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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 26 May 2016

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 10:00]

Scotland's Future in the European Union

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Our business this morning is a debate on motion S5M-00190, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on Scotland's future in the European Union. I call Fiona Hyslop to speak to and move the motion.

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I will first take a moment to welcome colleagues to their new positions, including Jackson Carlaw for the Conservatives and Lewis Macdonald for Labour.

There are only 28 days until the polls open for the European Union referendum and votes are cast across Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom on whether we should remain in or leave the European Union. Although the opinion polls in Scotland show a lead for support to remain, there is no room at all for complacency in Scotland, and polls are tight across the UK.

The leaders of all the parties that are represented in the chamber are committed to Scotland's continued EU membership. Their arguments for a remain vote may differ, as we will hear today, but the bottom line is that we are faced with a stark choice: do we remain in or leave the EU? There will be no qualifications on the ballot paper, which will simply ask: do we leave or do we remain? Of course, there may be voices to leave heard today.

The EU is not perfect. It is always changing and it needs to improve to ensure that it focuses on what matters to people, such as jobs, the economy, energy and general security and the environment. The Scottish Government is clear that being in the EU is far better for the people of Scotland than being out. Scotland wants and deserves to see arguments that are rational and reasoned and that respect the intelligence of one of the most politically engaged electorates in Europe. Today, I will concentrate on the benefits of Scotland's EU membership and I hope that the Parliament can unite behind our call for a vote on 23 June to remain in the European Union. I will address what the EU has delivered in the past, what it is delivering in the present and what the prospects are for the future.

The EU is founded on the principles of solidarity and mutual support. It was born out of the needs

of European countries to prioritise co-operation over conflict in the post-war years and to shape a better world for their children and grandchildren. The EU is much more than a simple trade association; it is based on the principles of strengthening peace, security, justice and prosperity for all. Those aims are embedded in the important rights that EU legislation guarantees for the people of Scotland, covering areas ranging from civil liberties to consumer protection.

EU social legislation has been a force for good and has prevented the exploitation of workers. The EU has guaranteed that workers cannot be forced to work longer than a 48-hour week, that they are entitled to 20 days paid leave per year and that women are entitled to at least 14 weeks of maternity leave. It is the EU that guarantees those rights, and it is most certainly not a given that those rights and protections would continue under a UK Government outside the EU.

In 2013, the UK increased the minimum entitlement to parental leave only as a direct result of European directives. In other cases, such as minimum annual leave and conditions for agency workers, the UK complies with the European minimum and no more. EU action has been a major driver of progressive legislation that directly benefits the people of Scotland. Earlier this week, Dr Allan made that case in Brussels during his first visit in his new role as Minister for International Development and Europe.

As of now in the present day, we know that those rights are guaranteed to all Scots who choose to work, live and study elsewhere in the EU. We all know many Scots who have benefited from opportunities to live, work and study elsewhere in the EU. EU membership has opened up those benefits to us and, if we want them to be available to our children and grandchildren, we have to communicate their worth to the people of Scotland between now and 23 June. This week, the Scottish Government has published information and web pages setting out the benefits of EU membership.

Migration from the EU has also benefited the communities, businesses and people of Scotland. EU migrants make a substantial net contribution to the UK's public finances and address crucial skills gaps in Scotland's economy. In my portfolio, the tourism industry needs access to European workers. According to a report this month from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, in 2013-14 recent EU migrants contributed over £2.5 billion more to the UK Treasury in taxes than they received back, contributing to paying for our public services. They are welcome contributors to our economy and society.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I agree with the cabinet secretary's observations about the

contribution that EU migrants make to Scotland and, indeed, the UK, but can she illustrate to the chamber whether there has been any assessment of the impact on our NHS if Brexit were to take place, given the number of doctors, nurses and other health staff who come from other EU countries?

Fiona Hyslop: NHS Scotland has been among those contributing to the case that is being made to the UK Government for a migration system that works for Scotland and our public services. Tavish Scott's point is well made that our NHS in particular is dependent on the very skilled—and very welcome—medical staff in our hospitals who come from other EU countries, and that is why we need to recognise the positive contribution that EU and indeed other migrants make to Scotland. Having said that, I find it interesting that UK nationals who live and work abroad are referred to as expats while those from the rest of the EU who work here are called migrants.

Moving on, I believe that protecting our environment and tackling climate change are global challenges. European decisions have helped us to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions by almost nine tenths in the past four decades, and nitrogen oxide levels have decreased by two thirds in Scotland since 1990. We have to act collectively to solve such problems; after all, environmental issues cross borders and geographies. The EU sets standards for European nations and its projects encourage the co-operation and innovation necessary in developing new technologies, including renewables.

That is of particular benefit to Scotland. Only this week, over £500 million-worth of EU investment in the Moray Firth Beatrice wind farm was announced. That project will eventually be worth £2.5 billion and will deliver many employment and community benefits to Caithness and Scotland as a whole.

Being in the EU puts Scotland in the vanguard of the global effort against climate change. Ahead of last year's Paris summit, the EU was, as the representative of 28 member states, able to negotiate far more effectively than any of those member states would have done on their own. Co-operation across borders is a necessity in today's interconnected world. Whether we are talking about climate negotiations or the current refugee crisis facing the EU, international problems require countries to work together more, not less.

As for the issue of sovereignty, I believe that Scotland should be an independent country precisely so that it can decide for itself the bodies and organisations it can pool or share its sovereignty with as an independent nation in an interdependent world.

The economic benefits of EU membership are well known.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary expand on her logic of wanting to leave a political union of 60 million to join a political union of 750 million and say whether she believes that Scotland would have more influence in that scenario?

Fiona Hyslop: I think that I have just made that case. There are 28 independent countries in the EU that can decide for themselves to be part of a market. If Mr Findlay wants to join others to take the UK and Scotland out of that 500 million, he can go and align himself with Boris Johnson.

More than 300,000 Scottish jobs are deemed by the Centre for Economics and Business Research to be associated with exports to the EU, 42 per cent of exports from Scotland go to the EU, and of course Scotland, unlike the UK as a whole, is a net exporter to the EU. That is an economic lesson that Mr Findlay might want to take up.

This week, Ernst & Young revealed that foreign direct investment in Scotland rose by 50 per cent in 2015, securing more than 5,000 jobs, and its survey also found that 79 per cent of investors cited access to the European single market as a key feature of the UK's attractiveness. I am not saying that all that would crash to a halt if the UK were to leave the EU, but I believe that our EU membership makes investing in Scotland a more attractive and easier prospect. Indeed, I am frequently told as much when I meet partners around the world—and that was especially true during my visit to Japan last year.

There is clear evidence that exporting helps business to become more innovative and successful. Our priority as the Scottish Government is to create jobs in Scotland by leveraging our EU membership to grow our exports, and being in the single market is vital for Scottish businesses to have the best possible opportunities in Europe.

Seven of the top 10 destinations for food and drink, our most significant exporting sector, are in the EU. The new innovation and investment hubs that we are establishing in Dublin, London and Brussels will contribute to that effort and are an example of our Government's international ambition, which our EU membership facilitates.

In facing the future, being within the EU offers us a better chance to tackle the international big challenges of energy security, climate change and other pressures.

There is no agreement or detail from the leave side about what it is offering for the future. An arrangement similar to the one that Norway has with the EU would leave us subject to all the same

rules and as contributors to the EU budget, but without any say in setting those rules or how the budget is allocated. As the former foreign minister of Norway has said, Norway pays but has no say. Norway is the 10th highest contributor to the EU budget. It has to pay in to have access to EU funds such as horizon 2020. Norwegian farmers do not receive common agricultural policy payments. We should also remember that Norway has decided to join Schengen and is now subject to freedom of movement rules.

On calls to be outside the single market, the idea that the UK should model itself on Singapore does not even get off the ground, particularly given the importance that the Singaporean Government places on its membership of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

I said at the outset that different parties will come to the debate with different perspectives, but I hope that, across parties, we can unite behind the motion and provide leadership to Scotland for the vote ahead.

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): On that point about different views, the cabinet secretary seemed to indicate that anyone who takes a leave view is aligning themselves with Boris Johnson. Does that mean that anyone who is taking a remain view is aligning themselves with David Cameron? Surely this debate must be much more than one old Etonian versus another old Etonian.

Fiona Hyslop: We could take a historical perspective. The Archbishop of Canterbury is currently addressing the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Perhaps some people might want to take the historical perspective that what is happening in this debate is about an English civil war and a civil war within the Tory Party.

The issue is stark. It is bigger than the internal dynamics of the Conservative Party. As the member says, the debate must be about the future not just of this country but of the European Union as a whole and our impact on the wider world.

I pay particular tribute to this Parliament and the European and External Relations Committee in the previous session for its work in bringing together different voices, with different perspective, to achieve consensus across Scotland.

Let me be clear. As a Parliament, we have to show political leadership to the people of Scotland. We intend to do that through today's motion.

I appeal to all involved in the debate. I appeal to the leave campaign to cease its smears, speculation and downright ludicrous arguments. I appeal to the remain campaign to realise that if the biggest risk is complacency at the polls, its

incredible project fear tactics will dissuade voters from turning out at the polls, not persuade them to do so.

The EU is not perfect, but it is a remarkable achievement. Over six decades it has secured co-operation over conflict. It has pursued a shared sense of collaboration, exchange and purposeful endeavour to work in concert to advance the interests not just of our own population but of the world. It is on that positive basis that the Scottish Government's view is that Scotland as part of the UK should remain in the EU.

I move,

That the Parliament supports Scotland and the rest of the UK remaining part of the EU.

10:13

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): I thank the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs for her welcome. It will indeed be fun for me, after nine years shadowing the health portfolio, to share a different portfolio and to lock horns with her.

My speech will not outline the Conservative Party position. The cabinet secretary was perfectly correct to identify that the leaders of all political parties are in favour of remain, as I am, but I am advocating a personal position.

It has been 40 years since the previous referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union. In 1975, 67 per cent of people said yes and 32 per cent said no. In fact, the only areas to vote no in that contest anywhere in the United Kingdom were Mr Allan's Western Isles constituency and Mr Scott's Shetland Islands constituency.

The turnout in 1975 was 65 per cent. There is a question mark about whether people are sufficiently engaged to ensure that we have a turnout of that level this time. It is important that we do because, as the cabinet secretary said, this is a fundamental decision.

The referendum in 1975 was the last vote in which I did not participate. After that, I was old enough to vote, but at 16 in 1975 I was able to watch the debate with interest.

When I hear many people who talk about leaving suggest that that would lead to some sort of economic utopia for Britain, I think back to 1975—and an economic and social utopia it was not. The legacy in the minds of some might be the music of Slade, T Rex, Wizzard, Roxy Music and David Bowie, but the top-rated television programmes, which show how distant life now is from then, were "Till Death Us Do Part" and "The Black and White Minstrel Show". It was a very different Britain in a very different age. At that

time, our industrial record measured the working days that were lost through dispute in millions.

When we look back to the vote 40 years ago, it is important to remember that the second world war had taken place only 30 years earlier. For many of my grandparents' generation, who had fought and raised families during conflicts, the European alliance held the prospect of a permanent peace and a degree of co-operation.

Although the fears that existed in 1975 proved to be unrealised, we in Europe sat next to the Soviet Union, and there was a perceptible and genuine fear of further conflict across the European mainland. The European project and participation in what was then the European Economic Community were seen to be a decisive step forward for the country. In that, we were correct: what were the battlefields of Europe are now the holiday playgrounds of Europeans. That is a significant change in life across the European continent, but people too easily dismiss it as irrelevant and set it aside as if it were inevitable.

The economy was broken in 1975; I do not remember it prospering. We had just come from the three-day week, in which businesses could work for only three days. I remember the power cuts and candles in the home. I remember Edward Heath saying:

"Britain has reached the end of the road"

and

"The rest of the world is very sorry, but the rest of the world regrets it is unable to oblige any longer".

I remember the Labour Party having to return from crisis meetings at the International Monetary Fund.

Forty years on, our nation is transformed not despite or because of but within the European Union. All the progress that we have made as a nation has been made within the EU. I do not argue that all our success is due to the EU—far from it—but membership was born from exceptional political courage here. The idea that the EU has somehow acted as a brake on our prosperity and interfered with all our economic, taxation and industrial policy is absolute nonsense.

In the EU, the UK drove through the single market, which has been the key economic driver of change. It is easy to forget the queues of lorries that were at every border post in every European nation; lorries sometimes had to wait for days before they could transport goods between countries of Europe. All that has been swept aside. Britain has been on the winning side of much of the argument about how we transform and develop Europe and policy in Europe in the past 40 years.

I hear some colleagues talk about a colossal loss of sovereignty, but I sometimes do not know how sovereignty is defined. Does it mean that we should seal our borders or stick it to anyone who has an interest in human rights? I do not know whether that is what is meant by sovereignty. In my life, day-to-day policy, whether it be education, health, economic or taxation policy, has been decided here or at Westminster, without any great interference from Europe. In meaningful terms, sovereignty over policy in this country rests with people in this country. Interference from Europe is sometimes exaggerated for effect—the dead hand of Europe—rather than referred to in realistic terms.

On justice issues and on some rural economy and border issues, there are fights to be had, but they are far better addressed by our being in the EU and arguing our case than by biting off our nose to spite our face.

Elaine Smith: What will happen if the comprehensive economic and trade agreement and the transatlantic trade and investment partnership are passed at the EU?

Jackson Carlaw: There are divisions of opinion, and the balance of where the arguments will eventually rest is yet to be decided, but international trade agreements are part of what the blocs of trading partners in the world actively participate in. Huge benefits can accrue from that. In the balance of my time, I do not want to repeat the litany of competing apocalyptic arguments on either side. All or any of them may be true, but they become a blizzard and a distraction in the debate.

I admit to an error of judgment. I thought that, while the Scottish referendum was a referendum that engaged the heads and the hearts of people in this country, the arguments in the European referendum would be much more nuanced—that they would be technical and devoid of emotion. Yet, as the vote approaches, I find that I care far more about the outcome than I ever thought I would.

What sort of Britain do I want to live in? Do I want to have an internationalist view or an isolationist view of our place in the world? Do I want to see us withdraw from our friends and markets? Do I want to see us unpick relationships that have been developing very rapidly with the other nations, after so short a time within the European community? In that at least I believe that my arguments are consistent in relation to the two referendums; there is sometimes an inconsistency in the nationalist argument.

I regret that we keep coming back to independence. To my astonishment, I discovered in this week's *Radio Times* that Nicola Sturgeon is

to star in a science fiction drama on Saturday, in which she will be playing herself in an adaptation of John Wyndham's "The Kraken Wakes". In the drama, there has been an apocalypse. The world has been invaded by aliens; the polar ice caps have melted; most of Britain is under water; and Nicola Sturgeon will broadcast to the nation. I have heard what she says. She says, "This represents a material change in circumstances and I therefore intend to—" [*Laughter.*]

I came into politics to improve life for the generations who follow me. I look to one of the architects of the European project—one of the 11 founding members—Winston Churchill. In 1942, at the height of the conflict, he said:

"Hard as it is to say now ... I look forward to a ... Europe in which the barriers between the nations will be greatly minimised and unrestricted travel will be possible".

Churchill also stated:

"Britain will have to play her full part as a member of the European family."

Do I look to Winston Churchill or do I look to Boris Johnson for my inspiration? I look to the former, not the latter. I will be voting for a future that I think is the right one for my sons and for the grandchildren I hope yet to see.

I realise that, in doing that, there is a balance—there is a shift between centre-right and centre-left Governments across Europe and both have their part to play. It is not a case of saying, "I don't want any lefties having any say over what happens in here," any more than it is for others to say, "I don't want any of these people on the right having anything to do with it." There will be a balance over history as we move forward.

I understand all that but, ultimately, I want to be an internationalist, not an isolationist. Therefore, I will vote with all the others who whole-heartedly decide on 23 June that the right decision for this country is a vote to remain.

10:23

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): I welcome this chance to set out the positive case for the European Union.

Labour is Scotland's internationalist party. We believe in solidarity beyond borders. We believe that sharing sovereignty makes us all stronger, wealthier and safer. We believe in Scotland's place in the United Kingdom.

Sovereignty shared is sovereignty gained. Walking alone in the world would not mean freedom; it would mean powerlessness. It is a truth that we understand in our own lives—we need each other because together, with others, life is so much more fulfilling.

The vision of nations across a continent coming together has never been an easy one, but it has survived economic turmoil, the fall of communism and expansion to welcome nation after nation.

The changes that we lived through together in the first 60 years of our European family and in the 43 years since we joined are nothing compared with the upheaval that we are living through now, with the shift of power and prosperity to the east, the spread of jihadism, growing inequality, a more confrontational Russia, climate change, conflict within nations, the refugee crisis, disillusionment with democratic politics and the rise of the far right and anti-European parties that fill the void.

This is a test for all of Europe, but all of Europe's eyes are currently on us. How will we react to the uncertainty of our world? Will we turn our back on our neighbours and turn in on ourselves, or will we face the world together? Will we be the outward-looking nation that made us so successful in the world and took us into Europe in the first place, or will we retreat? That is a question that all individuals and institutions will have to answer.

As with all parties, there is a variety of views on Europe in the Labour Party, and we will hear a bit of the socialist case for leave from my friend Elaine Smith later this morning. However, in contrast to the civil war in the Tory Cabinet or the confusion of nationalists who argue that we can share sovereignty with every European nation except our nearest neighbours, Labour will campaign enthusiastically for our place in the European Union.

This is a decision about where we believe the best future for the United Kingdom lies: in or out of Europe. Those in the leave campaign have attempted to make it a test of whether we believe in our country at all, and they question our patriotism. Those of us who believe in sharing sovereignty with our neighbours defeated those arguments two years ago, but in doing so we learned a hard lesson—that populist arguments cannot be underestimated. In this debate, therefore, the remain side must win the arguments that appeal to the head, but we have also learned that such an approach must be combined with a story that reaches people's hearts.

We will make the economic case: the importance of trade within the EU is essential to Scottish jobs, as it is worth nearly £12 billion and second only in value to trade with the rest of the UK. We will argue the case for workers' rights: Europe guarantees basic standards at work for millions of Scottish workers and workers in other nations, regardless of who is in government. Those European guarantees include four weeks' paid holiday for all; the equal treatment of part-time and full-time workers; the legal principle of

equal pay for equal work; maternity leave; and protection from discrimination due to age, race, gender, religion, disability or sexual orientation.

We will argue that, in a world of constant change and confusing new threats, we are more secure in bigger alliances than in standing alone. We will argue that we can tackle the threats to our environment only by working together and that the weight of 28 nations working together has enabled us to secure global action on climate change.

We will argue that case with reason but also with passion. We will make all those arguments, but we will also argue that there is something beautiful about being part of the European family. It is found not in the grey offices of officials in Brussels or in the columns of national balance sheets, but in the hundreds of millions of lives that are made more colourful, fulfilling and exciting in the cities and towns of Scotland, in the UK and in the 27 other nations.

My generation and that of my parents before me have become so used to being part of Europe that we do not stop to wonder at the achievement that the EU represents. We co-operate across an entire continent, sharing freedom and opportunity together. The continent, whose history is written in conflict and chaos, is now defined by peace and prosperity. The nations on the shores of the Mediterranean, the Baltic and the Black Sea, whose citizens lived under totalitarian regimes and military dictators, now take for granted their human rights and free speech, and democracy itself.

We have been a part of that; indeed, we built it. It is not perfect—of course it is not—but it is as extraordinary an achievement as any in our history. We are a more European country for having built that union. We are the richer for it, not just from the bump in our gross domestic product—as important as that is—but from the shared experiences, the mixing of cultures, the people we have come to know, and the amazing experiences and opportunities that the EU has brought to us. I fear we may not realise all of that until it is gone.

I do not listen to those who say that, on 23 June, Scotland will vote overwhelmingly to remain. There is no such thing as a guaranteed win in politics, and this is too important an argument to sit it out. It is too important for half-hearted support and too important not to lead. For my part, I will make the case with everything I have: the Labour case for Scotland and the UK in Europe.

10:29

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): I congratulate all the party leaders on showing leadership on Scotland and Europe and putting the positive case for remain. I also congratulate

Fiona Hyslop on her well-deserved reappointment to the Cabinet, and my other friend and colleague Alasdair Allan on his new position in the Scottish Government. I am sure that they will both wave the flag for Scotland on the international stage.

I should also say how much I look forward to representing my Moray constituents, after a nine-year absence from these benches, and to contributing to the debates on the issues facing Scotland in the times ahead.

Fifty per cent of Scotch whisky is produced in Speyside, with much of it going to EU markets. The water in the water of life is of supreme quality thanks to the EU environmental legislation that applies to our rivers and watercourses. Moray's famous food businesses, such as Walkers Shortbread and Baxters, export a lot to EU markets. Therefore, our access to the single European market and issues around EU membership are of direct relevance to thousands of families in Moray and to the local economy.

Today, we are debating our country's relationship with Europe, which is one of the biggest issues facing Scotland's future, with the in/out referendum only weeks away. The Scottish dimension to the EU referendum needs to be widely debated and broadcast. There are many unique and distinctive issues for people in Scotland to consider before they decide how to vote on 23 June. However, the debate is not just about the future of Scotland or the UK but about the future of Europe. The result of the vote on 23 June will affect every single person in Scotland and across these islands, and has the potential to affect every single one of Europe's 500 million citizens.

As someone who believes that Scotland should be a nation state in its own right, I strongly believe that Europe's nation states must work together, sharing and pooling sovereignty where appropriate, to meet the economic, social and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

It is indeed ironic that the UK is holding a referendum—just as many nations did in the 20th century to secure lasting peace and prosperity—given that it was instrumental in founding the United Nations in 1945, subsequently joining the European Community in 1973, in the first big expansion, in recognition of the fact that it can be in the national interest to share sovereignty. It really saddens me that those high ideals have been crowded out in a referendum debate that is now dominated by immigration, especially when we consider the origins of the EU. Boris Johnson and his colleagues want to walk out of Europe, but they should knuckle down and help our fellow human beings in their hour of need.

It is also ironic that Boris Johnson recently published a biography of his hero, Winston Churchill, who in 1940 proposed a Franco-British union with shared currency and citizenship and joint economic and financial institutions. Of course, that idea to help win the war was put to Churchill by one Jean Monnet, who went on to be a founding father of the European Union with the aim of preventing another European war.

Peace in Europe is the biggest dividend, but EU membership has resulted in many benefits for our citizens. When it comes to issues such as workers' rights, consumer protection, welfare and the environment, which Fiona Hyslop and Kezia Dugdale mentioned, Scotland is much closer to the mainstream European social democracy position than it is to the neo-liberal politics of Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage and the kind of Britain that they want to see. I have no doubt that most people in Scotland are much more supportive of the policies that have been agreed by our progressive European partners and neighbours than they are of some of the more regressive positions that have often been adopted by Westminster.

The negotiations, compromises and occasional climb-downs that being a member of the club necessitates have often prevented UK ministers from imposing damaging policies on Scotland. In my nine years of involvement in European negotiations, I came across many examples of cases in which other EU member states shielded Scotland, whether in relation to the £500 million for farm payments that continues to flow to Scotland each year because UK Chancellors of the Exchequer were outmanoeuvred and outvoted at EU negotiations—

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Richard Lochhead: I apologise, but I have no time to do so.

There is also the considerable progressive social and environmental legislation that I think we can all agree would never have seen the light of day if it had been up to Whitehall. The stark reality for Scotland is that transferring decision making from Brussels to Whitehall—especially to the UK Treasury—will often be against Scottish interests.

I have two further quick points to make. I have heard Brexit spokespeople, including the current UK fisheries minister, George Eustice, claim that Brexit would give Scottish ministers a greater role on issues such as fisheries. My difficulty with that argument is that the UK Government could give Scottish ministers a greater role under the current arrangements, but it has chosen not to do so. Therefore, the promises about what would happen

post-Brexit ring hollow for me, and they should ring hollow for all our fishing communities.

Ross Thomson (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the member give way?

Richard Lochhead: I apologise, but I have only one minute left.

I come to my final point. Many people in Scotland have genuine concerns about particular EU policies, how the EU institutions work or the direction that Europe is taking. Those are genuine, understandable concerns, which I am sure that many members across the chamber share—I know that I do.

The case for remaining in the EU is absolutely overwhelming, but our support for remain must not mean that we are unwilling to cast a critical eye towards the EU. I know from my experience of dealing with EU institutions that it can take ages to fix damaging regulations, that there is a need for more decentralisation, and that we need more of a focus on the issues that matter to ordinary people in Europe. Therefore, further reform of the EU is absolutely necessary, but the best way forward for Scotland is to reform, not reject, the European Union. EU membership delivers benefits for Scotland.

I repeat what Fiona Hyslop said. This may be a forlorn hope, but I urge the campaigns to cut out the myths, exaggerations and scaremongering in the remaining few weeks and instead have a debate that is based on vision, facts and high ideals.

In 1949, Robert Schuman said:

“We are carrying out a great experiment, the fulfillment of the same recurrent dream that for ten centuries has revisited the peoples of Europe: creating between them an organization putting an end to war and guaranteeing an eternal peace.”

I hope that all of us in the chamber will support that high ideal, and that on 23 June Scotland will support it, too. [*Applause.*]

10:36

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): It is a great honour to make my maiden speech in the Parliament as one of Glasgow's two newly elected Conservative MSPs. Given that I have taught European and British constitutional law at the University of Glasgow for the past 13 years, I suppose that it is apt that I am making my first speech in a debate on the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union. On the subject of the University of Glasgow, I refer members to my declaration of interests in the register of members' interests.

The city that I represent, which is the city that is my home, where I got married and where my four children were born, has a proud European heritage. It was the first British city to be named European city of culture, in 1990. A quarter of a century later, Glasgow is still making European waves. Just this year, it was ranked as top large European city of the future. More than 5,000 EU students come to Glasgow each year to study in the city's three universities. Altogether, Glasgow's 130,000 students come from 135 countries around the world. It is no wonder that we are the Rough Guides friendliest city on the planet.

On 23 June, I shall vote to remain in the European Union. That will not be with the same passion and pride with which I voted on 18 September 2014 to reject the Scottish National Party's proposition that we break up Britain, but nonetheless with clarity that to stay is the right course for Glasgow, Scotland, the UK and, indeed, the EU itself. In my judgment, the European Union is broken and needs fixing. With soaring unemployment in southern Europe, a failed currency union—there are lessons there for Scotland, too—immiserating the lives of millions of Europeans, and a migration crisis the like of which the continent has not faced since the second world war, the EU has problems aplenty. However, the great failure of the vote leave campaign has been its complete inability to explain how our leaving the European Union would help to fix any of those problems. Just as I wanted Scotland to remain in the United Kingdom because that is in the UK's interests as well as in Scotland's interests, so, too, I want the UK to remain in the EU because that is in the European public interest as well as in Britain's interests.

We should remain precisely because the EU needs fixing. We Britons can lead the way in fixing it. The Prime Minister's renegotiation of the terms of Britain's membership of the European Union shows how that can be done. That renegotiation secured for not only Britain but the whole of the European Union that the single market will have Conservative values at its core. It will be a more competitive and better regulated single market, with fewer administrative burdens, lower compliance costs for business, and unnecessary European legislation repealed.

