens who should be grateful for what they are getting. I do not agree with that, but it is what appears to be happening.

Ms Curran: I apologise for intervening and for leaving the chamber earlier—that was unavoidable. However, I caught what John Farquhar Munro and Fergus Ewing said. I want to investigate any concerns that MSPs have expressed about the operation of Eaga and will do so. I will report back to members about their individual and collective concerns.

John Farquhar Munro: I thank the minister for those comments.

Work has not been completed properly, a mess has been left and workmanship has been shoddy. In a recent case in my constituency, an elderly couple was promised that an inspector or engineer would come on a specific date. The old bodies

decided that they would stay in to welcome that individual, but he failed to turn up. That happened on two subsequent occasions, keeping the couple housebound for almost two weeks while they waited for the individual to call. A simple phone call would have avoided all that trauma.

The description that I have given may be unfair for the overall free central heating programme, but it is certainly accurate for the Highlands and, I suspect, for rural Scotland as a whole. I started by noting that this has become an annual debate. I hope that before too long there will be no need for such a debate, as we work to eradicate the scourge of fuel poverty, for the benefit and comfort of those whom we consider to be the most vulnerable in our communities. However, there is still much work to be done.

15:57

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Lab): I, too, welcome the opportunity to speak in today's short debate on fuel poverty. I also welcome the publication of the "Scottish House Condition Survey" and the information that it provides on performance so far in tackling fuel poverty and many other aspects of housing.

As we know, there is unfortunately no quick fix that will eradicate fuel poverty. If only we could flick a switch, how simple that would be. Realistic ministers of the Scottish Executive, past and present, and campaigners working on the issue of fuel poverty know that there are no simple solutions that will have an immediate effect and that we need to plan and put in place at all levels of Government measures that target the causes of fuel poverty.

Thankfully, after years of neglect, Government has taken and is taking action. Earlier this afternoon, Richard Baker told members how the Scottish Executive and the Westminster Government are moving forward by working in partnership. The fact that in the past six years the number of households living in fuel poverty has more than halved is a sign that measures designed to address the issues of low income, fuel cost and energy efficiency are beginning to bring about improvements. However, as the minister acknowledged, there is still much to do.

Nanette Milne gave her experiences of fuel poverty, but in a different way. I smile because I remember doing the same sort of things. It was fun to sit huddled round a big, highly stoked coal fire—money was not lacking to pay for the fuel. Few members will have had experience of having to scrimp to pay energy bills or of having to ration the amount of heat and light that they use because they do not have the money to feed the electricity meter. Unfortunately, that is the reality and way of

life for too many families—families with children and pensioners—who live in poor-quality homes that are not energy efficient and whose limited cash is literally flying out of the window.

The Scottish Executive must continue to drive up standards in Scotland's housing and must meet the targets that have been set. Once local authorities' housing strategies are available to the Executive, it must respond to the identified need with additional resources if necessary.

The Scottish Executive must continue to take the lead in driving up standards in our homes. It must ensure that housing is built to energy-efficient standards and that the good practice that is found up and down the country is shared. It is proven that if a little bit extra is spent on insulation and more time is spent on the design of new-build homes or modernisation projects, energy consumption and costs are reduced.

There is a lot to talk about, but I will take a few minutes to deal with some specific issues.

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

Cathie Craigie: Energywatch Scotland contends that the most extreme experience of fuel poverty is being disconnected from supply. I am sure that we all agree with that. The minister mentioned that the debt arrangement scheme and continued dialogue with suppliers will help to protect people from disconnection. However, change to reserved legislation is required to stop domestic disconnection. I know that the minister speaks to her colleagues at Westminster and I ask her to add her considerable voice to calls for changes to legislation that will stop domestic disconnection.

Some people use prepayment meters as a method of managing their household budget, but people on low incomes who are forced to use that method pay much more for their electricity. It cannot be right and fair that they are paying more for using the same number of units as I do. I welcome the minister's commitment to continued dialogue and I hope that the milestones that we have set are reached. I look forward to the day when people can use electricity and power as they need it.

16:02

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): I have three points to make. I welcome the fact that there has been a reduction of approximately 50 per cent in fuel poverty during the past seven years. Is it not now time to revisit the target of eliminating fuel poverty by 2016? If we have reduced the figure by 50 per cent during the past seven years, why can we not reduce it by the remaining 50 per cent during the next seven years? Instead of a target of

eliminating fuel poverty by 2016, which suggests a slowing down in the rate of activity, we should keep up the present pressure and try to eliminate it altogether by 2010.

This is one of those rare occasions when moving the goalposts of Government targets would receive approval from members throughout the chamber. I ask the minister to think about that seriously. If, by 2010, we still had an outstanding problem such as the one that Tricia Marwick suggested, we could deal with residual issues after that time. Alternatively, we could deal with some of those issues now, but there is a case for revisiting the target in the light of the progress that has been made.

Secondly, I encourage the minister to take an energetic and robust attitude to the energy companies who are charging customers in Scotland up to 12 per cent more for their power supply than they charge south of the border. That is unacceptable, and what makes it more unacceptable is that the additional profit that is generated by customers in Scotland is being used to cross-subsidise customers south of the border and to engage in marketing activity.

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

Alex Neil: Unfortunately I have only four minutes. However, Jeremy Purvis needs the practice.

Jeremy Purvis: I will learn from the master.

Alex Neil has talked, rightly, about the power companies and the increased charges in Scotland. Ofgem wants to address that with the new British electricity trading and transmission arrangements. I believe that SNP spokespeople have in the past accepted the need for a British trading agreement. How would independence help with that?

Alex Neil: If we were independent, we would be in charge of our own energy supplies. In any case, an independent government would not have allowed a situation to arise in which the Scottish people in energy-rich Scotland were paying 12 per cent more than those in energy-poor England for their energy. We certainly would not be cross-subsidising the entry by Scottish Power, and the other Scottish energy companies, into new markets south of the border. What makes the situation particularly unacceptable is the fact that, on top of that 12 per cent differential, Scotland has a far colder and wetter climate. As I said, everyone—with the possible exception of Jeremy Purvis—will be behind the minister if she takes a robust line with the regulator and the companies to address that issue.

I will make my final point in general terms, because I do not have any more time. I should first

say that, unlike Nanette Milne, Cathie Craigie and other members, I was not around in the 1940s to sit around the fire—I had to wait until the 1960s to do that. My final point is that we must not ignore the income side of this matter. Although the issue is by and large not a devolved responsibility, it is time that we sent a clear message to the Westminster Government that people still suffer from fuel poverty because their incomes are still too low. I ask the minister to address that issue as well as the others that I have mentioned.

16:06

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Alex Neil's final point is important. The Scottish house condition survey has revealed that 32 per cent of Scottish households—that is, 690,000 people in Scotland—have a weekly income of less than £200. I know that all members in the chamber will want the problem of income poverty to be addressed, because it leads both to fuel poverty and to poverty in many other aspects of daily life.

Over the past four years of the Scottish Parliament, I have found that, when we take part in debates and discussions about the Scottish Parliament's achievements—particularly at question time—some members can name more examples than others. I sometimes struggle to name any achievements, apart from the central heating programme. Indeed, that programme has been a real achievement, because it has tackled an absolute need and addressed a life-and-death matter. It has also been a great achievement because the delivery of the service was not means tested.

I am glad that the minister has made some very positive noises about rolling out the programme to people with partial central heating systems. Obviously, the programme had to start somewhere. In many areas of Glasgow, there were arguments over which side of the street the programme should start on. There will always be arguments about where a programme starts; however, now that progress has been made, I hope that the programme will be rolled out to those pensioners who invested in a central heating system that is now either redundant or so old that it is too expensive to operate. I hope that the minister will continue to be positive in that respect.

Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP)
rose—

Fergus Ewing rose—

Tommy Sheridan: I will take my own member.

Frances Curran: In the eight years that I have lived in council and housing association housing, I have not had gas central heating or any other form of heating apart from an electric fire. For four of

those years, I had a baby. The situation is unacceptable. Does Tommy Sheridan agree that a lot of hot air is talked about targets in this Parliament and that it is time we started to move on this matter?

Tommy Sheridan: I will also give way to Fergus Ewing.

Fergus Ewing: As Tommy Sheridan knows, we, too, want the successful central heating scheme to be extended. Indeed, we all want that to happen. Would it not be better to spend money on extending the scheme than on renationalising the power companies?

Tommy Sheridan: Frances Curran made a critical point about families with children who cannot afford to heat their homes properly. The message from the chamber is that we want the central heating and insulation programme to be extended to include not just pensioner households but households with children, in particular small children.

Fergus Ewing's point was largely irrelevant to the debate because, until we get an independent socialist Scotland, we will not be able to take over the power companies. [*Interruption.*] I will answer Fergus Ewing's question if he will be quiet. If he is asking me whether I think electricity and gas should be owned and controlled democratically by the people of Scotland, the answer is yes. In the member's vision of an independent Scotland, private energy companies will still control the energy resources of this country. I do not think that that is independence, so we have a basic disagreement on that point.

I am sure that the minister accepts that we must be wary about the figures that have been reported. In the consultation process, Energy Action Scotland made the point that the definition of fuel poverty—whether the 10 per cent of household income spent on fuel is before or after housing costs are paid—makes a large difference. The definition that the Executive uses has inflated the number of people who are now estimated not to be in fuel poverty. At least another 200,000 people would be in fuel poverty if the numbers were calculated after housing costs were paid rather than before. I hope that the minister accepts that as a constructive criticism rather than a negative one. We must consider rolling out the programme to all citizens in all housing in Scotland because it should be a basic prerequisite of housing in Scotland in the 21st century that it is properly centrally heated and insulated.

16:12

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Like Nanette Milne, Cathie Craigie and Frances Curran, I have experiences of

fuel poverty. I remember waking up in bed with ice on the inside of my window and rushing through to get a bath before going to school because my mum and dad had to be careful about where the money went on the weekly bills. I remember being delighted when my dad put central heating into our house.

For many constituents in the Borders who have genuine housing problems, fuel poverty is an important issue and, as Donald Gorrie said, it is a delight to be debating progress on the matter.

Much of the housing stock in the Borders is with social landlords and is vulnerable to external events, such as the flooding in Selkirk in June. There are still 10 families in caravans who were decanted there after the flooding.

We have historical problems. Galashiels was the town in Scotland with the highest proportion of outside amenities in the 1970s and there is still housing below tolerable standard, on which Margaret Ewing touched.

The debate has been progressive and I will be delighted to carry it on with Alex Neil. The irrational position of having a privatised system in an independent Scotland but under British trading agreements—according to the SNP's policy—is no doubt a subject for further debate.

Given the historical perspective and the fact that, according to the Scottish Low Pay Unit, the Borders has the second lowest average weekly earnings, fuel poverty is a genuine concern for my constituents. Members have paid tribute to the central heating programme, which has had a good effect. The minister's speech showed that we have achieved a reduction in fuel poverty to almost a third of the 1997 figure. That good progress is to be greatly welcomed.

