

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Wednesday 30 January 2008

Session 3

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## Scottish Parliament

*Wednesday 30 January 2008*

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

### Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):**

Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. I am especially pleased to welcome as our time for reflection leader today the Right Rev Sheilagh Kesting, moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

**Right Rev Sheilagh Kesting (Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland):**

When John the Baptist was in prison, he began to have doubts about Jesus. He had hailed Jesus as the long-awaited leader who would bring in the kingdom of God on earth. The expectation had always been that this leader would be powerful, a king, a military leader. Jesus did not seem to be fitting the bill. However, Jesus said to John's disciples:

"Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk ... the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them."

This week has been designated homelessness and poverty week. It is a week when churches across the United Kingdom put the spotlight on poverty and its related issues. Because of that, I have made it the theme of my visit to the Parliament.

When in London recently, I learned of the disproportionate number of Scottish men who are among those who sleep rough in the city each night. Research is going on to see to what extent the same is true of the more hidden presence of homeless women. The lure of the city is legendary—and if that is true of Scots in London, it is also true of people of many nationalities who are to be found on the streets of our cities here in Scotland. People leave their homes—voluntarily to seek a new life, or because they are thrown out for some reason—and they come to the city with the hope of escaping poverty, unemployment and violence, and so make good. The city is also a place to get lost in when things have gone badly wrong, to escape from the shame of being with people who perhaps know too much about you. The anonymity of the city is attractive when you feel you have little self-worth.

Poverty, alcoholism, drug addiction and homelessness are all interconnected. The cycle of hopelessness is hard to break. There is a need for people who will befriend you, trust in you and

identify the potential for change that lies within you—people who, because they believe in you, allow you to believe in yourself.

I spoke to some of the men in London who are being helped to find housing and to make a new start in life—in London or back home—and I learned what it meant for them to have someone to offer them friendship, to support them through hard times and to keep faith with them when the road to self-respect takes longer than anyone might want. Such patient, caring work may not seem like the breaking in of God's reign, but it is surely an example of the good news to the poor that Jesus associated with that kingdom. When it comes to addressing the needs of the poor, there is no room for point scoring and competition between different agencies, whether they are religious, political or of any other type.

When Jesus reported to John, he cut through all the religious and political self-interests of the time and put the spotlight on where the presence of God can be found—where the most vulnerable are brought good news. That, surely, is a focus for us all.

## Effective Government

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is a statement by the First Minister on delivering more effective government. The First Minister will take questions at the end of his statement, therefore there should be no interventions.

14:04

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** This Government has made a firm commitment to simplify Scotland's public services to deliver more effective government and contribute to our core purpose of creating a more successful country by increasing sustainable economic growth. We aim to achieve fewer national public organisations with less duplication and less bureaucracy, as part of the Government's wider programme to renew and reform Scotland's public services.

Today, I will set out how we will meet our commitment to reducing the list that we published last October of the 199 national public service organisations by at least 25 per cent. Let me explain first how the Government will approach those reforms. Clearly, our objective is not to get numbers down to zero. Public organisations in Scotland do vital work—their functions are a necessary part of Scottish life. I am thinking about roles such as protecting our natural environment, generating jobs and prosperity for the people of Scotland, and running our prisons. The Government is acutely aware of the importance of excellent public services in supporting a strong and dynamic economy.

When we launched the Government economic strategy last autumn, we emphasised that our greatest asset is our people. Scotland's public servants make a great contribution to our economy and society. I have often seen it reported that half of the Scottish workforce is in the public sector. That is simply not the case. The latest published statistics, in December, indicate that 22 per cent of Scotland's workforce is in the public sector. That is significantly lower than in recent years and includes the growing number of police, teachers and doctors who are delivering at the front line. I understand that police numbers are likely to grow further before long.

Our aim is to ensure that our institutional structures are fit for a nation and an economy of 5 million people, and to achieve more outcome-focused, efficient and streamlined public services, which provide better value for the public pound. Looking at the landscape of Scotland's public organisations today, we see a confusing array of organisational roles, remits and functions. It is a complex system, which risks being ever more

concerned with talking to itself about procedure instead of improving services and speaking directly to citizens to address their needs. Simplification and the reduction in the number of public bodies are but one strand of our overall approach to more effective government, on which we began work immediately on entering office. I remind members that we reshaped the Scottish Government, resulting in fewer departments, ministers and special advisers than our predecessors.

The Government's economic strategy and spending review provide a coherent framework for the entire public sector, with clear objectives and fewer targets. Our move to a new outcome-based relationship with local government will mean less bureaucracy, more effective monitoring and better public services. That new relationship with Scottish local government is widely recognised and welcomed in Scottish society, although not by every party in the chamber.

In reforming Scotland's public organisations, our overall approach is first, to streamline decision making and increase transparency; secondly, to bring together organisations with similar skills, expertise and processes; thirdly, to stop activity that no longer contributes to the public purpose; and fourthly, to apply much tougher tests to the creation of new bodies.

We have made important changes. The policy and delivery functions of Communities Scotland are being transferred to the Scottish Government. We have reformed the enterprise networks, removing 21 local enterprise companies and streamlining Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. VisitScotland will rationalise its own 14 regions to six, in line with new structures in the enterprise networks. We have set out plans to create a single, integrated, national sports organisation; that has been widely welcomed, at least outside the chamber. We are merging a range of skills and careers functions into skills development Scotland. Our rural and environmental agencies have agreed to work together to develop a single rural service. Earlier this month, we announced our plans to strengthen the children's hearings system—that reform has been widely welcomed and will result in significantly fewer public organisations.

Today, I want to outline our further proposals. The details will be worked out in the coming months with the bodies themselves, and with staff, unions and other stakeholders. Where appropriate, we will consult on specific reforms.

To better protect Scotland's marine environment and streamline services that support that vital Scottish industry, we will bring together marine management functions from across public organisations into a single body.

Scotland's environmental research capacity will be strengthened and its international competitiveness enhanced by encouraging our environmental and rural research organisations—notably, the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute and the Scottish Crop Research Institute—to form a new single institute. We will integrate the Fisheries (Electricity) Committee with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

We will merge the Deer Commission for Scotland with Scottish Natural Heritage and remove the need for a statutory body to advise SNH before it designates sites of special scientific interest. We will also bring the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency into the Scottish Government. *[Interruption.]*

I hear Lord Foulkes suggesting from a sedentary position that integrating the Fisheries (Electricity) Committee with SEPA was long overdue. If it was so long overdue, why on earth did the Labour Party not do it in its long period in power?

To integrate planning, architecture and building standards, we will bring the Scottish Building Standards Agency into the Scottish Government as part of an integrated directorate for the built environment. We will also examine the scope to simplify and increase joined-up decision making across the public sector functions that are involved in considering development proposals.

Our proposals include a new streamlined and more consistent approach to advisory functions across Government. We will abolish the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland, the building standards advisory committee and the Scottish Records Advisory Council. Following reform of the enterprise networks, we will abolish the Scottish Industrial Development Advisory Board.