Clipping the wings of the European Court of Justice is another of the Prime Minister's achievements that will certainly benefit Britain, and it will be to the advantage of the continent as a whole if others follow where British Conservatives have led. That the UK now has a much-needed opt-out from ever closer union will mean that, in cases that concern the United Kingdom at least, the European Court of Justice will have to enforce the law as the member states have made it rather than the law that the judges would like to see. I, for

one, fully share the frustration that our own Supreme Court recently expressed at the irresponsible overreach of some of the ECJ's case law.

It was a Conservative Government that took us into the European Economic Community in 1972, and it is a Conservative Government that has now, successfully and against the odds, delivered a renegotiation of the UK's constitutional and legal relationship with the European Union. A generation ago—yes, 41 years is a generation ago—the British people decided to remain in the EEC. We should reaffirm that decision next month, not because the European Union is perfect, but because its problems, like our own domestic challenges, require British Conservative solutions. We require solutions that get government off people's backs and leave them free to pursue their lives; solutions that encourage free movement—of goods, of services and, yes, of workers, too; and solutions that are designed to ensure not only the redistribution of wealth, but the creation of wealth in the first place.

Those are the values of union. Economic prosperity and security for all lay at the heart of our case for a no vote in 2014, as they lie now at the core of the case for a remain vote next month. They are my values and the values of my party, and they are the values that have brought me into Scottish politics. Economic prosperity and security for all are the values that I shall seek to promote, in the interests of Glasgow and Scotland as a whole, every day, as a member of the Scottish Parliament. [*Applause.*]

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Tomkins—and thank you for speaking precisely to time. I remind members that there is an expectation that every member who wants to speak in the debate will be able to do so. We are aiming for speeches of around five minutes.

I call Christina McKelvie.

10:41

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I welcome you to your new role in the chair.

There is much about the EU debate that reminds me of Alice in "Through the Looking Glass" by Lewis Carroll: up is down and in is out. The two right-wing factions of one party fighting over who is more Eurosceptic reminds me of Alice at the crossroads—or should I say Boris at the crossroads? "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?", asked Boris. "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the cat, who was named Nigel. "I really don't care where," replied Boris. "Then it doesn't

much matter which way you go," said Nigel the cat. However, which way we go matters a whole lot to all of us here.

On 23 June, the Prime Minister will ask us a question that is based not on the flimsy deal that he secured at the December Council of Ministers, but on a false premise. The more honest question would be: "Do you agree with the flimsy reforms that I have secured?"

I heard on the radio this morning that the children's word of the year is "refugee". Imprinted on the minds of our young folk is a humanitarian disaster of a kind that has not been seen since the second world war, and they want action to be taken to help—from the mouths of babes we hear much wisdom.

Earlier this year, I hosted with the Scottish European Educational Trust an event at the Scottish Parliament—the our Europe premiere and awards ceremony, which was a huge success. Teams of young people from all over Scotland made films about what the EU means to them. I urge all my colleagues to take the time to watch those enlightening films, which spoke of peace, of rights, of rebuilding Europe, of creating opportunity and of democracy.

The films lead me to think of some of the great things that the EU has produced. As you know, Presiding Officer, workers' rights are very close to my heart. Here are some of those rights—and my thanks go to the Trades Union Congress for providing such clear detail—

Neil Findlay: Will the member give way?

Christina McKelvie: We spoke enough last night, Mr Findlay.

In the UK, employees do not have a right to a written contract of employment.

Neil Findlay: That will be a no, then.

Christina McKelvie: Maybe the member should sit and learn something—rudeness will not get him anywhere.

However, thanks to the EU written statement directive, employees must be given a written statement setting out their pay and working conditions within 28 days of starting work. The working time directive, which was implemented in the UK in 1998, introduced a maximum 48-hour working week—normally averaged over 17 weeks—a daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours, a weekly rest period of 24 consecutive hours and rest breaks during the working day. Those are the regulations that some Tories would like to take away from people.

On maternity rights, the EU pregnant workers directive of 1992 led to substantial improvements

in health and safety protections for expectant and new mothers in the workplace.

I turn to equal pay, about which there is a lot of misinformation. The right to equal pay for men and women for equal work was indeed formulated in the UK. It was made a fundamental right and is enshrined in article 157 of the EU treaty, which is directly enforceable in UK courts. The founding treaty of the European Economic Community stated that member states with equal pay legislation should not be undercut by others that underpaid women workers and exploited their weaker labour market position. Article 157, together with the equal pay directive and ECJ case law, have had a significant positive impact on women's pay and pension rights in the UK. I know that the Equal Pay Act 1970 pre-dated the UK joining the EU, but it had a glaring omission because it did not cover equal pay for work of equal value. That is where the difference lies.

Let us look at discrimination. The UK already had sex and race discrimination laws in place when it joined the EU and it introduced the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 before the EU took action. However, legislation on age, religion and belief and sexual orientation discrimination was introduced as a direct result of the EU framework directive for equal treatment in 2000.

Let us not even start on human rights. Human rights are something that we should all agree on. The European convention on human rights and the charter reaffirm our collective rights in this place and at this time.

As we have heard, there are a lot of things to be proud of in being a member of the EU. My question to members is whether we should vote to leave and give the UK Government, unfettered by EU regulations, carte blanche to withdraw all those rights—and when the UK Government talks about "regulations", it means those rights. Instead, should we vote to remain and fight to reform and create the Europe that our young people want? I say oui, tak, ja and si to remain.

10:46

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): It is a privilege to be called for the first time as the new member for Edinburgh Southern in this Parliament—a privilege that comes with a sense of duty and responsibility to my constituents to ensure that I deliver on their priorities. There can be no better debate than this one in which to make my maiden speech, because Edinburgh Southern regularly polls as one of the most pro-EU areas in not just Scotland but the whole of the UK. From the many, many doorstep conversations I had during the election, I can attest to that.

I acknowledge and pay tribute to the work and dedicated service of my predecessor, Jim Eadie. It is a tribute to him not just that consistently warm words have been said about him by members throughout the chamber but that many of the warmest words have come from my fellow Labour members—a tribute indeed given that this lot stopped saying nice things about me after about five minutes, let alone five years.

Edinburgh Southern is a diverse constituency. It is a network of communities and an area of contrast. On its northern boundary, we have Fountainbridge—a site that once sustained jobs in the brewing industry but is now one of the city's largest gap sites. Edinburgh Southern is also an area of leafy suburbs, sustained by high-quality, professional, high-productivity jobs. Europe matters to my constituents because, whether for investing in future jobs or sustaining existing strengths, our membership of the European Union is vital. For the avoidance of doubt, this Johnson is definitely more Alan than Boris.

We need to change the terms and tenor of the debate on Europe. To date, the focus has been on personality and overblown rhetoric. Both sides talk in telephone number statistics and race to see who can claim the biggest financial calamity if the other side wins. It is not good enough.

There is a reason why my constituency is one of the most pro-Europe, and that is because Europe is real. In the middle of Edinburgh Southern, we have the King's buildings—a hub for science at the University of Edinburgh. It alone provides a multitude of reasons why Europe is a positive force. Universities are institutions with a global perspective. In academia, collaboration is what builds better learning and better research. Edinburgh university alone receives £45 million a year in research funding from the EU. Universities gain strength from their diverse student communities. At Edinburgh, there are 4,500 non-UK EU students; and more than 1,000 Edinburgh students participate in the Erasmus programme every year. For them, the opportunities of Europe are clear and concrete.

Our responsibility in the debate is to make the issues real and to point out the benefits of European co-operation and integration. It is too easy for those benefits to be taken for granted and dismissed.

The benefits and opportunities are not confined to academe. Representing an Edinburgh constituency, I am all too aware of the importance of the financial services sector. Some 100,000 people are employed directly by financial services in Scotland, with another 100,000 in supporting roles. Edinburgh is a major centre of asset management in Europe. That activity and those jobs rely on Europe. So-called passporting

enables our skills and expertise to be applied across the borders of Europe. Our service sector has become fundamental to our export drive, and our financial services expertise is at the core of that.

On talk of trade, Brexiteers snort that the Germans will still want to sell us Volkswagens and will continue to buy Dyson vacuum cleaners. However, in reality, the export of services is far more important and is far more likely to get snarled up in cross-border regulation—with justification, because it is important that cross-border financial activity is controlled and regulated. Ripping us out of Europe would put thousands of jobs at risk in what is indisputably one of Scotland's vital industries.

In Europe, we enjoy better working conditions and better public services, we are more productive and we have higher standards of living than exist anywhere else in the world. Through the European working time directive and the standards that are set out in the social chapter, we enhance and guarantee working conditions. It is not just that those standards are created here; it is that they are strengthened by being consistent across the continent and by the fact that we act collectively.

Although we need to make Europe real, we also need to make the debate bigger. We are living in an increasingly globalised world. The ability to move products across the world puts huge pressure on wages and working conditions. The argument for Europe from those of us on the Labour benches is obvious: by working together, we achieve more; through co-operation and collective interest, we are stronger. Those ideas are embedded in the Labour movement and they also underpin Europe.

In a time of ever-increasing globalisation, we have a choice: we can compete in an unwinnable race to the bottom; or we can work with others for mutual benefit. We are faced with issues that are global in scale: climate change poses a massive threat to our way of life; the global financial crash is still with us, almost 10 years on; and the crisis in the middle east has triggered the biggest movement of refugees since world war 2. Those are the issues of our time, and the only way to tackle them is together. To contemplate withdrawing from the EU—the most effective supranational institution that we have—is quite simply a move in the wrong direction. Isolation makes it harder to deal with those issues. We achieve more by removing borders and frontiers than we ever can by putting them in place. [Applause.]

10:53

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): This is my first speech as a member of this Parliament, but it is not my first speech in this chamber. Uniquely among the Parliaments and Assemblies in these islands, this Parliament regularly opens itself up to wider society, which created an opportunity that I took advantage of as a school student a few years ago. I assure members that I will not pass judgment on whether the standard of debate was higher among 16-year-old school students than it is among those present in the chamber today.

My time in school was not too many years ago and, to many, I seem to be known only as the youngest member of the Scottish Parliament. However, I am more proud of the other record that I set: I am the first Green MSP for the West of Scotland, and I cannot thank enough the volunteers and the voters who made that possible.

We promised to make this Parliament bolder, and that is exactly what the Green MSPs intend to do. However, a more pressing issue is that of the referendum. It is not one of our choosing, but its result will have a profound effect on Scotland. At the UK level, the referendum debate has been nothing more than a contest between two wings of the Conservative Party, two flavours of a failed economic model and two different kinds of hostility to immigrants and refugees. We are expected to choose between an isolated, inward-looking UK or a Europe of the corporations and the bankers. In that debate, it is no surprise that many progressives are tempted to vote to leave, even if I respectfully disagree with those on the left who will ultimately decide to do so.

Those of us who believe in a progressive Europe—a people's Europe—must stand up for everything that we have already won. We must explain what this referendum is truly a choice between.

Europe has strengthened workers' rights, as Fiona Hyslop mentioned in her opening remarks. The working time directive means that workers across the continent are protected from overwork and are guaranteed adequate time off. Looking at those leading the leave campaign, members can understand why the trade union movement is, on the whole, campaigning so vigorously to stay in. As a trade unionist, I have no desire to give Westminster unrestricted ability to decimate our workers' rights.

Europe has also brought limited, but welcome, regulation in the financial sector. Green MEP Philippe Lamberts is known by the *Financial Times* as the man who beat the banks, for successfully introducing a cap on bankers' bonuses. That is just one of the small efforts that have been made

to rein in the financial sector at the European level. It is the kind of progress that can be made only at the European level and not through individual action by member states.

Europe has brought huge benefit to our environment: it was European regulation that forced the UK Government to eliminate acid rain and smog; it was European regulation that stopped the dumping of raw sewage into our oceans and made our beaches cleaner, safer and more attractive; and it is European regulation that makes our air more breathable and less polluted.

What exactly is the red tape that opponents of the European Union talk of? Is it all of the above? Is it the health and safety legislation that has reduced the number of workplace deaths by two thirds in two decades? Is it the limited attempts to bring the bankers to heel? Is it the legislation that makes our air breathable, protects our wildlife and keeps our beaches clean? That is exactly the kind of red tape that they are talking about, and it is only a fraction of what the EU has brought us.

The hardest argument to explain in this debate is probably the most important, as has been mentioned already. European co-operation has brought us decades of uninterrupted peace, which is unprecedented in western Europe. That is why, only this week, the Church of Scotland reaffirmed its commitment to Scotland and the United Kingdom staying in the European Union.

Members may have noticed that I am a bit younger than the average MSP. Given that reputation, which will not leave me for some time, I asked a number of other young people what they would contribute to the debate if they were given the chance, and one response really stuck out:

"Europe provides young people with endless opportunities to connect with and learn from others ... Its diversity and cooperation is something we need to celebrate ... Everything from Erasmus to the freedom of movement means Europe is somewhere for young people to explore, learn and find employment ... Leaving would limit us politically and economically but it would limit us socially as well."

The Scottish Youth Parliament found that an overwhelming majority of young people are in favour of remaining in the European Union—I declare an interest as a former member of that Parliament. This is a generation with no interest in isolating itself.

Although it is deeply flawed and requires major reforms—both democratic and economic—it is our European Union, and reform can and does happen. The Greens are under no illusions about the lack of the reforms that we have demanded, but we have made progress. The European Parliament is more powerful than it has ever been before, and there is much more still to come. Its Green MEPs have led the fight against secretive

and dangerous trade deals such as the transatlantic trade and investment partnership. I would be interested to hear from members who intend to vote to leave the EU how they think the UK's unilateral trade deals would be any different.

That is the debate that we should be having—one not between the Conservatives' vision for Europe and their vision for Britain but between their vision and the vision of a people's Europe that we can build together by staying in. *[Applause.]*

10:58

Michael Russell (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): It is a pleasure and an honour to speak after Ross Greer's first speech. I am not the oldest member—fortuitously—but all older members will be stretched and tested by the changed nature of this chamber. I say to Ross Greer that, 40 years ago, at almost exactly his age, I voted in the first European referendum, and I rebelled against my party: I voted yes when the SNP leadership voted no. I am relieved to be more in tune with the main stream of my party now, after 40 years, as I wholeheartedly support the remain campaign.

Nevertheless, there was consistency in my and the SNP's inconsistency. The decision to recommend a no vote in 1975 was based on an assertion of Scottish sovereignty, which in that case refused to accept terms negotiated by a UK Government without reference to Scotland. Among those terms was the abandonment of the Scottish fishing industry, which was seen as expendable. Communities that I represent have paid a price for that every single year since.

Once again, the SNP is asserting our sovereignty, this time by making a positive case for Europe that is rooted in our desire to be an independent member, as befits an ancient nation. We assert our sovereignty not only by making that case but by refusing to be dragged out on the coattails of an increasingly raucous and isolationist campaign against membership. Our case is rooted in Scotland's positive, pro-European history: joint citizenship with France in the 16th century; the attendance of Scottish students at universities across the continent, something that I was very pleased to encourage when I was education secretary; and, even earlier, an appeal for nationhood that was made and heeded in Rome.

Our attitude is also rooted in the present, in the work of people such as the former member of this Parliament, Madame Ecosse—Scotland's longest-serving MEP and a passionate advocate of the European Union. Her belief in Europe was born out of her circumstances as a woman born in 1929, only a decade after the end of a world war that had its origins on the continent. Living through

another war as a young woman, she knew that a legally based, inclusive, irreversible collaborative structure was the thing that would guarantee peace in Europe; it was essential. It was as essential to her as it was to my father, who carried shrapnel in his leg from the beach at Dunkirk. That is not an aspect of Europe to be sneered at or ignored; it has saved lives, has stopped lives and families being ruined and has saved humans from suffering, too. The underpinning principles of European collaboration are designed to protect the rights of citizens fundamentally from the attack upon them that was genocide. I find it astonishing that anybody could argue to remove the European convention on human rights, given its origins. *[Applause.]*

The European Union is not like the union that we live in on this island—an incorporating union. We cannot express our sovereignty within this union, because it has been removed. Indeed, our very view of sovereignty lying with the people, not in the Parliament, has been usurped. However, in the EU, sovereignty is freely pooled for shared advantage and there is participation, as equals, in decision making. That is the type of union that benefits independent states and all those who live in them.

The EU also invites others to share in and benefit from its existence. Although Winnie Ewing is mostly remembered in the Highlands and Islands for speaking up for the area and for introducing objective 1 assistance that resulted in a great boost to the infrastructure, it is her achievement in securing the hosting of the Lomé convention in Inverness in 1985 that is best remembered outwith Europe. She believed—I know that she still believes—that encouraging other states to recognise that Scotland still aspires to full statehood and wants to enter into the family of nations positively enhances our prospects and success as a nation. She famously wanted, in her slogan from her Hamilton by-election in 1967, to “stop the world” because “Scotland wants to get on.”

We still want to get on. We need to aspire to be co-decision makers, and it is Europe that provides the context for that; indeed, there can be no other relevant context, as Jim Sillars eloquently showed a generation ago with his enthusiasm for independence in Europe, which I, at least, still espouse. Where Europe falls short, it is the open, democratic nature of Europe that can pick up, criticise and analyse those faults and find ways to do better. Isolationism can never do that.

I rejoice in the fact that our European co-operation is founded on a shared history, grounded in the desire for peace and justice, surrounded by cultural, environmental, social and economic ambition, and rounded off by a

generous vision of our obligations to fellow human beings and to the world. I rejoice that that co-operation reflects my vision—and, I believe, my party's—of how an independent Scotland would and will work with others when that time comes. To choose to remain is to choose the positive: to choose to carry on investing, with our resources and hard work, in a better future. It is a clear and easy choice. In fact, for those who want to see an independent Scotland emerge into the family of nations, there is no choice at all.

11:04

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): Scotland elects four tiers of Government; the one that the public knows least about is the European level, with most people struggling to say how many MEPs are returned from Scotland, let alone their names or what they actually do in Brussels. Unsurprisingly therefore, many people either could not care less about the referendum or know little about the issues at stake.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Will Margaret Mitchell give way?

Margaret Mitchell: In this debate of two and a half hours, leave speakers have about 10 minutes or, with the grace of the Deputy Presiding Officer, perhaps 12. Therefore, the member will forgive me if I do not take an intervention on this occasion.

To add to the confusion, despite her vow that the 2014 separation referendum would be a once-in-a-lifetime event, the First Minister—asserting as usual that she speaks for all Scotland—assumes that Scotland will vote remain and says that, if the rest of the UK votes leave, it will justify another separation referendum. Ironically, she is therefore sending out a clear and unambiguous message to everyone in Scotland who voted against separation or who is sick to death of talk of a second referendum that, to avoid such a referendum, they should vote leave. However, each individual will make up their own mind how to vote.

I do not pretend to have all the answers, nor am I a member of any official leave campaign but, having considered the arguments, my reasons to vote to leave are as follows.

I will start with the economic argument and the EU itself. From 1980 to 2015, the EU's share of world economic output dropped from 30 per cent to 17 per cent. At the end of 2015, the EU's share of world trade was the same as it was in 2006. Every other continent in the world grew economically over the past 10 years.

Only 5 per cent of British businesses and fewer than 10 per cent of Scottish businesses export to the EU, but family businesses, small and medium-

sized enterprises and other businesses are stifled by the burden of EU regulation. That in turn damages our economy and costs small businesses millions of pounds every week. Worse still, despite being the world's fifth largest economy, Britain, as a member of the EU club, cannot sign independent trade deals with emerging markets.

Given those facts, it is impossible not to conclude that the EU is a failing and outdated institution. Members should remember that Britain joined the European Economic Community for trading reasons. A vote to leave would restore the freedom to trade with the rest of the world. Logically, because the EU exports more to the UK than we do to it, there would be tremendous advantages for the EU in continuing to trade with the UK.

However, the key argument for voting to leave goes far beyond the economic one and centres on the free movement of people. The European Union's other 27 member states together have a population of 500 million, while the UK has a population of 65 million. With an ageing population, we need more migration, but the free movement of people means that we cannot choose the people with the skills that we need to grow our economy. Instead, anyone from that 500 million population can come and live in the UK. I understand why people from other parts of the EU would want to come here to improve their standard of living.

The Minister for International Development and Europe (Alasdair Allan): Will Margaret Mitchell take an intervention?

Margaret Mitchell: No, thank you.

However, the situation has the potential to put unsustainable pressure on our schools, health service and housing, for instance. Translation costs alone already impact on public services. The access that those economic migrants gain to our benefits system in turn impacts adversely on pensions and other benefits that UK citizens have worked—in some cases, for a lifetime—to secure.

Furthermore, the UK pays more into the EU than it gets out. Including our rebate, that equates to a net £24 million per day. That vast amount could and should be used to determine our own policies as a sovereign Parliament, including policies that affect our fishing industry and the communities that it supports throughout Scotland and beyond. Those communities will continue to suffer economic hardship as long as we are under the control of the EU's common fisheries policy.

The EU's common agricultural policy short-changes UK farmers compared to their competitors. In 2014, we gave £4.6 billion to the CAP but our farmers received £2.9 billion back.

Additionally, the Prime Minister has confirmed that, if we vote to leave, the UK Government will ensure that farmers continue to receive as much support as they do now.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): I ask the member to wind up. Thank you.

Margaret Mitchell: Finally, it is not the EU that has kept the peace for the past 40 years, but the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It sorted out Bosnia. Bilateral treaties and agreements already exist with countries that are not part of the EU for justice and defence. Quite simply, it is in the interests of the EU countries to co-operate and share information to combat terrorism and extradite criminals.

In conclusion, it is impossible for anyone to predict with any certainty what the future will hold, whether we are in or out of the EU, but we are a talented and innovative people with financial institutions that are respected worldwide—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, the member must wind up, please.

Margaret Mitchell: As a United Kingdom, we are a force to be reckoned with. We should grasp the opportunity to realise that potential and vote to leave.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. I gave you a little longer because there are so few speaking against the motion.

11:10

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): As I rise to deliver my first speech in the Scottish Parliament, I feel the sense of awe that I have seen on the faces of my fellow newcomers to this place; they have given excellent speeches, both yesterday and this morning.

My journey to this chamber has been a long one, and I am grateful for the kindness of parliamentary staff, journalists and indeed members of all parties for the good will that they have shown me in these first weeks. It has been good will tinged with surprise, I might add, at my appearance here, but that surprise was eclipsed by my own when I was plucked from the ranks of new Liberal Democrat MSPs and immediately promoted to the front bench. That was something of a shock. [*Laughter.*]

Before I address the substance of the debate, I pay tribute to my immediate predecessor, Colin Keir. He is a kind and generous man and I wish him every success in his future. I also pay tribute to the previous Liberal parliamentarian to represent Edinburgh Western, Margaret Smith. Margaret served in this Parliament for 12 years

and delivered many of the changes that brought about free personal care for the elderly. All of us can attest to the honour that it is to represent the great communities of Edinburgh Western. The constituency is steeped in history that goes back to Roman times and it flanks the beautiful fringes of the Forth estuary. It is in the shadow of our own world heritage site: the Forth rail bridge. I am sorry to say that, following my election, the area is no longer available to the SNP for parliamentary group photographs. I am sorry about that.

My first act as a parliamentarian for Edinburgh Western is to make the case that my constituents—and yours, Presiding Officer—are demonstrably better off as part of the European Union. One hundred years ago almost to the day, my great grand-uncle, a private in the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles out of Saskatchewan, at the age of 23, was killed along with 80 per cent of his battalion on the first day of the battle of Mont Sorrel on the Ypres salient. His name was Alexander Bennett and I am named for him. Just a generation later, his sacrifice was met by that of two of my grandfather's four siblings, who were killed on active service, this time in world war two.

It is a measure of the success of the European project that I am only the second generation in the recorded history of my entire family to never have to contemplate taking up arms against our nearest European neighbours. It is a comfort that I would extend to my three children, Finn, Kit and Darcy, and to theirs to come. It is from the shared desire for a continued and lasting peace that the originating treaties of the European Union emerged. First, there was the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, so that no country could ever again build a war machine, and then there was the treaty of Rome, which led to a single market in which the free movement of goods, people, capital and services has come to represent the most important charter for freedom that the world has ever seen. It is a solidarity of nations that has become a family.

The Brexiteers such as Margaret Mitchell and her colleagues paint a very nice picture of what it would be to reclaim all our sovereignty, but it is a doctrine of isolationism, pure and simple. I put it to you, Presiding Officer, that in this increasingly globalised world, human traffickers will never recognise that isolation. Climate change will not recognise it, and neither will terrorists. If we were to leave, we would be a tiny archipelago of islands adrift in a sea of economic uncertainty. That is why those on the Liberal Democrat benches are so proudly and full-throatedly backing the remain campaign.

I am delighted, and heartily glad, that my first speech is on an issue on which there is such consensus, and that I find myself on common

ground not just with those in other Opposition parties but with those on the Government benches. I hope that there are many days like this to come in my parliamentary service because, with consensus, this place can move mountains and it has done so. When I worked in the children's sector, from outside the chamber I helped to broker a consensus that led to a change in the age of leaving care and that will change lives as a result. However, there will be days of discord, and that is good and right because, as John F Kennedy said, without criticism and debate no Administration can succeed and no republic can survive. It is incumbent on Opposition parties, particularly in a minority Government situation, to challenge and scrutinise, so I will offer that debate and scrutiny. It will at times be fierce, but it will always be reasoned and it will always be Liberal.

However, today, let us put aside those differences and embrace that common ground on which we find ourselves. A sense of real optimism is currently sweeping the Liberal Democrats, and I know that it is sweeping other parties as well, because we have so much to gain by remaining as members of the European Union, so we must gather together to vigorously campaign for a remain vote on 23 June. Thank you. *[Applause.]*

11:16

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): This is by no means my first speech in the chamber, but it is my debut speech as the constituency member for Motherwell and Wishaw. I pay tribute to my predecessor, John Pentland, who served as an MSP in session 4. I have known Mr Pentland for many years, having shared a council ward with him before we were both elected to the Parliament in 2011. Although we have been political sparring partners in that time, we have always had a very amiable relationship and I know that he is still a passionate campaigner for his community. I wish him and his family well in the future.

I thank the constituents of Motherwell and Wishaw for putting their faith in me to be a strong voice for them in the Parliament. I am honoured to speak today, when so many new members have made their maiden speeches. We have heard from Mr Cole-Hamilton, Mr Tomkins, Mr Johnson and Mr Greer and there are more to come.

There are many elements of the European Union, some of which have already been discussed today. Many points have been made about the big issues and the big idea of Europe, which is to do with collaboration and the movement for peace and unity, but I would like to highlight the minutiae of one benefit that the EU brings to us today in Scotland. The horizon 2020 innovation programme makes available €80 billion

to fund research and innovation across the European Union. It encourages breakthroughs, discoveries, first-class scientific developments and laboratory innovations and, more important, it encourages collaboration across Europe. The project is about global competitiveness and making the European Union a driving force for economic growth and job creation. It has political backing from across Europe and from all members of the European Parliament. It is a blueprint for Europe that puts sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs at the heart of our research investment.

We want world-class science and we want to remove barriers to innovation and make it easier for the public and private sectors to work together to deliver innovation and growth. The EU framework programme for research and innovation is complemented by collaboration across those areas, which is breaking down barriers and creating a genuine market for knowledge, research and innovation. The key areas that the programme focuses on are excellence in science, industrial leadership and societal challenges. On societal challenges, the aim is to help tackle the major issues that all European nations face, such as climate change, sustainable transport and mobility, making renewable energy more affordable, ensuring food safety and security, and coping with the challenge of an ageing population.