We need to turn our attention to the future, whether it is to new targets, as Alex Neil suggested, or to putting greater pressure on the fuel companies, which we all wish to do.

Local planning and the relationship between the Scottish Executive and local authorities are crucial. I pay tribute to Scottish Borders Council, because the Borders benefits from a sustainable energy in community planning programme that states categorically the principle that fuel poverty is also linked to environmental impacts and local transport and housing needs. That is a model for the future of the relationship between the Scottish Executive and local authorities. It is about partnership and about addressing the concerns that my colleague John Farquhar Munro and Fergus Ewing raised about the quality of the work. Indeed, correspondence on that issue has filled my mailbag since June.

There have been other issues to do with the companies, such as mis-selling. We have not

touched on that in this debate, but it has been a scourge in Scotland, with rogue traders preying on the most vulnerable in society by mis-selling bad deals. I am glad that the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets has teeth and has fined companies for mis-selling.

The focus will have to be on a future that does not rely on lower fuel prices. It is about insulation in private homes. The most startling statistic on which I would like the Executive to focus is one that Margaret Ewing touched on, which is the high proportion of new homes that do not meet the insulation standards that they should meet. Yes, we are tackling those who are most in need and we have made real progress, but we must take the agenda forward. This debate has been a good contributing factor to that.

16:16

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

I open by congratulating Tommy Sheridan on the quality of his speech. It would be a joke to say that it was the best one he made today, but he made two important points that are worth dwelling on. The first one—and this is where he and I agree, and disagree with others in the chamber—is that fuel poverty, like absolute poverty, is a moving target and will remain so. We will never be on top of it. However long we go on, fuel poverty will always have to be addressed. The issue might be relatively different from what we have experienced in the past, but it will remain an issue.

The second issue on which I agree with Tommy Sheridan is that one of the great achievements of this Parliament—and of the Scottish Executive, of course—is the central heating programme. The fact that cold homes have existed in Scotland for generations is something that we all understand. The fact that that is unacceptable in this day and age is something that we have all come to understand as well. For that reason, it is extremely important that a programme exists to put central heating into houses.

However, as many members have pointed out, the programme has not been without its problems. The cause of that was the impact on the marketplace—in terms of those who were able to do the job and the physical resources that were necessary—when the programme arrived. It created far too much demand in an economy that was not able to supply it. I have also received many complaints about the quality and delivery of the central heating programme, but I hope that the Executive is now on top of that. I will look for reassurance from the minister that progress has been, and will continue to be, made in the delivery of the central heating programme.

It would be remiss of me not to comment on one or two things that a range of members mentioned:

the cost of energy and how that impacts on fuel poverty. We must take a broader view of the issue, and not consider it in isolation. There are potential problems with the supply of energy and the associated cost, and if we do not address them at the earliest opportunity, we may suffer from them in the longer term.

First, the energy white paper that was published at Westminster dodged many of the issues that relate to the generation of cost-effective electricity in Scotland in the longer term. In addition, by making a commitment to 40 per cent of energy from renewable energy sources in Scotland by 2020, the Executive might well have bitten off more than it can chew. We must consider energy policy in Scotland across the board. We must decide how energy will be generated over the next 15 to 17 years and consider the means by which we can generate affordable energy for the future. It is all very well to talk about sustainable electricity generation—not only do I understand that, I accept and support many of the concepts within it—but if it results in rising energy prices, we will be fighting a losing battle against the problem of fuel poverty. We must address that at this very early stage.

We need to take a much broader view of fuel poverty, keep it on our agenda for the longer term and understand that if we cannot generate cost-effective electricity and other energy sources in Scotland, we will be in long-term difficulty.

16:20

Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP): The debate has been interesting. It is an annual debate but, as John Farquhar Munro said, we must talk ourselves out of having the debate annually, because our aim is the eradication of fuel poverty.

I start by declaring a registered interest: I am the vice president of Energy Action Scotland. The post is unremunerated, but it is a registered interest. At least four of the members present were at the EAS conference in Falkirk, which was last week, and found it extremely interesting. EAS is a very dedicated, hard-working and committed group of people that brings together all the interests involved in energy action. I know that the Executive is working closely with EAS on EEC2 and expects a further report from EAS when it has considered the house condition survey. I am glad that EAS has that role.

My second interest is that I founded the all-party group on warm homes in Westminster many years ago, which was quite an achievement. The group has done a great deal of work at Westminster, and I pay tribute to my successor as its chair, Alan Simpson, who is a bit of a rebel of an MP—I do not think that he is Tony Blair's favourite person. Alan Simpson has kept up the pressure and has

worked closely with Energy Action Scotland, which is an associate member of the group.

I welcome all the advances that have been made on fuel poverty. We have come a long way since Edwina Currie handed out the advice to knit woolly hats and gloves and stay at home with one bar of the fire on. I have worked on fuel poverty for more than 30 years and feel passionately about it. The all-party group on warm homes at Westminster was about not only Scotland, but the whole of the United Kingdom. We were the people who raised the issue of excess winter deaths and pushed any Government that was in power to produce ideas to resolve the problem. Members must welcome the progress.

Shona Robison and others in the Scottish National Party have mentioned that Scotland is an energy-rich country, which is true. I have recommended to the SNP group that we cannot under any circumstances support the Conservative amendment, not least because of the point that I raised with Nanette Milne, which is that, as it says in the headline of the article that I have here, "Power bills may rise by 10%". I would have thought that Nanette Milne would buy *The Press & Journal* just as I do. That is where the major report on the removal of hydro benefit was to be found, although the issue was also reported in *The Herald*.

The removal of that subsidy will have an impact on heating bills throughout the north and north-east of Scotland. Last year, the benefit was worth roughly £40 million, and there has been a long-term commitment to such a subsidy. The owners of the company involved, Scottish and Southern Energy plc, say:

"the combined effect would leave Scottish and Southern around £30 million a year better off."

That £30 million will probably come from the pockets of the people in the colder Highland areas of Scotland.

I also say to the minister that I agree completely with what Alex Neil said about moving the goal posts—I wish that he had been in Amsterdam last night, as that might have helped us a wee bit—but we need to have the vision and ambition to pull the date for the eradication of fuel poverty closer and closer. In our surgeries, we surely all meet people of all ages who come in talking about condensation, mould and dampness, which is distressing. It does not matter whether they come from private, council or housing association property; if they have such problems, they must be addressed. As Tricia Marwick said, those issues affect children's and others' health, and we want that to be taken into account much more.

Donald Gorrie and Richard Baker mentioned advice. MSPs can give advice too. In the reception

of my constituency office, I have as many leaflets as possible on all the subjects under the sun, which can be distributed to people who visit the office, because, sometimes, they are not sure which organisation to approach.

I will bring my speech to a close, although I could say much more. As I said, I have worked on the issue for about 30 years, so I could go on for ever. The political will is needed to deal with the matter. There is a consensus in the chamber. Our views about the solution may vary, but the objective is agreed. Let us get on with it.

16:25

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Mrs Mary Mulligan): We still have a long way to go before we have tackled fuel poverty, but we can reflect on and take some comfort from the results so far. However, we cannot take all the credit. As Tricia Marwick said, it will take many partners to tackle such a widespread problem, but we are focused on our goal and I am confident that, together, we will eradicate fuel poverty by 2016. I will return to that target.

Last week, we learned the prevalence of fuel poverty when the "Scottish House Condition Survey 2002" was released. We in the Executive and Communities Scotland will analyse those results, and a more extensive fuel poverty report should be released in March next year. Soon, we will also have the results of the first year of the Alembic Research project on the impact that the central heating programme has had on fuel poverty. In addition, the annual report on the central heating programme and the warm deal should be released in the near future. We will then be in a better position to see not only what fuel poverty looks like in Scotland, but what effects our programmes are having. We will then need to consider the future.

Mary Scanlon: Why has the Executive delayed the target date for eradicating fuel poverty from 2007 to 2016?

Mrs Mulligan: That is because we have worked with several partners on developing a detailed strategy that will bring about a successful conclusion.

We know that we will have to improve at targeting homes that are in fuel poverty. The National Audit Office's review of the warm front scheme in England contains lessons for us. We suspected that using the receipt of benefits as a proxy for fuel poverty was not a reliable tool and the NAO report has confirmed that. We hope that the fuel poverty forum's sub-group on information will point to ways of targeting homes better.

Tricia Marwick: Will the minister give way?

Mrs Mulligan: If Tricia Marwick does not mind, I will not give way, as I do not have long for my speech and I have many answers to give to points that members made.

One of the lessons that we have learned is that fuel poverty cannot be tackled by one means alone. Fuel poverty is generally made up of three elements, and each element must be addressed. Our benefits health check has brought substantial income into people's homes. The latest survey results show that households that have made benefit claims following advice receive between £800 and £1,000 more per annum. Energy advice is also crucial, especially when a person has received a central heating system for the first time—Donald Gorrie referred to that. People must know how to use their systems effectively to use them best. The work of the fuel poverty forum's sub-group on income maximisation will provide us with valuable information about the best ways to provide benefits health checks and energy advice.

We will have to consider many other matters. We must start thinking about how to heat the hard-to-heat homes—that is a tongue twister—which are perhaps more accurately called expensive-to-heat homes. I suggest to Alex Neil that that is why it would be difficult to change the target at this stage, because we are tackling substantially more difficult-to-heat homes.

We must also consider how our warm deal programme is working, especially as it interacts with the energy efficiency commitment. EEC and the warm deal offer similar measures to similar groups of people. We must consider ways to use our warm deal resources more flexibly.

We may know answers to those questions already, but we are taking the time now to find out how effective our ideas would be.

Tricia Marwick asked whether there will be another house condition survey in 2007. There will be an on-going survey for which we will continue to gather statistics, but they will not be comparable until about 2006. We will make arrangements to report those statistics to the Parliament.

Margaret Curran has said today that we will examine the work of Eaga, which John Farquhar Munro and Alex Johnstone mentioned, and we will follow that up. Cathie Craigie made pertinent points about prepayment meters, and we must continue to discuss that with our Westminster colleagues.

As Margaret Curran said in her opening speech, fuel poverty is unacceptable in 21st century Scotland. It can seriously affect the health of people who are already vulnerable and exacerbate their vulnerability, and the Scottish ministers are committed to its eradication. We have seen how much fuel poverty can be lessened in a relatively

short period of time, and it would be easy to put the issue on the back burner and forget about it, but fuel poverty has too much of an impact on the quality of people's lives. We cannot and we will not be complacent.

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-543, in the name of Margaret Curran, on the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill, which is UK legislation, and one amendment to the motion.

16:31

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Mrs Mary Mulligan): There was much discussion on the bill at the Communities Committee recently, and I have followed up that discussion with letters to members who asked individual questions. However, I am more than happy to try to respond to any questions that members still have.

I move,

That the Parliament endorses the principle of including in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill provisions to remove Crown immunity from planning controls for development and agrees that the relevant provisions to achieve this end should be considered by the UK Parliament.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I now call Patrick Harvie to speak to and move amendment S2M-543.1. Mr Harvie, you have four minutes.