We propose to establish the General Teaching Council for Scotland as a self-regulating, profession-led body, along the lines of the General Medical Council.

We plan to bring together the public transport users committee and the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland into a single body to represent the interests of all transport users in Scotland. We will engage with key stakeholders to ensure that the change strengthens the voice of people with travel accessibility and mobility issues.

There are some important areas in which further work is needed. Our national collections play a vital role in our cultural life. I have asked them to look at how they can work together more closely to strengthen their impact in their national role, in supporting collections activity throughout Scotland and in representing Scotland abroad.

Public safety is our top priority in dealing with high-risk offenders. We will review the role of the

Risk Management Authority to determine whether integrating its functions into other bodies would improve the effectiveness of our systems.

We will consider the case for an integrated tribunal service for Scotland. For example, we do not believe that it requires a separate agency to provide the administrative support to the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland. A final decision about the future of that function will be made following the review of tribunals.

Earlier this month, we published our response to Professor Crerar's review into the scrutiny of public services. The Government will work with the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body and with local government on proposals to reform that complex area to achieve a radical reform of how scrutiny operates and a substantial reduction in the number of organisations with a scrutiny role. We will set out details later this year but, as a first step, we are announcing today changes to the scrutiny of the fire and rescue services.

I am pleased to say that our proposals represent the most ambitious drive to reduce Government bureaucracy since devolution. However, I must tell members that the firm proposals that the Government is presenting do not meet our commitment to a 25 per cent reduction in the number of national public bodies—they will exceed it, at 26 per cent. If we include the reduction of justice of the peace advisory committees, which took effect in December but was planned by our predecessors, there will be a 39 per cent reduction in the 199 organisations. By 2011, that will bring the number of national public organisations in Scotland to around 120—the lowest number since devolution by some considerable distance—but that is not the final position. After appropriate consultation with stakeholders, further reforms to scrutiny and complaints organisations and to tribunals, as well as other strands of further work that we are setting out today, will bring down that figure further.

The rationale for the reforms is simpler and more effective government. In a tough financial climate, we also need to increase the productivity of the public sector, with challenging efficient government targets. This package will make a significant contribution to the efficiency gains of around £25 million that are required under efficient government from the bodies directly affected by the changes. The savings that are made will be available to support improved services.

Our drive for more effective government will produce substantial savings in the wider economy, by making it easier and quicker to deal with the public sector. Let us consider for a second the scale of what could be achieved. If we argue that simpler, more effective government could help, in terms of dealings with the private sector, to raise

productivity by only 1 per cent, the increased benefit across the Scottish economy could be as much as £800 million.

Our aim is clear. We want a simple and effective public sector that is focused, delivers results and helps to facilitate growth in Scotland's economy. Let me illustrate the drive behind the reforms with some specific examples. A sheep farmer in the north of Scotland is currently subject to separate visits from the Scottish Government and SEPA in relation to sheep identification and sheep dip disposal. Our proposals for a single rural service would cut the number of visits for such purposes from almost 450 to around 100 each year across Scotland.

An aquaculture development could currently require six separate consents. Better integrating marine management will streamline those services to customers. Even the simplest planning applications for a rural housing development can involve up to half a dozen public agencies—in addition to the local authority—all working with different perspectives, procedures and deadlines. Indeed, I am told that larger developments can involve even greater complexities these days.

Closer to home, even my predecessor's plan for a flagpole at Bute house required both a planning consent and a listed building consent. I have to tell the Parliament that there is still no flagpole at Bute house.

Turning away from the impact on our economy, let me give members an example of the potential simplification that could be achieved for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. As we conducted our exercises to consider the scope for streamlining, one local authority reported that it could require 29 separate local processes, 63 possible meetings and 108 different documents to discuss needs and agree action for one single child. That overcomplex process is being streamlined, and it will be enhanced further for the most vulnerable people in our society by the changes that we are making to the children's hearings system.

Governments north and south of the border are embarking on programmes to achieve more effective government. There is, in my submission, a vital difference in our approach. Let me make this absolutely clear. We in the Scottish Government are honouring our commitment to no compulsory redundancies. I believe that large-scale reform of the public sector is best achieved where the valuable and valued public service staff have security and can focus on their core role of delivering for our citizens.

Our changes will of course mean a reduction of nine publicly appointed boards, which means approximately 90 fewer public appointments

across Scotland. In advertising costs alone, there is a saving of around £250,000 for each round of appointments—for each time that all those posts are advertised.

We will transform the Government's relationship with public bodies, with clear lines of accountability, a stronger focus on outcomes and better co-ordination of the work of Government.

We have delivered greater flexibility for local government through the introduction of outcome agreements. We will extend that outcome-based approach to national public bodies.

We intend to deliver the package of reform by 2011. Some of the changes will be made in the next year; others, particularly those that require legislation, will take longer. Later this year, we will produce proposals for the necessary legislation. We will work closely with, and support the leaders of, our public organisations in implementing the changes to ensure that the reform delivers clear benefits for the customers, the consumers, the people—the public of Scotland. We will engage with staff, trade unions, local government and other stakeholders to ensure that the changes are well designed and implemented.

The package of changes that I have announced today and the Government's programme will make a real difference to public services throughout Scotland. Together, they will improve responsiveness and build simple and effective government. The impact will be felt across a wide sweep of public services, from housing to enterprise and from marine management to children's services. The Government is making reform a reality. We want to build a new, simpler and better model for government in Scotland, with better value for money, better quality of service, better governance and better outcomes for the people of Scotland. Those priorities are our priorities—I trust that they will command support from throughout the Parliament.

**The Presiding Officer:** As I said, the First Minister will take questions on the issues that are raised in his statement. I intend to allow about 40 minutes for questions. I anticipate that a large number of back-bench members will want to ask questions, so I ask their front-bench leaders to show a good example by keeping their questions as short as possible.

**Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab):** We welcome the genuine efforts to streamline and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, as outlined in the Crerar report. However, real progress will mean avoiding the sense that we have a rose by any other name. In short, when is a public organisation not a public organisation? An answer to a parliamentary question indicated that, since May, the Government has set up an additional 24



“consultative committees, groups, councils and other bodies”.—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 20 November 2007; S3W-8657.]

Only one of those 24 extra bodies featured in the statement. The same question is due for answer again on Friday. By how much does the First Minister expect that figure—for the number of extra consultative committees, groups, councils and other bodies that have been set up since May—to have risen by Friday? How many extra bodies have been set up in the past nine months?

To make my question about when a public body is not a public body real, I turn to economic development. The statement mentioned the abolition of the LECs. How many new co-ordinating committees will be established automatically as a result of changes to the enterprise network? Will the First Minister confirm that his Government has moved away from his party's manifesto commitment to merge Scottish Natural Heritage and SEPA?

Finally, I come to the numbers. We will have evidence of better services when the promised 2 per cent efficiency savings that are planned for each year are realised. The efficiency savings are to start a few short weeks from now. When will the Government publish details of the efficiency savings that are planned to start at the beginning of April? Finally, on a simple point, the First Minister mentioned the flagpole at Bute house. In three years, will planning consent and listed building consent still be required for a flagpole at Bute house?