I think that all those issues were raised in yesterday's debate on what members across the chamber believe is at the heart of taking Scotland forward. After all, Scotland's priorities are Europe's priorities, and we can meet those priorities only if we continue to work together in the European context. We have heard about the issue of health and demographic change, which was raised by Nicola Sturgeon; food security has been mentioned this morning; Ruth Davidson and Graeme Dey highlighted the need for secure, clean and efficient energy yesterday; the issue of smart, green and integrated transport was key to Patrick Harvie's speech; and, in his excellent maiden speech, Maurice Golden concentrated on climate change. Those issues sit at the very heart of where we want to be as a nation.

More important, we need secure societies in which freedoms and European citizens are protected. As Kezia Dugdale has said, that is about not only human rights but trade union rights, the very rights that Westminster is seeking to take away from us.

I want to finish with a very tangible example of what horizon 2020 brings to Scotland. Last October, the centre for research in education inclusion and diversity was awarded a grant from the horizon 2020 programme that will allow a three-year project encouraging lifelong learning for an inclusive and vibrant Europe to be taken

forward. The centre is part of a European consortium involving England, Flanders, Austria, Denmark, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Estonia and Spain, and the project will explore policy interventions in adult education with a focus on training young adults. That sort of approach sits at the heart of what this Government wants to do in education.

We are at the heart of Europe—and we should stay there.

11:21

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): So far this morning, we have heard a number of interesting and insightful contributions from across the chamber in relation to the upcoming referendum on Britain's membership of the EU. I particularly welcome the excellent contributions from our new members.

I am unambiguous about and unapologetic in my support of Britain's continued membership of the EU. For me, the argument in favour of Britain's staying as an EU member is rooted in my personal beliefs and values, shared by the Scottish Labour Party, of co-operation, solidarity and equality. Fundamentally, I believe in the maxim that

“by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone”.

My first substantive argument is that working women in Scotland and across the UK are better off with Britain remaining in the EU. The facts are clear and the arguments are compelling. This year, the Trades Union Congress produced a comprehensive report that spotlighted 20 ways in which women workers have explicitly benefited from Britain's membership of the European Union. For example, the report highlights that although the British Equal Pay Act was introduced in 1970 in response to the action taken by women at the Ford factory in Dagenham in their fight for equal pay, the act did not actually give women the right to equal pay for work of equal value. In fact, it was EU law that ensured that working women in Britain received that right. The equal pay directive, which was adopted by the EU in 1975, made it clear that the right to equal pay meant that women would receive equal pay for work of equal value.

The European Union has delivered for women in the past and continues to promote co-operation, solidarity and equality for working women all across Europe. For women in Scotland and across the UK, the EU has secured equal pensions for part-time women workers; better protection from sexual harassment; paid time off for antenatal care; better health and safety protection for pregnant workers; and better protection from unfair dismissal because of pregnancy. Britain's continued membership of the EU is therefore in the interests of working women across Scotland

and the UK, and I urge all working women in Scotland to make a passionate, positive and progressive case for remaining in the EU in order to defend the protections that our membership of the EU has given us.

The second substantive argument that I will develop is that, whether people like it or not, there is an inherent risk to leaving the European Union. The evidence has shown that one of the main risks of leaving is more austerity and, as members across the chamber are aware, austerity disproportionately affects women. That is not a risk that I am willing to take. This week, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has warned that if Britain votes to leave the EU, that could result in public finances being reduced by around £20 billion.

Last year, a fair deal for women—an umbrella group consisting of 11 women's rights charities, such as Women's Aid, the Fawcett Society and Rape Crisis—highlighted that, in 2015, Britain fell to 26th place on the World Economic Forum's gender gap index, lower than almost all its European neighbours. A fair deal for women was clear in its assertion that women have been disproportionately affected by the austerity agenda. The group's spokesperson, Florence Burton, stated that austerity will “further cement women's poverty”. Women simply cannot afford for the austerity cuts to get any deeper or continue any longer.

Ross Thomson: Will the member take an intervention?

Mary Fee: No. I apologise, but my time has been cut today. I am really sorry.

There is nothing progressive about continuing austerity. If we wish to tackle gender inequality and have a progressive economy that invests in people and in our public services, it is vital that we stay in the EU.

I will touch briefly on the European convention on human rights before coming to a close. The ECHR was drafted in the aftermath of world war two and is symbolic of the visionary and progressive ideals of post-war Europe. The ECHR protects everyone's human rights: young and old, rich and poor, male and female. The ECHR is at the progressive core of what makes Europe a force for positive change in the world and its importance should never be understated.

Women have to start making the passionate, positive and progressive case for Britain's continued membership of the EU through promoting the Labour Party and the EU's shared values of co-operation, solidarity and equality. It is time for women in Scotland to take centre stage in this debate; it is time to put women's issues and women's voices at the forefront of the debate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Tom Arthur, to be followed by Graham Simpson.

11:27

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer. First, I offer my congratulations to you and your fellow Presiding Officers on your election to your positions. I wish you all the very best in your new roles.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have made a brilliant start. [*Laughter.*]

Tom Arthur: I listen and learn. As the newly elected member for Renfrewshire South, it is an honour and a privilege for me to participate in this important debate in our national Parliament.

Before addressing the question of Scotland and the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union, I will say a few words about my predecessor, Hugh Henry, and the constituency that I am proud to represent. In a career spanning more than three decades, Hugh Henry served his party, community, constituency and country with distinction. As a councillor, a council leader, an MSP, a minister, a shadow minister, a committee convener and a former politician of the year, he leaves a formidable legacy. I wish him and his family the very best for a long and healthy retirement. [*Applause.*]

The Renfrewshire South constituency encompasses the proud and diverse communities of southern and western Renfrewshire. Several of its towns and villages are of some renown. Kilbarchan, which is well known today for its restored weaver's cottage, was, in 1875, the birthplace of Mary Rough. From Kilbarchan, the Rough family moved to Elderslie, which is also in my constituency, where Mary, at Wallace Place, would marry David Barbour of Johnstone and assume the name that we all know her by today. More than a century later, the ideals of two of Renfrewshire's most famous children would be as one, with a union of progressive politics and the idea of an independent Scotland.

My constituency is also home to Linwood, in which, from the ashes of deindustrialisation inflicted from afar, is emerging a centre of community-led regeneration. Last week, I had the pleasure of meeting the Linwood Community Development Trust, which was brought into being and has been driven forward by a group of local women whose drive and determination are matched only by their ambition for their community. In some respects, Linwood is a microcosm of Scotland—it is an empowered and engaged community where people are coming together to shape their collective future.

In the months and years that are ahead, I look forward to sharing with the chamber the many stories from the many communities of Renfrewshire South. I look forward to working towards creating a fairer and more prosperous Renfrewshire South, just as we are all united in this place in working together to create a fairer and more prosperous Scotland.

For a fair and prosperous Scotland—indeed, for a fair and prosperous United Kingdom—we must not turn our backs on our European partners. There have been—and, I am sure, there will be further—erudite and considered contributions to the debate that will articulate many economic, fiscal and social justifications for remaining in the EU. In my remaining time, and as a new and young MSP—although I am not as young as Ross Greer, who has left his place—I would like to convey a sense of what the EU means to me and to many people of my generation.

My earliest memory of any political event is of the television news reports from Berlin in November 1989. As a wee boy watching the TV, I did not understand the context or the historical significance of what I saw, but I remember the sense that important events were unfolding. I recall recognising, in a sense of shared humanity, the hope and joy that were etched on the faces of those who surmounted and tore down the wall. I share that experience because, in its simplicity, innocence and humanity, it recognises what is most fundamental in the debate.

The European Union cannot be reduced to a set of trade deals and diplomatic arrangements. What began as a means to ensure that French and German coal reserves could never again be used as capital in war making is now the most successful community of independent nation states ever to be assembled. It is testimony to that success that so many nations have aspired and continue to aspire to membership.

To be a citizen of the European Union is to be one of 500 million people who each has a stake in this great project that gives expression to our ancient shared identity as Europeans. It is for us, with our multilayered identities as Scots, Brits and Europeans and as citizens of the EU, to make a choice. Will we recommit to the shared project of peace, prosperity and social justice or will we allow ourselves to be seduced by the siren calls of isolationism and division? Are we prepared to work in partnership to confront the challenges of this century and to embrace opportunity together, or will we indulge in the myopia of some imagined mid-Atlantic future?

A month after the collapse of the Berlin wall, Leonard Bernstein famously conducted an international orchestra in two performances of Beethoven's ninth symphony in East Berlin, when

Schiller's "Ode to Joy" was notably transformed into an "Ode to Freedom". The symbolism of that speaks to us now as clearly as it did then. Generations past and present have seen the bloody consequences of a Europe divided, but we have all lived and shared in the prosperity of a Europe united. As citizens of this great community of independent nations, let us stay together and work together for a prosperous and peaceful future. [*Applause.*]

11:34

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):

This is the first time that I have addressed Parliament in my role as one of the three Scottish Conservative MSPs for Central Scotland—how good does that sound? However, I fear that, maybe not for the last time, I could be severely outnumbered today. That few MSPs are on the side of the leave campaign demonstrates that Parliament, on this issue at least, does not reflect Scotland at large.

I am 52. That may surprise members. It surprises me sometimes. In my heart, I am still the disco-dancing cool dude of my 20s, although my head tells me otherwise. I will be going with my head at any MSPs' parties. My age puts me in the bracket of the majority in this chamber who have never had the opportunity to vote on the UK's membership of what is now the EU. My parents did and my grandparents did, but they were sold a pup.

No one asked the British people if they wanted to join the Common Market, as it was then. They were asked what we are now being asked—"Do you want to remain?" They were asked if they wanted to stay in the Common Market. If I was asked that today, I would say yes but that is not what was on offer then and it is certainly not what is on offer now. Our leaders knew then that it was not merely a trade organisation. They knew that it was a full-blown political project and they deliberately did not let on, so it is right that we are now, thanks to a Conservative Government, getting the choice—the choice to accept or reject what Britain did not vote for.

We must accept the result whatever the outcome. This must be a once-in-a-generation vote, just as the Scottish referendum should have been a once-in-a-generation vote. On this issue, it is the Scottish Conservatives who most reflect public opinion in Scotland, more so than any of the other groups in this Parliament.

Scottish Labour used to have a strong Eurosceptic element. It now seems to have abandoned its past. I would have thought that SNP members would accept the unarguable logic of Jim Sillars. He says that it makes no sense to

suggest that we should leave a union with our closest neighbours only to jump into an even larger and more remote one elsewhere, giving back the powers that have just been asked for. However, SNP parliamentarians, even if they agree with their former deputy leader, are not allowed to say so—[*Interruption.*]—although I read in *The Scottish Sun* this week that apparently one of them agrees. Will they break cover today, I wonder?

The choice on 23 June is to stay or leave. The question that voters must ask themselves is really very simple—how do I want to be governed? That is what it comes down to in the end. We can argue about prices, the economy, immigration and security and there are valid arguments on both sides in all those areas but, ultimately, it comes down to this: do I want decisions affecting my country to be taken by people outwith these borders? Do I think that it is right that unelected and unaccountable European judges can overturn the decisions of democratically elected politicians? Do I think that it is right that policies can be decided by unelected bureaucrats and imposed on this country?

When the Scottish Government put forward its proposals for minimum alcohol pricing, I saw it as more nanny state politics from the SNP but I absolutely thought that it had the right to do it, having been elected by the people of Scotland. For that measure to be blocked, in effect, by the European Court of Justice was a disgrace.

Why do so many in the political class want to remain? It could be because the EU serves them and their armies of bureaucrats very well. Those in the bubble are hardly likely to want to burst it. The EU is nothing but a political project. It is a first-class-only gravy train with no stops, where the buffet car serves only the finest food, never mind the cost, and it is one way—to ever-closer union. We have the chance to pull the emergency cord and jump off, to set ourselves on another, freer course, able to spend the fare money—£350 million a week—on whatever we like. Leaving would hand this Parliament powers over, for example, agriculture and fisheries. Why would anyone in this chamber not want that?

There is a sign in the European Commission building in Brussels that reads, "Europe—Your Country". That is what they believe. It is not what I believe and anyone who agrees with me should be voting to leave on 23 June. [*Applause.*]

11:39

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):

Every country in the European Union and the global community strives to achieve a combination of national autonomy and international

collaboration. Our response to the referendum must be framed as facing both inward and outward, considering the impact that EU membership has in Scotland and the UK and the impact that we have on other EU members.

A progressive union is built on the principles of co-operation and solidarity, and those principles lie at the heart of my decision to vote to remain a member of the EU. Membership has provided the opportunity for continent-wide collaboration on an improved trade market; better jobs; progress on women's rights and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights; and sustainable development.

More than 3 million jobs in the UK are linked to our trade with the EU, and the EU market buys half of Britain's exports. Millions of livelihoods are interlinked with EU membership, and we must continue to pioneer that world-leading trade system. It is not perfect, and I disagree with TTIP, but to be out would make things increasingly difficult for us.

Beyond providing jobs, the EU's social chapter means that those jobs come with workers' rights, as many other members have described. Those rights include paid maternity leave and now paternity leave; rights for part-time workers; and anti-discrimination laws. Where people argue that we could have those things in a separate UK, I point out that workers in other countries might not be so lucky—our voice is louder in chorus.

In environmental policy, the EU has been a driving force for progress. The environment does not have a public infrastructure to be monitored, which serves to heighten the importance of EU-regulated targets and deadlines. Those issues are not confined to lines on a map, and nor should their regulation be.

Our membership of the EU means influence and accountability. Scotland and the UK have shaped EU emissions targets by advocating more ambitious policy, and at the Paris climate conference our voice was louder as part of the union. Credit goes to on-going EU regulation for tackling pollution levels and chemical manufacture and use. Fifty years ago, our air had the highest level of sulphur dioxide emissions, as the cabinet secretary highlighted, and we were surrounded in some places by sewer-like inshore waters. Ross Greer stressed some of those issues in his speech. Policymakers reacted to problems after the damage was done, and a more voluntary approach was taken to regulation.

Today, citizens of the EU are protected from those health and environment risks. The ambient air quality directive sets legal limits on air pollution concentrations and is an important incentive for action to protect public health and the environment. The Scottish Government is at

present breaking those legal requirements in several areas of Scotland, which currently exceed the legal limits for nitrogen dioxide as set out in the directive. That is a serious environmental and social justice issue. Our EU membership ensures that the Scottish Government is accountable for that failure, and it forces us to address improvement rapidly.

The EU has played a significant part in slowing and reversing biodiversity and habitat loss. The biodiversity strategy to 2020 and the EU habitats and birds directives have played a vital role in the collective management of land, sea, and air. Nature knows no boundaries, and it is completely logical that we make collective arrangements for its protection and for the health management of our natural resources. The ash dieback situation was an example of how quickly we can act on such issues as an EU member state.

For many in South Scotland and in other coastal and rural communities, the common fisheries policy and the common agricultural policy will be important in their decision. I am sure that, during his time as Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment, Richard Lochhead will have put the case well.

For reasons of production in the aftermath of world war two, as we know, farmers were given subsidies, and those payments retain their importance today. We must ask whether, if powers are repatriated, our farmers will still receive such payments. Common agricultural policy payments today go far beyond supporting production; they now include environmental incentives, which of course benefits us all. I have serious concerns that, without the EU, our farmers and our fishing industry would suffer.

The referendum is about who we want to be. Do we want to be an outward-looking country that is ready to pool a small amount of our sovereignty and work with other countries to tackle the big questions, while always remembering that significant word "subsidiarity"—I took some time to learn it, but I now know what it means—or are we to be inward looking, focusing on the past and trying to hide from the big questions of tomorrow?

We should not give up our influence over the character of Europe—a union born from the ideals of peace and democracy, with a significant role to play in fighting for a fair, sustainable and secure future. Let us stay.

11:45

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I congratulate the two members who most recently made their first speeches, Tom Arthur and Graham Simpson, although I have to say that my views are slightly closer to Tom Arthur's.

We have a referendum in four weeks. I think that the choice of date was extremely poor. In many parts of the UK—London, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as Scotland—we have just gone through major elections, but we are where we are.

Just this morning, I was checking out of a hotel and the receptionist asked what I thought of the EU and the referendum. She said that she could see reasons for voting to stay in but that she also had reasons for voting to leave, so she was undecided and a bit confused about which way to go. I think her position is not unusual among members of the public.

My very first vote, as an 18-year-old, was in 1975, in the last European referendum, so it has special meaning for me to be voting again in a similar referendum 41 years later. I just hope that it does not set a precedent that 41 years should be the period between referenda.

Why am I enthusiastic about the EU? There are a number of reasons. First, I feel European. I think that it makes a difference to have lived and worked outside the UK. In my case, that was for three years in Nepal in the 1980s when I was part of an international non-governmental organisation that had folk from all over the world working together. In that situation, you realise how much Europeans have in common.

I accept that we should not stereotype people but, for me, the Dutch are generally the group that I have felt closest to. Their country is also a small country, they share many words with us, and they have a similar sense of humour and a similar religious history and mix—they have strong reformed and Catholic traditions. All of us probably have European countries that we feel close to, and the fact that there are 2 million UK citizens living in Europe and some 2 million people from other European countries living in the UK says a lot about mobility in Europe these days.

My second reason for being enthusiastic about the EU is to do with history, on which Mike Russell has been much more eloquent than I could be. When we read the stories of Montrose, Mary Queen of Scots, David Hume and figures in church history such as John Knox and John Ogilvie, it is clear that they all operated at a European level.

My third reason is the fact that, as has been mentioned, there has been peace since the second world war. I was born only 12 years after world war two, but it seemed like ancient history to me when I was younger. European history appears to be a story of war after war after war. The EU in its various forms has played a major part in changing that. The danger for those of my age group and younger is that we forget how torn

apart Europe has traditionally been, and we downplay the EU's success in addressing that at our peril.

Fourthly, I feel safer in the EU than I do in the UK. I accept that the EU institutions are not perfect, and I would strongly support improvements, such as giving more power to the Parliament, but at least the EU is attempting to be democratic, whereas here in the UK we do not even have an elected head of state, and one of the two chambers at Westminster is not elected. I would rather be in a more democratic system such as the EU than in a less democratic one such as the UK.

Neil Findlay: Who elects the European Central Bank? Who elects the European Commission?

John Mason: Civil servants such as those who work in the European Commission are appointed in every country in the EU by elected members—by Government. That is quite normal. What happens in the Commission is no different from that.

On the same theme, the EU—unlike the UK—favours smaller nations. For example, at the Council of Ministers each country gets one seat. In the European Parliament, degressive proportionality—if that is the right term—is used, which means that voters in countries such as Malta and Luxembourg have considerably more influence than citizens of the six largest countries do. We do something similar with the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland but, in general, that is not the way in which the UK operates. Of the 28 countries in the EU, only 12 have populations of more than 10 million and a further four are significantly larger than Scotland. Therefore, Scotland is very much a normal type of country in Europe, whereas the UK is clearly hopelessly imbalanced in favour of England.

Fifthly, there is the concept of confederation against federation, although I am not sure that we use the word “confederation” quite so much these days. The real power in Europe sits with the member states. There are relatively few subjects in which the EU has exclusive competence, and it is the member states that agree what are to be exclusive, shared and supporting competences.

I am running out of time.

As Fiona Hyslop, Christina McKelvie and Mary Fee mentioned, the EU has proven to be fairer for workers than the UK has been, and finally, the UK is really too small in a world of big players. Therefore, I very much support Scotland and the UK remaining in the EU.

11:50

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): First, I declare an interest as a farmer and food producer.

It is great to be back in the chamber and able to take part in debates again.

I turn to the subject in hand. I am very much in the remain camp in the European debate. Apart from other reasons that I will deal with later, it is my own experience that places me there. In my business life before politics, I was involved in the creation of three working co-operatives, among which were farmers markets. To my surprise and delight, when I have worked with farmers—who are people who do not naturally work collaboratively—I have found and proved to my satisfaction that, when one works together, the total is greater than the sum of the parts. It is the same in politics and business and with countries.

That is why I was and remain totally opposed to Scotland breaking away from the United Kingdom. Scotland working in union with England, Wales and Northern Ireland has achieved much in the past and will achieve much in the future. Through working co-operatively and collaboratively with our neighbours, the total is greater than the sum of the parts.

That is why I also believe that the United Kingdom should be part of the EU. Working within the EU has helped the UK to become the fifth wealthiest country in the world, and working together has created a total for the EU and the UK that is greater than the sum of their parts.

We can all see the problems of working together at whatever level—local, national or international—and any co-operative or union such as the UK or the EU is always work in progress. It is never the finished article, because new obstacles and challenges that have to be overcome come along. Those are problems to be solved, not given up on. Throwing the baby out with the bath water because the problem appears too difficult to resolve is not a solution. Instead, we in the United Kingdom need to play a positive and active role in the EU, where we have much to bring to the top table. If reform is needed, propose solutions rather than exit strategies, and if challenges exist, face up to them together rather than run away from them. Create the political will to lead the 500 million people whom politicians across Europe represent to deal with the current problems.

Making the case to remain is straightforward because, by remaining in the EU, we will continue to develop trade with the EU and grow our economy, and provide jobs and a secure future for our children and grandchildren. We will continue to develop our relationship with America and other English-speaking countries as one of their

gateways and access points to Europe, and we will continue to develop and grow our financial products and services market, which is vital to employment in Scotland and England. As Richard Lochhead said, we will continue to export our Scottish food and drink to Europe, which is our biggest market by far, and protect and enhance our precious jobs in urban and rural Scotland.

We can bring UK help and expertise to bear and help to solve the problems of the euro, a bankrupt Greece, and the refugee crisis. Everything is doable with the right mindset. It is time to get on with solving the problems of Europe rather than adding to them by leaving the EU.

In less than a month's time, we will have to choose to leave or remain in the EU. The decision will boil down to who has made the most credible argument. I believe David Cameron and George Osborne when they say that it is in the best interests of our economy, our country and our future to remain part of the EU, not just because they are Conservatives but because they now have a six-year track record of delivering for and restoring the fortunes of the United Kingdom, of which Scotland is such a vital part.

I believe the many others who have the best interests of Scotland and the UK at heart, including President Obama, Angela Merkel and François Hollande. I also believe our senior military and defence staff who believe that our security is enhanced by being part of the EU. I believe Christine Lagarde of the IMF and our many distinguished business leaders who support remaining part of the EU. Indeed, as the rest of the world is coalescing into larger and larger trading blocks, with an ever increasing number of bilateral agreements, why would we willingly erect barriers to trade and risk our security at the same time?

The leave campaign simply has not demonstrated any reasonable strategic case for breaking away from the EU, so I urge the people of Scotland and the UK to vote to remain in the EU for the benefit of all UK citizens, our children and grandchildren.

11:55

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer, for giving me the opportunity to set out a different perspective in the debate. As my colleague John Scott said, it is good to be back in the chamber making a speech in a substantive debate.

I have been listening to the wider EU debate, and one of its worst aspects is the way in which it is dominated by the right—often with racist undertones. It is important that a legitimate left-wing case for leaving is voiced in the debate. The key argument of the official stay campaign—I

should say that I am not part of any official campaign—seems to be that things can only get worse if we leave, but that argument ignores the role that the EU has played in intensifying austerity and reactionary politics.

I appreciate that many of my Labour colleagues are enthusiastic about staying—as has been outlined by Kezia Dugdale. However, from a left perspective, there is a need to assess what the EU is and, based on that, what route is most likely to offer the best prospects for the working class and employment rights. I am not convinced that the best route involves being part of an undemocratic superstate, with mass unemployment, falling living standards and growing inequality. We have only to look to the Greek tragedy and the 50 per cent youth unemployment rate in Spain to see that.

Undoubtedly, many people on the left will hold their noses and vote to remain in the hope that reforms will come. I understand that, but with its having an unelected bureaucracy at its core and a largely decorative Parliament, to vote to remain would be to avoid the reality that the EU structures are closely bound to capitalism. The original title of the EU—the Common Market—told socialists then that it was an essentially capitalist institution that was designed to reverse the socialist advances that had been made in western Europe after world war two. Of course, Britain was originally locked out of the European Economic Community club by French vetoes because the French believed—correctly—that Britain would use its influence to advance the interests of United States capital.

In contrast, the interests of workers are important to the EU only in so far as the consent of workers—or the absence of organised opposition—can be achieved. At this point, someone usually mentions the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty; however, that treaty was introduced to develop the single market and monetary union, and the social chapter was included because it was recognised that increased labour movement resistance to worsening economic conditions could derail the whole EU project.

In Britain, equality, health and safety laws, the working-time directive and other benefits that are included in the social chapter seemed to be very attractive because of the aggressive market-led capitalist approach of Tory Governments. However, it is also important to note the limited nature of the social chapter: key areas in relation to class struggle, such as pay and the right to strike, were not included. In reality, most of the key rights that we still enjoy—for example, paid holidays and equal pay—do not stem from the EU, but from struggles that were undertaken collectively by trade unions in Britain. Of course,

the EU has provided some individual—as opposed to collective—rights, such as the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, or TUPE, but that was only in order to limit resistance to EU-imposed privatisation and competitive tendering. Individual rights for agency workers were introduced to mitigate the effects of casualisation, which the EU helped to create.

The EU works on the basis of the primacy of the market, and collective labour organisation is seen as an impediment to effective markets. We have seen endless pro-business directives ending public ownership of rail and utilities, introducing compulsory competitive tendering in the public sector and allowing companies to pay workers from other states at rates that are lower than the locally agreed rate.

As we have heard in other speeches, that agenda has impacted directly on Scotland. The Scottish Government claims that it was the EU that enforced the retendering of Caledonian MacBrayne services with the threat of privatisation. That is one of the reasons why RMT is so keen for its members to vote leave. Currently, CETA and TTIP are being negotiated secretly by the unelected European Commission. If they are agreed, they will be a huge threat to our public services here in Scotland. The treaties are a corporate power grab that will undermine our democracy and give businesses a right to sue Governments. That is absolutely terrifying.

The EU is not Europe: it is a political construct that is imposed on the people of Europe to undermine democratic national Governments, and it seeks the effective elimination of any genuine elective democracy. I say in the strongest terms that that runs contrary to the true definition of internationalism. Since its foundation, the EU has had a clear direction of travel, which is to open up public services to privatisation, to erode collective bargaining and to centralise power. Unfortunately, not enough of the debate on the EU referendum—on either side—addresses those fundamental points.

Fighting to remain will inevitably allow that agenda to continue in the face of minimum opposition and with little hope of any real reform. Voting to leave could help to reassert the power of working people over that of big business. Politically, that would be much more likely if we elect a Labour Government in 2020.

In his case for leaving, John Foster says:

“it is ... essential to put forward and win a positive, progressive case against Cameron’s EU—a vision of renewed democracy, a restored welfare state and a redevelopment of public control over the economy, a vision that can combat racism, cynicism and division and unite all working people.”

Whatever way people vote, they should be aware of the true nature of the EU. Personally, I intend to vote leave and will not support the motion tonight.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): We now move to the last speaker in the open session. All those who have taken part in the debate should ensure that they are back in the chamber for the closing speeches. I call Stewart Stevenson.

12:02

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I congratulate you on your elevation to your position. I will crave a boon from you at some point in the future; let us get in credit at the outset.