16:32

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): The minister's motion asks us to approve the UK Parliament's intention to legislate to bring Crown land into the planning system. That objective is, of course, to be warmly welcomed. It is clearly unacceptable for the Crown to have immunity from the planning rules that affect the rest of society; I have no objection whatever to removal of that immunity.

The purpose of my amendment is to highlight three areas in which the Crown will retain unreasonable advantages in the planning system—advantages that private applicants for planning permission will not have. Because of those advantages, objectors in Crown planning cases will not get a fair crack of the whip. I would like to outline briefly the circumstances in which those Crown advantages will apply.

In cases in which it is believed by the Scottish ministers or the Secretary of State for Scotland that disclosure would compromise national security, planning inquiries that would otherwise have been held in public will take place behind closed doors. That will limit the ability of objectors to make their cases. The proposal to allow the Lord Advocate to appoint a special advocate to represent the interests of individuals will not make

up for that disadvantage. In discussions in the Communities Committee, the reassurances that Mary Mulligan, the Deputy Minister for Communities, gave were in my view insufficient to ensure that the rights of objectors would be maintained. It is still unclear what should happen if the Lord Advocate decides not to appoint a special advocate.

The second matter that concerns me is that of urgent planning applications. In such cases, the local authority will be bypassed; the application will go directly to the Scottish ministers. The skipping of a stage in the normal planning process will put objectors at a time disadvantage.

Enforcement is my third concern. The Crown's exemption from prosecution is to be maintained, and courts will be unable to deal with problems of enforcement. As enforcement is such a perennial problem in private planning cases, with work being done without planning permission or outwith the terms of a successful application, objectors can often lose all confidence in the planning system. Enforcement is a crucial issue that should be addressed.

There are, of course, enormous problems with the planning system in general; the Executive agrees with that, having made a commitment to reform it during this session of Parliament. When that time comes, we will argue that the presumption in favour of development should be replaced by a presumption in favour only of sustainable development. However that debate goes, Crown planning applications—either before or after the reforms—should not be given unreasonable advantages. I ask Parliament to send those concerns to the UK Parliament.

I move amendment S2M-543.1, to insert at end:

"but, in so doing, expresses its concerns over several provisions contained in the Bill, namely those relating to national security, urgency and enforcement; believes that these provisions could face objectors with a greater disadvantage in Crown planning cases than they are faced with in private planning cases, and considers that the UK Parliament should address these issues during its consideration of the Bill."

16:34

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I thank the minister for making herself available to the Communities Committee. The change in the way in which we deal with Sewel motions, whereby they go to committee, is a valuable change to parliamentary procedures. It was useful to hear from the minister; the committee successfully—and reasonably amicably—dealt with a number of issues that might have exercised the wider Parliament. The committee had scheduled 10 minutes for dealing with the matter, but I think that we took 50

minutes. At the end of the debate, we divided on whether we should report certain matters to the Parliament—five members voted against the proposal, three members voted in favour of it and there was one abstention. Those who did not support the proposal were from three different political parties; therefore, it is entirely right to bring some matters to the full Parliament for discussion.

First, I want to speak to Patrick Harvie's amendment, with which the SNP sympathises. We believe that it would be useful for the issues that are raised in the amendment to be discussed in Parliament so, on that basis, we will support his amendment at decision time. If the substantive motion remains unamended, we will abstain because we believe that it is more appropriate to have discussions on matters that affect Scots law and procedure in the Scottish Parliament than to have them elsewhere.

I want to turn to the matter that concerned me in the committee. We welcome what is happening with the bill at Westminster—the changes will be useful and we have no objection to them. The removal of Crown immunity in respect of the three planning acts is a useful move forward, albeit that there are reservations, which Patrick Harvie spoke about. However, we remain in a position whereby, if the Crown chooses not to obey the law, no criminal sanctions can be brought against it if there is such deviation from the law as it stands, although I accept that it is unlikely that that will happen in practice. The memorandum that we have been provided with states:

"The pivotal opening amendment makes it explicit that abolition of Crown immunity will mean that ... the Planning Acts will bind the Crown."

I am somewhat perplexed as to how that can be true in a strict legal sense if the Crown cannot be prosecuted for failing to consider itself to be actually bound by what is happening.

At the root of the matter is the fact that we are starting to strip away some of the constitutional nonsense that straitjackets the Scottish Parliament, this country and indeed our colleagues south of the border, which includes the convention that the Crown cannot prosecute the Crown. My SNP colleagues and I think that it would be useful if Parliament could discuss the proper structure and form of a legal system in the 21st century as part of a wider-ranging discussion about the removal of Crown immunity in relation to planning. After all, in my view—and I suspect in the view of a great majority of people in Scotland—prosecution really takes place in the name of the citizens of Scotland. The Crown is merely a mechanism that dates from many hundreds of years ago and it is a convention whose time has passed.

In making that point, I say nothing whatever about the person of the Crown, but of the use of that person's title for a purpose that is far removed from the individual who, pro tem, happens to be the wearer of the crown.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): What about the heir?

Stewart Stevenson: We will not give airtime to that matter.

On the ability of the Lord Advocate to appoint a special advocate, the Ministry of Defence is the real problem where sensitive matters are concerned. We share such concern—we are in the era of open government and we disadvantage our citizens if we do not treat all information in an open and accountable way.

I have great pleasure in supporting Patrick Harvie's amendment and in saying that we shall abstain on the substantive motion, if it is unamended.

16:40

Murray Tosh (West of Scotland) (Con): In the previous session of Parliament, the Procedures Committee examined the Sewel procedure and made some interim recommendations on it. I am glad that the Executive and the SNP are content with one of those recommendations, which was to set up a procedure whereby ministers attend a discussion at the relevant committee to handle much of the substantive debate on the issues involved.

A considerable academic lobby has built up on the issue—which is backed to a degree by echoes in the press—to the effect that there is something sinister about the Sewel mechanism; that it in some way claws back powers from the Parliament to Westminster and that because the mechanism exists, the Parliament is somehow cribbed, cabined and confined in what we can do with the powers that were devolved to us. The Executive's counter position, which was put in a memorandum to the previous Procedures Committee from Patricia Ferguson, is that the Executive initiates Sewel motions when it sees the opportunity to apply in Scotland legislation that the UK Parliament is producing and which would be of benefit in Scotland.

This afternoon's motion is a classic case of the Sewel mechanism working to our advantage. There is no question that there is a pressing desire for an absolutely uniform planning structure in the UK, because we have separate structures and laws in Scotland. There is no need for the legislation to come through the Sewel mechanism, but the advantage of doing so is that we will obtain the benefit of ending Crown immunity as soon as

the bill is enacted. The alternative is to wait for the passing of legislation through the Scottish Parliament under the devolved powers.

Members will be aware that the Executive's stated intention is to pass a planning bill, but we have only a consultation paper about what might be included in the scope of that bill. Therefore, we might not be able to legislate on the issue next year, the year after or even the year after that. The proposed bill might not be considered until late in the life of this Parliament.

The Conservative group thinks that it is entirely logical that we take advantage of the bill that is before the UK Parliament and that we agree to the Sewel motion this afternoon. I congratulate Patrick Harvie on the sensible line he has taken in his amendment, which reserves his position and raises the issues that are significant to him, without getting in the way of obtaining the benefit of ending Crown immunity. I cannot guarantee that we will agree with all the points that he raises, but I have sympathy with his point about the lack of information for objectors in the planning process and some of his points about the lack of openness.

I will throw in my tuppenceworth, which is that there are areas that are not Crown properties in which the utilities are allowed to bypass the planning mechanisms using emergency-power orders. Scottish Water's recent construction works at Milngavie are a case in point—objection was not possible, nor was public participation. That is a related issue, which we will have the opportunity to consider, debate and discuss when the proposed planning bill comes before the Parliament.

Fergus Ewing: Will Murray Tosh clarify the Conservative's position on what would happen if a Sewel motion were a matter of political controversy at Westminster? Should English Labour MPs abstain from voting on such matters?

Murray Tosh: That was a nice try, but we will judge the issues on their merits. Our position on the voting practices of members from various parts of the United Kingdom in relation to various pieces of proposed legislation is well known and has been well publicised in the past few days.

I am pleased that Stewart Stevenson, perhaps in response to the sensible way in which the Sewel mechanism now operates in the Parliament, gave a sensible response, which was to abandon the somewhat ritualistic past habit of always opposing Sewel motions. Stewart Stevenson said that he will abstain on the substantive motion, which is an outbreak of considerable common sense, especially for him.

By agreeing to the motion, we will introduce in Scotland a perfectly sensible and worthwhile measure that has been consulted on in this

country—I think that the consultation started in 1992—and for which no space has been found in our legislative programme. Although, in the widest sense, our planning law may well in two or three years encompass the issues that are involved, it makes sense to agree to the motion today. I hope that we all agree so to do.

16:45

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I have found scope for agreement with all three speeches so far, on different parts but not always on the whole. Murray Tosh set out the argument about Sewel motions very well. I am one of those who have grave doubts about them, but I have not yet thought of any better system. Until I do, I will go along with Sewel motions. However, as Murray Tosh said, the way in which the matter was dealt with in committee was an improvement on what happened in the past.

I agree with Stewart Stevenson that the use of the term “Crown” to cover the Government—with the Crown’s prerogative to do all sorts of things meaning that Mr Blair or his successor can do those things—is pernicious. We should try to combat that. Nonetheless, I am not sure that that applies to the specific proposals.

I share some of the concerns expressed by supporters of the amendment; however, on balance, I think that we should go with the motion. Removal of Crown immunity is, as other members have said, a very great prize and we do not want to muddy the waters. We should assist in the removal of Crown immunity from planning as soon as possible.

Patrick Harvie raised the issue of national security. I think that we are often conned on the subject of national security, but Governments must have the power to do such things. Recent events have shown that security is important. Even if we think that the security people go overboard in various respects, real security is important. The provisions do not say that a whole inquiry will be held in private if there are any security implications, but that those parts that are to do with the security of a building will be dealt with in private. That is how I understand it; if I am wrong the minister can say otherwise.

Patrick Harvie: Would Donald Gorrie consider that an automatic right to the appointment of a special advocate would at least be some improvement on what is proposed, which is a discretionary right to such an advocate?

Donald Gorrie: That is the point that I was coming on to. It may be a mistake to say that an advocate would have to be appointed, because there are people—especially in planning issues—who are totally unreasonable and would make

frivolous cases. There would be no need to go through a huge apparatus of activity for every case. I hope that the Government will treat any serious planning issue that was raised in a serious manner and that the Lord Advocate will appoint somebody to deal with it.

We must consider how the provisions will work in practice. There are reasons for urgent Crown developments. For example, if a sea wall is breaking down, the Government must act quickly and must have the powers to do so. As I understand it, there are opportunities for objecting, although that would have to be done rather speedily and I suppose that the Government would still judge its own case. However, that is what already happens in planning matters. One has to have some hope that there will be Chinese walls or glass ceilings—all the funny bits of architecture that we are expected to have.