**The First Minister:** I do not think we are getting the flagpole, because the council turned it down.

I welcome Wendy Alexander's welcome for the statement. However, I have to say to her that quoting Lord George Foulkes is always a dangerous occupation but relying on one of his parliamentary questions—I have here the one to which she referred—is very, very dangerous indeed.

There is a world of difference between statutory national public bodies, with boards and appointments, and groups that provide external advice and support to the Government for the delivery of specific commitments.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** Twenty-four.

**The First Minister:** For the benefit of Jackie Baillie, I will read out some of the bodies that Wendy Alexander is talking about. One is the Glasgow 2014 strategic group. Are we to count that as a national public body? There are also short-term groups looking at housing supply statistics, such as the housing supply task force. Those groups are engaged in the normal business of government, and the vast bulk of them cost no resources whatever. Specific commissions that

are established to do vital work in Scottish society, such as the broadcasting commission—which we have every reason to believe will focus attention on an issue that will generate tens of millions of pounds of extra investment in the Scottish economy—and the prisons commission, which is doing vital work under the former First Minister, Henry McLeish, are short-term bodies that provide advice on certain issues. Such bodies are, again, involved in the normal business of government and have always been set up by the Government. There is a world of difference between them and statutory national bodies. I am sure that someone of Wendy Alexander's intelligence understands that distinction full well.

Last October, we helpfully published a list of the 199 national statutory bodies, so that the Parliament and the whole of society could have a reference point against which to judge our progress. I cannot imagine that Wendy Alexander looked at that list because, if she had, she would have known that the local enterprise companies were not on it—because they are local, as opposed to national—and are therefore not counted in the statistics relating to the substantial reduction in national statutory bodies. However, our reforms of the enterprise network—local and national—will provide a more effective process for the pursuit of good governance in Scotland.

There are changes coming to Scottish Natural Heritage and SEPA. However, Wendy Alexander's almost last point—the one before her last point—dealt with the 2 per cent efficiency savings that this Government is determined to see across the public sector. As John Swinney said at the time, indications of those savings will be published in March. However, as I remember, in her hungry caterpillar speech, Wendy Alexander bemoaned what she saw as our far-too-modest efficiency targets. Rather than me saying how the Government will achieve our sensible, effective 2 per cent efficiency targets in conjunction with our staff and unions, perhaps Wendy Alexander can remind us how she was going to achieve her targets without widespread compulsory redundancies across the public sector in Scotland. [*Applause.*]

**George Foulkes (Lothians) (Lab):** Performing seals.

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con):** I do not think that Lord Foulkes has ever applauded me before, Presiding Officer—I rather like it.

What we have here is a pack of cards being reshuffled and redealt, leaving us still with 52 cards. That is not how we should approach effective government. In principle, my party supports a reduction in the size of the state,

although I confess to a penchant for police and prisons. However, that reduction is not achieved by renaming, rebadging, mergers and amalgamations.

The test of whether this statement is just craftily spun candy floss or a statement of substance that represents a real rolling back of the state is not whether there are 26 per cent fewer quangos, but whether there will be a 26 per cent cut in the cost to the taxpayer. The questions that every taxpayer wants answered are these: how many fewer people will be employed in the public sector and how much money will be saved to the public purse by today's announcement? The First Minister must surely be briefed on those aspects. Will the reduction in persons employed and the saving to the public purse be more or less than 26 per cent?

**The First Minister:** Many of the functions that we are discussing are vital for Scottish society, and I am sure that Annabel Goldie would not suggest for a second that they should disappear. The Government believes that it is far better to work in an integrated way with one organisation than with what are, in many cases, multifarious organisations throughout Scotland.

The efficiencies that will be made are twofold. First, we believe that the changes we are making to the organisations that I have mentioned and their administrative and other costs will contribute substantially to meeting the demanding and effective target of 2 per cent annual efficiency savings. As I said earlier, on the organisations mentioned alone, that represents £25 million.

Secondly, I argue that the real cost of confusing bureaucracy falls not on the public services but on the people who attempt to deal with them. Those people are often shunted from pillar to post and find that they need numerous and delaying consents. I have given specific examples of problems that we came across during this and the other simplification reviews. In the projection that I suggested, a mere 1 per cent saving to the private sector in Scotland as the result of its dealing with a simplified and coherent public service in Scotland would be worth some £800 million to the Scottish economy.

I depart from Annabel Goldie in my attitude to public sector reform in this respect: I think that the best way to achieve reform and the substantial reductions in the number of organisations that have been outlined today is to work in a co-operative way with our vital staff across the agencies. Our assurance that there will be no compulsory redundancies is a vital part of engaging people in a necessary progress for the benefit of our country.

**Nicol Stephen (Aberdeen South) (LD):** Will the First Minister confirm that the budgeted set-up costs of his new skills quango will be £16 million?

Does the First Minister agree that the problem with his list is that he counts only what he cuts and not what he creates? When he promised to cut 21 local enterprise companies, he replaced them with 48 new national, regional and sub-regional organisations. John Swinney has admitted that he has created another 24, including the new Scottish fisheries council—created, but not counted—four national health service scrutiny bodies, the seasonal flu review steering group, the housing supply statistics group, and the housing supply task force. All were created by the Government but not counted. Last week, the Government announced a crackdown on waste. That created a working group, a review, a consultation and a think-tank. Was any of that added to the list?

Is this not like that episode of "Porridge" in which a prison escape tunnel is discovered? In the final scene, Mackay asks Fletcher, "What did you do with the dirt?" Fletcher replies, "That's simple. We dug another tunnel and hid it in there." Is not the First Minister doing exactly that? Seventy-six new bodies have been created by the Government, and the total is rising. All are supported by a total of 58 reviews and 91 new consultations. Why does the First Minister not admit that he is adding to the clutter and that the truth is that, for every thing that he has dropped, he has brought in something new?

**The First Minister:** I now know what Nicol Stephen was doing with his Christmas holidays—he was watching reruns of "Porridge". If he encountered the Scottish Prison Service, he would have a chance under this Government of serving out his term in the prison in the north-east of Scotland that his Government would not build but which this Government intends to build.

I will not concede Nicol Stephen's point because there is a world of difference between, for example, a national statutory public body with a board and the seasonal flu review steering group. If he had bothered to read the answer to Lord Foulkes's question, he would have seen that the estimated cost of that steering group is zero because it has only modest incidental expenses. It seems sensible, given that there is the danger of a flu epidemic in Scotland, that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing would bring together the expertise that can deal with that. If Nicol Stephen had been health secretary, he would not have done that in case somebody had accused him of setting up a national statutory body.

**Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP):** One of the Scottish National Party Government's first actions was to encourage all the organisations that deliver environmental advice, management and controls to work together in order to reduce duplication and simplify the often complicated landscape of

environmental controls. Will the First Minister give us further information and an update on the action that is being taken to provide a more integrated service to farmers and land managers?