Like fellow rebel Mike Russell, I voted yes in 1975 not because the arguments were absolutely decisive and compelling, but because, as a child who was born in the immediate aftermath of the war that ended in 1945, the value that I placed on international collaboration in the cause of peace overrode other considerations.

John Mason talked about 41 years. Interestingly enough, 41 years before the 1975 referendum there was another referendum, which was on whether the United Kingdom should remain a member of the League of Nations. It was not organised by the Government, but was a mass franchise that was open to the voting of everyone in the United Kingdom. Of the electorate, 38 per cent chose to vote and 96 per cent of those said that they wanted to remain part of that international organisation. I crave our achieving such an overwhelming result on 23 June, but I am not holding my breath.

To Elaine Smith I say that a further 41 years back the inaugural meeting of the Independent Labour Party took place in Bradford, chaired by Keir Hardie. There must be something about 41 years in politics.

The debate around how we should engage with each other is not particularly new. In 1606, in the Westminster Parliament, it was said:

“If we admit them into our Liberties, we shall be overrun with them”.

There was a fear that if Scotland and England joined together, the English would be overrun with Scots. In that debate in 1606, the member went on to say:

“witness the multiplicities of the Scots in Polonia.”

Today, part of the debate concerns the number of people who are using the provisions for free movement of people across Europe to come to our shores, and the 2 million UK citizens—including

substantial numbers of my family—who have moved elsewhere. However, in the 17th, 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, substantial numbers of Scots migrated to many of those countries, and to Poland in particular, to the extent that there are areas called Nowa Szkocja—New Scotland—in Warsaw and Krakow, as well as in Danzig, which is now part of Poland. If the Scots are anything, we are a people of international interests.

I am happy to recruit Margaret Mitchell and Graham Simpson to the campaign to abolish the House of Lords. Margaret Mitchell said that an argument against the EU is that nobody knows who the members of the European Parliament are; I would bet that we will not find many people who know the names of people in the House of Lords. I do not even know those who might claim Scottish connection, and I am involved in politics. Graham Simpson made remarks that support that, too.

When I made my first speech in the chamber, on 14 June 2001, I referred to fisheries policy bringing zonal management. There has been some progress on the common fisheries policy, which will continue, but it would be fair to say that the overwhelming majority of skippers in my constituency, who catch fish in the North Sea and elsewhere, are likely to vote no, because the common fisheries policy is one of the great failures of the EU. On the other hand, for those who produce fish products and export fish, the free movement of goods across borders allows fresh products that would perish rapidly to make it to the markets of the EU and to generate huge economic benefit. The fishing industry, therefore, is deeply divided between those who produce products and rely on access to the wider market and those who share the bounty of the seas in a way that is unfair to them. Reform is needed and is probably coming. I encourage the UK, which will have the European presidency in the second half of next year, to take a much more proactive role in promoting the interests of those who catch fish in our seas.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now move to closing speeches. I call Lewis Macdonald.

12:07

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer—I welcome you to the chair this afternoon.

The formal record of today's debate will appear to show a high degree of consensus on a hugely important issue—a brief and uncontroversial Government motion with no amendments from Opposition parties, and an overwhelming vote in favour of the motion, with every party leader voting the same way. There will not be much to suggest that we are dealing with one of the most critically

important decisions that our generation will face, or that many people in Scotland have still to make up their minds.

I thank Fiona Hyslop for welcoming me to my post. As she said, referendums reduce debates to a binary choice—for or against; in or out—even though many people can see arguments both ways. Those who vote in favour of continued membership of the EU will do so on the basis of having quite different visions of the futures of Scotland, Britain and Europe, as will those who vote to leave. Labour's support for remaining in the EU is firmly based on the collective view of our party conference and, as Kezia Dugdale said, on the proposition that

"Sovereignty shared is sovereignty gained".

As Mary Fee said, we believe that,

"by the strength of our common endeavour, we achieve more than we achieve alone".

That ambition for achieving more together is not limited to the people of Scotland, Britain or the European Union—our "common endeavour" is a universal principle that applies to all. For example, Gordon Brown recently wrote of the vital role that the European Union can play in working for stability and hope in the middle east and Africa. Those are vital objectives for those regions and for Europe, itself. That, too, speaks to our common humanity.

In today's debate, Daniel Johnson laid out the benefits of membership of the European Union for his constituents in terms of investment, education and jobs: what is true of Edinburgh Southern is true of Scotland as a whole. I congratulate him and all the new members who have spoken in this debate, all of whom made strong contributions from their different points of view.

I welcome members from different parties who have stressed the need for reform of the European Union to support people—here and across Europe—against the damage that is being done by austerity policies from national Governments. We want a European Union that builds on Europe's best democratic traditions, not simply a common market for the free movement of capital.

The socialist case to remain is the polar opposite of the Conservative case to leave, which was put today by Margaret Mitchell and Graham Simpson. We reject the idea that free movement of people is a one-way deal or a burden on public services. We recognise that free movement of workers must go hand in hand with shared high standards of workers' rights, and we believe that government must invest in public services and not simply let market forces take their course.

Our aspiration is to widen the circle of shared values, of common endeavour and of equal rights

as far as is practicably possible. For example, we want—as a number of members have said—to protect the rights of people at work: the right to paid holidays, the right to parental leave, the right to equal treatment and the right to safe working environments. As a party, we will use the powers of the Scottish Parliament where we can, and we will work with other parties here that share that agenda. However, whenever we get the opportunity to legislate on those matters for the whole of the United Kingdom, we will do that as well. That way, 10 times as many people will benefit. We will embed those rights in European law when the opportunity arises, because that will benefit 100 times more people than live in Scotland alone.

The rights of people at work in Scotland are enhanced every time we succeed in winning the same rights for people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as every time we succeed in winning those rights across the EU. The wider the reach of progressive legislation, the harder it is for unscrupulous employers or governments to promote a race to the bottom at working people's expense, and the harder it then becomes to impose policies of austerity at the expense of working people.

It is for those reasons that trade unions share not only the Labour Party's values, but in the main—Elaine Smith mentioned some exceptions—our views on the European Union, including what needs to be done to make it work better. As Jeremy Corbyn has said, there is a "socialist case" not only for the European Union but for reform and progressive policies within the European Union. As Dave Ward of the Communications Workers Union said last month:

"The EU is far from perfect—but it's necessary for tackling inequality, tax avoidance, climate change and preventing workers being exploited across Europe."

Those points have been made in the debate and they unite many members in this chamber. It is not for its own sake that we in the Labour Party back any state or union, European or otherwise; it is for the good that it can do and the difference that it can make. For Labour, that is what the debate is all about.

12:13

John Lamont (Etrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): I, too, welcome you to your new role, Deputy Presiding Officer.

With less than a month to go, we are coming into the home straight of the debate that will decide our future in Europe. The debate this morning has provided an extremely useful opportunity for this newly elected Scottish Parliament to discuss the issues at stake ahead of

the decision, and I congratulate all those members who have delivered their maiden speeches during the course of the debate.

There is clearly some divergence of opinion across the chamber, just as there is some divergence of opinion across Scotland. Like many others in the remain camp, I do not pretend that the European Union is perfect. That point was well made by my colleague Adam Tomkins in his excellent maiden speech. Nevertheless, I believe that, on balance, the Prime Minister has negotiated a better deal for the United Kingdom in the European Union, which will allow Britain to continue to play a leading role in one of the world's largest international organisations, with our having a special status within the EU framework.

The Prime Minister has stressed that there is a need for further and continuing reform, but there is little doubt that Britain is best placed to pursue that from a position of influence inside the EU fold. If we were to leave the EU but still have access to the single market, our level of access would likely not be the same as it is now—we need look only at Norway and Switzerland as examples of that. We would still have to pay into the EU budget and accept the free movement of people as the price of that access, we would still be subject to all the EU's rules, but we would have no say over the creation of those rules.

Neil Findlay: Is Mr Lamont seriously pointing to the impoverished Norwegians and Swiss as an example of what not to do?

John Lamont: I think that, on balance, the overall package of the European Union is able to address the challenges in member countries better than we could do individually as separate nations.

I understand that, for some, the UK's ongoing participation in the European project is an emotive matter, with questions of sovereignty and control at its core. My colleague Margaret Mitchell highlighted her concerns in her speech, as did Graham Simpson in his maiden speech. However, it seems to me that far from halting the constitutional creep of the EU and restoring the UK's sovereignty over its decision making by leaving, we would find ourselves more constrained than we are with the status quo.

Mr Findlay rightly highlighted the SNP's hypocrisy over the EU referendum. It is odd, to say the least, that the SNP is now strongly promoting one union, when it passionately argued against another that more clearly benefits Scotland. It argues that one union in which Scotland has 10 per cent of elected representatives is somehow undemocratic but another union in which we have less than 2 per cent of MEPs is acceptable; and that one union that represents £46 billion-worth of Scotland's trade is worth leaving but we should not

risk leaving another union that represents £13 billion of trade. However, the SNP has not stopped there, because it is publicly pinning Scotland's constitutional future on the outcome of the EU referendum. Mr Russell highlighted during his speech earlier the SNP's continuing desire to break up the UK.

I believe that for many people in Scotland and across the UK, the case for remaining in the EU is not so much an emotive one as a practical one—it certainly is for me. Therefore, instead of looking at abstract ideas, let us look at concrete benefits. As the UK's major trading partner, the EU accounts for 44 per cent of UK exports; more than 3 million jobs in Britain are linked to our trade with other EU countries; and, overall, the independent Confederation of British Industry estimates that, through lower prices and increased trade and investment, each household across the country benefits, on average, by £3,000 a year from EU membership. Daniel Johnson highlighted in his maiden speech the economic benefits for his constituency, but the same arguments apply across the whole of Scotland.

The Prime Minister has consistently argued that the main, overriding purpose of European Union membership is to secure prosperity. Since the eurozone crisis boiled over in 2009, the EU has perhaps become more connected with financial instability than economic prosperity, but the figures show that, despite the widespread economic turmoil that has defined the past few years, EU membership still benefits us not just at a national level but in people's pockets, too.

For many of my constituents in the Borders with farm businesses, the EU also offers a critical level of support, through the common agricultural policy. In fact, nearly 40 per cent of the European budget is dedicated to the agricultural sector. In addition, EU membership offers tariff-free market access for Scottish produce, which had an export value of £5.1 billion in 2014—a fact that every business across the country should be, and will be, aware of.

The NFUS rightly argues that the European negotiating position has allowed international trade agreements to be opened with around 50 partners in recent years, opening up new markets for Scottish produce. We do not know what the alternative would be if the UK voted to leave. What trade barriers would be imposed? The future is extremely uncertain, and that is bad for the agricultural sector and bad for our economy as a whole.

So much of the leave rhetoric surrounding the UK's membership of the EU has focused on the constraints that it supposedly places on our sovereignty—on our freedom to exercise autonomy and independence on issues affecting

our laws, our borders and our global trade. However, to my mind, weighed against the costs, the benefits of staying in the EU are clear. Together with many of my Conservative colleagues, I will continue to make a strong and convincing case to remain in the EU.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Fiona Hyslop to close the debate. Cabinet secretary, you have around 10 minutes.

12:19

Fiona Hyslop: Thank you, Deputy Presiding Officer.

I am very grateful to members for their contributions to the debate in the chamber today. Is it not the case that the chamber really does rise to the occasion when we are addressing the big issues facing our people and communities? I hope that the new members, who have spoken extremely well today, can see that as the way forward.

There clearly is overwhelming—though not absolute—enthusiasm in the chamber for continuing membership of the EU. Many good points have been made during the debate. It is incumbent on those of us who can contribute to ensure that our voices are heard loudly and clearly in the short time that is left ahead of the vote on 23 June.

I will mention first speakers. We heard from Adam Tomkins. The best bit of his speech was his reference to Glasgow being the first European city of culture.

As many others did, Daniel Johnson paid tribute to his predecessor, which was much appreciated by members around the chamber. He spoke specifically about the role of universities and about the financial sector in Edinburgh.

Ross Greer made an excellent speech and I welcome him to his post for the Green Party. He was eloquent about how young people want to reach out, communicate and connect in the world. That part of the debate must not be lost.

Alex Cole-Hamilton made an articulate speech about his constituency. He also considered the opportunities and thought about things from a personal perspective.

How powerful was Tom Arthur's reflection, which reminded us of what it felt like when the Berlin wall fell? He also reminded us of young people's desire to contribute and connect and of the personal perspective that many people have on the debate.

On the other side of the debate, Graham Simpson set out his case. It is always important,

even when we disagree in the chamber, that we listen with respect and argue the points.

There have been some outstanding speeches in the debate, in particular from Richard Lochhead, who is a close colleague and has, for a long time, been a strong champion for Scotland in the EU. He spoke about his constituency of Moray and its exports—Walkers, Baxters and the whisky industry—which are important to Scotland.

Richard Lochhead also talked about historical reflection, as did Mike Russell. It is important that, in the debate, we think about what the EU has achieved and why it exists from not only an historical perspective but the perspective of the present and the future.

Kezia Dugdale brought a reflective perspective to the debate. She articulated not only the beauty and importance of the mix of cultures that is alive in Edinburgh and other cities but how the EU has brought peace and prosperity from conflict and chaos.

Some hard points were also made and some concerns were also raised in the debate, particularly by Margaret Mitchell, who seemed rather confused. She wanted to complain about and blame the EU for the UK's trade figures without acknowledging the importance of the growth of emerging markets and then based her argument on the need to have unilateral trade agreements with those new and emerging markets.

From the other end of the spectrum—how often do the right and left meet?—Elaine Smith expressed concern about what would happen with future trade agreements within the EU, but the question is what would happen outwith the EU. Do we really think that some of the protections that we seek for the NHS and other services would be part of any trade deal that an unfettered, free-market Conservative Government made with the US?

Elaine Smith: Will Fiona Hyslop give way?

Fiona Hyslop: I want to move on.

On the point that Graham Simpson made about minimum unit pricing, which was reflected by others, I point out that the measure has not been blocked. The ECJ's preliminary ruling indicates that it will be for member states' domestic courts to make a final decision on the issue.

The desire to connect and to ensure that we can build—as Ross Greer said—“a people's Europe” are aspirations and are the type of issue that we are arguing about. What type of country do we want to be part of? What type of leadership do we want our country to provide? How do we want our country to shape the world around us?

When we consider the debate through the prism of civic Scotland, we see a number of organisations reflecting a strong case for EU membership. The Scottish Council for Development and Industry has said:

“SCDI is entirely confident that in stating that if the UK remains in the EU it would be better for the Scottish economy it accurately represents the position of the majority of our members ... In SCDI’s view, the EU is an essential foundation for Scotland’s international trade and investment.”

David O’Neill of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has said:

“Given the importance of the issue we took a paper on the EU Referendum to our full Convention and I am pleased to say that there was agreement from the political groups within COSLA that we would campaign to remain within the European Union.”

The Scottish Trades Union Congress has said:

“the General Council believes that the option that aligns best with the STUC’s economic and social justice objectives is for the UK to remain a member of the EU.”

On 24 May, Rev Sally Foster Fulton of the Church of Scotland said:

“For the last 20 years we have recognised the European Union’s achievements in promoting peace and security. We reaffirmed that position today.”

The president of NFU Scotland, Allan Bowie, has said:

“A robust debate amongst our board of directors and wider membership looking at the economic arguments around the EU has seen NFU Scotland come off the fence in favour of remaining ‘in’ the EU at the current time. That is a position shared amongst other UK farming unions.”

We heard from Clare Adamson about the importance of horizon 2020. The debate is not just about the history and the present benefits of the EU; it is about what we can do to shape the future, to challenge and to take on the big issues and the big economic opportunities for the future. It is about invention, research and the leading lights of democracy, debate and innovation. Yes, those things are all capable of existing outside the EU, but how much better is it to have the ability to connect with so many of the cities, the institutions and the creative economies that are abroad in the EU?

I turn back to some of the arguments that were made in the debate. Claudia Beamish made an informed point about natural resources and the importance of the EU to our environment. John Mason touched on the fact that, although we talk about the EU in the abstract, we are actually talking about collaboration with our friends—with people in the Netherlands, with the Germans and with the French. People make those connections and help to shape what we do going forward. In that regard, I also want to reflect on Mary Fee’s excellent speech. She made a passionate case on

what the EU means to working women. We have to take the abstract and institutional and make it personal and real, as Mary Fee did.

It is rare, perhaps, that we have a debate in which we can get consensus across the parties in the chamber, and I am pleased that we can do so today. We are responsible for articulating the case and bringing the voices of the people of Scotland into the chamber. We have all spent a number of weeks on the doorsteps, and I have talked about the civic institutions and their voices. We can argue for our parties’ positions and our personal positions, but our foremost responsibility is to reflect wider Scotland and to bring people’s voices into the chamber, and that has been done in the debate today.

I want to look at the task ahead and at how, from our different perspectives, we can agree on the importance of Scotland’s membership of the European Union. If, like me, members support Scotland and the UK remaining in the European Union, we must argue that case enthusiastically and with passion, but also with reason. We must make the rational case that Scottish voters expect from politicians in debates in the chamber and, more important, out in society and in the economy at large.

Through our EU membership, the people of Scotland have enjoyed many opportunities, including the right to live, work and study abroad and the chance to co-operate with like-minded people across Europe, and that opportunity must be there for future generations. We should never forget the birthplace of co-operation across Europe. In that regard, I reflect on the speeches of Mike Russell and other members. We must remain grounded by that perspective and remember the importance of a union of 28 members that has sustained peace and prosperity. It is important that future generations can enjoy the same benefits and assume a leading role in the EU.

I will finish—perhaps unusually—by commenting on a speech by a Conservative member. In his excellent speech, John Scott said that it is important to help to solve the problems of Europe rather than adding to them. The voice of Scotland is important, and the debate is not just about what we get from Europe in material terms, but about what we can contribute and what we can give to the wider world. That, ultimately, is the big argument and the big horizon. That is the big picture of why we should co-operate with our colleagues across Europe and remain in the European Union.

12:29

Meeting suspended.

14:00

On resuming—

Taking Scotland Forward

Resumed debate.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): This afternoon's business is the continuation of the debate on taking Scotland forward. I invite members who intend to speak to press their request-to-speak button now, and I invite the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to start us off.

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): First, Presiding Officer, I welcome you to your post. I also welcome your two deputies.

There can be no greater responsibility than to ensure that each and every child and young person has a fair chance to succeed in our country. Fulfilling that responsibility will drive every moment of my term in office as Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. To put it bluntly, we must get it right for every child.

We have great schools and teachers right across Scotland. As the education secretary, I will support the development of publicly controlled education that operates for the good of everyone in our country. For too many children, the ability to succeed in life is determined by where they live, rather than by how hard they work. This Government is determined to bring that tragedy to an end.

I will be focused on delivering three key priorities, each of which is essential to ensuring that every young person's potential is fulfilled. First, to ensure that our children and young people get the best start in life, I will focus on transforming early learning and childcare with a doubling of provision, the deployment of flexibility to help parents—particularly mothers—to return to work, and an insistence on educational input to close the attainment gap before it begins to have a profound impact.

Secondly, by empowering teachers, parents and communities, reducing workload, ensuring that funding reaches schools to meet local needs, focusing on what works, and being relentless in our efforts to raise standards for all children, I will work to close the attainment gap for good.

Thirdly, by widening opportunities to access higher, further and vocational education, I will ensure that every child has the same chance to progress. I will do everything in my power to break down the barriers that prevent young people from

deprived backgrounds from progressing to the same levels as their more affluent peers reach.

Closing the attainment gap and improving attainment across education in Scotland—in other words, the pursuit of equity and excellence—will be the driving purpose of my tenure as education secretary. That aspiration is widely shared across this Parliament and this country. My challenge is to bring together the numerous and varied voices involved in the debate, to ensure that the pursuit of equity and excellence is translated into concrete actions that transform young people's life chances.

The summit on education, which the First Minister announced yesterday, is essential. It will focus on the actions that we need to take collectively to realise our ambition of closing the attainment gap and raising standards for all children. It will inform the delivery plan that I intend to publish before the summer recess. The delivery plan will be anchored in the national improvement plan that was published in January. It will develop and set clear, precise and meaningful milestones on the road to closing the attainment gap.

The summit on education is part of my commitment to listen to views and concerns about the performance of the education system. A significant concern that I have heard is about teacher workload as a consequence of change in the education system. I will act today to reduce that workload, as my first step towards improving performance in Scotland's schools. Today, I have published the first report of the working group on assessment and national qualifications, and I will implement in full its recommended actions. The actions commit the Scottish Qualifications Authority to reduce teacher workloads in 2016-17 by streamlining its requirements for unit assessment and simplifying verification for 2016-17.

The SQA has published subject reviews that will further reduce teacher workload next year and beyond. Today, it is publishing its evaluation reports that inform the process. I have met the chief examiner for Scotland to press her to reduce further the burden of assessment and examination. She has advised me that the changes that I am announcing today go as far as it is safe to go at this stage in the process. To go further would reduce the value and damage the integrity of our national qualifications, which could create risks to the secure delivery of the results and the system. I cannot jeopardise the ability of young people to obtain the qualifications to which they are properly entitled. However, I will ensure that the SQA continues to take all the actions it can take to achieve reductions in workload, and I will meet the chief examiner monthly to ensure that progress promised is progress delivered.

I have also met the chief inspector of education and insisted that Education Scotland sets out clear national expectations around qualifications and assessment that will further reduce unnecessary workload for teachers and provide clarity on the curriculum, where that is required. The chief inspector of education is writing to all schools this afternoon with that statement.

I hope that there will be a recognition that in my first week in office I have acted firmly and decisively to address issues in front of me, reduce teacher workload and strengthen Scottish education. Those are first steps in a journey to provide clarity and confidence in the education system and to reduce the workload of teachers, enabling them to do what they must always do and must be liberated to do: concentrate on delivering the educational potential of our young people in Scotland.

It falls on all our shoulders to rise to the challenge that the First Minister set—to make significant progress in closing the attainment gap within the lifetime of this session of Parliament and to substantially eliminate the gap within a decade. That will not be an easy challenge, but it is one to which I am absolutely dedicated.

I hope that we can be united in our efforts to deliver on the ambition to build equity and excellence in Scottish education. We owe that to every child and young person in our country today.

14:06

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Presiding Officer, I congratulate you on achieving the position, which is very well deserved. I also congratulate John Swinney on his move to the education post, although I am somewhat disappointed that he is leaving finance; I realise that Derek Mackay faces a huge challenge in following him.

I want to make points on a few topics, the first of which is housing, which is very important for my constituency of Glasgow Shettleston. I certainly welcome the commitments that the Scottish National Party Government is making, especially its key commitment to provide 50,000 affordable homes.

As has been said previously, when we improve our housing stock, as well as improving the housing itself we deal with the health problems that are caused by people living in cold and damp housing, we help with education by giving kids a better place to study in, and we help with household budgets, as energy costs come down.

Of course, there are still challenges in the housing sector, not least in the private rented sector, and I welcome the moves forward that

have already been made in that field, but I think that there is a feeling among many of us that the task has not been completed. There is also the problem with owner-occupied stock, especially tenements, of owners not being able—or, sometimes, not being willing—to properly maintain it.

Returning members will not be surprised by my mentioning under the subject of housing the Bellgrove hotel, which, in effect, is a homeless hostel for 140 men in my constituency that is subject to virtually no regulation whatsoever. I mentioned it over the five years of the previous session, and I plan to continue mentioning it in the coming five years. If that situation could be sorted, I and many local constituents would be very happy.

On health, we welcome the record funding commitment and the protection from cuts, which very few other sectors are getting, but that does not mean that there is no pressure on the health budget. Given that more people are living longer and are often doing so with complex conditions, meeting demand will definitely be a challenge.

I also very much welcome the commitment that the share of funding that is dedicated to mental health and to primary and community care is to increase each year. The Finance Committee in the previous session emphasised the importance of preventative spending and, frankly, I would like more emphasis to be put on general practitioners and less on hospitals.

On mental health, I welcome the plan for specialised links workers in GP practices in deprived areas. People come to see me about issues such as housing and antisocial behaviour, but I often suspect that there might be a mental health problem involved as well. From speaking to other organisations in the constituency, I think that they have the same experience.

It seems to me that the more we can treat people as whole beings instead of separating the physical and the mental into silos, the more likely it is that we will achieve healthier individuals. The profile of mental health has definitely been raised over the past five years, and we should pay tribute to Jim Hume among others for emphasising it. My feeling and, indeed, hope is that the subject will continue to have a high profile over the next five years.

On local government, I very much welcome a review of local authorities and especially the suggestion that functions should be decentralised. There is a host of reasons why council boundaries are as they are, with the incredible differences between Clackmannanshire, the islands and larger cities such as Glasgow. The regions of Scotland are very different and we should not try to impose

arbitrary uniformity on councils, but Glasgow as a city is far too centralised. There are big differences between the west and the east of the city, and between the south and the north of it. Therefore, local authorities may well be given increased remits—for example, on health—but I would argue that they should also be prepared to devolve power down to much more of a community level.

It is probably appropriate to mention community councils at this stage. As their names suggest, they are the part of our system that is closest to our local communities, but I fear for some of them that are really struggling and are kept together only by a small band of older people, especially in areas such as mine. We need to consider community councils over the next five years.

On rail, I started only one cross-party group in the previous session, which was the cross-party group on rail. That is the kind of subject on which MSPs from across the parties can join together in an area of common interest and work to see what they can do. It would be great to see projects near my area, such as Glasgow crossrail, moving forward. However, we have seen over the past few years and especially in the past winter how important it is to have back-up rail routes in place. With the problems of the Lamington viaduct and with the Queen Street high-level tunnel closed, that is an important issue to push forward.

In her speech yesterday, the First Minister mentioned controversy. Even though we are a minority Administration, we should not shy away from controversial subjects at times. I will mention two of them.

I fully support the named person policy, which helps vulnerable families, perhaps especially in constituencies such as mine, to know where to go for help. In the past, people have been passed from pillar to post. I accept that, in the better-off areas, which the Tories are maybe emphasising, there is perhaps not so much need for a named person and such help, but a lot of ordinary folk in my constituency are not confident about challenging professionals. The scheme should help them when they look for help.

Like all legislation, the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012 is not perfect, but in Glasgow and the west of Scotland we continue to have a problem with sectarianism, anti-Catholicism and anti-Irish racism. If better legislation can be introduced, I am very open to that, but we should not repeat the mistake of the past and fail to talk about sectarianism in the hope that it will go away. It has not gone away, and we need to tackle it. The danger of repealing that act would be that it would leave a vacuum.

I am very much looking forward to the next five years. We have party-political issues, and we will all line up in our tribes at times, but I hope that we can also have sensible and balanced debates and look at some subjects on their own merits.

14:13

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Presiding Officer, I welcome you to your office and congratulate you on your election. I have considerable experience of losing elections, so I will not hold against you the fact that you managed to defeat me. I am sure that you will undertake the duties of your office with great distinction. I also welcome the appointment of your deputies.

I welcome and congratulate the Deputy First Minister on his appointment as education secretary. I listened with great interest to what he said a few moments ago, particularly on teacher workload. He will be gratified to hear that Mrs Fraser will be delighted that teachers' workloads are likely to be reduced under his tenure.