On enforcement, as I understand it the authorities can take enforcement action; however, if a civil servant has erred, he will not be sent to jail, although perhaps he should be. Nevertheless, considerable progress is being made and what is proposed in the bill is reasonable. We should go along with it while keeping an eye on the important issues that have been raised to see how they work out in practice.

16:49

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): Although I am the convener of the Communities Committee, I am not speaking on behalf of the committee, given the fact that the committee agreed not to report on the matter to the full Parliament. However, I think that I bring a particular perspective to the matter as someone who sat through the committee meeting.

The committee was asked to consider the issues in relation to the memorandum that is attached to the Sewel motion, not whether it was appropriate to use a Sewel motion: it is important not to mix the two things up. I echo some of the points that have been made about the usefulness of Sewel motions. It is a matter of regret to me that we did not take the opportunity of using a Sewel motion when the legislation to regulate the private security industry was going through Westminster because we are now awaiting a legislative vehicle in Westminster that will allow us to do that. Members will note that it has taken since 1992 for an appropriate legislative vehicle for the planning provision that we are discussing today to appear. Thank goodness for devolution, because it means that in many cases we do not have to wait for such legislative vehicles. We should think of Sewel motions as being a positive option that is available to us, not as a threat.

As has been said, it is important that substantial discussion was held in committee on all the issues that are relevant to the proposal. Anyone who knows how I chair meetings should take comfort from the fact that, although the item was scheduled to last 10 minutes, it ended up lasting 54 minutes. I would not lightly allow such slippage in any debate, even if it were a matter of life or death. Members should take that as a sign of how seriously the committee took the issues that were being highlighted. We were grateful to the minister for the time that she gave the committee that day.

We went into a significant level of detail and there were a number of votes on issues that have been commented on today and which the committee might have wanted to highlight to Parliament. I point out that the committee as a whole found none of the concerns to be compelling: indeed, the concern that was raised by Patrick Harvie was defeated by six votes to one, with two abstentions. I do not think that a compelling case was made for a report to be made to Parliament.

I understand that the SNP is reluctant to leave the little comfort zone from which it makes points about Sewel motions. I find it bizarre, however, that SNP members have indicated that they will support Patrick Harvie's amendment and abstain on the main motion. Surely, one either supports the Sewel motion process or does not. Those who support the process might want to reflect on why Patrick Harvie's amendment did not win support in the committee but is now being supported by the SNP group in the chamber.

I genuinely do not understand why the Green party has felt the need to push for a short debate in the chamber on the matter when the *Official Report* of the Communities Committee's discussion does exactly what Patrick Harvie's amendment calls for. In our discussion, we highlighted issues that are of concern to him and to others. The *Official Report* of that discussion reflects that broad general debate and details what people thought one way or another and, in the committee, we clarified that the *Official Report* of our discussion—which is in the public domain in any case—would be made available to those who are considering the matter in Westminster. We have to be cautious about assuming that if we do not ask a question, a question will not be asked. We have to be careful that we do not degrade others' democratic commitment—whether at Westminster or in local authorities—to asking the questions that are being posed today.

We should welcome the procedure that has been brought forward and the commitment of the Scottish Executive to participate in it, and we should reflect on the fact that the committee did not feel the need to report any matters of concern to Parliament.

I urge members to support the Sewel motion so that we can ensure that we can apply a more accountable decision-making process to Crown lands as speedily as possible.

16:53

Mrs Mulligan: I thank Stewart Stevenson for giving us an early indication that he was going to raise the issue of the Sewel motion. I was going to answer his specific points but, as Johann Lamont has done that most eloquently, I will move on to dealing with the substance of the matter that is before us.

On national security, the relevant bill provisions specifically recognise issues of national security and the security of property and premises while ensuring that the interests of individuals who are concerned about such proposals are taken into account. The provisions will allow ministers to make directions that restrict disclosure of information at a planning inquiry that relates to such security information, where disclosure would not be in the national interest. That is appropriate, especially as it would be only the part of the information that was considered to be relevant to national security that would be restricted.

The same provisions will also introduce powers for the Lord Advocate to appoint special advocates to represent the interests of persons affected by the restrictions on disclosure, which could mean objectors or the planning authority, for example. The intention is that, when consideration is given to making a direction that would restrict the disclosure of security-sensitive material at an inquiry, ministers will request the appointment of a special advocate by the Lord Advocate. When there is a restriction on disclosure of information, the Lord Advocate will appoint somebody to represent those views. Therefore, we consider that the new arrangements taken together will provide appropriate safeguards for the interests of individuals or communities who might be affected by any proposed development.

Patrick Harvie: Does the minister mean that those two measures that she has outlined will always be used together; in other words, that there will never be circumstances in which national security is invoked without the appointment of a special advocate who has access to all the information?

Mrs Mulligan: Yes. The special advocate would be appointed and would have access to the relevant information that was not being disclosed because it was security sensitive.

The bill's provisions on urgent development will impose publicity and consultation requirements; first, on the developing department that seeks to use the procedure and, thereafter, on the Scottish

ministers when they consider proposals under that procedure. Those requirements are additional to those on publicity and disclosure of information, which apply to any inquiry into such a planning application. The aim is to ensure that developments of national importance that are required urgently can be considered as quickly as possible while still allowing planning authorities and local people an opportunity to be involved in the process of determining applications.

The purpose of the proposed amendment of the provisions on enforcement is that the Crown remain immune from prosecution from any offence under the planning acts. Planning authorities will be able to initiate enforcement action by serving enforcement notices or by issuing revocation orders, but they will not be able to enforce those by entering land, bringing proceedings or making applications to the court without the permission of the appropriate authority. The point of allowing enforcement notices is to ensure that an entry is made on the planning register to the effect that the development has been subject to enforcement action. In exercising its discretion to give consent when that is required for further enforcement action, the Crown will be required to meet the usual requirement of reasonableness. If the Crown did not act reasonably in exercising its discretion, it would leave itself open to judicial review. In resisting any valid enforcement action, the responsible minister would be accountable either to the United Kingdom Parliament or to the Scottish Parliament, as appropriate. Means of redress are therefore available in that regard.

What we are doing today is removing Crown immunity from planning applications. If members oppose Crown immunity's being removed, it will continue to apply. I do not think that that is something that Parliament wishes. Crown immunity would continue to apply until we found a legislative slot in which to deal with the matter. Given that we are in the process of consulting on planning matters, it could be some time before any such legislative slot was found. Therefore, I say to members who wish Crown immunity to be lifted that they should support the Sewel motion.

Point of Order

16:57

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The Parliament will be aware of the unfolding tragedy in Istanbul today. I know that the matter was raised at First Minister's question time but, in view of the scale of the disaster and of the number of casualties—indeed, fatalities—would it be in order if we could, through you, Presiding Officer, send a message of condolence to the people of Istanbul and to the two organisations that have been so badly affected by this terrible act of terrorism. [*Applause.*]

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): I am sure that that would be the wish of the Parliament.

Presiding Officer's Ruling

16:58

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): I wish to make one point of clarification, following the issues that were raised by Duncan McNeil and other members before lunch time. Having made inquiries, I wish to state that the normal practice of ministerial statements being made available in the Scottish Parliament information centre upon completion of the minister's speech in the chamber was followed in the case of today's statement. The statement was therefore available to all members at the same time. I am satisfied that there was no disadvantage to any member.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

16:59

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of four Parliamentary Bureau motions, motion S2M-620, on membership of a committee, and motions S2M-621, S2M-622 and S2M-623, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Tommy Sheridan be appointed to replace Rosie Kane on the Local Government and Transport Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (Orkney) (No.4) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/501) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Agricultural Holdings (Consequential Amendments) (Scotland) Order 2003 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Budget (Scotland) Act 2003 Amendment (No.2) Order 2003 be approved.—[*Patricia Ferguson.*]

The Presiding Officer: The questions on the motions will be put at decision time.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer: There are potentially 18 questions to be put as a result of today's business. I point out, in relation to this morning's debate on poverty in Scotland, that if the amendment in the name of Margaret Curran is agreed to, the amendments in the names of Stewart Stevenson and Murdo Fraser fall. In relation to this morning's debate on world peace, if the amendment in the name of John Home Robertson is agreed to, the amendments in the name of Nicola Sturgeon and Phil Gallie fall.

The first question is, that amendment S2M-625.3, in the name of Margaret Curran, which seeks to amend motion S2M-625, in the name of Carolyn Leckie, on poverty in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Ms 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)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)

McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 63, Against 36, Abstentions 15.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: Amendments S2M-625.2, in the name of Stewart Stevenson, and S2M-625.1, in the name of Murdo Fraser, fall.

The next question is, that motion S2M-625, in the name of Carolyn Leckie, on poverty in Scotland, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Ms 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)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)

Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 62, Against 36, Abstentions 18.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament welcomes the Scottish Executive's commitment to tackling poverty and disadvantage; notes the Executive's work towards increasing opportunities through growing the economy including delivering on "A Smart, Successful Scotland", delivering excellent public services, particularly in education and health, and through supporting strong communities through community regeneration and focusing on the interests of the individual.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-618.3.1, in the name of Mike Rumbles, which seeks to amend amendment S2M-618.3, in the name of John Home Robertson, on world peace, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, 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)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 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)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Ms Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)

Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 52, Against 61, Abstentions 3.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-618.3, in the name of John Home Robertson, which seeks to amend motion S2M-618, in the name of Tommy Sheridan, on world peace, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)

McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)

Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
McNeill, Ms Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 77, Against 35, Abstentions 4.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: As a consequence of amendment S2M-618.3 being agreed to, amendments S2M-618.2 and S2M-618.1, in the names of Nicola Sturgeon and Phil Gallie respectively, fall.

The next question is, that motion S2M-618, in the name of Tommy Sheridan, on world peace, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)

McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

ABSTENTIONS

Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
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)
Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
McNeill, Ms Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)

Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 76, Against 13, Abstentions 26.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament supports all those who are working for world peace and the extension of democracy; reasserts its support for the route map to peace in the Middle East; believes that the contribution of UK service personnel, including those from Scotland, should be commended, and expresses its sympathy to the families of those members of the armed forces who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country and in the pursuit of world peace.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-627.3, in the name of Shona Robison, which seeks to amend motion S2M-627, in the name of Margaret Curran, on progress in respect of fuel poverty in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Ms 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)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)

Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 36, Against 63, Abstentions 17.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-627.2, in the name of Mary Scanlon, which seeks to amend motion S2M-627, in the name of Margaret Curran, on progress in respect of fuel poverty in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Baker, 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)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Ms Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 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)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 17, Against 97, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-627, in the name of Margaret Curran, on progress in respect of fuel poverty in Scotland, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament welcome the new fuel poverty figures from the Scottish House Condition Survey 2002 as good news for Scotland; endorses the Scottish Executive's current fuel poverty programmes, and reaffirms the commitment to eradicate fuel poverty as far as reasonably practicable by 2016.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-543.1, in the name of Patrick Harvie, which seeks to amend motion S2M-543, in the name of Margaret Curran, on the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill, which is UK legislation, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Ms Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)

Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 35, Against 80, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-543, in the name of Margaret Curran, on the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill, which is UK legislation, 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, 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)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 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)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Ms Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

Against

Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)

ABSTENTIONS

Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, 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)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 87, Against 4, Abstentions 24.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament endorses the principle of including in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill provisions to remove Crown immunity from planning controls for development and agrees that the relevant provisions to achieve this end should be considered by the UK Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-620, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the membership of a committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that Tommy Sheridan be appointed to replace Rosie Kane on the Local Government and Transport Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-621, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, 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, 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)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 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)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)

Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 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)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Ms Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Ruskel, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)

Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, 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)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 87, Against 27, Abstentions 1.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (Orkney) (No.4) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/501) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-622, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Agricultural Holdings (Consequential Amendments) (Scotland) Order 2003 be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S2M-623, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Budget (Scotland) Act 2003 Amendment (No.2) Order 2003 be approved.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Could you please confirm the result of the vote on motion S2M-621?