**The First Minister:** The single-stop shop for advice will encompass the five agencies that previously supplied advice on such matters, and will provide an integrated approach. That is welcomed widely—not just in the farming community, but throughout rural Scotland. The reaction from our stakeholders, consumers and voters is to ask why on earth previous Governments did not take such a sensible step.

**James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab):** The First Minister said that the package will make the significant contribution of £25 million to efficiency gains. However, the SNP manifesto said that streamlining government would release £500 million over the next three years. Where will the First Minister find the £475 million to bridge the gap between today's announcement and his commitment in the SNP manifesto?

**The First Minister:** The gains of £25 million relate to the organisations that have been detailed today—they come from efficiency savings by those organisations of 2 per cent, which moves up to 6 per cent over three years. The other figure refers to efficiency targets for the whole public sector in Scotland. One figure applies to everything and the other applies to the bodies that I have mentioned today. That is reasonably clear.

**Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP):** The First Minister said that the Scottish Building Standards Agency would join a newly formed directorate for the built environment. What other agencies or sections of Government will become part of that directorate?

**The First Minister:** By bringing the Scottish Building Standards Agency into the Scottish Government, architecture and planning policy will become part of a single integrated directorate. It is proper for those vital skills in the Scottish Government to be exercised by a single unit in the Government, rather than duplicated in several agencies.

**Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab):** First Minister, I heard you say that the SNP Government will honour its commitment to create no compulsory redundancies and that you will consult in the coming months. Will you state for the record—

**The Presiding Officer:** Ms Eadie, could you please speak through the chair and not directly to the First Minister? Thank you.

**Helen Eadie:** I apologise. First Minister, please state for the record what consultations you will have with your vital staff—I will start again. I apologise.

What consultation has the First Minister had with trade unions, the staff he regards as being vital and the Scottish Trades Union Congress? Will more than or fewer than 500 voluntary redundancies take place? Has he consulted on which ministers he proposes to make redundant first? Does he have ambitions to make Stewart Maxwell redundant?

**The First Minister:** As Helen Eadie well knows, but has forgotten momentarily, we have—by a substantial margin—fewer ministers, fewer special advisers and fewer Cabinet ministers in this supremely effective Government than the previous disoriented Government had.

Consultation with trade unions and stakeholders has been extensive. I had a discussion with key union figures this morning to explain the course of our reforms. That discussion, which followed an excellent general meeting with the STUC, emphasised how much our staff appreciate the commitment that there will be no compulsory redundancies. That commitment is vital in encouraging people to engage in the reform process. As Helen Eadie well knows, that is in sharp contrast to what is happening in some departments south of the border.

**Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con):** I am sure that the First Minister will agree that the test is not so much today's statement as what happens in practice. Can he clarify whether the £25 million in savings to which he referred is a one-year or three-year figure? How much of it relates to savings from the Scottish Enterprise reforms, of which we have heard very little of late?

**The First Minister:** The figure does not refer to the Scottish Enterprise reforms, for the reasons that I have already given. It is the three-year figure to achieve the 6 per cent efficiency target on the administrative and bureaucratic costs of the agencies that we have specified today.

I agree with Derek Brownlee that the proof will be in the system of effective government. However, I re-emphasise to him the point that I emphasised to Annabel Goldie: I regard the key potential for efficiency savings to be in how the whole range of our public agencies and our Government react with other partners in Scottish life. I am sure that the complaint that he hears—as I do—when he meets various organisations is about their frustration at delays. Often, the delay is caused not by the examination but by the fact that a number of agencies must cross-examine the same proposal.

The big efficiency savings that we are looking for—which we will get through the reforms—will come not from within the organisations themselves, although such savings are important, but from much more rapid decision making

throughout Scottish society. I am certain that Derek Brownlee and Annabel Goldie share that objective.

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** I ask the First Minister—in a fairly supportive fashion, I hope—whether he is alive to the law of unintended consequences and the risks of an oversimplistic and superficial approach. Does he accept that 60-odd organisations that he proposes to do away with, out of about 79 that he proposes to deal with, were set up by the previous so-called disorganised Government? Will he take the sensible step of widening the limited consultation that was suggested in his statement so that everybody who will be affected by the proposals will be able to point out any issues to do with them and how they can go forward with them in an effective manner, which is what we all want? Does he accept that, for example, the amalgamation of the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland into a broader transport group risks losing that committee's specific focus on disability issues? Will he answer the question that Nicol Stephen asked him about the set-up costs of some of the new organisations, not least the £16 million for the skills agency? Will he let us have a full statement of both sides of the equation?

**The First Minister:** I am glad that Robert Brown is so supportive. I will explain to him why people with disability and mobility issues in respect of public transport will benefit from the change. There is a difference between the two bodies at present. The body that is related to disability transport issues has no powers to make recommendations to ministers—it has only an advisory role. The public transport users committee for Scotland, however, has recommendation powers. Bringing the disabled interest groups into one organisation will enable them to recommend to ministers, not just advise them. That is why the change will enhance their position.

I have tried to specify what I think the advantages of the proposals are in administrative savings, in their impacts on wider society and even in the savings that are to be made through not having to advertise another round of appointments. I think that those are good answers.

Of course we will consult: we have already consulted, and the reaction from stakeholders and organisations has been favourable. I would not say that it has been universally favourable because some people are going to lose their posts. I understand that. Nicol Stephen was concerned about an example of that only a few weeks ago. Nonetheless, the reaction has been pretty favourable.

On whether I understand the law of unintended consequences, I regard the entire record of the

previous Administration as being an unintended consequence for Scottish society.

**Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP):** I am pleased to see that the First Minister has taken action that eluded previous First Ministers and has lit the bonfire of the quangos. I ask the First Minister how the package of measures that he has announced compares to the efforts of the previous Executive to reduce the number of public bodies in Scotland.

**The First Minister:** It is not too difficult for me to answer that question, as a comparison has just come into my hands.

Last October we published a list of national public bodies in Scotland so that everyone would have a reference point. The difference between what we have done and what the previous Administration did in 2001 is that it decided to redesignate a number of public bodies in order to count them in the so-called bonfire of the quangos. However, I have managed to make a like-for-like comparison between 2000 and what we will have if all the proposals in my statement are implemented. Like for like, there were 192 organisations in 2000; if our proposals are successful, by 2011 that number will be reduced to 89. If that is not a bonfire, it is certainly a good-going blaze.

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab):** The First Minister has chosen his definition of organisations on the basis that it will allow him to streamline by using the one-out-one-in principle.

I will pursue another bit of the First Minister's logic. He referred to simplification's potential to help some of the most vulnerable people in our society. How is abolishing the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland, which has a disabled convener and must have a majority of disabled people among its membership, and replacing it with a composite body, which must include only three people who have knowledge of mobility and disability issues, in line with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995? How will that advance the interests of disabled people, particularly those who have something to contribute to the future of Scotland's transport?

**The First Minister:** I do not know whether Des McNulty was listening to the answer that I gave Robert Brown. It will do so because the disabled interest groups in that wider group will have considerably enhanced influence. They will have the power to make recommendations to ministers as opposed to the power merely to advise ministers, as they have at the moment. That will enhance protection for disadvantaged and vulnerable people in our society.