It is encouraging to hear the Scottish Government talk about the need to seek consensus around education. We Conservative members are bursting with ideas on education, and I hope that the Scottish Government will be prepared to take at least some of them on board. Perhaps it is a little curious that a party that has been in power for nine years is only now looking for cross-party consensus on how to improve education. Nevertheless, in the spirit in which the offer has been made, we will respond with enthusiasm. Later, my colleague Elizabeth Smith will set out in more detail some of our ideas to improve education in Scotland.

I want to concentrate on the future of the Scottish economy, which is the Scottish Government's other priority. I think that the greatest challenge that Scotland and the Scottish Government currently face is how to improve our economic performance. That is essential in itself, as a strong economy underpins everything else that we do. It provides the well-paid jobs that people need, the homes for people to live in and the transport links that they need to travel on.

Crucially, a strong economy also provides the tax revenue that the Scottish Government needs to fund its spending. This will be the first session of the Scottish Parliament in which a substantial proportion of the money that we spend has been raised right here in Scotland. If the Scottish economy underperforms, there will be less tax revenue and less money to spend. Our economic performance is vital to everything that we do in the Parliament.

The sad fact is that Scotland's economy is not performing as well as it should be. Just last week,

the economist John McLaren produced a new report entitled, "Challenges facing the new Economic Secretary with regards to Scotland's economic performance". It does not make happy reading. According to the report, Scotland's economy did not perform well in 2015 and the prospects for 2016 and beyond are gloomy. After a record-breaking performance in 2015, the construction sector is likely to stall or even fall back, and the downturn in North Sea activity is likely to be on-going for some years. In 2015, we saw a record trade imbalance in Scotland, with a fall in Scottish exports to the rest of the UK.

That latest reports backs up a series of recent data, which also raise concern. Our unemployment rate is now substantially higher than the rest of the UK and the gap is growing. Gross domestic product growth lags behind the rest of the UK. Retail sales are showing a downward trend, and business confidence is low and far behind the UK as a whole.

When Scotland's economic performance was better than the rest of the UK, the Scottish ministers were quick to claim credit. Now that the position is reversed, they have to take at least some of the responsibility. Given the extensive control over taxation that the Scottish Parliament already enjoys, they can no longer hide behind the mantra that they do not have enough powers.

It is in the area of industry and manufacturing that we have seen the greatest concern. A series of closures in recent months and years have decimated the sector: Tullis Russell in Fife, the Carron Phoenix plant in Falkirk—with a history going back hundreds of years—Longannet power station in Fife, Texas Instruments in Greenock, Tannoy in Coatbridge, which Richard Leonard referred to yesterday, and Polaroid Eyewear in West Dunbartonshire. There is also a question mark over the future of the aluminium smelter in Fort William.

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): Will the member take an intervention?

Murdo Fraser: Not just now, thank you.

The decline in oil and gas and the job losses in the North Sea have been well publicised. The deindustrialisation of Scotland is upon us at a far more rapid pace than we have seen in the past.

I will take the intervention now.

Fergus Ewing: I thank the member for allowing me to intervene. Will he allow me to temper the doom and gloom of his litany of negativity by pointing out that, among recent successes, the Scottish Government has played its part in saving the Scottish steel industry and that just this week it was announced that, for the umpteenth year in

succession, when it comes to inward investment, Scotland has outperformed just about every other part of the UK, delivering a record 115 inward investments? Should Mr Fraser not allow some of those facts to enter his speech?

Murdo Fraser: I am very interested in the comments on foreign direct investment. The number of projects has indeed gone up in comparison with 2014, but we might reflect on the fact that they had gone down so much in the run-up to 2014. Might that have had something to do with the constitutional uncertainty created by Mr Ewing and his party?

Of course we do not know what the value of those foreign direct investment projects is. We know that the number of projects has gone up, but we do not know what their value is, so we cannot make a proper comparison.

Fergus Ewing: I can tell you.

Murdo Fraser: Please do.

Fergus Ewing: I can tell you the value of one: Norbord is spending £95 million and building a new plant near Inverness, which is going to serve the community—

Murdo Fraser: Sit down, the intervention is over.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, gentlemen.

Murdo Fraser: I hope that you will give me some extra time, given those lengthy interventions, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: I will do, Mr Fraser

Murdo Fraser: Thank you. I notice that Mr Ewing could not answer my question as to the value of those projects.

What needs to be done? My party is determined to be an effective and constructive Opposition, and we will not be shy in coming forward with practical suggestions for the direction of Scottish Government policy. We have a full debate on the economy next week in which I will set out in more detail what we would do.

Business rates is a policy area that has been wholly devolved to the Scottish Parliament since 1999. The SNP's response in Government has been to treat businesses like a cash cow, hiking business rates by 42 per cent in nine years, at the same time as householders have enjoyed a council tax freeze. In his most recent budget, the former finance secretary went even further by doubling the supplement for large businesses and removing the exemption for industrial properties from empty property rates.

All of those measures go in entirely the wrong direction. It is little wonder that they have been

denounced by leading figures in the business community, who have expressed great concern. As Bryan Buchan of Scottish Engineering put it,

“The imposition of an additional levy on business rates is a burden which an already-struggling manufacturing and engineering sector can ill-afford.”

I will say much more next week about what we would do differently in relation to the Scottish economy. We need to see investment in skills. We need to see a reversal of the SNP’s swingeing cuts to our colleges, which take away from young people the opportunity to learn the skills they need to improve their ability to compete in the workforce. We need proper investment in infrastructure, not least broadband.

Scotland’s economic performance needs to be turned around. We need a Government with ambition to make that happen. If this SNP Government is prepared to step up to the plate, it will have our support, but we will not be shy of coming forward with concrete proposals as to how our economy can be improved.

14:20

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I join others in welcoming you to your post, Presiding Officer. I hope for a favourable disposition in all your decisions.

When I became a minister in 2007, one of the first events that I recall was the whole ministerial team sitting in Bute house listening to the then chief medical officer, Harry Burns, talking to us about the effect of poverty on very young children and how it would blight their existence throughout their lives. The new Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney, put early learning at the heart of his opening remarks. That chimes absolutely with what Harry Burns said to the ministerial team in 2007, which resonates with me to this day. If we do not get it right at the beginning, we sure as heck will get it wrong at the end. I very much welcome all the initiatives that there will be: initiatives to support mothers back to work, to support children before they get to school, and to increase investment in communities where there are particular needs because of social and economic circumstances.

Like John Mason, I will pursue one or two of my obsessions. I will continue from time to time to suggest to any education minister that the Trachtenberg system for mental arithmetic is worthy of further consideration. I was a pretty indifferent student at all levels of my studying. Fortunately, I was brought up in a house that was filled with books. Essentially, I am an autodidact—I am self-taught. I therefore have no one but myself to blame for my shortcomings.

I represent an area that has substantial rural communities. It is interesting to go round schools in those communities and to see how different they are from schools in urban communities. The relationship between teachers and their pupils is quite different—it is more intimate and there is more knowledge in both parties of what is going on. One of my standard questions when I am at a rural primary school is to ask everyone who has driven a tractor to put their hand up. The really good news is that in the majority of such cases, these days, more young girls in rural schools put their hands up than young men. That tells us about a good change in society.

I have longer-run experience of rural schools. My grandfather started teaching in a rural school in 1881 as a pupil teacher. He ended his career in 1926 in Peddieston school in the Black Isle. The world then was very different; even though there were more than 20 pupils there, it was a single-teacher school. My grandmother made soup for the pupils from the vegetables that the pupils themselves brought to the school. Infrastructure was very limited.

Today, schools are resourced in a very different way and work in very different buildings. Education is now not simply face-to-face, but can be online as well. That is important for rural communities and for tertiary education in those communities. That is why it is important that we get rural broadband up to the required speeds. I very much welcome the Government’s commitment to provide 100 per cent of premises in Scotland, including in rural areas, with broadband by the end of this parliamentary session. My wife in particular is looking forward to that—she reported to me yesterday that our broadband was running at 50Kbps.

It is also worth thinking about how important communication is more generally for rural communities. The Romans were a much more successful empire than the Greeks because they had an effective system of communication and the Greeks did not. The Romans could get a message from Londinium to Roma in 24 hours by a system of hilltop signalling. Thankfully, we have moved on a little bit from that, but we should remember that the first public access speech call across the Atlantic was made in 1957. That is within my living memory; I remember my father having to make a call across the Atlantic in 1958 in relation to a patient of his.

The number of my constituents who have tertiary educational qualifications is lower than that in most constituencies in Scotland. Historically, that has been for the good reason that lots of school leavers have been able to go straight into employment. However, in the future the world will be more difficult, and education will play an

important role in helping people into new jobs and long-term employment. That is why I particularly welcome the substantial investment in the North East Scotland College in Fraserburgh. Its campus is gleaming and efficient and is ready for 21st century—

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the member give way?

Stewart Stevenson: I am in my last minute.

The number of apprentices at the college has risen dramatically because we are focusing on ensuring that the tertiary sector delivers people who are fit to work, which helps the economy and it helps individuals. Rural areas such as the one that I represent benefit particularly from the policies of this Government. Please keep it up, education secretary.

14:27

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): To take Scotland forward, we first need to take a look at the jobs and industries that will do that: the high-skill, high-wage jobs in science, engineering and technology. There is no future for Scotland as a low-skill, low-wage economy or in competing with developing countries for those jobs. The way in which we give our young people and people who want to retrain the education and skills that they need to get a job in a high-tech industry will play a massive part in taking Scotland forward.

There is a big prize to aim for. According to research, by 2030 more than 7 million jobs in the UK will depend on science skills. Those jobs in science, technology, engineering and technology are exactly the kinds of jobs that we need—high-quality, highly skilled and highly paid jobs for which emerging economies will struggle to compete with us.

However, there are three big challenges for the Government in that regard; first, there is a stubborn attainment gap that has to be wiped out; secondly, the barriers to women in science need to be removed; and thirdly, college cuts should be reversed, so that colleges can return to being places of lifelong learning for people who need a second chance at education or who need to retrain.

I see that the Deputy First Minister's job title is also Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. That is a change from the role's previous title, which was Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. I say gently that, although I accept that the dropping of the phrase "lifelong learning" is simply a change in the name, the decision seems to match the Government's emphasis in education, with adult learners having been disproportionately affected by the cuts to

college budgets and places. Colleges used to be valued by communities for their roles as providers of lifelong learning. The Government should return to that situation so that people have the ability to retrain for the opportunities and industries of the future.

At university, I studied mechanical engineering, which is a key source of skills and graduates for our growing and changing energy sector, among others. The course provides fantastic opportunities for high-skilled, high-wage work. There were 120 students on my course, four of whom were women—four women out of 120 people studying one of the top courses in the country for highly paid and highly skilled work. When I spoke to graduates and undergraduates recently, I found that things have not changed much since I was a student. How this Government opens up careers in science and technology to half of our population will determine how successful it is at taking the country forward.

A career in science and technology should be attainable for every child who starts school this August. Too many young people will not get the right qualifications to train for a highly skilled job in the sector because of their background rather than because of their ability. Educational inequality is a symptom of a deeper problem of poverty that we need to address, so the focus of any programme is vital.

I live in Cumbernauld; the variation in educational attainment across that one town is massive. In the council ward of Cumbernauld North, the child poverty level is 8 per cent, which is far too high, but cross the footbridge—a two-minute walk over the M80—and the level of child poverty jumps to a staggering 23 per cent. That difference in child poverty levels impacts on the educational attainment of young people, which can stop them breaking out of the vicious cycle of poverty. The measures that the Government takes to tackle the attainment gap must be focused on our most deprived communities and on children from the most deprived backgrounds.

There has been a massive increase in the use of private tutors in recent years, and wealthier families have the ability to give their child an extra boost compared with children in families who cannot afford that. Private tutoring is used when a child is struggling with a particular subject or to help in the run-up to exams. In itself, it is not a bad thing. However, where is the support for the pupil from the poorer background when he or she is struggling or needs that support during exam time? Wealthier families also use the placing-request system to move their children out of seemingly low-performing schools to ones with a better reputation because they can afford to pay

the travel costs. That reinforces the attainment gap instead of reversing it.

Those are the things that parents do to ensure that their kids have the best chance to succeed, but the Government must level the playing field and make sure that all kids have those opportunities. It should provide wraparound care including breakfast and homework clubs, as well as supported study sessions outwith school hours during exam times that do not rely on the good will of our overstretched teachers. Education cuts must be reversed, and there should be an increased attainment fund focused on the individual children who need it most, which would be paid for through progressive taxation.

The Government will have our support in taking Scotland forward if it is willing to be bold, stop the cuts and increase investment in education—or it can rely on support from the other side of the chamber to do the opposite.

14:33

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Presiding Officer, I congratulate you and your deputies on your election and wish you well in your roles. I am sure that you will have no difficulty whatever in keeping order in the chamber—I am not looking at any member or part of the chamber in particular. I also welcome the class of 2016, both returning and new members, all of whom will, I am sure, serve their constituents well in the Scottish Parliament. I thank, too, members who have not returned or who have retired, for their service to the Scottish people, and wish them every success for the future.

Yesterday, the First Minister set out the Government's priorities for this session of Parliament. One phrase that stood out in particular was "equality of opportunity". I have striven for that throughout my political life, whether here in Scotland, nationally or internationally, and I am proud to be part of a Government that puts that at the heart of its agenda.

I welcome the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skill's opening remarks and statements. As someone who went into further education in their 30s—which I will say is not that long ago—I know and value our education system. I am very pleased that the First Minister has made education the defining mission of this Government, recognising that a good education is paramount if every child is to have a fair start in life. More important than that, however, is the recognition that the years before and after the school years are crucial in any child's life and in defining that fair start and equality of opportunity.

I welcome the introduction of the baby box and of maternity and early years allowances, which will

give financial support to low-income parents, and the expansion of the attainment fund, which is also very important for the early years.

I also welcome the additional apprenticeships, the widening of access to university, helping young people into work through college places, and the skills and training initiatives. I look forward to the publication—I think that the cabinet secretary mentioned this already—of the draft delivery plan, which involves parents, teachers, local authorities and trade unions. The involvement of all those groups—I cannot stress this enough—is key to success in improving attainment for all our children, including before school and after school.

That leads me on neatly to an area that is very close to my heart: community involvement and community empowerment. As the constituency MSP for Glasgow Kelvin, I have worked very closely with the local groups in my area, and the issue that is most often raised by all groups is community involvement—or the lack of community involvement. In my opinion, giving local people greater control over decisions that affect them and their communities—from those of health boards to those of community planning partnerships—is very important. I ask the cabinet secretary and the First Minister to take that important issue on board as it has been raised with me on numerous occasions. I sincerely hope that consideration of it will lead to members of the public being able to be members of health boards and community planning partnerships. For too long, the issue has been raised with me—and, I am sure, with other MSPs—that only professionals are on those boards and organisations, and not patients or members of the public. I sincerely hope that we will look at that to ensure that members of the public are able to sit on those boards or organisations.

To become fully involved in the implementation of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, communities need to know exactly what it stands for; they need to be fully involved in the legislation. I know that they were when the bill was first produced and put out for consultation, but I am not sure that too many members of the communities that I and others represent know exactly what "community empowerment" means and what the act actually stands for. We can stand here and say "Well, it means that you're involved", but what does it mean to them? That is why I took the liberty today of approaching the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, Angela Constance, to seek a meeting about organising seminars in my constituency so that we can have, throughout Glasgow Kelvin, meetings with local groups and people to let them know exactly what empowerment for local people means. I think that that is very important.

People have some great ideas and want to get involved. There is legislation, but people are sometimes a wee bit frightened about approaching not just local representatives but Parliament with regard to the legislation that comes from it. I hope that I will have a meeting shortly with the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities and that we can set up the seminars after September, when Parliament comes back after the recess.

I am very proud to be a member of this Government team. I may not be a minister or a cabinet secretary, but I am a long-standing supporter of what our party and this Government stand for. I have said for many years—I say it all the time—that government does not work from the top down but from the bottom up. I think that this Government has got it exactly right when it goes to communities and asks local people what they want, because that is the only way we are going to get anywhere. We will make this a better country by asking people what they want and having meaningful consultation.

14:39

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I declare an interest under the standing orders: I remain a councillor at Stirling Council, although that might not be for ever. I also congratulate you, Presiding Officer, on your election to your position in the Parliament.

It has been nine years since I last stood in the chamber as an MSP representing communities throughout Mid Scotland and Fife. I am delighted and humbled to be given the role for the second time. My old office from 2004 on the garden level suits me just fine. I thank the Parliament staff for the welcome that I have had over the past few weeks and the kind words from many members.

Listening to the debate over the past two days, I sense that the Parliament has some of the freshness of the first session in 1999, particularly given the large influx of new members. There is also much of the political diversity that flavoured the rainbow Parliament of the second session, and it was good to hear Labour members—for example, Richard Leonard and Mark Griffin—dig deep into their party's socialist roots and find resonance in the struggles that workers and communities face today.

It was also interesting to hear from the big tent of unusual suspects that has popped up over on the right, including Maurice Golden and Annie Wells. I wish that Mr Golden had got a job as Murdo Fraser's speechwriter, but I thank him instead for announcing that the Tories are opposed to waste incineration in Scotland. That is interesting news.

There is also some of the finely balanced parliamentary maths of the third session that I hope will deliver a listening Government with the strongest constructively critical Parliament to date. In that vein, along with Rhoda Grant, I welcome the meeting that the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity, Fergus Ewing, convened yesterday, which was focused on delivering an immediate solution to the CAP payments fiasco while respecting that the Parliament will want to forensically pick over the lessons learned when the time is right.

As Patrick Harvie has already done, I welcome the First Minister's commitments to the Green proposals for supporting young carers and the Parliament's resolve to develop what Christina McKelvie described yesterday as a welfare system that delivers dignity not disdain.

There is much that unites us across the chamber and much cross-party work to do, such as extending childcare, addressing mental health services, providing new affordable housing and supporting small business. However, there are fault lines in the chamber, and the rot of austerity that has been creeping through local government in recent years must be halted.

As Nicola Sturgeon said yesterday, we need to put local communities more in charge of decisions. The hollowing out of capacity in local government that I have seen over the past four years has been devastating. Yes, there have been efficiency savings that make sense—digital service delivery is one such area and the integration of health and social care is another—but there have also been cuts that have borne down particularly on women and the vulnerable; that is inexcusable.

Let me take the central theme of the debate: school education. Although Jenny Gilruth gave a compelling first speech in the chamber, most teachers in Scotland would not recognise the picture that she painted. Although funding for teacher numbers is protected and there has been a consensus on delivering targeted attainment funds, the Government must recognise that cuts at councils, where education makes up 40 per cent of revenue budgets, are biting hard. With rising class sizes, cuts to additional support and specialists and cuts to teacher training and resource budgets, the ability of schools and nurseries to drive attainment is being stretched to breaking point. Do not even mention national testing to primary teachers who have class sizes of 32 and who every night take home 100 jotters to mark.

I welcome the fact that the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills has come to the chamber to announce the work that he is undertaking with the Scottish Qualifications Authority. If there is a crisis in

education, however, it comes not from the implementation of child protection laws, as Ruth Davidson would have us believe, but from the austerity that council education departments face and the erosion of core resources and specialist support.

Patrick Harvie reflected on Nicola Sturgeon's commitment to participatory budgeting. Most councils are moving towards budget consultations, but they are all about choices over cuts. Would people rather see school music tuition or rural bus services go, or see headteachers split between three schools or road maintenance budgets cut? Bruce Crawford wonders why education has, as he puts it, weaponised. It is hardly any wonder.

The top question asked at every participatory budget meeting to which I have gone is: why can we not raise more money to protect local public services? That is the question that the Government must answer if it is serious about empowerment. The Scottish Government must apply to the relationship between Scottish local government and Holyrood the principles of fiscal autonomy and a fair fiscal framework that are applied between Holyrood and Westminster.

I am pleased that the First Minister has agreed to implement in full her poverty adviser's report. She will note that a key recommendation of that was to be bold on tax. As Alex Rowley said, we cannot deliver Scandinavian levels of public services with American levels of taxation. It is time for action to create a bold, progressive reform of our tax system that lowers the burden on those who cannot afford to pay more while ensuring that those with the broadest shoulders pay more, including MSPs and the many public sector executives in Scotland who earn more than £150,000 a year.

I turn briefly to climate change. We have a moral obligation to set the most ambitious climate targets that reflect our position as a renewables-rich country, but there is much that we can gain, too. We can create jobs, tackle fuel poverty, tackle the chronic obesity crisis that we have in our communities and link communities that are disconnected from the rail network by investing in low-carbon infrastructure for the future.

There is much to talk about in the chamber and I am sure that we will get on to many of those topics next week. Members on the Green benches will challenge and provide ideas. We will provide ambition and boldness in this Parliament and we will be constructively critical in our scrutiny. I look forward to all of us playing that role in the next five years.

14:46

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): In Alexandra Park, in my constituency, there is a wrought iron fountain—a proud and iconic symbol of this part of the east end that many would recognise. Manufactured in the Saracen foundry for the 1901 great exhibition, it is a reminder of our great industrial heritage—a heritage that has been dismantled by the misguided policies of successive UK Governments. It is symbolic of the decline of this part of Glasgow from industrial powerhouse to byword for underachieving and disadvantaged communities.

I want to talk today about ambition, opportunity and how this Scottish Government's programme to take Scotland forward is designed to deliver for the people of Scotland and the people of Glasgow Provan. But first, I want to thank my predecessor Paul Martin for his 23 years of public service to the people of this part of Glasgow. I wish Paul every success in whatever he chooses to do next. There is life after politics as well as before it, as I know. In my previous life, I worked all over the world building businesses and creating jobs, and I witnessed how countries with far fewer natural resources and human potential than Scotland have built fairer and more prosperous societies than we have enjoyed. I also witnessed the value of a strategic focus on supporting innovation and building an industrial base.

Under this SNP Government, Scotland is making good progress. There is continued growth in inward investment, which is 50 per cent up on last year, and Scotland now has higher average wages than the UK, although far too many are still left behind. Our historical productivity gap with the rest of the UK has almost been wiped out and Scotland is benefiting from a higher profile internationally and increased confidence at home, but there is still so much more to do.

This is my first speech in this Parliament, and I want to use my time to talk about my Glasgow Provan constituency. I want to talk about young people with ideas. Marie Molloy and George Smith, who are here today in the public gallery, are two young people from Provan with ambition; they are starting their own unique businesses in the premium retail sector and the music business. Both are being helped by the connXenterprise initiative, which is run by Johnny Walker, who is also here today. I thank them for coming along and listening to the debate.

I want to talk about the steps that the Scottish Government is taking to create opportunity for young people—the 30,000 modern apprenticeships, increasingly focused on technology; the opportunities for all programme, which offers every 16 to 19-year-old a place in learning or training; the STEM strategy to inspire

young people to engage with technology; and the jobs grant to support young people into employment. Those are policies to deliver this Government's target to reduce youth unemployment by 40 per cent in the current session of Parliament.

I want to talk about the entrepreneurs with established businesses from across my constituency who come to me with great ideas for new processes and technologies and new ways to expand and create jobs. They are driving innovation, which is the life-blood of new business and a strong economy—something that I understand from my experience of growing an exporting business from scratch, and something that the SNP Government understands, which is why it is focusing the enterprise agencies to support innovation for start-up businesses.

I want to talk about the countless small businesses across Provan that have benefited significantly from the small business bonus and about established east end businesses with great plans to grow. Locally owned TotsBots is a UK market leader in its sector. Its largely female workforce designs and manufactures environmentally friendly baby products. It supplies the Finnish baby box and it is ready to supply our own Scottish baby box, creating jobs locally. Soapworks, which was originally part of Anita Roddick's The Body Shop, is now a locally owned business that maintains her legacy of ethical business after 30 years in the east end. I urge members to support the motions that I will circulate in support both of those businesses in the next day or so.

I want to talk about what the Scottish Government is doing to help businesses, particularly those that seek to expand into new markets. It is reviewing the business rates system to ensure that it supports economic growth and job creation and maintaining the most competitive business tax environment in the UK. It is ensuring 100 per cent access to superfast broadband and pressurising the UK Government to adopt the prompt payment code so that small businesses do not have to wait for their cash. It is creating new international investment hubs and trebling the number of export advisers. It is committing to massive infrastructure investment, with a £5 billion investment in rail alone in the coming session of Parliament. It is also reducing the burden of APD and so facilitating more direct flights to the markets that we need to expand into.

I want to talk about the jobs fairs that we are running in local communities across my constituency of Provan, working with Anne McLaughlin MP and her team to link up those seeking employment with local businesses and the range of available support services. That is

practical help at a local level, building confidence and aspiration.

Economic development is about more than just the bottom line; it is about the proud record that the Scottish Government has in leading the way internationally on inclusive growth. It is doing so not only because that is the right thing to do, but because we know that tackling inequality boosts productivity. We have the women in enterprise action framework, the 10-year strategy to grow and develop social enterprises, the partnership for change campaign, which supports gender balance, and the business pledge, which encourages progressive practices in the workplace.

For too long, we have accepted lack of ambition and aspiration. The Government's programme is focused on can do Scotland, and that message is nowhere more important than in the areas that I represent. To build a fairer and more prosperous Scotland, this SNP Government is taking Scotland forward. Thank you. [*Applause.*]

14:51

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):

I am told that I first need to say, for the register of interests, that I am an Aberdeenshire farmer.

As I stand here before members to make my first speech in our Parliament, I am thinking to myself, "Crikey—how on earth did this happen?" I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those voters who have put their faith in me. I know from the conversations that I had with voters across the north-east that they want us to do a job. They want us to hold the Government to account, provide the strong Opposition that has been lacking over the last five years and stand up against a second referendum, and that we will do.

I have the great privilege of representing a large and diverse area, whether that is Dundee with its vibrant gaming industry, Arbroath with its great smokies, Aberdeen, which is the energy capital of Europe, or my own corner of the Buchan coast, which is famous for farming and fishing. I am looking forward to representing all my constituents, no matter who they voted for or indeed whether they voted. My role is to ensure that they have a strong voice in me, and that is something that I take incredibly seriously.

Of course, I also have an important role in helping Ruth Davidson and the rest of the shadow cabinet in focusing on the rural economy and connectivity. I look forward to working closely with the minister on fixing the mistakes of his predecessor and ensuring that farmers and fishermen have someone they can work with effectively, someone they can trust and someone they can rely on to help to tackle their challenges.

I campaigned on a wide variety of issues, from improving the road network in my corner, revitalising our town centres and addressing the shortage of local GPs to ensuring that school leavers have the option of attending good quality colleges. However, the issues that are closest to my heart are those on rural affairs. Although a great many issues came up during the campaign, it quickly became obvious to me that rural communities feel badly let down by the Government. Farmers across the country are still waiting for their full CAP payments, despite the fact that the SNP promised that at least 70 per cent of payments would be made by last December. That mess needs to be cleared up and the remaining moneys paid out as quickly as possible. If the process is not 95 per cent completed by 30 June, EU fines of up to £125 million may be imposed.

The EU is poised to withdraw licences for glyphosate, which is better known as Roundup. Despite the European Parliament having approved an extension, we may lose that product. We across this chamber must do everything we can to ensure that farmers are able to do their jobs and that more vital crop products are not lost. It is time for the Scottish Government to face up to the fact that rural communities need support, not spin. Farmers need to know that the Government will stand up for them, no matter what, and not leave them and the rural economies to which they contribute so much twisting in the wind.