The Presiding Officer: I can confirm what is on the piece of paper that has been given to me, but I would prefer to check that with the record. If you bear with me, we will get the vote printed off and I will come back to you at the earliest possible opportunity.

I am now in a position to confirm the vote on motion S2M-621. Two lines on the piece of paper

that was handed to me were transposed. I will repeat the figures for the record—although the impact of the vote is not affected. The result of the division was: For 87, Against 1, Abstentions 27.

Maternity Services (Glasgow)

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S2M-511, in the name of Sandra White, on the review of maternity services in Glasgow. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the decision of Greater Glasgow Health Board to endorse the recommendations of the maternity working group to close the Queen Mother's Hospital and transfer services to the Southern General Hospital; further notes the concerns of the public and hospital health professionals at the closure of the Queen Mother's Hospital and subsequently services at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children and the adverse effect that this will have on maternity and children's services throughout Scotland, and considers that the Minister for Health and Community Care, Malcolm Chisholm, should launch an immediate investigation into the maternity services review by Greater Glasgow Health Board.

17:16

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I thank all the MSPs who signed my motion. I pay special tribute to the *Glasgow Evening Times*, which has been at the forefront of the campaign for maternity services in Glasgow. Not only was it responsible for a petition that has been running for many weeks, but it has kept the general public well informed of all aspects of the maternity services review—something that Greater Glasgow NHS Board failed miserably to do.

I make it clear that this is neither a party-political issue nor solely a Glasgow issue. The closure of the Queen Mother's hospital, with its unique position in the Yorkhill complex, will have an adverse effect on all maternity services in Scotland. I am pleased that MSPs from all over Scotland have stayed behind to take part in the debate.

It is beyond belief that this world-renowned set-up is in any way under threat. It is a state-of-the-art provision that many countries want to emulate, but Greater Glasgow NHS Board is trying to destroy it. On a recent visit to the Queen Mum's, I met young doctors and other professionals who told me that they had chosen to train and work at the Queen Mum's because it was a world leader in innovation and practical medical advances that exist nowhere else in Scotland.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): I apologise to Sandra White for the fact that I cannot stay for the whole debate. Does she share my concerns about reports suggesting that the hospital's breast-feeding support unit may be forced to close its life-saving breast milk bank if the Queen Mum's closes? Does she agree that

action must be taken to ensure that that vital service is not put in jeopardy?

Ms White: I agree entirely and have supported Elaine Smith's motion to that effect.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): Like my colleague, I may have to leave before speaking in the debate. I apologise for that. Ironically, I am going to a meeting in my constituency about school closure proposals caused by the falling birth rate.

Does the member agree that the issue of expertise is not about buildings, but about the people who have it, and that the discussion surrounding the Queen Mother's hospital has consequences for the Southern general hospital on the south side of Glasgow, or does she intend to argue that we need three centres in Glasgow?

Ms White: I thank Johann Lamont for her intervention and am sorry that she cannot stay for the rest of the debate. However, I am pleased that she has at least arrived for it.

Johann Lamont is right to say that this debate is not about buildings. On a recent visit to the Queen Mum's, the professors told us that the issue was not buildings, but the unique set-up that keeps mothers and babies together. Greater Glasgow NHS Board has forgotten that.

I mentioned the Yorkhill complex, which houses both the Queen Mum's and the sick kids hospital and has been at the forefront of pioneering techniques. I know that other members want to comment on that point. I refer to techniques such as foetal diagnosis and therapy; Professor Ian Donald also pioneered ultrasound for maternity services at Yorkhill. Professionals are seriously concerned that if the Queen Mum's closes the experience and expertise that both hospitals have built up will be lost.

The support that other medical professionals throughout Scotland and beyond have given to their colleagues at the Queen Mum's is a sign that the campaign to avoid closure is not just a knee-jerk reaction to a local inconvenience—it is a Scotland-wide campaign. Today I received a phone call from a campaigner who told me that he has written to the Queen on this issue. She has written back to him to say that she has contacted Dr John Reid. If the minister is not already au fait with that, perhaps he should contact Dr John Reid MP, who might intervene on the campaign's behalf if the Executive does not wish to do so.

I turn my attention to the consultation process, which is the nub of the issue. From the beginning the consultation process was flawed to the point of being a sham. If, as some people are saying, that is not the case, why was the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health not invited to

contribute? What about the concerns of paediatric cardiologists at Yorkhill, who have had to write to the newspapers to get over their information about the 60 newborn babies with serious heart disease who have been treated in the sick children's hospital in the past year? Why were the views of child psychiatrists not noted? Experts such as Alice McGrath and Michael Morton have stated:

"We do not believe the way forward involves the closure of a specialist centre that allows sick babies and their mothers to be together as much as possible".

Recently I attended a public meeting where emotions were running very high. The two most telling contributions came from health professionals who were pleading the case for the Queen Mother's hospital. One of those professionals, Anthea Dixon, spoke of the special relationship that helps to make the Yorkhill site world renowned for the care of babies and children. She expressed her concerns that she had not received a copy of the consultation evidence from the health board. I have not received a copy, either, even after repeated requests.

Professor Cockburn, who is highly thought of, spoke with real emotion about the work that is carried out at the Queen Mother's hospital, much of which would be disrupted if closure went ahead. He was truly angered that his evidence and that of many other eminent health professionals was not included in the consultation document. As well as all those experts who were ignored in the so-called consultation, there have been approximately 100,000 signatures on a petition from concerned citizens all over Scotland and beyond. Although Catriona Renfrew of the Greater Glasgow NHS Board has arrogantly announced that public opinion will not influence the closure decision at all, we politicians cannot afford to behave in such a high-handed manner. There is real anger among the public, and the minister must look into the issue immediately.

Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP): I apologise to Sandra White but I have to leave the debate early because I have an engagement with Unison.

I ask Sandra White to comment on a few points. She referred to specialist services. Does she agree that professionals in the area are concerned that extracorporeal membrane oxygenation—ECMO—will cease to be available in Glasgow if the Queen Mother's hospital closes? Does she agree that there need to be three units in Glasgow and that that is the only sensible solution? Does she agree that it is absolutely shocking that there has been no assessment of the cross-boundary impact of the maternity strategy, contrary to Executive policy on regional planning?

Ms White: I am pleased that Carolyn Leckie has stayed until now.

Some of my colleagues are going to pick up on some of the questions that Carolyn Leckie asked, particularly about ECMO and the situation with the Southern general hospital. The professionals are concerned that the professionalism and expertise at Yorkhill could be lost to Scotland.

There is real anger about the proposals and the minister would do well to speak to the publicly appointed board and tell it that it is there to serve the public, not to dictate to us. People are very angry and unhappy about the whole situation. We all know that the health board is a publicly appointed body, and secrecy is not necessary in this case; secrecy is very much against the public interest. Misinformation is also unacceptable and the health board's suggestion that there are no high-dependency beds in Yorkhill is an untruth. There are high-dependency beds on the Queen Mother's hospital site and people should remember that. Sometimes, people have to be moved from the Southern general hospital because there are no beds, so it is a fallacy to say that there are no high-dependency beds at Yorkhill.

The specialist and dedicated staff of the two units are pleading with the minister and others to look into the situation now and to start an investigation. I ask the minister to remember his find words about "a culture of care" and

"a new partnership between patients, staff and Government."

Those fine words should now be put into action. Nothing further should happen until the minister puts together an investigation of the consultation. We want to know how the evidence was gathered, and if the evidence gatherers and the pre-emptive decision that was taken by the working group to close the Queen Mother's hospital were acceptable. I demand that that investigation takes place immediately.

The Presiding Officer: I ask members to keep speeches tight and nearer to three minutes than four, if possible.

17:25

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): I am grateful to the Presiding Officer for taking me next. I again apologise for not being able to stay until the very end of the debate.

I acknowledge that views on this issue are not split along party-political lines and that some of my colleagues take a different view from me. Equally, I have to say that some of my colleagues have not taken a fully-formed view on the matter. I thought that it was important to make some points that perhaps have not been given the same airing as others and to bring some balance to the debate.

I also acknowledge that this is a very emotional matter that causes some concern. Clear, authoritative and professional voices have expressed views on all sides of the debate, and we are in the difficult position of hearing different professionals' opinions on the same issue—opinions that profoundly disagree with one another. However, unlike Greater Glasgow NHS Board, we also have the luxury of not having to square many circles.

We have to confront the issue. If we keep the Queen Mother's hospital open, we have to close the Southern general hospital. Such a decision is not a free one; it will have consequences elsewhere. There is also a genuine concern that we need two maternity centres. However, even if we had all the money in the world, we should not tie up our increased funding for the health service in keeping wards closed. We must ensure that every penny we put into the health service addresses health needs.

If we are going to have more than two centres, how many more will we have? If the issue is all about locality and access, how many more centres do we need? What should the provision be in other parts of Scotland?

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Johann Lamont: I will let the member in soon.

I had my own children in Rutherglen maternity hospital and was deeply distressed when I heard that it was closing. However, I was even more distressed later on in life when a professional informed me of the risks I was taking in giving birth in a free-standing maternity unit. As a result, I now understand that there is not necessarily a connection between one's emotional feeling about a place and the reality of the medical advice that one receives.

At the centre of this debate is the requirement to balance the needs of women and babies. I have been told that although women who fall ill in childbirth require immediate attention, neonatal babies are not operated on within the first day. As a result, the issues of travelling or of where care should be provided are slightly different in such cases.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): Is the member aware of comments by consultants in Edinburgh that the fact that the new Edinburgh royal infirmary is further away from the sick kids hospital than the old ERI is a major disadvantage? They have recommended that Glasgow should learn lessons from what has happened in Edinburgh.

Johann Lamont: I understand that. As I have said already, I appreciate that many voices out there that are raising difficult points that we have to listen to.

Provision by the sick children's hospital is Scotland-wide. The logical conclusion of the argument that the Queen Mother's hospital must be beside the sick children's hospital is that everyone should have their children in the Queen Mother's hospital. If the provision is Scotland-wide, it is only natural that people will have to travel to use it.