I was looking at some research recently. I am sure that the figures are wrong—they will have to

be checked and rechecked—but Des McNulty seems to be responsible for almost one quarter of all written parliamentary questions.

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** What about Jackie Baillie?

**The First Minister:** Well, perhaps Jackie Baillie is rivalling him these days but, in the figures that I have seen, Des McNulty seems to have been responsible over a period of time. My goodness, but we are going to need to strengthen the arms of Government, if only to respond to Des McNulty's questions—never mind take on the range of other activities in Scottish society.

**Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP):** The First Minister made comments about merging the organisations that are responsible for the marine environment. Is that action preliminary to a future marine bill? Will the mergers improve the sustainable future of our seas and, in particular, our fishings?

**The First Minister:** The main management functions of the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency, parts of Scottish Government and possibly the Fisheries Research Services will be brought together to form a single Scottish marine management organisation that will be able to work with other organisations, such as SNH and SEPA, to improve integration of existing marine management. Obviously the mergers look forward to the legislation, and the simple answer to the question about the relationship between the proposals and the legislation is yes.

**David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab):** The First Minister has talked about the changes to Scottish Enterprise as a move towards more effective government. One of those changes was to give responsibility for the business gateway to local authorities. The First Minister has also said that he likes like-for-like comparisons, so I will give him one. As a result of the changes in my constituency of Strathkelvin and Bearsden, there have been 88 assisted start-ups since October. For the same period last year, the number was 165. The forecast for this year is 450 new start-ups, compared with 546 in 2006-07. Does the First Minister call that more effective government?

**The First Minister:** One of the great things that is going to assist start-ups in Scottish economy and business during the next wee while is the substantial reduction in business rates and the fixed cost burden that affects small businesses across Scotland. I suspect that every start-up and small business in David Whitton's constituency will cheer on the Government's proposals. I hope that the member will find it within himself to vote for the budget when it comes before Parliament next week.

**Mike Rumbles:** For the third time of asking—he has not answered the question—can the First

Minister confirm that the budget to which he has just referred gives the set-up costs for his new skills quango as £16 million? Can we have an answer, please?

**The First Minister:** By far the most effective proposal is to merge the Scottish university for industry, learndirect Scotland, Careers Scotland—which was once part of Scottish Enterprise—and most of the skills and training functions of the enterprise network to create skills development Scotland.

Having had a meeting with the Scottish Trades Union Congress today—and with many employer organisations previously—I can tell Mike Rumbles that the development of the new organisation that we have announced as part of our skills strategy is recognised as not just the cheapest but the most effective way to proceed. If the Liberal Democrats are arguing against an initiative that carries a consensus across Scottish society, they will find themselves in even more of a minority than usual.

**Mike Rumbles:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I know that you have no control over the answers that the First Minister gives, but he has been asked for a simple point of information that Parliament needs to know. We have not had an answer.

**The Presiding Officer:** As Mr Rumbles is fully aware, that is not a point of order. I have no doubt at all that the First Minister heard the question.

**Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind):** In reference to the answer that was given to Mr Brownlee, am I correct in assuming that the First Minister sees the amalgamations as a process as well as a decided policy? If it turns out that some of the announced amalgamations do not produce the required results, will there be some mechanism by which we can return without great upheaval? I am thinking, of course, about the sportscotland decision. I am sure that, when we look at the books properly, we will discover that the proposed merger will cost far too much money for no great change. Might the decision on the organisation's relocation to Glasgow be reversed?

**The First Minister:** The development of hubs across the country and the relocation of the organisation's headquarters to Glasgow carried fairly substantial support. Margo MacDonald obviously demurred from that, but she knows from other matters that this is a listening Government. We will obviously consult across the range of today's announcements. We consult and listen to our stakeholders and we have, where necessary, changed our minds on certain issues to the benefit of Scotland. That is the way to govern.

On the particular point, I think that Margo MacDonald will find that she does not have majority support across the Parliament in arguing

against the location decisions. The development of hubs in Stirling, Aberdeen and Edinburgh as well as the relocation of the headquarters to Glasgow were widely welcomed. That seems to me to be a good way to proceed, as it involves all of Scotland in our single national sports organisation.

**Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** In answer to my colleague James Kelly, the First Minister reiterated that the package of measures that he has announced will make a significant contribution of around £25 million to efficiency gains. Can the First Minister quantify how much the Government will save annually by the abolition of the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland, the Scottish Building Standards Advisory Committee, the Scottish Records Advisory Council and the Scottish Industrial Development Advisory Board? Can he reassure Parliament that the changes will not result in a reduction of independent expert advice to ministers?

**The First Minister:** We think that a more effective public service profile will provide better and more integrated advice to ministers. Elaine Murray's question perhaps suggests that she does not think that we will achieve substantial savings from merging those organisations. We are opening up the possibility of integrating with similar organisations, those that do not have a huge workload or a huge staff, or which are not called on to give advice regularly, so that they can share the workload and take a more focused approach.

Many Labour members have argued in their questions that this substantial change in the Scottish public sector—this beacon of simplification and more effective government—does not amount to a radical transformation, although that is at odds with other arguments that they have put. If it is so simple, why on earth did the Labour Party and other doubters not do it when they were in government?

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** My question is about the First Minister's policy of no compulsory redundancies. I understand that his aim is to work with public servants who are involved with the trade unions. Does he appreciate that reducing staff numbers without compulsory redundancies can be extremely disruptive to organisations? Often those who come forward when volunteers for redundancy are sought are good people whom organisations want to retain. If an organisation is slimming down, it does not always make sense for it to rule out compulsory redundancies. Will the First Minister reflect on that?

**The First Minister:** We will maintain our position that there will be no compulsory redundancies. I want us to have the enthusiastic co-operation of our valuable staff in the Scottish public services. Murdo Fraser should not

underrate the degree of enthusiasm for a simplified public sector landscape that exists in the public services. No one likes to work in conditions where many organisations are standing on one another's toes. No one likes the complexity and frustration of delay that people often find when they deal with some public service functions at present. We should not underrate the enthusiastic co-operation that we expect from our vital and valuable public servants as we take through this great reform. Our commitment to the principle of no compulsory redundancies, which is based on our understanding of our public servants, is part of that. It is not the only thing that matters, but it is one of the ingredients that will allow us to take through the reform constructively.

## School Curriculum (Scottish History)

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-1238, in the name of Maureen Watt, on the importance of Scottish history in the school curriculum.

14:58

**The Minister for Schools and Skills (Maureen Watt):** I am delighted to introduce this timely and important debate on ensuring that young people in Scotland develop a proper understanding of Scotland's and their own place in the world, in relation both to what is happening today and to what has happened historically.

I begin with some very recent history. Just two weeks ago, the Parliament debated the expert analysis of Scottish education that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development published recently. The OECD's report commended the on-going reform and modernisation of the Scottish curriculum, through the curriculum for excellence. That is the context of the motion that we have brought to the Parliament.