The rural economy is found not just in farmers' fields but in the fishing ports up and down Scotland, whether on the west coast or in my local towns of Fraserburgh and Peterhead. Fishing has long been a vital part of our country's economy and food security, but fishermen face enormous challenges that we in this chamber must take seriously and take action on if we want to safeguard this vital industry for the future. We need to stand up for our fishermen on issues such as the discard ban and ensure that measures used to enforce the ban are universal across the European Union and do not aggressively target our fishermen.

Last year, when I and Ian Duncan MEP visited the fish market in Peterhead—which is, incidentally, the biggest white-fish market in Europe—I saw at first hand the incredible work that our fishermen do. Eight thousand boxes of fish on the market floor is a sight to see. Fishermen need confidence that their Government is fighting for them, and I hope to assist in ensuring that the Scottish Government keeps its eye on the ball when it comes to their issues.

In order to ensure the continued success of our rural businesses and allow them to grow, we must ensure that they have the right infrastructure,

whether that means installing high-speed broadband in rural settlements across the country, expanding mobile phone coverage for farmers in their fields or improving vital road links like the A90 to get fishermen's products from the quayside to shop shelves. Connecting our country beyond the central belt must be a priority for the Scottish Government, but more and more, we have seen it pursue an agenda that brings power to Edinburgh and strips away the ability to make decisions at local level.

Increasingly, the Government is taking away power and responsibility not just from councils, but from families and parents. Essentially, the SNP does not trust individuals to take decisions for their own areas—and it does not trust parents to look after their children without a named person looking over their shoulder.

I look forward to standing up for not just my corner of the north-east but the whole of rural Scotland and everyone who needs a strong voice in the Scottish Parliament. [*Applause.*]

14:57

Ash Denham (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP): I start by recognising the substantial contribution made by my predecessor, Kenny MacAskill, who served his constituents ably and moved the Scottish justice agenda forward considerably during his time as cabinet secretary.

I am privileged to represent the constituency just outside this building, Edinburgh Eastern, which encompasses people from a wide variety of backgrounds. It has vibrant communities but, despite that, it faces many challenges. In the past few months, I have spoken with many of my constituents, and I have promised them that I will carry their concerns with me into the chamber. For as long as I represent Edinburgh Eastern, I will fulfil that promise.

During my time with a progressive think tank, I had many meetings here in Parliament to discuss policy ideas for Scotland, and I look forward to being able to engage just as constructively with the third sector now that I am on the other side. I intend to listen to and act on ideas that have the potential to move Scotland forward.

I want to reflect on the changing nature of Scotland, using the experience of two women from my own family: my mother and my grandmother. My grandmother was abandoned by her father; she was married in a borrowed dress; and she took on cleaning jobs in the evening as that was the only work that fitted around the demands of a young family. In later life, though, she and my mother both went on to run successful small businesses. My mother, despite passing her 11-plus examination and attending a senior

secondary, left school aged just 15 with no qualifications. She felt that further education was not relevant for her; it was not relevant for a working-class girl from a city centre tenement with no indoor toilet.

Thanks to the commitment to widening access, that is not the case now. Young people from backgrounds like my mother's are more likely to feel that university is relevant to them. Free tuition makes it easier to take that step towards fulfilling their dreams.

While I was receiving my university conditional offers through the post—a while ago now—my newly widowed mother was struggling with soaring interest rates to keep a roof over our head. I went to university in England, which was at that time free. I checked last night, and my former university charges the full £9,000 per year—that is a staggering £27,000 for a three-year course, just for tuition. With my family circumstances at the time, I believe that the thought of so much debt would have scared me off; I would have missed out on that opportunity.

I reserve a particular disdain for those who have benefited from a free university education only to turn around and seek to deny that to those coming after. That is why I commend the Government's continuing commitment to free tuition. That is the difference that the SNP has made. In England, a young person will rack up huge debts to study at university; in Scotland, they will not.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's recent survey on education, England now has the highest tuition fees in the industrialised world. On the other side of the chamber, parties disparage the gain made by this Government. They are so keen to say that Scotland must not become the highest-taxed part of the UK, yet what are tuition fees but a tax on education, aspiration and social mobility? It is the creeping commoditisation of everything. I subscribe to the idea that education is not a commodity to be bought or sold like a tin of beans or a loaf of bread but rather an expression of society's belief in learning for its own sake, with a wider benefit for all of society.

After all, today's children may end up working in jobs or sectors that do not exist yet; we can only imagine what the world of work will look like 20 years from now. Many of today's start-ups are coming straight out of our universities—does it not make sense to invest in them? Does it not make sense to invest in the future of Scotland and in young people from backgrounds like my mother's?

What is happening in England is a travesty, and I am proud that the situation in Scotland is different. A Scotland that prioritises education, high skills and innovation now will be well

prepared to succeed in the future. Educational opportunity and social mobility must be protected. Universal benefits are a principle worth fighting for, as they define the future of Scotland—the Scotland in which we and our children will live.

I want to make sure that any child—maybe a child from my constituency, with a background similar to my mother's—will have the full opportunity to achieve their dreams. That is why I am here. I look forward to the next five years: I look forward to making the case for progressive policies and debating them in the chamber. I welcome the Government's many steps to move Scotland forward, and I believe that, during this session of Parliament, we will do so. [*Applause.*]

15:04

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): In my new role as justice spokesperson, I focus my comments on the early priorities of this session of Parliament. We are listening to a few first speeches this week. I remember my very first speech in the chamber, which was on justice. I spoke about antisocial behaviour, which is an area that I still believe needs greater action. I was happy to work with the justice team in the previous session of Parliament on the issue of antisocial behaviour on quad bikes.

I recognise the contribution of my predecessor in the spokesperson role. Graeme Pearson dedicated his whole career to public service; he served in the police for 38 years and became deputy chief constable of Strathclyde Police and then director general of the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency before he made an important contribution to the Parliament. He did not leave us empty handed, though. The "Pearson Review of Policing in Scotland", which he published in November, is an important document as we look to establish trust and accountability in our police force as it meets local needs.

I welcome the First Minister's commitment yesterday to protecting the police budget in real terms. However, Police Scotland faces a funding gap of almost £85 million and must find savings of £1.1 billion by 2026. That will be a significant challenge and we should consider how best to use our powers in the Parliament to invest in our public services.

The Parliament can also make progress on addressing reoffending. As figures that were released last week show, those who receive prison sentences of six months or less are reconvicted twice as often as those who are given community payback orders.

The presumption against short-term prison sentences is working. Our justice system should pursue sentences that deliver proper rehabilitation.

Short sentences of under six months have been shown to be particularly ineffective, and we believe in extending the presumption against sentences of less than three months to sentences of less than six months. I appreciate that the Scottish Government has consulted on that and I note that it will publish a formal response to its consultation in due course. I look forward to making the case, which was in our manifesto, for extending the presumption to sentences of less than six months.

A key priority of the parliamentary session must be to make progress on improving the treatment of women offenders and delivering on the Angiolini commission recommendations.

I welcome the plans that have been announced this week to legislate for a new offence of domestic abuse. That was a commitment in Labour's manifesto and I look forward to working to achieve it, along with pressing the Government to consider Labour's calls for specific domestic abuse courts in our sheriff courts to ensure that such serious crimes are dealt with as a priority.

We know that the Conservative Government at Westminster is intent on forcing through a British bill of rights. However, this Parliament has been steadfast in its commitment to the European convention on human rights. The Human Rights Act 1998 protects our basic rights, such as the right to a fair trial, the right to life and the right to privacy. I am proud that a Labour Government introduced that act and, at Holyrood and Westminster, we stand fully opposed to any attempts to weaken human rights law. Over the next five years, this Parliament has a responsibility to defend the act and resist attempts to remove it.

During the recent election campaign, I, along with many others in the chamber, received emails from concerned solicitors about legal aid, which is a lifeline for many people who need help to access justice—particularly women in family law cases. We as a Parliament must be committed to ensuring that cost is never a barrier to justice. Our legal aid system must work for all, and not just for those who have means.

John Mason mentioned the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012. James Kelly has made a commitment to propose a member's bill to repeal the act, and I hope that we can have a reasonable debate on the legislation and that the Government will demonstrate its commitment to being in listening mode.

In the previous session, I pressed the Cabinet Secretary for Justice for a review of deaths in custody. As many members are aware, there was a high-profile instance of such a death in my region, and I have been working closely with the

family involved to ensure that they receive the full facts relating to the death.

That is the first priority, but the case has also raised questions about how we investigate deaths in custody and the outcomes that we get. The UK Government's Home Secretary has established an independent review into deaths and serious incidents in police custody, and I strongly believe that the Scottish Government should seriously look at doing the same. I also support Neil Findlay's efforts to have the Pitchford inquiry into undercover policing extended into Scotland or, if the UK Government does not agree to that, to have the Scottish Government undertake an inquiry under the same kind of remit.

Yesterday, the First Minister focused her comments on tackling inequality. One clear consequence of inequality is a society that is vulnerable to crime, where lives are damaged and too often destroyed. The report of Elish Angiolini's commission on women offenders ends with a clear recognition. It states:

"Finally, the evidence is now overwhelming that intervening in the early years of life will have significantly more impact on rates of reoffending than intervening later in life."

That is relevant to the focus this afternoon on education and early intervention in young people's lives. I do not intend to see justice as isolated from other objectives; I recognise that a holistic approach is needed if we are to successfully address some of the deep-rooted and complex issues in our justice system.

15:10

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): For my generation, the conception and realisation of this institution—our Scottish Parliament—heralded the beginning of a more positive era for our country and an exciting new chapter in our nation's story, so I feel both honoured and inspired to speak for the first time in this magnificent chamber and to succeed such an exemplary public servant as Malcolm Chisholm. I am sure that I speak for all of us here when I wish Malcolm all the very best in his retirement and thank him sincerely for all that he did as an MSP and all that he did for the benefit of other people. *[Applause.]*

As well as feeling grateful and privileged to be here, I feel determined—determined to deliver for my constituency and for the people of Edinburgh Northern and Leith and determined to speak up for the common cause of the common good.

Like many people in our country, I believe in social justice, and I believe in it as an ambition to be achieved, not just as an aspiration. That is why the Scottish Government's bold priorities matter to

us all. From measures to close the attainment gap in education to record investment in our health service, and from plans to build 50,000 more affordable homes to using new tax and welfare powers progressively and responsibly, the Scottish Government's priorities will benefit the whole of Scotland.

With reform, leadership and initiative, we can build a fairer society and a stronger, more equal economy—a Scotland where we remember that sharing the rewards rewards us all and that success is succeeding together.

We can build a country where we get past the misleading divide between the public and the private sectors and instead remember that with collaboration, innovation and creativity, we can live in a nation that is not only more productive and competitive but more just. That is why we should embrace the Government's commitment not only to invest in our country's physical infrastructure but to increase childcare provision.

We should endorse the Government's determination not only to enhance support for small businesses and to support public services but to promote fair work. I welcome the Government's priorities and its determination to use all the powers of the Parliament to make a positive and lasting difference.

However, let me be clear about something else. Although I certainly welcome using all the current and new powers of the Parliament, at every appropriate opportunity, I will also passionately and purposefully state the truth on the constitution as I and many others see it—the truth that more powers and ultimately full powers for Scotland are the keys that we need to achieve the greater end of social justice and to enhance economic progress. They are the tools that we require to shape our future and they are the passport to an equal voice in the modern world.

However—and this is important—I have always believed that the differing views on independence in our country and in this chamber must not distract us from the unifying hope of a better Scotland. There is so much that binds us as MSPs and as a society, and we should build on that consensus.

From addressing inexcusable man-made poverty in our communities to tackling the global threat of climate change and from measures to confront the socioeconomic difficulties of our time to realising more of our country's human potential, let us focus over the next five years on the hopes that we share and harness that collective aspiration to deliver for those who sent us to this place.

What we do in this remarkable building in this important chapter for modern Scotland will have

impact and meaning throughout our country, and every word and action will make a difference. In that spirit, let us take forward our democracy, as well as our country. With so many new MSPs and so much new energy, let us consistently demonstrate the good work of this institution and the good will of our nation in the proceedings of this chamber. Let us move beyond the tribalism, the exaggerated language and the unnecessary amplification of conflict. Let us move beyond the bad habits of the past that put so many people off politics.

In the months and years ahead, let us always remember that our role here is not to entertain the press or the Twittersphere, as important as they may be. Instead, our responsibility is to inspire the people and our constituents who, in the vast majority of cases, want us to debate respectfully, considerately and constructively. Too often, particularly at First Minister's questions, this chamber—this shop window to our democracy—has fallen short of the public's expectations. We should recognise that and change it.

In this new Parliament, I sincerely hope that all of us can seize this chance, this fresh start, to embrace a more constructive style of political dialogue. In my experience, the vast majority of people passionately want to see that. I make that plea particularly strongly to the Opposition leaders, as they will set the tone for First Minister's questions.

As we debate and inevitably disagree in the chamber in the months and years ahead, let us always bear in mind the guiding principles that were set out at the conception of this institution: wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity. Let us reflect those values in the style of our arguments and in the choice of our words. Let us work together to take forward our country and our democracy, too. [*Applause.*]

15:16

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): It is a great pleasure and a real privilege to be back in this chamber after an absence of five years. [*Interruption.*] I know that I am appreciated by some.

Over the past couple of weeks I have found being treated as a new boy in some ways and as an old hand in others an interesting experience. I do not think that I am betraying any confidences in saying this, but during this week's business bureau meeting the Presiding Officer, while reminding business managers of the convention that new members giving their first speech should not be intervened on, pointed at me and said, "That doesn't apply to you, though, Mike." Therefore, I say to members that, at an

appropriate moment, they should feel free to intervene, as I am happy to give way to anyone.

Turning to the serious business of the First Minister's statement, I had an enormous feeling of déjà vu when I heard it. It was full of generalities and a huge amount of rhetoric. Other members have commented on the speech, and I want to address a few of the issues that struck me.

I am a great believer in the phrase, "By their actions you shall know them." That applies to the SNP Government. It has been in power for the past nine years—and don't we know it? We do not have to wait to find out whether its actions match its rhetoric, because we can match its record against what it said nine years ago.

Nicola Sturgeon said that she wanted to talk about "democratic accountability", adding:

"We will devolve ... power to local communities."

That sounds good—it is what the SNP said during the election. However, let us look at what the Scottish Government has done: it removed democratic accountability by disbanding local boards when it centralised our police and fire services.

What about an example of the SNP devolving power? I am looking at John Swinney. The Government has dictated to local authorities. The First Minister did not allow them to increase the council tax in their area if they wanted to. We have had a freeze for nine years, which has hit our local services.

John Mason: Will the member give way?

Mike Rumbles: Of course.

John Mason: I want to take the member up on his offer. Does he accept that with the ending of the ring fencing of a lot of local authority funding there has been an important move towards decentralisation?

Mike Rumbles: The member cannot look at just that example. [*Interruption.*] It is a fair point, but it cannot be taken in isolation. The most important aspect is the Scottish Government's determination to control everything that goes on in local government. Some local authorities wanted to increase the council tax, and Mr Swinney did everything he could possibly do to stop them.

John Swinney: Will the member give way?

Mike Rumbles: I will in a minute. I have just answered John Mason's question, and I ask John Swinney to give me a second to move on.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): I think that you will regret your invitation to members to intervene, Mr Rumbles.

Mike Rumbles: I am happy to give way, but not to everybody all at once.

She said:

"We will legislate to establish a new and more testing target".

That is because, of course, she has failed to meet, every year, the climate change targets that she already has.

The First Minister said—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry to interrupt you but please name the minister and do not use the term "she" because those reading the *Official Report* will not know who you are talking about.

Mike Rumbles: Absolutely.

The First Minister said:

"we are ... determined to extend the opportunities ... open to young people later in life."

However, over the past few years she has axed 150,000 places at further education colleges.

One of the biggest promises in the First Minister's statement was the commitment to widen access to university in the way that was outlined. Is she seriously saying that resources would be directed to ensure that, within 14 years, 20 per cent of Scotland-domiciled university entrants will come from the 20 per cent most deprived communities? Forgive me for saying so, Presiding Officer, but I believe that Nicola Sturgeon will be long gone by 2030, and that particular pledge with her. There is no commitment to fund the target and therefore it must be seen as what it is—a target that, with no resources, will be impossible to achieve within the timescale that has been set. That timescale is therefore helpful to the First Minister because we cannot say that it has been breached for another 14 years. I was reminded of her predecessor's commitment to dump the student debt—and we all know what happened to that.

The First Minister made many other statements that, on reflection, do not seem to be all that they have been made out to be. Let us take the funding of our health service and the statement that

"Over this ... Parliament, revenue spending on our national health service will rise by £500 million more than inflation. That means that, by the next election, the NHS revenue budget will be almost £2 billion higher than it is now."— [*Official Report*, 25 May 2016; c 11, 10, 5 and 7.]

What she did not say is that she will pass on all the funding that the NHS receives from the UK Government. I point that out because, according to the respected Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Scottish Government has consistently failed to do that over the past nine years.

Yesterday, I attended a briefing by Fergus Ewing on the common agricultural policy payments crisis, which is a really important issue. He said that it was his number 1 priority to sort out the mess that has been left to him and to make sure that our farmers receive the payments that they are due, which should have been paid nearly five months ago. An official at the same briefing said that the Government had not yet given up on making the payments by the end of June, but we are close to receiving a huge financial penalty from the European Union. I do not doubt Fergus Ewing's integrity in saying that the issue is his top priority, but it got one line in yesterday's 30-minute statement by the First Minister.

I am running out of time. The First Minister's statement was long on rhetoric and short on detail. I said that I am a firm believer in the phrase, "By their actions you shall know them." We should not have long to wait to find out what action comes from the First Minister's statement, but I, for one, am not holding my breath. [*Applause.*] I thank Alex Cole-Hamilton for that—it was very good of him.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have a fan.

I call Fulton MacGregor, to be followed by Douglas Ross.

15:23

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I congratulate you on your recent appointment—I congratulate the other Presiding Officers, too.

It is a great privilege to be delivering my first speech as the new member for Coatbridge and Chryston. As members can see, I am not wearing my kilt today—after hearing that I had made the dizzying heights of the *Daily Mail* for wearing it at the oath-taking ceremony, I thought that I had better just stick to a suit for parliamentary business. However, I was pleased that the local paper in Coatbridge—the *Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser*—ran a very nice article and spoke to people on the streets who found my wearing the kilt very tasteful.

In all seriousness, I am proud to be here as the representative of the constituency where my family have lived and worked for generation upon generation, and which, I am proud to say—if the chamber will indulge me in doing so—voted yes by a majority in 2014.

I am only the second MSP to represent the constituency, and I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Elaine Smith, who now serves Central Scotland. Although I did not always agree with the positions that she took, particularly on the constitution, I know that she made decisions that she felt were best for constituents. As I look

across to the Labour members, I see that she is not here. However, I thank her for her commitment to the people of Coatbridge and Chryston and assure her that the constituency has been left in good hands. I know that there will be lots of opportunities to work with her over the coming years.

On that note, I welcome yesterday's speech from Elaine Smith's Central Scotland list colleague Richard Leonard, which Murdo Fraser followed up today. They both mentioned the proposed closure of Tannoy in Coatbridge, and I can confirm to both members that I have been in touch with the company's chief executive to outline my concerns. If either is happy to speak to me about how we might work together to best mitigate the impact of the proposed closure, I would be more than happy to speak to them.

As I have said, I am genuinely honoured to have been elected to represent Coatbridge and Chryston, and I will never tire of working for the people of the constituency. I was born in and went to school in Coatbridge, and I spent my early years in one of the towers in the town centre before my family moved to where my mum and dad still live, just behind the stadium of our local football club, Albion Rovers. I cannot mention Albion Rovers without recording my congratulations to the team on a great season. It narrowly missed out on the Championship play-offs. Reaching the play-offs would have been a fantastic achievement for a part-time club.

Coatbridge has other sporting heroes, of course. I am sure that everyone in the chamber will join me in wishing the former boxing world champion, Ricky Burns, well in his contest on Saturday night. Let us hope that he finishes his bout with fewer bruises than I received during the recent election campaign.

On the job at hand, there is a lot to be done, but when I look back at the hard work of the many volunteers across the constituency, I see the impact that they have on the people who need support, and I know that it is all worth while. I highlight the work of Katie Slavin from the shining stars group, which is an excellent local organisation that supports children with additional needs. Her commitment is an example of the dedication that is shown by many across my constituency.

My time as a social worker as well as a local councillor has given me a unique insight into the needs of the constituency. Yesterday, I was delighted to hear the First Minister highlight affordable homes and the commitment to build tens of thousands of new social homes. In a modern, civilised Scotland, there should be no need for charities such as the Coatbridge night shelter, which was set up last year to give

homeless people a hot meal and somewhere to rest for the night. One of my main aims as a member of the Scottish Parliament will be to tackle head-on the issue of homelessness throughout Scotland. That said, I pay tribute to Caroline Ferguson and Vickylee McGlade and their team, who do fantastic work locally through the night shelter in Coatbridge.

As a father, I was pleased to hear the ambitious targets for education from the First Minister and the new education secretary and their plans to encourage those from the poorest backgrounds into university. My constituency has some of the most deprived areas in central Scotland. I look forward to helping young people from those areas get into university, college and apprenticeships.

As I mentioned, my career up until a few weeks ago was in social work. In the first eight of my 12 years as a social worker, I specialised in child protection, before moving into community justice for the past four years. In the previous session, the Scottish Government made many inroads into reducing reoffending and tackling issues that relate to youth offending and domestic abuse. Following the announcement of new legislation, I am pleased that there is a continued commitment in that area throughout this session.

I welcome the announcement of the baby box for every child as well as the grant for low-income families at the three key stages of a child's early years. I also fully support the named person legislation, which has been subjected to blatant political point scoring. Child protection should be a priority for everyone in the chamber and for society as a whole. Having worked on the front line of the child protection service, I am certain that that legislation will help to protect the most vulnerable children in our country and will, in fact, lead to less intervention by the state, contrary to claims that its critics have made.

There are many other items that I have not had time to mention, but it is testament to the aspirations that the First Minister has set for the country that she has laid out such a challenging but constructive programme. I look forward to being part of taking Scotland forward. After a long and often difficult campaign for me, my family and my team, I intend to fulfil the promise that I made to be a strong local voice for the people of Coatbridge and Chryston. [*Applause.*]

15:29

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I congratulate Fulton MacGregor on his maiden speech and wish him all the best for the future.

It is a huge honour for me to represent my home area of Moray as part of the wider Highlands and Islands region. I was born and educated in Moray

and have worked there my entire life. I am delighted to live in such a beautiful part of the country.

I would like to begin with some thanks. I am grateful to my constituents in the Fochabers Lhanbryde ward who, back in 2007, put their faith in a young farm worker and elected me as one of their local councillors. That election started me on the path that has led me to where I stand today—making my first speech as a member of the Scottish Parliament.

The Highlands and Islands region is as diverse as it is big, stretching from Shetland to Argyll, from the Western Isles to Moray and encompassing everything in between. As other new and returning members have done, I pledge to work hard for everyone in my region and to be a strong voice for them in Edinburgh.

It is customary in a maiden speech to make mention of one's predecessors. As a Scottish Conservative member representing the Highlands and Islands, I want to acknowledge the work that has been done by three MSPs before me. The late Dave Petrie served in Parliament for only a short period, but he was highly regarded and well respected. Jamie McGrigor was passionate about his home area of Argyll and Bute and about farming. Jamie is undoubtedly one of life's great characters and I know that he will be missed in Parliament. Mary Scanlon was an extremely hardworking MSP who often took on cases for which other politicians had failed to find a solution. Her work on mental health, in particular, was commendable; she began that work long before it became common for politicians to champion the cause. Mary and Jamie were great servants to the Scottish Conservatives and the Highlands and Islands, and we wish them well for the future.

Keeping our communities safe must be a priority for any Government, which is why I want to focus my speech on the police. The extra police officers in Scotland that were delivered with Scottish Conservative votes should be helping to do that job. Instead, many are now filling back-office vacancies that have been created by the SNP Government's cost-cutting drive and its centralised service.

Across the Highlands and Islands, concerns were raised about the single police force; sadly, many of those concerns have been realised. Front offices have closed, national plans are prioritised over local initiatives, experienced officers have left in significant numbers and new recruits are often mentored by people who are only just out of their probationary period or who have yet to complete it. Morale is at an all-time low. All that has happened on the SNP's watch.

When officers feel that they need to focus more on meeting targets than on targeting the needs of the communities that they hope to serve, something has gone wrong. I know how hardworking, professional and dedicated our police officers are, but I also know that they need our support to do the job that they signed up for. It is clear that if we want a police force that is capable of safeguarding us, we need to safeguard our police force.

Eight hundred officers have resigned since the inception of Police Scotland. Every time a police officer leaves it is a loss to the force. We do not lose just that individual officer; we lose their experience, knowledge and skill. We lose the mentors who help new recruits and we lose people who have been keeping Scotland safe. Losing 800 police officers is not a single failure, but is the culmination of 800 failures. It is completely unacceptable.

Last year, a third of all police staff said that they plan to leave the force in the next three years, and only 15 per cent of officers said that they would recommend Police Scotland as a good place to work. That is not what I want for our police officers and staff. Our officers should be proud every time they put on their uniform, every time they go into their communities and every time they are called to help. Unfortunately, such pride seems to be more of an aspiration than a reality for many officers and staff. We have to address that. The Government will have the support of Conservative members if it wants to strengthen local policing, to restore the link between communities and their local officers, and to put policemen and policewomen back on the streets, rather than in back offices.

I would like to end where I started—with a note of thanks. As Mark Ruskell did, I would like to record my appreciation of each and every member of the Parliament staff who have made my first few daunting weeks as a new MSP—part of that group of 51—a little bit easier: from Leanne who took me round on my first day, to Kirsty who offers a friendly chat as she prepares the coffees, to Robert and Jimmy who deliver copious amounts of mail but always in a jovial mood, which cheers up the office, and to Stephen, one of the committee clerks, who stood just behind where I stand today when we took our oath on the first day of the new session of Parliament. As I walked towards Stephen he extended his hand, welcoming and congratulating me on being elected to this great Parliament. He told me how to do the job of preparing and repeating the oath. That reassurance was appreciated by me and by many other members. That is to name just a few of the Parliament staff who have been on hand to assist. I am in absolutely no doubt that the pride that each and every one of us has in being elected to this

place is shared by each and every member of staff. I hope that they realise how appreciated they are. It is because of their professionalism that we are able to do our jobs to the best of our abilities.

This debate is entitled “Taking Scotland Forward”, so let us see what the SNP minority Government will do in the next five years in office that it has been unable to do in the past nine. Let us see that Government use the powers of this Parliament to make better the lives of people throughout Scotland. Let us see a Parliament that meets the aspirations of the people who send us here, and where there is grown-up debate, sensible policy making and effective scrutiny of the Government. [*Applause.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Gillian Martin, to be followed by Anas Sarwar.

15:35

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I spend a great deal of my time waxing lyrical about how my patch of Aberdeenshire is the best-kept secret in Scotland. Now that the people of Aberdeenshire East have put their trust in me to represent them, I will make a point of doing that in Parliament whenever possible. I aim to spend a lot of my time working with my constituents to put our beautiful corner of Scotland on the map. I have long said that we need to shout louder about our unspoilt coastline, the tremendous and varied wildlife that populates it, and our fishing rivers, such as the Deveron, the Ugie and the Ythan.