Carolyn Leckie: Will the member give way?

Nicola Sturgeon: Will the member give way?

Johann Lamont: Members should let me make progress for a minute.

If the ideal position is that all services should be located on one site, the Southern general hospital is logically the only site that allows for a long-term solution.

I think that, as in the debate on the acute services review, it is unhelpful to focus on buildings instead of on real health needs. Everyone knows that the issue is not about cost-cutting, but about using moneys to address health inequalities. For example, we need to maximise the amount of money that is allocated to vulnerable women, women with drug problems and so on. Such women do not have healthy living conditions and might not even be able to access antenatal care or the care that they need to support their children once they are born. Indeed, those children are sometimes at their safest when they are born. We need to find services that address the needs of those mothers and their children before and after birth. As a result, I seek reassurance from Greater Glasgow NHS Board that it is accessing money for genuine community provision and antenatal and postnatal care, because those services will most benefit the vulnerable women in my community.

Although I acknowledge the point about centres of excellence, I return to my point that excellence and expertise are about people and funding, not about sites. The sites are random; instead, we have to ensure that provision exists across the service.

17:29

Murray Tosh (West of Scotland) (Con): I congratulate Sandra White on securing this important debate and on the measured and informed way in which she introduced the topic. I should begin by saying that I am here principally to speak for Bill Aitken who this week had a second accident and is currently in Glasgow royal infirmary. He would have wished his views to be expressed on this matter, although communication with him has understandably not been possible this week.

Bill Aitken is concerned that we risk disrupting and possibly losing some of the quality that exists in the present centre of excellence. He is

concerned about some of the cross-river transport issues that are similar to those raised in connection with the acute services review. He is also concerned about some of the long-term implications that arise from the uncertainty about what further changes there might be regarding the sick children's hospital.

The issues that are raised in the consultation impact particularly on greater Glasgow, which means that they spill into the West of Scotland region. I want to address those less immediate implications for the west of Scotland that arise from the current use of the Queen Mother's hospital as the principal point where patients from the Vale of Leven catchment area require to go for maternity services because of the closure of the consultant-led service at the Vale of Leven hospital.

Yesterday evening I attended a large public meeting in Dumbarton—one of a series of such meetings—in which considerable misgivings, to put it most moderately, were expressed by the local public. It is more accurate to say that there is deep discontent not only about the loss of acute services at the Vale of Leven hospital, but about the impact of the loss of services on the maternity side. There has been recent considerable concern about what appears to be a sharp increase in births taking place in ambulances as a result of the greater distances that require to be travelled as a consequence of the rationalisation of services. In the brief time that I have had this week to pursue the topic, it seems remarkably difficult to get statistics on those issues.

Carolyn Leckie: It is unfortunate that Johann Lamont did not take an intervention from me, but she suggested that neonatal transfer was somehow an option that was available nationally. What she omitted to mention is that, because of the existence of the Queen Mother's hospital at the Yorkhill site, the preferred option of every obstetrician that I encountered in my professional life was to transfer babies in utero to the Queen Mother's hospital so that they could get immediate treatment. That is the preferred clinical option and I wonder whether the member will comment on how, suddenly, some clinicians think that it is okay to embark on the risky business of transferring neonates when that should not be required.

Murray Tosh: The member will understand that I am not prepared to answer for clinicians who have put that contrary point of view, because that is their point of view. The member will have to pursue that with them. She has put her point on the record and the minister might wish to reflect on it.

What comes across from the members of the public with whom I am in contact is a complete lack of information from any rational, national

debate about what has been, over the lifetime of the Parliament, a series of localised rationalisations, reductions and mergers throughout Scotland. There been no national strategy. Above all, there has been no spatial dimension, in the sense that no one has said, "We need centres here, here and here." As Duncan McNeil recently pointed out forcefully, the process in the west of Scotland is driven by two different health boards for a national health service that is concentrating all the provision for the west of Scotland in two hospitals that are five minutes apart—the Royal Alexandria hospital and the Southern general hospital. One might say that there is not much difference between the Southern general and the Yorkhill sites in relation to the big picture, but the crucial difference is that both the Royal Alexandria and the Southern general are on the south side of the Clyde. The Queen Mother's hospital at Yorkhill is on different transport routes, which means that the existing Glasgow sites together provide a much better service than we will have if there is a rationalisation in Glasgow that puts all provision on the south side of the river.

Ministers have to convince the public that there is a genuine national strategy that will reflect and satisfy local needs. They have to recognise that they are losing the battle to convince the public that that is a priority of the Executive.

17:34

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): Sandra White has initiated an important debate on the future of maternity services in Glasgow. We have all been through many campaigns on these issues: I was involved in the campaign against the closure of Rutherglen maternity hospital, to which Johann Lamont referred, where my children were born.

We have to disentangle the related issues in the maternity services review in a way that reflects the genuine issues, irrespective of whether that is how it has been phrased by the health board in its consultation arrangements.

With the decision to reduce from three to two the number of maternity hospitals in the city already taken, the first question is whether that was a correct decision. One significant issue is capacity. The falling birth rate is such that the current and likely demand from greater Glasgow can be accommodated in two hospitals. Given the huge demands on health services in Glasgow, the price of retaining three hospitals would be significantly less money for other key health services and a stretching of health resources too thinly.

Greater Glasgow NHS Board says that such pressures mean that it is no longer possible to keep three maternity hospitals open safely. We

have to be careful not to waste scarce health service resources. The issue for the minister is whether the changes in maternity provision in surrounding areas, such as Renfrewshire and Dunbartonshire, change the demand and staff figures significantly for Glasgow.

The second issue is the location of the second maternity hospital, other than the Princess Royal. Location is always emotive, but I will make a couple of observations. First, if the maternity facilities at the Southern general were to go—which is the alternative—there would be no maternity facilities on the whole of the south side of Glasgow. My second observation relates to the Clyde tunnel. Much has been made of the problem that would arise if the Queen Mother's hospital closed and there was a blockage in the Clyde tunnel. That is undoubtedly an issue, but the Clyde tunnel is not a one-way tunnel, so that argument points both ways: it would apply in equal measure if the Southern general maternity provision were chosen for closure.

The third issue is the important link between the maternity facilities at the Queen Mother's hospital and the paediatric facilities at the Royal hospital for sick children, which has been touched on already as a major point of the debate. Maternity specialists seem to favour the link with an adult hospital on the basis that it will save maternal lives, and some eminent specialists on the paediatric side have expressed strong views about dangers to children if the services are separated. From that, the best medical conclusion must be that maternity and paediatric facilities should be co-located on an adult acute site which, oddly enough, was the health board's original plan when it produced the acute services review to which we all objected in the previous session.

I am not convinced that the health board has yet got this right. We are perhaps trying to do too many things too quickly. Major changes are due to take place at the Southern general as a result of the acute services review, and we are only just beginning the provision of the ambulatory care and diagnostic units. Maternity provision across Scotland is in uproar, with major reductions in the number of specialist maternity units. Would it not be better to approve some of the other changes in maternity provision that reflect the way expert opinion is going—such as the move to more midwife-led deliveries, developing the quality of specialist services, and all the rest—and retain the present three sites in some form for a slightly longer period?

I concern myself with the health resource issue that comes out of that, but the central priority is to keep the vital link between maternity and paediatric services. It is less important that they be located at Yorkhill. The health board should go

back to the drawing board and come back with new proposals and a consultation that directs itself at that central issue, which I do not think the current proposals do.

17:37

Dr Jean Turner (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind): I congratulate Sandra White on securing this debate. I will try to be as brief as possible.

Greater Glasgow NHS Board should rethink the issue. I have absolutely no doubt that the Queen Mother's hospital and Yorkhill are married together and should stay together. They have saved lives. Why is that? Because they have worked in teams. Wonderful teams have been built up over years. Greater Glasgow NHS Board has the great idea that when something is good it ought to break it up, but if we have something that works, we should keep it and build on it. People leave teams and people join teams, but they learn from the experience that grows within a medical team, therefore that team—Queen Mother's and Yorkhill—should stay together.

I will give the chamber another example. People come from all over. Carolyn Leckie was right to say that if someone thinks there will be a difficulty with a delivery, they get the mother there with the baby inside her, because then there is a more controlled outlook for mother and baby to survive. My sister-in-law and niece are alive today because of that connection. Many of my constituents have emphasised that and many other people say the same thing.

Another way of explaining it might be to say that specialist teams do not need to be in every town or area. The neurosurgical unit at the Southern general works well. People know where it is and it is accepted that medical services are provided there. It used to be that neurosurgeons went round hospitals. Obstetricians and gynaecologists could do the same thing.

I ask the minister to think carefully about locating another huge unit at the Southern general. The Greater Glasgow NHS Board plan means that, by the time he is finished, we will have the biggest megahospital on the south side of Glasgow, and I wonder what that will do to traffic jams. It is not the best location for a general hospital, and I hope that the minister will find it in his heart to fund acute beds at both ACADs.

I am in the Parliament because consultation with the public has not been good. People do not think that the authorities listen. They may consult, but consultation is no good unless the people doing the consulting hear. I do not think that Greater Glasgow NHS Board or the politicians are hearing. I have said to Malcolm Chisholm on other occasions that, after 18 years of Conservative

Government, the Labour Party could have been in power for life if it had got the consultation right. It is political suicide not to listen to the public and the clinicians who work in the hospitals. It disturbs me greatly that Catriona Renfrew can say that a million signatures will not change her mind, because we have previously had dealings with her in relation to Stobhill.

I urge the minister to pay attention. The health service in Glasgow and the west of Scotland—and probably throughout Scotland—is about to fall apart because nobody seems to be doing the joined-up thinking. That scares me and it scares my colleagues. I speak for many clinicians in this matter: the maternity hospital and Yorkhill should not be separated—absolutely not. It would even be possible to have a maternity facility on the south side of the city, but why would the minister want to break up a world-renowned unit? At Stobhill, we have one of the most fantastic cardiac units, and the minister wants to split that up too. I cannot understand the thinking and I urge him to rethink his plans.

17:42

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): I too thank Sandra White for initiating the debate, which is important. I will address two issues. The first is what I consider to be the sham of Greater Glasgow NHS Board's consultation. The board is effectively asking people to choose between the Queen Mother's hospital and the Southern general. It might have decided that the retention of three maternity units is not a viable option but, to be frank, others are not yet convinced. The birth rate is falling, but when people consider developments in Argyll and Clyde and the efforts to repopulate the city of Glasgow they question the health board's certainty. At the very least, that issue should have been tested in the consultation. The fact that it will not be tested in the consultation suggests that the health board already knows what it wants—which is not the way to build public confidence in the process.