I will say a few words about the curriculum for excellence, because we are here not only to discuss the teaching of history—and social studies more broadly—in our schools, but to give some thought to what it is about education that can make this country and its people confident, skilled and successful. People are Scotland's powerhouse. For Scotland to be all that it can be, all our people need to develop skills in the widest sense, so that they can fulfil their potential. By increasing sustainable economic growth, we can create a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish. We need a smarter Scotland to support the Government's overarching purpose of achieving sustainable economic growth and its other strategic objectives: a wealthier and fairer, healthier, safer and stronger, and greener Scotland.

Our concordat with local government includes 15 outcomes that characterise the kind of country that we want to build. One of those outcomes is:

"Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens."

That is the language of the curriculum for excellence. It is a mark of the Government's support and respect for the ambitions of that programme of reform that its key goals are incorporated within the concordat.

Achieving the outcome that I have mentioned is

important in its own right, but doing so will also be a major contributing factor to achieving the other outcomes. Through the national indicator relating to increasing the proportion of school leavers in sustained and positive destinations, we are sending a strong message about what we think is important. The focus is therefore rightly on the outcome and what happens to young people beyond school. To achieve what we want, we need every young person to develop the four capacities to their full potential.

There is, of course, much in Scottish education that we can be proud of, as the OECD found, but it is unacceptable that our well-resourced and well-regarded education system does not make the difference for all our children, particularly those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. As a country, we must maximise the economic potential of all our citizens. As a caring society, we must ensure that we get things right for every child. As the OECD report noted, with our modern economy, we must recognise the importance of higher-order cognitive, organisational and communication skills in our young people.

Our aim is to ensure that young people have skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life. That means that there must be a coherent curriculum from three to 18; a focus on outcomes; more vocational opportunities; a focus on literacy and numeracy at every stage; appropriate stretching and pacing for every child; and teachers working together to make coherent sense of what each child is being taught.

The Government is fully committed to the curriculum for excellence programme as the means of achieving those aims; indeed, the Scottish National Party was the only party that made a specific commitment to the curriculum for excellence in its manifesto. The curriculum for excellence encourages and challenges teachers to think about and develop their teaching, so that it is as good as it can be. That is for teachers and schools to do; we are not talking about a centralised or top-down initiative.

To do such things effectively, teachers need support and challenges from everybody concerned, including parents, employers, people in further and higher education, local authorities, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and the Scottish Government. We want every school and teacher to examine critically their teaching and planning, explicitly for the purpose of developing and improving.

The role of local and national Government is to create the conditions that will allow that to happen. The Scottish Government and local authorities can provide tools to help. We are revising the guidance on the framework within which the curriculum can be organised to allow space for innovation and a

focus on all four capacities. We are producing curriculum guidance to update content, focus on outcomes and emphasise the need for every teacher to contribute to the development of skills, particularly literacy and numeracy skills. We are providing guidance on and examples of interdisciplinary projects and studies so that teachers can work together on outcomes and make connections between different areas of young people's learning.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I do not wish to be unkind to the minister in any way, but when will she address the subject of the debate, which is the importance of Scottish history in the school curriculum? She is six minutes into her speech.

**Maureen Watt:** I am coming to that. If the member reads the motion, he will see that it focuses on other matters, too.

We are looking at how assessment can best be used to support real learning and are consulting on proposals for qualifications at standard grade credit and general and intermediate 1 and 2 levels, which correspond to Scottish credit and qualifications framework levels 4 and 5.

Curriculum for excellence should be and is being implemented already. Government-provided materials are not necessary for teachers to build on and improve their existing practice. Our children need the best possible teaching now.

Forthcoming guidance will give a stronger impetus to continuous improvement. Learning and Teaching Scotland has already published, for discussion with and within the profession, a significant quantity of draft guidance in the form of draft curriculum outcomes and experiences. The remainder will be released during the rest of the present academic session and will be finalised in the next session. Guidance on the framework within which the experiences and outcomes can be used will be drafted alongside them. We expect that the guidance will be phased in after 2008-09, to replace the present five-to-14 curriculum and to provide an integrated curriculum from three to 18.

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** I am interested that the minister is outlining the draft outcomes in social studies, but has the SNP Government made any changes to the reforms that were carried out under the curriculum for excellence or, for that matter, those that were implemented under the Scottish Qualifications Authority's review of highers, which was put in place by her predecessor?

**Maureen Watt:** We certainly have, by ensuring that outcomes over a wider range of areas will have a Scottish spine. We have sought to integrate Scottish history, culture and language into the new outcomes for the curriculum.

**Ken Macintosh:** Will the minister take another intervention?

**Maureen Watt:** No.

We know that it is possible for pupils who have taken the current higher and advanced higher courses to leave school with a greater knowledge of aspects of history outwith Scotland than of Scottish history. That situation is being addressed by the decision to introduce a compulsory Scottish element in the higher examination, which has been well received by the profession. I, too, warmly welcome it.

Last week, as part of the on-going schedule of releasing draft guidance on different areas of the curriculum, Learning and Teaching Scotland published, for engagement with the profession, draft outcomes in social studies. Social studies includes the study of experiences and outcomes in historical, geographical, social, political, economic and business contexts.

It is important that children and young people understand where they live and the heritage of their families and communities. Teaching our young people about the history and current context of Scotland is not about brainwashing them into adopting a single set of political beliefs. It is about ensuring that they have enough good-quality information and understanding to make their own informed decisions and judgments.

Nature abhors a vacuum. If we do not properly teach all our young people about the history and current context of their country and society, the vacuum will be filled with the often misguided imagery of Hollywood, and that will do none of us any good at all. The future well-being of our country and, indeed, the future quality of political debate require a good foundation of cultural understanding and knowledge.

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** The minister used to be a teacher. Does she think that the film "Braveheart" gave an accurate depiction of Scottish history?

**Maureen Watt:** It certainly created an interest in Scottish history and Scotland, and focused people's minds on the period of history in question. I am sure that, after watching the film, they went away to discover more about the real picture.

Let us be clear: we are not talking about some sort of public relations exercise to glorify Scotland's past, in the way that "Braveheart" might have done. We are talking about encouraging young people to reach personal conclusions on different aspects of social studies, such as human and ethical issues in the past, the land use and ecological dilemmas that face us, and political, economic and social issues. Lessons need to be



learned from the mistakes of the past as well as the glories and successes.

When it is taught well, history has significant potential to contribute to the curriculum for excellence's four capacities and to our objective of a smarter Scotland. Studies of Scottish history are already found in almost all primary and secondary schools. However, we cannot be sure that pupils' engagement with history enables them to understand how Scotland has developed.

Our goal with the curriculum for excellence is to ensure that all our young people benefit from the best possible teaching across the whole spectrum of curriculum areas. Social studies, as described in the draft guidance issued by Learning and Teaching Scotland last week, offers excellent opportunities for children and young people to focus on the historical, social, geographic, economic and political changes that have shaped Scotland. With greater understanding of such issues comes the opportunity to influence events by exercising informed and responsible citizenship.