Members’ first speeches often reference local persons of note, be they from history, literature or otherwise. Members will all know that Scottish international, Mintlaw’s own Kim Little, was recently announced as the BBC women’s footballer of the year. She is ours. In our patch, we also have links to some significant literary figures, including Bram Stoker, for whom Slains castle in Cruden Bay was the inspiration for Dracula’s castle—do not let anyone tell you different. Lord Byron was born in Gight near Methlick, and then there is Flora Garry, “the Buchan poetess”, who was a New Deer quine. For me, though, it is not so much the historical figures that will tempt visitors to Aberdeenshire East but the landscape, the wildlife and the affa fine folk fa bide there.

However, since we are looking to the future in this debate, I would like to think that a future member for the constituency, making their first speech in this chamber—maybe someone yet to be born—might lead their speech by making a rather big deal about Aberdeenshire East’s most important political figure. It is a person whose links to the area might warrant visits from hordes of tourists—to Strichen, perhaps. Of course, I am talking about my predecessor, the former MSP for

Aberdeenshire East and former First Minister for Scotland, Alex Salmond MP.

If I could make a small prediction, a future MSP for Aberdeenshire East might even lay claim to Alex Salmond's being one of the premier architects of the independent Scotland that they enjoy. That independence might be the only state of affairs that that future representative has ever known, and they might marvel that such was not the case back in 2016, when Mr Salmond's constituency was handed over to a certain Gillian Martin. Well, here's hoping so, anyway.

It is to my constituency and my home of Aberdeenshire East that I look and imagine the future as we take Scotland forward. Already within our programme for government I see areas of development that will make enormous changes for the betterment of the lives of my constituents—not in decades, but in this parliamentary session.

My area is set to be one of a fair few rural communities that will see their business, education and leisure lives immeasurably enhanced by the promised 100 per cent broadband provision across Scotland. I hope that that will mean the expansion of existing businesses, new enterprises and—this subject is close to my heart, as a working mother—an increase in work flexibility and moves to different and more efficient ways of working and to more family-friendly ways of working.

Aberdeenshire East will also benefit hugely from the completion of a key connectivity and infrastructure project—the Aberdeen western peripheral route. At last! We have waited so long for it. Travelling across the constituency, I see on the route massive progress day on day—progress that was not made while it was put into legal limbo during a Labour-Lib Dem Scottish Government. The completion of the AWPR will considerably cut the commuting journeys that we struggle with and open up our corner of Scotland to a world of commercial possibilities.

I also look forward immensely to Aberdeenshire East families enjoying their doubled free childcare provision. A quick peer into the crystal ball that I appear to have might reveal a Newmachar family that looks a bit like mine when my kids were wee, but which is different because they do not—unlike me and my husband at the start of the millennium—have to struggle financially to afford childcare so that mum can go back to work.

I am reminded of an interview that I read with the former Norwegian Prime Minister. He was asked, "What is the secret of Norway's economic success?" The journalist was no doubt expecting an answer that featured oil and gas, but he got this response: "It's our women in the workforce". The Norwegian premier went on to explain that the

secret to Norway's economic success was the fact that free childcare allowed many women to go back to work after maternity leave, and that it was their economic contribution that had made Norway as affluent as it is.

I also look forward to my constituency's largest town, Inverurie, opening the biggest new health centre in Scotland, and to a new state-of-the-art Inverurie academy campus being built under the schools for the future project, which is the project that saw the fabulous new Ellon academy being opened last year—a school that will not forgive me if I do not mention it, because I am a former pupil.

I also look forward to an Aberdeenshire East that has more affordable housing and which has other initiatives that can attract public sector workers to live and work in our great towns including Turriff, Oldmeldrum, Newburgh, Balmedie and Fyvie. With our First Minister outlining further action on the recruitment of general practitioners and on the diversification and widening of primary care services, we are addressing issues that concern my constituents directly. I confidently predict that, once those newly recruited skilled workers from outwith our area arrive in our incredible Aberdeenshire East, they will never want to live anywhere else and that they, like me, will wax lyrical about it, too. *[Applause.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Anas Sarwar. I apologise for pronouncing your name incorrectly earlier, Mr Sarwar—I saw you wince.

14:27

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I start by thanking the great people of Glasgow, whom I have the immense honour and privilege of representing in this Parliament. I promise always to make it my top priority to fight for the city that I am proud to call home. I also pay tribute to my immediate predecessors, Hanzala Malik, Anne McTaggart and Drew Smith, and thank them for their service to this Parliament, to Glasgow and to the Labour Party.

As I start my new role in Holyrood, I reflect that it is a journey that big figures in Scottish politics and in this Parliament have travelled before me—Donald Dewar, Sam Galbraith, Alex Salmond and Winnie Ewing, to name but a few.

On election night, Jackson Carlaw described me on the BBC as one of

"the old and tired faces of the Labour party".

I respectfully remind the comparatively young and fresh-faced whippersnapper on the Tory benches that I would, at 33, prefer it if he were to call me the youngest veteran in politics.

In his speech on the opening day of this Parliament in 1999, Donald Dewar said:

“The past is part of us. But today there is a new voice in the land, the voice of a democratic Parliament. A voice to shape Scotland, a voice for the future.”

I would like to think that the make-up of this Parliament is what he envisaged: a Parliament of minorities, with no party able to whip decisions through, and a Parliament where agreement is reached through debate, compromise and—dare I say it?—consensus. I welcome consensus, but consensus does not mean no debate, no argument and no passion. What it should mean is finding common cause and common ground.

As a member of the devolution generation, I have grown up knowing only the existence of a Scottish Parliament, but I reflect on the words that Donald Dewar spoke on that day. They serve as a reminder that this Parliament was created not to be a voice for disaffection or as an echo chamber for grievance and unhappiness, where we could all come just to say what is wrong with Scotland, but to be a vehicle of change that would give new and fresh opportunities not only to my generation, but to every generation.

The history of this Parliament shows that when we find areas of common interest, we can achieve great things. The smoking ban is perhaps the single most important piece of public health policy for a generation. Land reform—for so long ignored—is now not just an issue to be debated, but one in which there has been real progress and about which there is a recognition that we still have more to do.

The arithmetic of Parliament means that where we have the will to be bold, we have the ability to deliver real and lasting progressive change—progressive change to our taxation system, in which we can choose to have fair redistribution of wealth, and progressive change to our social security system, in which we can choose to redistribute that wealth to those who need it most.

We repeatedly make the point that we aspire to create a Scotland where the only limit to a young person’s ambition should be their imagination. I say to colleagues in Parliament from all political parties that so, too, it should be for every one of us. The only limit to Parliament’s ambition is our collective imagination.

The people of Scotland are right to call out what is wrong in Scotland and to demand action from their Parliament and their parliamentarians. It is Scotland’s shame that in some parts of my city, Glasgow, more young people go to prison than go to university. That is why we are in this Parliament. The chronic levels of poverty, unemployment and poor health in parts of Glasgow are not just a problem for Glasgow; they are a problem for the

whole of Scotland. That is why we stood for elected office.

How can any of us accept that, for many young people, their postcode decides not only their life chances but their life expectancy? Such inequalities are what I hope brought each and every one of us into politics in the first place. We must speak up for those who need our support and those who need our voice because, as Donald Dewar said, we are their voice. Today, we are the

“new voice in the land”—

the new voice to shape Scotland. We are that voice for the future about which Donald Dewar spoke eloquently. To repeat a famous saying,

“If not us, who? If not now, when?”

In this Parliament, we have the power to transform Scotland. We must now get serious about using it and get on with the work of transforming our wonderful country.

I am delighted to have been asked by Kezia Dugdale to lead for Labour on health. There is nothing more important, and there is no greater Labour achievement than our national health service. Having spent quite a bit of time around hospitals in the past few weeks, for both happy and sad reasons, I recognise two things: first, the amazing dedication of our NHS staff, who always go above and beyond; and, secondly, that the NHS today would be unrecognisable to Nye Bevan. The advancements in medicine have not been matched by a similar reduction in health inequality, and our job is to address that because there are individuals, families and communities across this country who are crying out for hope.

In this Parliament, we have an opportunity—I would say a responsibility—to give not the illusion of hope, but the realisation of hope, and to use the powers of the Parliament to fight inequality, create opportunity and tackle injustice wherever it exists. *[Applause.]*

15:48

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde)

(SNP): I, too, congratulate the Presiding Officer and the two new Deputy Presiding Officers, the new ministers and those members who are new to the Parliament. In particular, I congratulate the new members who have made their first speeches over the past couple of days. There have been some excellent speeches so far, and I look forward to hearing others in the coming weeks.

This is my first speech as the constituency MSP for Greenock and Inverclyde. As I said in my acceptance speech, becoming the constituency MSP is the honour of my life. I aim to serve all my constituents and to serve Greenock and Inverclyde with pride, passion and determination,

promoting and highlighting the many positives that we have as well as working to address the challenges that we face.

My predecessor, Duncan McNeil, who retired prior to the election, had been the constituency MSP since 1999. We did not have too many cross words in here, apart from in one debate on the regeneration strategy in 2011. I believe that the electorate wanted and preferred that approach rather than seeing politicians bickering all the time. Duncan worked tremendously hard for his constituents. I know that he is well thought of and I wish him well and hope that he has a long and happy retirement.

This session of Parliament will, again, be groundbreaking—a Parliament of minorities produces a different chamber where even greater dialogue between the parties is required. The First Minister's statement yesterday and the comments by the Deputy First Minister today highlighted their ambition for Scotland and Scotland's education system. Education is a priority for the Scottish Government and closing the attainment gap is something that, across the chamber, we can all agree on.

Therefore, I welcome the attainment challenge funding and the fact that Inverclyde is a recipient of the first tranche of funding from the Scottish Government. During the election campaign, the issue of attainment arose a number of times, and there was an appreciation that Inverclyde was in receipt of that additional funding. Ensuring, along with others, that that resource is invested well is one of my tasks as the local MSP. We will need to challenge continually both the Scottish Government and Inverclyde Council on that investment.

The First Minister stated yesterday:

"We must ... grow an economy that is strong, sustainable, fair and inclusive."—[*Official Report*, 25 May 2016; c 2.]

In his speech earlier, Murdo Fraser challenged the Scottish Government to give some examples of its action in that regard. I will provide just two at the moment.

In Inverclyde, the work has already started. Orders worth £120 million for three new Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd ferries have been placed with Ferguson Marine in Port Glasgow. Those have led to there being more than 200 people in employment, 150 new apprentices to be trained and a multimillion-pound investment programme to bring the yard up to being among the best in the world, securing the future of shipbuilding on the lower Clyde. Then, only last week, we had the fabulous announcement that Caledonian MacBrayne had secured preferred bidder status to undertake the Clyde and Hebrides

ferries services for the next eight years. That was Derek Mackay's last act as Minister for Transport and Islands and it was certainly one that was hugely welcomed in Greenock and Inverclyde. I am led to believe that the cafés and bars of Gourock did a roaring trade last week, with the Calmac headquarters being based in the town. Maintaining the HQ in Gourock provides stability and sustainability for the town in the years ahead.

This week, Inverclyde has had a double boost for tourism. Greenock's Ocean Terminal is receiving six cruise liners in four days this week alone, and it was reported in the *Greenock Telegraph* yesterday that Gourock has seen a 200 per cent increase in interest from people asking about breaks in the town—that information was provided by HolidayLettings, a TripAdvisor company. Inverclyde has not always been considered a destination for tourists, but we have a huge amount to offer and are in the best place possible. Whether visitors want to undertake the abundance of things to do and activities in the area or go down to Burns country, to Cowal or even up to the city, our location is perfect.

My constituency is also a perfect example of how marine tourism and other recreational boating activities can play an even greater part in local economies. Scotland's rivers, lochs and waterways play a huge part in our sustainable economy, but they can do so much more. We have the River Clyde on our doorstep, two marinas and numerous boating clubs that do taster sessions—come and try them.

I want to raise two issues that I have campaigned on for some time. The first is flooding and its environmental and economic effects. There has been investment in flood prevention in Inverclyde in recent years and the Scottish Government has contributed to that. However, one of the biggest challenges that we face every year, and have faced for over 70 years, is flooding on the A8 corridor. Clearly, if there were a simple solution, it would have happened decades ago. On multiple occasions, that annual event has had a detrimental effect on the local economy and on the safety of patients who are being transferred to hospitals outwith Inverclyde, not to mention the environmental effect. I will pursue the issue to attempt to find a long-term sustainable solution, and I have written to the transport minister about it.

The second issue that I have campaigned on is fixed-odds betting terminals, as members in the previous parliamentary session will know. As of this week, the Scottish Parliament now possesses powers—although they are very limited—to help deal with the proliferation of such machines on our high streets. In January this year, in 18 betting shops in Inverclyde, there were 71 FOBTs—down

on the figure in January 2015—and almost £60 million had been gambled on them in the year to January 2016. Thankfully, that figure is down on the previous one. I welcome that reduction, but there is still an issue with those machines that the Parliament must try to address to help not only Greenock and Inverclyde, but all of Scotland. I have written to the First Minister on the issue.

The next five years will present a tremendous number of opportunities and challenges for the Government and Parliament and, as Bruce Crawford said yesterday, we have a window of opportunity to deliver. I am confident that the Government and every member in this chamber can do just that, and I am sure that everyone will play their part.

15:55

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Although I am an advocate by profession, as an undergraduate I studied history, and I will begin with a brief foray into the past.

Edinburgh has seen many invasions, as occupying forces have swept in and out of the city. One such invasion famously occurred in the autumn of 1745, when a Highland army led by Bonnie Prince Charlie briefly captured the city. The prince took up residence in the palace of Holyrood house, just across from where we sit today, and the Highland clans, including the Camerons, had the run of the city.

Despite the ultimate failure of the Jacobite rising, that event serves as a metaphor for what I want to achieve as an MSP for the Highlands and Islands: I want to occupy Holyrood once again, this time on behalf of the people I represent; and I want to remind the Parliament of the world beyond the Highland line and of the daily challenges that are faced by those who live on Bute or Barra or in Lochaber or Lerwick.

Those challenges are many: the lack of broadband and mobile coverage; the state of road infrastructure; the requirement for reliable and robust ferry connections; and, above all, the urgent need to revitalise the rural economy so that we retain our young people and provide the jobs and security to allow them to live and thrive in the Highlands and Islands. I also echo the words of my colleague Peter Chapman in support of our beleaguered farming communities, our crofting communities and the fishing industry, all of which are hugely important in the west Highlands in particular.

Last week, I was given the task of shadowing the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport. I congratulate Shona Robison on her reappointment in that role. I look forward to working together with her and attempting to find common ground where

we can. I follow in the footsteps of Mary Scanlon, Nanette Milne and, latterly and for the longest period, Jackson Carlaw. I pay tribute to all that they have achieved in health.

As Mary Scanlon in particular will appreciate as a former Highlands and Islands MSP, health policy and the needs of rural communities inevitably coincide, not least when it comes to the provision of health services to remote areas. One example is the difficulties that are currently experienced on Mull, where there is only one ambulance for the whole island. Another is the fact that obtaining a pregnancy scan for someone who lives in Ardnamurchan involves an eight-hour round trip to Inverness because, since 2013, Fort William's Belford hospital has been without scanning facilities.

My guiding principle in the next five years will be to campaign tirelessly for people who live in the far-flung parts of the Highlands and Islands so that, in every glen and in every island, my constituents feel entirely connected to and part of our joint efforts.

This morning, there was much talk of unions, but John Donne perhaps put it best in the 17th century in his famous line:

"No man is an Island, entire of it self; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main".

I take that to mean that, however remote, the lives of the people who inhabit the periphery of Scotland are as important as those of the people in the towns and cities of central Scotland.

In that objective, I would like to emulate two friends, both Highland politicians—one from my party and another from a different political tradition. The first is Jamie McGrigor, latterly of this parish, and the second is the late, great Charles Kennedy. Both men shared many attributes: a dogged independence of mind, a deep sense of integrity and always a self-deprecating sense of humour that reminds all of us who are involved in politics never to take ourselves too seriously.

Every member present will remember the time when they first became inspired to enter politics. For me, it was the general election of 1987. I was 10 years old and I recall watching my uncle, Michael Ancram—then a Scottish Office minister—being interviewed on election night after he lost his seat in Edinburgh South. I remember his grace in defeat as he faced the end of his political career in Scotland, and I knew at that very moment that I wanted to follow him into the political fray.

It is no secret that the 1987 election marked the beginning of many years in the wilderness for my party in Scotland. Well, it has been a long time coming, but three weeks ago, a resurgent Scottish

Conservative Party achieved an historic result, supplanting Labour as the principal party of opposition. The tide has truly turned and, almost 30 years on from 1987, that 10-year-old boy is now honoured to be a member of this Parliament and to sit here amongst colleagues who hail from all walks of life. On these benches, we are farmers, lawyers, soldiers, councillors, academics, businesswomen and retail workers, to name but a few.

I began with the past. Let me finish with the future. Those of us who are new here, from whatever party, will be part of a political generation that will not necessarily be defined by recent constitutional events, be it the first devolution settlement or even the independence referendum. This is a new era and a Scottish Parliament with new powers that can secure a strong Scotland within a prosperous UK. Let us look forward and not back. I want to leave my children a better country than the one that we inherited, and in the coming five years, I look forward to playing my part in that great endeavour. [*Applause.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Emma Harper, to be followed by Claudia Beamish.

16:01

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I too offer you my congratulations on your new post. I am delighted to be called to give my first speech in the chamber and I look forward to making many more contributions over the parliamentary session.

I remember watching the opening of the Parliament in 1999 from 6,000 miles away, when I worked with the theatre trauma team at a Los Angeles hospital. There, I was an immigrant, I worked with immigrants and I was welcomed as an immigrant. Indeed, healthcare across the world depends on immigrants. Today, though, I will focus on my region of South Scotland, but particularly an area that I am very familiar with because I grew up in Stranraer: *bonnie Gallowa*'.

Before I continue, though, I would like to recognise the significant contribution of former South Scotland MSP and Government minister Aileen McLeod. Aileen worked hard for the people she represented, and in government she was a driving force behind the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 and a proponent of climate change reform.

I also wish former constituency MSP for Galloway and West Dumfries, Alex Fergusson, well in his retirement. I shared a stage with the former Presiding Officer at a couple of Burns suppers last year. We were invited to the same village halls. Indeed, the village hall Burns suppers often demonstrate what great local talent we have

for reciting the poetry of our national bard. Robert Burns lived, worked and died in the town that I now live in: Dumfries, where the 400-year-old pub, The Globe Inn, was known by Burns as his favourite howf.

The plan for Scotland's future that has been laid out in the First Minister's manifesto is wide-ranging and ambitious in its approach to building on nine years of competent government by the SNP. Education is a clear focus, and I look forward to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills presenting further plans for addressing the attainment gap.

My background is in healthcare. I am a proud nurse with more than 30 years of experience. It was my passion for protecting and nurturing the NHS that made me a political campaigner and led me to this place. Too often, it is claimed by political opponents that the south of Scotland and Dumfries and Galloway are neglected by the Scottish Government. I would like to refute that myth. The Scottish Government is spending £270 million on a new state-of-the-art hospital for the region of Dumfries and Galloway, and in 2012 almost £30 million was spent on an acute mental health unit at Midpark hospital in Dumfries. Additionally, we have a new ambulance station at Lockerbie and a satellite dialysis unit at Kirkcudbright cottage hospital, and £6 million has been invested for Lochfield Road primary care centre in north-west Dumfries, which opened in 2013. Other investment has been made in Dunscore and Dalbeattie health centres. That is just health investment.

Like most members across the chamber, I hold our NHS dear, and I know that the First Minister and her Government do, too. The prescriptions and medications that many of us depend on are part of our healthcare and are, rightly, free. The SNP's continued commitment to the NHS is reflected in the fact that the health service budget is set to increase by almost £2 billion by the end of this session of Parliament. The First Minister has promised to make healthcare fit for the future by increasing the number of students in Scotland's medical schools and widening access to medical education. The Scottish health secretary, unlike her UK counterpart, has made it clear that the SNP is steadfastly committed to maintaining a nursing bursary and keeping nursing tuition free. There will be a 5.6 per cent increase in student nurse intake this year and a fund of at least £1 million for nursing and midwifery students who experience financial hardship.

As a former clinical educator in NHS Dumfries and Galloway, I am all too aware of the importance of those measures. The communities that I represent face particular healthcare challenges. For example, in the south-west, we

have a greater elderly population than other areas of Scotland. Older people are a great asset to any community, and an individual's specific needs must be met so that they can continue to live a dignified and comfortable life.

As many members may be aware, next week is dementia awareness week. Last week, I attended an awareness-raising event that was organised by two former colleagues who work at Dumfries and Galloway royal infirmary. Linda Shaw and Lyndsay Johnston gathered experts whose work is aimed at educating families and the wider public about how people with dementia are affected by the disease. I learned a lot.

The Parliament will oversee the most significant reform in health and social care in Scotland since the creation of the NHS in 1948. The integration process is already advancing in Ayr, for example, where the health and social care partnerships are delivering co-ordinated care. I look forward to further success stories as our local government and national health service groups work together.

I will draw my first speech to a close by thanking the people of the south of Scotland, who placed their trust in me to help take the region forward. This Galloway lass will represent you all in the south of Scotland, no matter what party, if any, you support. I will listen, I will work hard and I will represent you. Thank you. [*Applause.*]

16:07

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I am pleased to have the chance to speak in this important debate. I will use my time to focus on some issues that present and possible future cuts will inevitably affect and I will then highlight some opportunities that I believe the new Scottish Parliament and Government should grasp. In the previous session, I was co-convener of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on carers and I worry about the cost of some of the commitments and expectations that have been raised through the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016. During the election campaign, my first meeting was with a group of parents of children on the autism spectrum. Those parents identified concerns about the slow pace of school support post referral and the failure to provide a parental out-of-school group in villages such as Lesmahagow. That is a cost issue.

In colleges such as Dumfries and Galloway College, there are funding worries about part-time day release courses. That is a concern for people such as the plumbers learning to install solar roof panels whom I met at a parliamentary event.

Analysis by the Institute for Public Policy Research Scotland has shown that Scottish Labour's tax plan would raise more than £1 billion

of additional revenue in real terms annually by 2020-21. The SNP's plan to freeze income tax and failure to tax the richest would raise only £300 million, meaning huge cuts to the Scottish budget. Scottish Labour will go on trying to convince this Scottish Government that it is necessary to be brave and bring in tax rises for those who can afford to pay a little more in order to protect services and prevent further cuts in future. That would, indeed, be progressive.

I now want to talk about some opportunities. The melee of urgent everyday concerns and issues can push longer-term structural development lower down the list in our Parliament, and those issues need to be prioritised and taken forward if there is to be any action on them. In the last Parliament, I detected a consensus on certain issues. First, on support for behavioural change in relation to biodiversity and climate change, the climate challenge fund has empowered many communities to contribute to lower emissions while, importantly, enabling them to improve the quality of their lives. That approach must continue, and I hope that that funding will be expanded.

A second and closely connected issue is the necessity for the Scottish public sector climate leaders forum to be continued. The forum not only highlighted in a more inclusive way the need for mandatory reporting on climate change action but enabled the provision of mutual support to face the challenges of addressing that matter in a range of organisations of varying sizes, some of which were further along the way than others. As a representative of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee in the last session, I observed how the forum crystallised opportunities and expectations.

The third issue that I want to mention is my strong belief that the Scotland performs round table, which the Deputy First Minister set up when finance was his brief, should be re-established. The group was tasked with taking forward analysis of the development of the national performance framework and related issues, and it set a tone for the underpinning of policy beyond the political cycle. I am clear that, composed as it was of members of each political party, non-governmental organisations and wider civic Scotland, the group made a significant contribution to the development of connections with marginalised communities, not least through the contribution of the Carnegie UK Trust and Oxfam. I ask the new cabinet secretary for finance, Derek Mackay, to consider acting early in this Parliament to set up a similar group.

Intimately connected with that is the chance for the Scottish Government to pilot complements to the measure of gross domestic product. The people of Scotland deserve to get reports on measures of Scotland's progress that are more

relevant to their everyday lives and the challenges that they face than GDP. Some measures that could be considered include the length of time in employment, wage levels and access to the outdoors, to name but three. Although I acknowledge that such issues are more complex, particularly the more qualitative measures, which slip into definitions of wellbeing, I ask the new cabinet secretary to announce that he will pilot one or two of them and give them a similar status to that of GDP. If the pilot measures need to be tweaked, altered or even totally changed, so be it, but let us give it a try. I believe that such an approach would better connect with people who have an interest in how Scotland is thriving and would be valuable to representatives at all levels.

Finally, I ask the Scottish Government to consider assessing whether the Scottish index of multiple deprivation is fit for purpose in relation to the assessment of poverty in rural Scotland. The Government has stated that the index

“allows effective targeting of policies and funding where the aim is to wholly or partly tackle or take account of area concentrations of multiple deprivation.”

I know that in my own South Scotland region there are small pockets of serious poverty where people are struggling and need support, and that support would be forthcoming if they lived in a larger geographical area of deprivation. The issue was drawn to the attention of the RACCE Committee during the last session in evidence from the Scottish rural colleges in particular and I hope that the Scottish Government will consider it.

Please let us be progressive in bringing more opportunities to our communities and let us across this chamber join together in taking forward adventurous initiatives for the sake of the people of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): As we move to the last of the contributions in the open debate, I remind those who have spoken in the debate over the past two days that they should be in the chamber for the closing speeches.

16:14

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): Like many colleagues who have spoken in the debate, Presiding Officer, I not only welcome you and the other Presiding Officers but pay tribute to my opponents who campaigned in my constituency of Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley: David Meehan from Labour and Mr Brian Whittle from Ruth Davidson’s party. Mr Whittle has found his way into Parliament though our complicated list system; I do not see him in the chamber at the moment, but he is nonetheless very welcome. Of course, I also thank my constituents for electing

me to this place for a third time—it is indeed an honour to be here.

The First Minister set out yesterday her vision for equality of opportunity for all: through our education system by tackling the problem that young people with talent and ability from less well-off communities in Scotland are not achieving their full potential; through our investment in childcare that gives youngsters the best start in life and liberates parents to be more active in the economy; and through our new powers in social security and welfare to help—not harangue—people who are disabled and disadvantaged, and to treat all with dignity and respect. The coming five years will give all members and parties in the Parliament the chance to make a positive contribution towards those aims, and to see in Scotland that transformational change that the First Minister referred to.

The challenge to close the educational attainment gap is the most crucial of all. If we succeed, for the first time Scotland will be a country that makes sure that equality of access and opportunity is the right of every young person, that ability counts far more than wealth or disadvantage, and that ability becomes a key to that brighter future. What a task we have in front of us.

The extra £750 million is a huge commitment to make, and it will make such a difference if we spend it wisely. In our January debate, we considered the OECD report’s perspective. It was positive, pointing to the potential for Scotland to be a world leader in education. The new systems and processes of assessment in the national improvement framework are important because they give us the information that we need to help us make those decisions. However, in themselves neither they nor the new money guarantee ultimate success. They are enablers, and it is the people—our teachers—who will make the difference. The OECD report suggested that success lies in what it described as the “middle area” of networking and collaboration—the engagement among professionals up and down the country to bring about transformational changes. We will rely heavily on our teaching profession to drive this forward. If successful, Scotland will lead the world in this area.