The second issue is the national, not only Glasgow-wide, importance of the Queen Mother's hospital. We are talking about it as a maternity unit, but it is not only a maternity unit: it is much more than that. With the sick kids hospital on the Yorkhill site, the Queen Mother's hospital provides a highly specialist service for very ill babies. The co-location of foetal medicine, neonatal intensive care and paediatric surgery is the jewel in the crown of maternity provision in Scotland, and losing it would be insanity. To Johann Lamont, who had to leave, I say that it is possible to argue that bricks and mortar or the site's physical location are unimportant, but it is not possible to argue that the co-location of the services that the

sick kids hospital and Queen Mother's hospital provide is not vital. That co-location is what we stand to lose if the Queen Mother's hospital is lost.

The best way to illustrate the value of the service that is provided at the Queen Mother's hospital is to compare what happens to a sick baby now with what will happen if the Queen Mother's hospital goes. Currently, as Carolyn Leckie said, if problems are identified antenatally in any part of Scotland, the chances are that the mother will be transferred to give birth at the Queen Mother's hospital. When the baby is born, it will go to neonatal intensive care, where the consultants, in conjunction with the paediatric surgeon at the sick kids hospital, will assess and prepare that baby for surgery.

When the baby is ready for surgery, it goes next door to the sick kids hospital. The baby's mother is on site with it during that process. If the Queen Mother's is taken away, a sick baby in, say, Dundee, will be born at Ninewells hospital. The paediatric surgeon from Yorkhill will not be on site to assess that baby. When the baby is ready for surgery, it will go to Glasgow, but the mother will have to stay in Dundee, because no bed will be available for her at Yorkhill. I defy anybody to argue that that is an improvement in service. Rather, it represents a huge step backwards.

The counter-argument is that the Queen Mother's is unsafe for mothers because it has no adult intensive care on site. I agree that, in an ideal world, adult intensive care would be on site, but when the mother and not the baby is deemed to be at risk, arrangements are made for the mother to give birth at a hospital that has adult provision. When complications are unexpected, obstetricians are qualified to stabilise the mother until she is transferred to an intensive care unit. It is instructive to consider that, last year, only five mothers were transferred from the Queen Mother's to another hospital, and all returned within 24 hours.

The integrated world-class service that we have at Yorkhill is too important to lose. I hope that ministers will take heed of that.

17:46

Ms Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): I welcome the debate, which Sandra White secured. The subject is dear to my heart, as the Queen Mother's maternity hospital is in my constituency.

I will nail some of the myths. First, the Queen Mother's maternity hospital provides a national service, although it also happens to be the local service for many of my constituents. The hospital is the national centre for cystic fibrosis testing and for amniocentesis. I could go on and on. We must

nail the myth about the service that is offered. It is not a run-of-the-mill maternity hospital that happens to be linked to the children's hospital; it offers a national service. That is important for the whole of Scotland.

The assumptions that have been made about the delivery of service at the Queen Mother's are fundamentally wrong. I want the minister to note the feelings of local clinicians in the hospital. How can we make a fair decision about what is right for Glasgow if the basic assumptions are incorrect?

I say that because I listened to clinicians give their evidence during the consultation process and I share Sandra White's view that the process was dangerously flawed. I listened to Professor Cockburn, who is a professor of child health, and to Tom Turner, who is head of the neonatal service at the Queen Mother's, deliver their evidence to Margaret Reid's working group. In my opinion and that of many others, their evidence was not listened to. I heard paediatricians say that if they were not allowed to deliver babies with a problem at the Queen Mother's, babies would die. The group did not ask those clinicians a question. That seriously upset me on the day and it seriously upsets me now.

Experts were appointed to advise Margaret Reid's group. It is important to understand that the debate is not about one profession versus another. Of course professions have different views, but the view of the experts who run the service was ignored. The evidence of experts from England and Wales who have no experience of running the Queen Mother's or Yorkhill children's hospital was taken as category A evidence, while the evidence from those who run the service was taken as category B evidence. Ministers must note the upset of the people who run the services at the Queen Mother's and Yorkhill about the way in which the process operated.

The Queen Mother's was never asked whether it could provide a blood transfusion service, which it does. It also delivers the fastest service. It was also never asked whether it could provide radiology intervention, by which the panel seemed so impressed. Those issues make the whole process unfair.

I disagreed with some of what Johann Lamont said, but she was right that the focus should not be on mothers versus babies. I am alarmed at the letters to *The Herald* that talk about what is best for mothers and what is best for babies. I am certain about the history of the Queen Mother's. As Carolyn Leckie and Nicola Sturgeon were right to say, the Queen Mother's has provided the key service in Glasgow for difficult births. It has a safe history.

If the implication is that the Queen Mother's is

unsafe, I must ask why it is delivering babies now. Will we stop that service now? The health board talks about a safe, sustainable maternity service, but it does not use the emotive word "safe" in relation to acute services.

I do not see any evidence that the national services division has responded, and it is crucial to the whole process. The important thing about the link is this: sometimes, when a baby has a complication on birth, two or three specialists are required to come from Yorkhill to the neonatal unit at the Queen Mother's. What do we suggest should happen if a mother has to deliver her baby at another unit? Have those three specialists to travel round Glasgow? We can see the practical implications of that but the report does not address it. This is a national service and it will be lost to Scotland for ever. I plead with the minister not to do to Scotland what is proposed.

The Presiding Officer: I am prepared, with the minister's agreement, to consider a motion without notice to continue this debate until 6.15 pm. Is it agreed that a motion without notice be moved?

Members indicated agreement.

Motion moved,

That Parliament agrees that Members' Business on 20 November 2003 be extended by 15 minutes.—[Murray Tosh.]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: I have to say that, even so, I expect only constituency and regional members to be called.

17:51

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): I shall be as brief as possible so as to allow others to speak. It may not be possible, but it would be helpful, if members representing areas outwith Glasgow were able to speak, particularly if their areas are affected by the closure of maternity services.

We are facing a national reduction in services that, quite simply, is not being planned for. There is no co-ordination whatsoever. I spoke to the Minister for Health and Community Care during question time a number of weeks ago when he talked about looking for a detailed service plan for the Argyll and Clyde NHS Board and Greater Glasgow NHS Board areas in relation to the delivery of maternity services. We are in the middle of decisions and discussions on services that are affected by that detailed service plan, which the minister will not even have on his desk until March. That is why the matter has united members across the political spectrum.

I welcome Sandra White's introducing the motion for debate. Robert Brown and I often disagree on political issues, but all the political

parties in Glasgow that are represented on the list, and most of the politicians in Glasgow—certainly the ones from whom I have heard—are united on the question. We face the potential destruction of a world-renowned and valued service. My worry is that we could allow ourselves to be boxed into a corner where the situation is portrayed, as Pauline McNeill said, as involving a decision between the benefit of the mother and the benefit of the child—whether the Southern general's maternity services must go or whether we retain the Queen Mother's hospital linked to Yorkhill.

We must say that we do not accept that premise. Why cannot we retain the service at the Southern and the service at the Queen Mother's? The British Medical Association, which provided quite an instructive briefing for today's debate, said:

"It is important to state that it would be our aspiration for the NHS to be resourced and able to provide all services to all patients in their local communities. However, given the pressures facing our National Health Service, this is still only an aspiration and the time has come to face up to reality."

When Johann Lamont says that the decision is not driven by cost, she is wrong. If we wanted to deliver those services in the way that people want them to be delivered, we would retain the Southern general maternity service and the Queen Mother's hospital, linked to the Yorkhill service.

That is the point of view from which the minister is hearing the appeal, and it is a cross-party appeal. This is not a party-political issue at all. The minister is hearing appeals not to break up an excellent service and he is hearing appeals that it is time to say, "Wait a minute," in relation to the reduction of maternity services throughout Scotland. We must wait a minute until we have a co-ordinated plan and a co-ordinated attitude throughout the country. What is happening just now, particularly in the west of Scotland, is quite simply not acceptable.

I do not want to make a big issue of what Murray Tosh said, but the Royal Alexandria hospital and the Southern general are not five minutes apart. They are a lot further apart than that. The idea that we can have a reduction in service in the Argyll area and expect Glasgow to deal with it somehow or other at the Southern is just not on. Jean Turner made a point about the super-hospital that is beginning to develop at the Southern—it must be the biggest hospital in the world, never mind the biggest hospital in Britain. Because of the reduction in acute services, extra building will be taking place at the Southern general. Now, according to the new plan, we will have all the maternity services at the Southern general. The way that things are going, soon there will be only one hospital to serve the whole of the west of Scotland.

The proposal is simply not practical and I say to the minister that it is time to call a halt to it. In the view of the people of Glasgow, Greater Glasgow NHS Board has lost all credibility and the minister will also lose credibility if he does not step in and not allow the decision to be taken.

17:55

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): I join others in condemning the comments that have been made by the Greater Glasgow NHS Board official. When an official says that the number of petitions that have been received does not matter and that proposals will be proceeded with regardless of the number of petitions that have been received, that threatens our democracy. I ask the minister to deal with that matter.

It is important that all members of the public are given the opportunity to express their views in consultation exercises. As Pauline McNeill and Sandra White said, there are concerns about consultation exercises. I believe that they are cosmetic exercises. We see documents that say things like, "Have your say" and "Tell us what you think." However, the people who produce those documents want to know what people think only if it is the same as what they think. The Parliament faces a serious challenge in ensuring that, when people express their views about the future of their health service, consideration is given to ways in which those views can be accommodated. All views cannot be accommodated, because people sometimes make unreasonable demands—as an elected member, I appreciate that. However, we must develop proposals to ensure that a mechanism exists for occasions when health boards get things wrong, which happens often. That is why I plead again with the minister to consider my member's bill, which proposes opportunities for communities to appeal if they are concerned that an exercise has not been conducted properly.

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con): Does the member agree that we are not just highlighting Glasgow issues this evening, but discussing a national situation? Does he agree that it would be better if the minister simply called a moratorium on any proposed changes in health board areas until we have had full and proper discussion of the proposals, because the issue is of national importance?

Paul Martin: Obviously, David Davidson can raise that matter with the minister.

We must move consultation forward. We face challenges and difficult decisions in our everyday lives. If somebody asked me to move from the Clydesdale Bank to Lloyds TSB, I would want to know what improvements in service there would

be. However, with the maternity services review, no one has said where patients can expect improvements in services. Every day, the health board faces the serious challenge of telling its patients where they can expect to see improvements in services and whether those improvements will be to the fabric of the buildings in which services are delivered, or to staff conditions for those who work in the buildings, or to the waiting times for maternity services.

The daily challenge that health boards face is not in asking for people's say and for what they think, but in demonstrating to members of the public where they can expect improvements to be made in services as a result of reducing three sites to two sites, for example. There has been no demonstration of how such services will be improved, because the health board in question does not know how they will be improved. All that the health board sees is a proposal to reduce the number of sites from three to two. Where members of the public can expect to see improvements in service has not been demonstrated.

17:59

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I, too, thank Sandra White for giving us an opportunity to debate the issue. I was pleased to add my name in support of the motion and I am pleased to have the chance to speak to it. I was also happy to add my name to the *Evening Times* petition, to which many members have referred. Some 100,000 people signed it, which is even more than attended the historic anti-war demonstration in February. Those are two nails in the coffin of apathy.