The Government wants a progressive, successful, confident Scotland for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a people, we will not know where we are going—or whether we have got there—if we do not know where we have been. Our ambitions for education and for Scotland are high. The on-going reform of our curriculum, evidenced by the recent publication of draft outcomes in social studies, is a welcome indicator of our confident, progressive approach.

For those reasons, I am pleased to move,

That the Parliament recognises the importance of ensuring that young people understand Scotland's and their place in the world, both currently and in a historical context, and in pursuit of this aim welcomes the opportunities for more exciting, engaging and relevant teaching presented by the Curriculum for Excellence and, in particular, the publication of the draft social studies outcomes and experiences by Learning and Teaching Scotland, along with the recent decision by the Scottish Qualifications Authority to include questions on Scottish history as a compulsory component of the Higher History examination.

15:11

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** I wonder how many speakers in the debate will have cast their minds back to their school days and study of history, as I have done. I found it impossible to think about history in the school curriculum without vividly remembering my history lessons. I recalled field trips to Vindolanda and Hadrian's wall, and I remembered lessons about Robert Owen, David Dale and the New Lanark mills, the slave trade, and the reasons for the outbreak of the first world war.

My father was a history teacher and I studied history at university. I suspect that, like me, many

members enjoy the subject, particularly Scottish history. For that reason, I think that there is much common ground in the Parliament. On the face of it, there is nothing in the motion that I disagree with. It will be interesting to note whether other members who are history graduates will speak in the debate. I think that the sort of person who likes history and benefits from that quintessentially liberal education is also drawn to politics. The study of history taught me not what to think but how to think. It taught me how to question events, decisions and political actions. I hope to say more about that.

I am not sure whether the SNP expected us to throw up our hands in horror at the thought of a compulsory Scottish history question in the higher exam. I fully support the idea. If we do not teach Scottish history, who will? However, we should say for the record that the two developments that are the subject of the motion began life under the previous, Labour-led Administration. A Labour minister initiated the reforms that have been put in place through the curriculum for excellence, which culminated in the publication of the draft social studies outcomes. The same is true of the SQA's review of higher history. If the timing of the review had been different, the announcement about higher history could easily have been made under a Labour Administration.

In her response to my intervention, the minister referred to the Scottish spine that the new SNP Government has apparently added. I ask her or the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to point me to a specific decision or document that backs up her remark. The two initiatives that are mentioned in the motion do not do so.

Discussing history is enjoyable and important, but is history really the most worrying aspect of our current or developing curriculum? There is little disagreement in the Parliament about the importance of history. Why do we need a debate on it, given that we have the makings of a consensus? I cannot help feeling that the debate has been generated to focus on the importance not of history but of Scottishness. It will be interesting to hear members' speeches. I worry that the debate is not about broadening young minds but has a more limited perspective, which is about trying to get young people to see the world from a particularly narrow and nationalistic viewpoint.

The contrast this week is that, while the SNP obsesses—unnecessarily, given the agreement on the issue—about how Scottish our history curriculum is, the Labour Party announced that it will publish a bill on skills. My colleague John Park will lodge a member's bill to address some of the real gaps in our education system and the needs

of our young people. In a week that saw the publication of worrying statistics, the question for the SNP is, why did it not bring forward for debate its policies on school discipline?

**Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP):** I am curious about the member's claim that we are taking a narrow, nationalistic view of history. Does that mean that he would condemn schools in Argentina for teaching about José de San Martín in their history classes on the grounds that that would teach young Argentinean pupils how their nation was formed and how it struggled to be free from the imperial power—in this case, Spain?

**Ken Macintosh:** My point is that, given the agreement in the chamber—and probably outside it, too—on the importance of Scottish history, the SNP has brought the debate to the chamber to promote not the benefits of history but a Scottish viewpoint. Mr Wilson's remarks absolutely back me up in that fear

Even if we restrict ourselves to the shortcomings of studying history in Scottish schools, one of the biggest problems that our teachers have identified is the lack of literacy skills that some young people display, which prevents them from accessing the history curriculum. Why did the SNP not bring forward a debate on literacy or numeracy?

I hope that all members agree to Labour's addendum to the motion. It adds a note of realism in identifying some of the difficulties that history teachers and others in our schools face and the political action that is needed.

**The Minister for Children and Early Years (Adam Ingram):** Mr Macintosh will be aware of Carol Craig's work, which stems from a reflection that Scots lack confidence. One reason for that is that they have little knowledge of the glories of their past achievements, whether the Scottish enlightenment or the contribution that Scots have made to the modern world. Unfortunately, all too often in the past, our children have not been taught about those in school. Our aim is to build the confidence of our young people. In future, they should see the world as their oyster and feel that they can achieve a lot. That is the whole point of the debate.

**Ken Macintosh:** I agree with some of what Mr Ingram said, and I certainly agree with Carol Craig's comments on confidence building. In fact, in the video that we all as MSPs made in the first session on the things that we could do to transform Scotland, I made the same points. However, learning history is about building confidence. Mr Ingram is talking not about learning history but about learning to become more Scottish. I do not see how learning to become more Scottish makes someone more confident. In contrast, learning about history gives people confidence.

Of course, I am sure that history teachers and others will have brought their issues and anxieties to the attention of the minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. For example, the move to broader social studies faculties has left a residue of worry about whether the change has lowered the status of discrete disciplines such as history and geography.

There are concerns about integrated teaching. Few are against a more collaborative approach to teaching or the need for greater coherence in our approach to social studies. However, we have to question, or at least monitor, whether non-history teachers are as good at teaching history as those teachers who have expertise in and are enthusiastic about the subject. Although those are matters for local interpretation and decision making, we should beware of decisions that are taken in the name of integrated teaching that are budget cuts or cost-saving measures in disguise.

I draw the minister's attention to a letter from Mr Duncan Toms, the president of the Scottish Association of Teachers of History, that was published in *The Scotsman* last week. Mr Toms made three very good points. First, if we are to teach more Scottish history—which I hope we agree on—will we have to lose another broader part of the history curriculum? Will the gain come at the expense of equally important British, European or world history? What gives way for that additional learning?

Secondly, it is all very well talking about the importance of Scottish history, but where is the additional investment? Where is the money for new books, high-quality resources and new curricular material? If we are to expand the range of options that we make available to our young people, surely the Executive should lead on that.

Mr Toms's third point, which I strongly endorse, is that history exists not to help us to puff ourselves up, but to help us to understand how society has developed. History provides knowledge, but, more important, it helps us to evaluate and to develop our critical faculties, and thereby to weigh the evidence and arguments for ourselves, not to view subjects through a nationalist prism.