I also mentioned the case of a young woman in Possilpark in Glasgow—in the constituency of my colleague Bob Doris—who achieved all the qualifications for medical school but still did not get into any of Scotland’s universities. That is a different issue, which is about equality of access even when a person attains the qualifications that are required. Closing the attainment gap is the target, but ensuring equality of access immediately after that is essential for students such as that

young woman from Possilpark and other similar communities. I hope that our proposed new commissioner for fair access will take a close look at that.

To support the whole effort on attainment, we have to start earlier than school. The Government's proposals for 30 hours of free childcare per week for every three and four-year-old and the most vulnerable two-year-olds are vital. There are those who say that, by the time many youngsters are in early primary school, the battle for attainment parity at secondary school has already been lost. We know the reasons for that. Deprivation, family instability and lack of access to resources, encouragement and support all make it very difficult for some youngsters to keep pace with their peers. The Government's intervention will be helpful in providing that essential nurture and support and ensuring that children get a good start. It will also have the benefit of freeing up parents to get back into work, which—as my new colleague Gillian Martin mentioned earlier—is so important to the success of the Norwegian economy.

The third crucial area relates to our new powers on social security and welfare. For too long now, we have heard story after story about the disgraceful and inhumane treatment that is meted out to those people who are disadvantaged or have disabilities. A country's social security system is meant to protect people from further disadvantage and poverty, not to set out to make it worse and to add punishment and further injury to people's self-esteem. I am delighted that the Scottish Government will abolish the bedroom tax, which is surely the most disgraceful of public policies to have been introduced by the UK Government in recent years, although there are several candidates for that accolade.

At the end of the parliamentary session, what progress do we expect to have been achieved? We expect educational attainment across Scotland to be pretty much even; access and opportunity to be balanced, with young people from every community looking forward to fulfilling their dreams, whatever they may be; and youngsters getting off to a great start in life and not being left behind as a result of poverty. That is a tall order but, with the support and hard work of everyone in the Parliament, I am sure that we can make that happen and take Scotland forward to a better place.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to closing speeches. I call Iain Gray, who has about nine minutes.

16:20

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer. Like every other speaker, I want you to know that I can hardly contain my admiration for you and your colleagues and that I will be seeking your forbearance regularly in return.

The taking Scotland forward debates are a regular parliamentary occurrence, but this one has certainly been unique for the number of first speeches that we have heard. I congratulate all the new colleagues who chose to dive in at the deep end yesterday and today. There have been too many to list, and it is a bit invidious to pick out one or two, but I will do that anyway.

Richard Leonard gave a tremendous first speech yesterday, which contained pride in place, passion and politics—all that a first speech should have. However, I lost the sweepstake on how long it would take him to quote Keir Hardie—he got there even more quickly than I thought he would.

Rona Mackay and Fulton MacGregor were brave enough to make substantive and important contributions on the controversial issue of the named person. From the Tory benches, Annie Wells made not just a maiden speech but an M and S maiden speech. I was particularly moved when she spoke of her dream coming true in Glasgow—I had the same experience at about 4.45 last Saturday afternoon.

It was lovely to hear some of the old lags who are back to live down to our expectations as usual. Speakers ranged from Stewart Stevenson, autodidact extraordinaire, to Mr Adam, who gave his maiden speech singing the praises of Paisley—the maiden speech that he has been giving continually for the past five years, with occasional breaks for sleep, sustenance and re-election, which shows that someone must be listening to him.

That is the thing about the taking Scotland forward debates—they follow and reflect an election. I have fought a lot of elections and I am still surprised by the way in which the electorate, through their individual acts of democracy, seem to get what they collectively want. However, the wisdom of crowds does not always suit me. As an American senator famously said,

“The people have spoken ... the bastards.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Gray, I can see why you asked for forbearance. That is it used up.

Iain Gray: I apologise.

I cannot deny that, a few weeks ago, the electorate wanted Nicola Sturgeon to be First Minister, but nor can she ignore the fact that they

deliberately removed her majority in the Parliament. Her manifesto might have been a successful job application, as she said, but it cannot become—as she claimed—the blueprint for delivery.

The First Minister tried to demonstrate that she has taken ideas from other parties—the Minister for Mental Health post is from the Liberal Democrats, the young carers allowance is from the Greens and the warm homes act is from us—but Mr Rennie was right to say yesterday that that is not enough. The First Minister should not mistake policy kleptomania for political consensus building, which is about behaving differently every day of the next five years and not about half an hour spent cutting and pasting from others' manifestos.

The trouble is that we have heard consensus talk before. Even five years ago, when he formed a majority Government, the First Minister's predecessor assured us that he had no monopoly of wisdom. Alas, that turned out to be simply a flourish of his speechwriter's pen and not a change of heart at all. The current First Minister must do better and she should start with austerity and the cuts.

A year ago, Nicola Sturgeon was all about stopping austerity and her MPs in Westminster are still all about stopping austerity cuts, as Kezia Dugdale pointed out. The First Minister said that, in this Parliament,

"there is cross-party opposition to unfair or regressive Westminster policies, such as continued austerity",—
[*Official Report*, 25 May 2016; c 11.]

but there is also in this Parliament a progressive alliance against continued Holyrood austerity cuts; the First Minister made no mention of that because she is not part of it. She remains a founder member of the new taxpayers' alliance with the Tories.

The First Minister may have ignored the cuts, but others did not. Neil Findlay and Alex Rowley spoke powerfully of the impact on councils, their staff and the communities that they serve. Others spoke of the 4,000 fewer teachers and 152,000 fewer college students and the shortfall of GPs. We cannot ignore that reality.

The First Minister won applause from her colleagues when she talked about seizing the precious opportunity to make real improvements for this and future generations. The new power of this Parliament to stop the cuts is that opportunity, and she has not seized it but rather has sidestepped it.

We agree with all the fine words that the First Minister and others have said about education being our number 1 priority. Kezia Dugdale quoted JFK on that. Let me quote Malala Yousafzai, who

knows something about the importance of education:

"There are many problems, but I think there is a solution to all these problems; it's just one, and it's education."

However, the words that the First Minister should have said but did not say are, "We will protect education budgets and reverse the cuts of the past five years."

A review of how education resources are directed might be welcome—even Joan McAlpine admitted that the attainment challenge funding has been misdirected. However, it cannot be a substitute for making sure that there are enough resources in the budget in the first place. A council of education advisers meeting in Bute house might be an interesting and worthwhile idea but it is no substitute for more teachers in our schools. A major summit on raising attainment will be an interesting day, I am sure, but it will be no substitute for sorting out the problems that we have right now with new national exams, teacher shortages and excessive teacher workload, and I am afraid that Mr Swinney's announcement today has not convinced teachers.

John Swinney: Mr Gray has marshalled an argument whereby the Government has to engage and listen, and we accept that. He has then criticised us for having a summit on education at which we intend to engage and listen. Can he give us some hope that he may have learned some lessons from the election before he concludes his speech?

Iain Gray: Perhaps Mr Swinney could learn the lesson that to say a summit is not the answer or a substitute for addressing other problems is not to criticise it. Perhaps, indeed, he should demonstrate that he intends to listen.

I am from Edinburgh, where we have, or used to have, a saying that starts "All fur coat". It then turns quite unparliamentary. However, it warns against focusing on appearance while neglecting the fundamentals. That is why Willie Rennie was right yesterday when he criticised the First Minister's statement for being full of frameworks, summits, strategies, reviews, plans and consultations but short on the fundamentals.

In truth, the statement had the feel of a Government groping to discern a way to take Scotland forward in the darkness left by previous Governments, as if it had not been the Government for the past nine years. The SNP should have the courage and the boldness to grasp the way forward. It is right here around it. We have a Parliament with the power to end austerity, to reinvest in our future and to get the fundamentals right. We can have a real progressive alliance to create the education system that we all want, the health service that we

all need and the welfare system that the dignity of our citizens deserves, and to really transform Scotland—not just to talk about it, meet about it or plan about it but to do it. As Anas Sarwar quoted, “If not now, when?”

16:29

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I add my congratulations to the team of Presiding Officers. I also congratulate all the new members of Parliament, across the political spectrum, on their excellent speeches. Mr Gray eloquently described some of their content. It is good to see Mr Gray back in the education role. I have to say, however, that the view is very much better from these benches than it was from over there.

In opening yesterday’s debate, the First Minister said that she wanted to build progressive alliances with other parties, so that, to its greater good, Scotland can benefit from good ideas across the chamber. Likewise, in announcing her commission of experts on international education, she said that she wants policies that have a proven track record. As Ruth Davidson said in her speech, we intend to hold the First Minister to do just that. Indeed, many political commentators, when writing about the recent election, said that the most successful message that had come from the Scottish Conservatives was the desire in Scotland to have a strong Opposition that is forensic in its scrutiny of Government policy, supportive of it where there is a clear advantage for Scotland’s welfare and in opposition to it where the Government has clearly got things wrong.

The voters sent out a clear message that they want better-quality opposition. They expect that opposition to be based on two things: good-quality facts and evidence, and constructive, credible and coherent policy alternatives. I hope that the SNP’s actions will match the First Minister’s words, because much of political history shows that Governments are often at their best when there is effective opposition. Maybe that should not just be opposition from Opposition parties, but from within the SNP’s party, too.

On the scrutiny process in this Parliament, there is clearly a growing consensus that it, and most especially the committee system, is not functioning as well as it should be. Indeed, there is an argument that the current process makes for lazy politics. In the previous session of Parliament, the debate preceding a committee or a chamber vote was too often sterile because the outcome of the vote was predetermined. There was diminished incentive to prepare properly and to expose Government failings, because the exercise was deemed to be pointless. Surely that is not good for democracy. It is not good for Government. I know

that the Presiding Officers are taking the matter seriously.

That is important not just because of the need for good Government, but because all of us who have been elected to be in this place have more powers at our disposal than ever before. We are no longer simply in the business of debating how to spend the money we are given, but of debating how it is raised. With that power comes not only greater accountability but much greater responsibility, and that is a good thing.

The key priority must be how we deliver economic growth in Scotland. As Ruth Davidson rightly said, that will be the defining test in the finance and economy briefs. We will support the Scottish Government when its policies are clearly designed to bring jobs, investment and economies of scale, and we will support tax policies that will encourage rather than deter people to do business in Scotland. However, there will be opposition when we believe that SNP policies will threaten growth.

My colleague Murdo Fraser set out the key principles for that growth: a competitive tax system that ensures that Scotland does not find itself facing higher tax rates than the rest of the UK, competitive business rates so that there are incentives rather than barriers put in the way of people who want to invest in our high streets and our rural communities, and well-planned infrastructure projects that will deliver better economic integration and connectivity, about which there is much still to be done.

The Government has a responsibility to free up creativity and enterprise. That should not be done by attacking rural communities with punitive land reform or spending millions on an information technology system that leaves our farmers struggling for their livelihood, by attacking local authorities when they will not do the Scottish Government’s bidding, or by attacking our universities with new governance legislation that threatens their autonomy and their ability to attract cutting-edge research and development. All that is detrimental to Scotland’s best interests.

Scotland can benefit so much from key industries when this Parliament works together to create a sound economy. In that respect, I am pleased that the Westminster Government is now showing a willingness to listen to what we all believe is a compelling case for the reintroduction of post-study work visas. I hope that progress will be quick so that the work undertaken by Humza Yousaf and his cross-party committee can bear the fruit that is so desired by employers, colleges and universities.

Despite the good news this week about inward investment, there are warnings from economic

groups, such as the Scottish Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses, about employment and about Scotland's growth rate lagging behind that of the rest of the UK.

There are warnings, too, that politicians must not get mired in ideological warfare as they debate their tax policies but must be fully focused on what works. We must always remind ourselves that it is not in this place that we create the jobs and the investment but it is here that we create the right economic circumstances for others to do so.

It is important that economic growth is on a base that is supporting our public services in the face of very significant demographic changes that put huge pressures on welfare; on health and social care; and, of course, on education—and that is where I turn to now.

I warmly congratulate on his appointment as Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills John Swinney—a man who already has a very strong, proven track record both at Holyrood and in Westminster, and who has a reputation for honesty, top-class debating skills and considered dialogue. He has such a distinguished reputation that, when I heard about his appointment, I had to make a quick phone call to my former colleague, Gavin Brown, who is much more experienced than me at dealing with Swinneyism. Here is what I was told: "Liz—it's a very good appointment. He's easy to work with; he listens; he is generous in his praise; he is amusing; he is down to earth; and you will always know exactly what is in his budget because the only thing you have to do is phone George Osborne. He is a class act." Mr Swinney will have to be a class act if he is going to sort out the education brief, and I hope that he really is listening today.

Let me divide my comments on education into three parts—first, on what the priorities should be. Of course, that means putting the main focus on policies that will narrow the attainment gap. On this side of the chamber, we believe that nothing is more important than a better grounding in the three Rs, which is why we have made the recommendation that more time has to be allocated to those in teacher training.

Part of that equation is the early years, which are absolutely critical in a child's development but also in affording everyone a better chance. We welcome the First Minister's comments in that regard, because it is a case not just of providing more hours of childcare for those who are in most need, but of taking up the call from parents and campaigners such as the fair funding for our kids group for much more radical reform so that there is more flexible and better-quality childcare, and a system that responds positively to parental choice.

Another part of the equation in the early years is ensuring that there is better and proper support for teachers, including qualified nursery teachers, instead of their numbers being cut. Therefore, it was good to hear yesterday that the First Minister will seek to reverse the cuts that her Government made previously, but I suggest that the same needs to be done for teachers who assist pupils with additional support needs, because if this work is done properly and we address literacy and numeracy in the early years, we will not have the same worries about widening access to college and university, by which time it is too late.

Two days ago, the Scottish Government made the point that we have much to learn from international education, and I really hope that that genuinely means listening and acting upon what works best. One of the most interesting trends in international education is the realisation that success comes best when educational institutions have genuine autonomy and trust the professionals to lead and to get on with the job in hand.

We are well aware that the First Minister has on her desk requests from some parents to have more diversity within the state sector—not diversity that is forced or imposed, but diversity that is responsive to parental demand. If that means a desire to operate within the state sector but not necessarily within local authority control, so be it. The Scottish Conservatives want to see genuine devolution of power rather than a national education service or a new network of quangos, so we look forward to participating in the summit on school reform, because there is undoubtedly a case for greater diversity in state education, based on what works.

When it comes to colleges and universities, I think that the challenge is as great as it is anywhere in education. This week's reports that look at research funding, innovation, bursary support and all the aspects of access do not paint a very happy picture. They all make plain the fact that significant injections of cash are required to sustain our further and higher education sectors. Whether the SNP likes it or not, that debate will take place in this Parliament, and rightly so.

Scotland can boast excellence in those sectors, but that will not continue unless there is more cash. It comes down to a stark choice between raising taxes, which some in the chamber want to do, but which we believe would be seriously detrimental to the rest of the economy; raiding other budgets, which is exactly what has happened to colleges, and which we will not find acceptable at all; or a graduate contribution. If universities are to be told that they must take 20 per cent of their intake from the most disadvantaged backgrounds without restricting

access for other students, that means providing more places and much higher bursary support than is currently the case.

I will finish my comments on the issue of fairness in education, which is again a mantra for the First Minister. I will give members just three examples of where that fairness does not exist. First, around half of Scotland's two and three-year-olds do not get the same level of nursery provision because their birthday happens to be in the wrong month. Secondly, there is much weaker bursary support in Scotland. There might be a slight improvement, but we are still well beyond what is happening in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Thirdly, there is increasing concern about subject choice and whether some pupils have access to fewer examination courses compared with the rest of their peers.

We believe that we have to be very bold and radical in our approach to the earliest years, and focus on the three Rs and simpler, better and standardised testing—although I say to Mr Swinney not in primary 1. That needs more financial support for teachers, especially those in early years and support areas, and a reduction in the unnecessary paperwork burden on teachers so that they can get on with the job that they want to do. It also means getting rid of the awful named person policy, which is not only deeply unpopular, but is increasingly unworkable.

The Minister for Childcare and Early Years (Mark McDonald): Will the member give way?

Liz Smith: I think that I am in my final minute.

That policy is unworkable on the mandatory basis that the SNP is clearly struggling to defend.

Several new MSPs have said that the new session will be defined by whether the Parliament is able to get on and do the job that it has been asked to do by the voters in Scotland. To do that, the First Minister will have to ensure that her actions match her rhetoric, and the Scottish Conservatives must keep our promise to the voters in Scotland to hold her to her word. Let us get on with the job in hand.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call John Swinney to close the debate. You should take us to 5 o'clock, Deputy First Minister.

16:42

John Swinney: Thank you, Presiding Officer. It is a pleasure to be called by you; I welcome you to your post.

I will draw this debate to a conclusion with some reflections on the varied and excellent contributions that have been made to it. Derek Mackay commented yesterday on first speeches. I

will not repeat them, but I will address some issues that arose in yesterday's debate that I want to give clarity about.

I want to make it clear to my colleague Joan McAlpine that I will chair the south of Scotland transport summit—I will be there to keep a very close eye on Humza Yousaf and all that he is getting up to. That will continue my association with the south of Scotland alliance and I look forward to that opportunity.

From the point of view of my portfolio, Jenny Gilruth's speech yesterday was a tremendous one to hear. She has come through the education system in Scotland and made an outstanding contribution to it and she demonstrated yesterday that she will make an outstanding contribution to Parliament. I look forward to being on the receiving end of that wisdom about the education system from an experienced practitioner in my party in Parliament in the course of the session.

The issues that Ash Denham raised about widening access are central to the Government's agenda. We are determined to ensure that we expand educational opportunity and enable young people to make a full and proper contribution to our society as a consequence of the investment in their educational experience that we will get right.

Ivan McKee also made an outstanding first speech. The way in which he wove together the argument about investing in education and skills with the necessity of ensuring that that supports the country's economic and business development agenda was a very refreshing way of looking at the important challenges that we face in linking up important questions that will exist between different portfolios in Government. Of course, the tackling of inequality that Mr McKee talked about is central to the agenda of delivering higher economic growth in Scotland.

Peter Chapman made a wide-ranging speech on the rural economy. I can assure him that Fergus Ewing will be considering that and engaging very closely with Mr Chapman and others on the delivery of common agricultural payments and ensuring that we do everything that we can to support the interests of the farming community. However, I gently point out to Mr Chapman that our efforts to protect the interests of the fishing and farming communities of Scotland are not always greatly assisted by the actions and interventions of the United Kingdom Government. It would be helpful if Mr Chapman were to perform a role that supported the Scottish Government—as Richard Lochhead has done consistently for nine years and as I know that Fergus Ewing will do in the years to come—in protecting and asserting the interests of the farming and fishing communities within our wider discussions. That will be an important part of our agenda.

We heard a large number of first speeches today. I am not quite sure what the correct terminology is for the speech delivered by Mike Rumbles, who has been a member of the Parliament before. My dear late friend and colleague, Margaret Ewing, introduced her return speech to the House of Commons in 1987 as not a maiden speech, but it was described as a “retread” speech. There was certainly a lot of retread about Mike Rumbles’ speech.

As I listened to Mr Rumbles, I realised that his sense of self-awareness has not improved in any way during the years of his absence from Parliament. He thundered to the Government front bench:

“By their actions you shall know them”—

without any sense that by the actions of propping up a Conservative Government hellbent on austerity, the Liberal Democrats might have suffered any consequences.

Mike Rumbles: Will the member take an intervention?

John Swinney: I would be delighted.

Mike Rumbles: Does the member agree that he has a nine-year record to defend? His Government is not a new one, starting from scratch, and it has a pretty abysmal record as far as the farming community and local government is concerned. The Government needs to change its tune.

John Swinney: I am glad that I demonstrated some generosity of spirit towards Mr Rumbles by taking an intervention from him, given that he refused to allow me to intervene earlier on, because that allows me to say a few things to him. Mr Rumbles suggested that I had been taking a centralising agenda with local government, despite the fact that when I came to office as the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth nine years ago, I liberated local government from £2 billion-worth of ring fencing that had been put in place by the Liberal Democrats when they were propping up the Labour Party.

I also point out to Mr Rumbles that there has been an election and that all the issues that he raises were tested at the hustings. The result is that the Scottish National Party now commands a higher share of the vote than we commanded in the constituency ballot in 2011. I am well aware of the electoral arithmetic and I will be coming on to the question of consensus in a moment. However, I say to Mr Rumbles directly that he must respect the fact that the SNP Government has a mandate to govern, which is precisely what we are going to do.

There were a number of other speeches from new members. Donald Cameron made the point

about broadband and mobile—a point that was also made by Rhoda Grant in the debate yesterday. Broadband connectivity is a central commitment of the Scottish Government. If we had left it all to the market—the precious market that the Conservatives love—the level of broadband connectivity in Scotland would have reached about 60 per cent.

However, under this Government’s investment, the level of connectivity will get to 95 per cent. We are absolutely determined to increase the level of connectivity. We have given a commitment that that will be 100 per cent over the course of this parliamentary session. However, if we accept the arguments in support of the Government’s proposition, the Conservatives must accept that, in order to deliver on that commitment to the people of Scotland, we have had to intervene to address the failures and weaknesses of the market. That is an important part of our on-going commitment to the rural economy.

I will make a couple of points about education issues that have been raised. In my opening remarks, I set out specific steps that I have taken to reduce the workload of teachers. I have also published today a letter from the chief examiner for Scotland that makes it clear that if I had gone further than today’s proposed changes, I would have jeopardised the integrity of qualifications available to young people in Scotland. That is a piece of evidence that I put in front of Parliament to ask Parliament and the wider community to accept that the Government will move as far and as fast as it can. However, we cannot, in any circumstance, jeopardise the ability of young people to receive certificated qualifications. It would be folly if we were to go down that route.

My second point on education is on what Liz Smith said about the funding of higher education. She said that the option was to raise tax or ask for a graduate contribution, as if there was any difference between those two propositions. The Conservatives have the brass neck to go around talking about low tax, but they want to increase the costs on individuals by graduate contributions and prescription charges. It is not a low-tax agenda that the Conservative party is putting across; it is a misleading agenda.

Liz Smith: The cabinet secretary is confusing a very important point here. If we were to raise the general level of taxation, it would have a hugely detrimental effect on the entire economy. A graduate contribution is necessary to provide the additional funding into higher education and further education that will allow Mr Swinney to do what he wants to do, which is to widen access and to insist that colleges and universities have 20 per cent of their students from disadvantaged communities.

John Swinney: Liz Smith rather makes my point that there is no difference between a graduate tax and the issue of raising the general pattern of taxation. The Government has set out its agenda in that respect.

A number of colleagues, including Fulton MacGregor and Rona Mackay on the Government side and Peter Chapman on the Conservative's side, have raised the issue of the named person. I thank Fulton MacGregor and Rona Mackay for the considered way in which they set out the arguments on the named person proposition. Liz Smith said that the named person proposal was "unworkable". That is not the case because, today, it is working—and working satisfactorily—in various parts of Scotland, including in South Ayrshire, which is a council led by the Conservative Party.

I simply put those points on the record to encourage us to have a more considered debate on the issue. We live in a country where all of us are signed up to an agenda that is about ensuring that we do everything we can to protect the wellbeing of our most vulnerable citizens. That is absolutely central to this Government's agenda and it is why we believe that the named person proposition is the right way to proceed. It is to ensure that we protect the interests of the most vulnerable in society.

Iain Gray: Mr Swinney knows that I, too, praised the contributions that he has just mentioned. He also knows that, when Parliament considered the legislation, the named person policy was one that Labour members supported. Will he accept, though, that something has happened that has meant that many parents across Scotland have lost confidence in the implementation of the policy, and that something has to be done to redress that and to restore confidence in a policy that we both supported at the time of the legislation?

John Swinney: What has happened is that a good idea with broad support in Parliament and enormous support in the community has been utterly misrepresented in the debate during the past few weeks. I agree with Mr Gray that it is important to rebuild confidence in that concept, and I assure him that one of my early priorities will be to do exactly that, because I believe in the policy and I believe that it is right and proper for the young people of Scotland. I will do everything that I can to rebuild that confidence.

The other part of the debate related to the condition of the Scottish economy. In that respect, the tone of the afternoon was set by Murdo Fraser. At one point, because of the way in which he went through the issues, I thought that he was auditioning to play his namesake, Private Fraser in "Dad's Army", who says, "We're a' doomed!" As

was noted by my colleague Fergus Ewing, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity, there was not a glimmer of positivity or optimism in Mr Fraser's speech.

Mr Fraser also had the nerve to suggest that the level of deindustrialisation that is taking place in Scotland today is unprecedented. Has he forgotten the deindustrialisation that was presided over by the miserable Conservative Party in the 1980s? My colleague Ivan McKee referred to the tremendous industrial heritage in his constituency and the work of the Saracen foundry. However, the whole issue was brought to life by Stuart McMillan when he spoke about the work that was done to save the Ferguson's yard from closure—the yard is now thriving and is restoring the tradition of shipbuilding in the lower Clyde—and by Fergus Ewing, when he intervened on Mr Fraser to speak about the saving of jobs in the steel industry in Motherwell and the opening up of the prospect of a new future for the steel industry in Scotland.

Yesterday, Richard Leonard made a point about industrial strategy. At the heart of the Scottish Government's economic strategy is the determination to deliver an industrial strategy that invests in the fabric of Scotland and in the consequential employment and economic opportunities.

I will conclude by referring to three speeches—those of Anas Sarwar, Ben Macpherson and Bruce Crawford—that captured the same significant point. In his speech yesterday—the first backbench speech of the debate—Bruce Crawford appealed to Parliament to think beyond the parameters of the election and asked them to come into this Parliament in a spirit of good will and to try to find areas of common interest to advance, particularly with regard to my policy responsibility, the future of Scottish education. That sentiment was echoed today by Anas Sarwar who said—if I may paraphrase his words—that we do not come here just to complain but to find common interests and solutions. People are perfectly entitled to come here to complain but we must also work together to find common solutions and achieve common successes. Ben Macpherson said to the chamber that we have all come here with the unifying hope that we could create a better Scotland.

Those three speeches sum up what I think is an important point for Parliament to reflect on as we consider the First Minister's policy programme, which she outlined yesterday, and as we look forward to how that can be delivered by the Scottish Parliament in the next five years.

We must all recognise that the election has happened and that the Parliament has been elected on the distribution of votes and seats that

it has been elected on. The Government recognises that we have to reach out beyond the 63 fine individuals on the SNP benches—wonderful though they are—and find support on other benches in order to deliver our programme, and we will do that. However, we also need the Opposition parties to engage constructively in a fashion that shows that they are determined to create a better Scotland, and we all need to look for areas in which we can create opportunities for people in Scotland to succeed. That requirement is greatest in relation to the challenges that I face in education, in terms of closing the attainment gap and delivering equity and excellence for every young person in Scotland. That is the driving mission and the definition of this parliamentary term, and the Government looks forward to taking forward its programme with energy and enthusiasm in order to deliver on that vision.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There is one question to be put as a result of today's business. The question is, that motion S5M-00190, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on Scotland's future in the European Union, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)

Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)

Abstentions

Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 106, Against 8, Abstentions 3.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament supports Scotland and the rest of the UK remaining part of the EU.

Meeting closed at 17:01.

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