None of us would try to pretend that the issues involved are simple—they are complex—but if there were rock-solid reasons for moving services from the Queen Mother's hospital and if we were certain that patient care would be improved as a result, it would be wrong to rail against closure of the hospital out of affection. However, the reasons for closure are far from rock solid. We have heard conflicting argument from the experts. In the six months or so that I have been a member, I have seen that most MSPs are hard working and well informed, but we are not the experts in delivering services—the people who do the work are the experts. Johann Lamont and Pauline McNeill both recognised that, although it is interesting that two members started from that first principle and reached different conclusions. If there is little clarity in the debate among us and among the experts, and overwhelming popular opinion on the issue, it is difficult to understand how the Greater Glasgow NHS Board reached a conclusion.

I attended a public meeting of the board. If there

were strong arguments against the proposal, I was deaf to them because I did not hear them mentioned at that meeting. I fear that the board did not consider those arguments properly.

Ms McNeill: It has come to light recently that one of the four panel members did not actually go on the visit to the Queen Mother's hospital during the review process. I am concerned about that. Does Patrick Harvie have similar concerns?

Patrick Harvie: I am sorry, I did not hear that question and I want to move on because I have little time.

Someone who has made his views known is the regional director of neonatal transport services, who said that the proposed system "will undoubtedly be inferior". He continued:

"To dismantle the combined neonatal and surgical service and replace that with the bed and breakfast approach is simply appalling and will lead to increased risk."

With that background of doubt about the proposals, Sandra White's motion asks only for the minister to review the decision and to ask how the board managed to reach its conclusion so clearly. If the health ministers, both of whom are here, can answer that question with 100 per cent confidence, so be it, but I do not see how they can do so. If they cannot, the call for a review of the decision is entirely appropriate. If minds are closed to that call, consultation genuinely is, as Nicola Sturgeon said, a sham.

The Presiding Officer: I call Jackie Baillie, to be followed by the minister.

18:02

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Thank you for allowing me to speak, Presiding Officer. I am not a Glasgow member, but a wider interest is involved and the level of concern about the issue among members is evident.

I say at the outset that I do not believe that the closure of the Queen Mother's hospital is the best option for the care of babies and their families north of the River Clyde. As others have said, the issue is not only about provision for babies and mothers from Glasgow or even the west of Scotland; it is about a resource for the whole of Scotland. The proximity of the Queen Mother's hospital to Yorkhill is a unique situation and I will not rehearse again the arguments about those hospitals being at the cutting edge of research and practice or about the consultation process, although I associate myself with the remarks of my colleague Paul Martin on the issue.

There are genuine concerns and a recognition that the debate is about the services that are in place not only for mothers, but for babies. We

should have the debate, but it must be open and honest. Everybody understands the desire to avoid maternal deaths, but that must be balanced by an understanding of the desire to avoid the death of babies.

I will talk about the wider geographical context of the issue. We must consider what is going on in the neighbouring Argyll and Clyde NHS Board area. Following its maternity services review, the board concluded that there should be one consultant-led service—at the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley—with midwife-led units elsewhere, including one at the Vale of Leven hospital. I welcome the presence of a midwife-led unit at the Vale of Leven because it means that finally, after an absence of a year, babies are again being born locally.

I have no problem with the principle that the best possible service should be available for women and their children. For that to happen, we need to make decisions about where those services should be located. We must strike a balance and enable easy access.

I say to the minister—as I have said many times before—that, if the proposals are carried through, mothers in Argyll and Clyde would have to attend a consultant-led unit in Paisley. If a mother was discharged but there was, regrettably, something wrong with her child so that it had to be kept in the special care unit, that mother would have to undertake a five-hour return journey by public transport to bond with her child. That is not acceptable in rural Scotland, never mind in urban Scotland.

Moreover, what happens when those women have to cross the river but the Erskine bridge and the Clyde tunnel are closed at the same time, as has happened before? Our natural transport corridors north of the river run into the north of Glasgow; they do not cross the river. The minister cannot ignore the proximity of the Southern general hospital to the RAH: they are a mere 7 miles apart. The proposals do not effectively balance the need for quality with the need for access.

I very much welcome the minister's intervention in asking Greater Glasgow NHS Board and Argyll and Clyde NHS Board to work together to arrive at a much more reasonable solution and report to him in April. However, I ask him to reflect further on how we organise maternity services across health board boundaries. In doing so, he must recognise the fact that the Queen Mother's hospital and Yorkhill serve a population far greater than that of north Glasgow. His decision matters to women not just in Glasgow, but in Dumbarton, the Vale of Leven, Helensburgh and beyond.

18:06

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm): I thank Sandra White for securing this important debate. I will respond to some of the points that have been raised, but it would be inappropriate for me to discuss the detail of the proposal, which is currently the subject of public consultation. At the end of the consultation period, the NHS board will submit its final proposals to me and I will have to come to a view then. It would, therefore, be wrong—and procedurally impossible—for me to express a clear view today. I can, however, explain what I will consider when the proposals are put to me next year. I will need to consider two issues: the adequacy of the public consultation and the substantive proposal—in particular, the consistency of the proposed reorganisation of maternity services in Glasgow with national policy.

In consulting on the proposals, the NHS board is required to follow the draft guidance that was issued in May 2002. That guidance will be reissued in its final form soon. The principles underpinning consultation are that end-process consultation is not acceptable; that boards should develop proposals for change in partnership with all the affected groups and communities; and that boards should formally consult on the outcome of that development process. To underline further the importance of consultation and public involvement, the National Health Service Reform (Scotland) Bill will place a duty directly on boards to secure public involvement in planning and development and decisions affecting the operation of health services. I am sure that the points that Paul Martin raised will be discussed in the context of that bill.

I assure Parliament that I will pay close attention to the substantive arguments that are being made and to the nature of the consultation. I will consider all the information that is available and all representations that have been made to me before I come to a view. I have already started to look at the issues in detail and I will continue to examine them over the coming months. Like Sandra White and other members, I visited Yorkhill in the summer and I have spoken to many clinicians and members of the public about the proposals. However, as I said at question time recently, I have been struck by the way in which, more than in most reorganisations, senior clinicians are totally divided on the issue and are expressing contrary views. That is a particular challenge to us all in addressing the matter.

I will refer to two specific points before moving on to talk about maternity services more generally. First, Carolyn Leckie raised a point about ECMO. That is funded by the national services division and, therefore, will continue to be provided in Glasgow. It is something for which we are responsible.

Ms McNeill: The minister may not be aware of it, but the point that Carolyn Leckie was making was that the consultant who runs that service has already advised the national services division that he would be unhappy to do so if he did not have a link with the Queen Mother's hospital.

Malcolm Chisholm: That is certainly one of the many points that I can look at. I wanted to establish the principle that we, not Greater Glasgow NHS Board, control that service.

Several members—including Murray Tosh, Robert Brown, Jackie Baillie and Tommy Sheridan—raised the issue of planning services in a regional context. As members know, and as Jackie Baillie reminded us, I asked NHS Argyll and Clyde and Glasgow to undertake further work in that area and for that work to be taken forward alongside the review that is currently being undertaken by Glasgow. I have asked for a report of that work to be submitted to me by April 2004 and can assure Tommy Sheridan that Glasgow will take no decisions until that work has been completed.

I need to put the issue in the more general context of maternity services in Scotland. The fact that the birth rate in Scotland is falling is not irrelevant, although I know that people can draw different conclusions from it. We should remind ourselves that, in the decade between 1991 and 2001, there was a 22 per cent fall in the birth rate.

Another important general point was made by Johann Lamont when she emphasised the importance of flexible local antenatal and postnatal care. Whatever the outcome in Glasgow, the reality is that more maternity care will be delivered in local communities. That partly answers Paul Martin's question about how services will improve.

Murray Tosh said that there had been no national debate and that there was no national strategy. I have to remind him and others that, in 2001, the Scottish Executive published a framework for maternity services in Scotland and that, in 2002, I set up the expert group on acute maternity services—EGAMS—which was a short-life working group of professionals and other stakeholders that considered how the principles of the maternity services framework should be applied to care during childbirth.

Murray Tosh: The point that I was making is that the public are completely unaware of and uninvolved in that and feel utterly left out of the process. The minister has a particularly serious job to do in the areas that are the subject of the reviews if he is to ensure that credibility is retained in the process of public consultation and involvement.

Malcolm Chisholm: I fully accept that we can do a better job of communicating some of the

general issues around maternity services and I assure Mr Tosh that we shall do so. Indeed, that is what I am attempting to do in the closing minutes of my speech.

The EGAMS report addresses some of the issues about consultant-led units, which are at the centre of the debate for many people. The EGAMS report concluded that the current configuration of acute maternity services needs to change. Women at risk of complications in pregnancy should have consultant-led care. The falling birth rate means that some units will not care for sufficient numbers of women and babies to ensure that professional skills and experience can be maintained to an adequate level to provide the highest quality of care. In short, the specialists working in smaller maternity units simply do not get the experience that they need to maintain their skills and to provide safe, specialist care. A rationalisation of consultant-led units will ensure that women who require it will benefit from hands-on care from specialist staff. It will also ensure that staff in training are well supervised and supported.

The report also concluded that we need to realise the full potential of midwives to ensure continuity of care and the provision of childbirth services at as local a level as possible. The midwife's role should be maximised to lead management of pregnancy and childbirth for low-risk women; steps in that direction should include establishing midwife-led units. I was pleased to hear Jackie Baillie welcome the creation of a midwife-led unit at the Vale of Leven hospital.

Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP): According to the Greater Glasgow NHS Board, the EGAMS report says that there needs to be an on-site adult intensive therapy unit whereas, in fact, the EGAMS report says that the units such as the one at the Queen Mother's hospital should "have access to" adult ITU facilities. Does the minister agree, therefore, that Glasgow has been misleading people quite badly in that regard?

Malcolm Chisholm: That point goes to the heart of the debate, but the fact is that obstetricians in general believe that maternity services should be co-located with adult services. There is a splendid service at Yorkhill, but that model, involving only maternity and child services, is not used in any other hospital in the United Kingdom. Of course, that does not take away from the fact that Yorkhill provides an excellent service.

Following the EGAMS report, the Executive provided £150,000 to put in place three regional maternity services co-ordinators to ensure that local planning and commissioning of services take place within a regional context. That is part of our and the EGAMS report's general emphasis on regional planning.

We have provided more than £1 million for training and education in order to upskill midwives and, through a national work force planning group, we have established a process for work force planning for maternity services.

I assume that my time is more or less up, so I will conclude. Implementation of the EGAMS report will ensure that local, regional and national networks provide vehicles for the provision of high-quality maternity care throughout Scotland as part of a framework of tiered care, with clear and explicit communication and referral pathways.

As far as Glasgow is concerned, I can assure members that I will pay close attention to all the arguments that have been made today, as well as to the points that have been raised by many other people, including members of the public and clinicians, with all their diverse views on the issue. I will consider the substantive proposals that have been made and the adequacy of the consultation. There will be no rubber-stamping. The important next step is for the consultation to proceed.

Meeting closed at 18:16.

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