The last time the SNP raised the issue of history for debate, Fiona Hyslop in opposition set up the false premise that somehow the Labour-led Scottish Executive was hell-bent on eradicating history from the curriculum—"to make history history", as she put it. Labour's threat, she said, lay in the curriculum for excellence, which was going to destroy history as a stand-alone subject in secondary 1 and secondary 2. Well, those very reforms have come to fruition and have been published under this Administration, and—surprise, surprise—they are no longer a threat but

a blessing. If the curriculum for excellence was such a threat to the teaching of history when Peter Peacock was the Minister for Education and Young People, why is it not a threat to the teaching of history under this new SNP Administration? The minister's scaremongering then can now be seen for what it was.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning has talked in this Parliament about promoting a Scottish world view in our education system. *The Times Educational Supplement* this week reflects on how her Scottishness can be translated into education. Overwhelmingly, what leaps out from the comments of the various writers is that, in the hands of a good teacher, the immediacy and familiarity of our own experience can bring a subject alive, but that as an end in itself it is limited and parochial.

I quote Mr Toms again:

"For a young person growing up in today's global society, too much Scottish history can be as disadvantageous as too little."

**Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I hold in my hand a piece of Scottish history—the "Chambers Educational Course: History of Scotland". The book is 130 years old. If the education system in the 1870s had the insight to teach Scottish history, what is Labour afraid of today? National pride, maybe?

**Ken Macintosh:** I thank Ms McKelvie for her intervention, but all these interventions just confirm my fear that the debate is about national pride in Scotland and not about teaching history and educating and opening young minds. I was worried that Ms McKelvie was holding an SNP manifesto from the 1970s, containing many other broken SNP promises.

The minister and SNP members have no monopoly on Scottishness. The minister's narrow view of what it means to be Scottish is not mine. I am no less Scottish than any nationalist here, and I am no less proud of Scotland's history than any member on the Government seats. However, I do not view history as a way of indoctrinating our young people with a narrow view of the world—quite the reverse. It is a way of opening our eyes to enable us to understand the world around us. History enables us to know not only who we are and where we came from, but—more important—what we may be. History is not about propaganda. It is about using the intellect and releasing the imagination.

SNP members made a lot of noise in opposition about what Labour was going to do. They created a bogeyman in the curriculum for excellence that they claimed would threaten history. However, in office, they have changed nothing. The Learning

and Teaching Scotland reforms and the Scottish Qualifications Authority review were both started under a Labour Administration and there has been no change in policy direction.

The minister may believe that by promoting Scottish history she will promote her view of the world. I believe that, by supporting the study of Scottish history, we will give a whole new generation of pupils access to the sort of liberal education that will enable them to look beyond these shores, to challenge the orthodoxy of received opinion, and, I hope, to build a better world.

I move amendment S3M-1238.2, to insert at end:

"further recognises that without basic literacy and numeracy skills young people have difficulty accessing the curriculum, including history, and calls on the Scottish Government to provide leadership to tackle literacy and numeracy in Scottish schools which will facilitate an improved understanding of history."

15:23

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** The Scottish Conservatives are pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the important issue of Scottish history in the school curriculum. I thought that I might have wandered into the wrong debate earlier, because the minister was eight minutes into her 11-minute speech before she even mentioned history. I am delighted that we got there in the end.

The debate really started a few weeks ago, with comments made by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning in *The Scotsman* about the teaching of Scottish history. I agreed with much of what she said. Of course, Fiona Hyslop is by no means the first Scottish politician to take an interest in Scottish history. In January 1997, the then Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Forsyth, asked the Scottish Qualifications Authority to consider introducing a standard grade in Scottish history. That coincided with the then imminent publication of the final consultation paper of the Scottish consultative council on the curriculum's review of Scottish history in the curriculum, which had also been requested by Michael Forsyth's civil service team.

I point out as gently as I can to Ken Macintosh that the proposals were abandoned in May 1997 by the new Government, following Labour's victory in the general election. Rather ironically, it was reported at the time that the review had been suppressed because it was thought by the new Labour Government to be "too nationalist" in tone. Here we are, 11 years on, with the current Government following in the footsteps of the Conservatives all those years ago, and the need for proper teaching of Scottish history is as important as ever.

The level of ignorance among many young people about the history of our country is quite startling. A recent survey showed that when offered reasons why Scotland became part of the United Kingdom, 37 per cent of young Scots said that it was because English forces conquered us and 28 per cent thought that it was a result of a referendum, but only 24 per cent opted for the correct answer, which is that the Scots Parliament at the time voted for it. Similarly, the battle of Culloden was seen as a conflict between “wholly Scottish and wholly English armies” by 41 per cent. Of course, most Scots at the time of the battle of Culloden supported the Government’s side—a fact that is all too often forgotten. As we know from history, when news of the result of the battle reached the central belt there were celebrations in Scottish cities at the defeat of the Jacobites. That history is not well remembered today. Children were similarly unenlightened about Scotland’s contribution both to the industrial revolution and the enlightenment. One child even thought that Ramsay MacDonald was famous for the invention of the hamburger.

We therefore applaud the Government’s intention to strengthen the teaching of Scottish history in the school curriculum. However, we have some qualifications, which are addressed in my amendment. We certainly do not wish Scottish history to become parochial and inward looking.

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Hear, hear.

**Murdo Fraser:** I am delighted to hear Rob Gibson agreeing with me.

From 1707 onwards, Scottish history is linked with that of Great Britain, and it of course needs to be seen in a world context. Like Ken Macintosh, we do not want a nationalist tinge to Scottish history teaching. Enough myths already exist about Scottish history without Government seeking to add to them and present a “Braveheart” version of our country’s past. I was reassured by what the minister said on that point, although she was rather undermined by SNP back benchers’ interventions—perhaps she will be undermined again.

**Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP):** What does the member suggest would be a nationalist tinge to the teaching of Scottish history?

**Murdo Fraser:** If the member listened to his colleagues, he would know exactly what our concerns are.

We should not be inward looking; we should be outward looking and we should recognise Scotland’s role in the United Kingdom and in the world. We make that point gently in our amendment, and the Liberals make it rather less gently in theirs, but the point is important. I hope

that SNP members support the amendments, because that would reinforce my view of what, I hope, can unite us all—that we should not have a partisan viewpoint on the teaching of history. I think that we can all agree on that.

We need to be wary that we do not concentrate too much on the negative aspects of Scottish history. Whether we are talking about the collapse of the Darien scheme, the aftermath of Culloden or the Highland clearances, too often there is a tendency to portray the Scots as victims. I remember my grandmother complaining to me that the only Scottish history that she was taught in school was about the clearances. The fact that she started her school education in 1897 demonstrates how long the problem has been around. We all know that Scots have made a tremendous contribution to the world, both as part of the UK and on our own. The teaching of Scottish history needs to be about celebrating our successes in the past as much as hearing about the darker aspects.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop):** Does the member recognise that one of this Administration’s contributions was to include in the draft science outcomes that were published some months ago the history of Scottish science and the inventions that Scotland has contributed to the world, in order to inspire young Scots’ interest in science?

**Murdo Fraser:** Absolutely. I am pleased that that point was reinforced, although stressing the successes of the past is nothing new in the teaching of science. However, it is important for young Scots to have role models and to learn about those who led the way in the past.

Going back to Adam Ingram’s point, I am something of a sceptic about Carol Craig’s thesis about a crisis of confidence. However, any ammunition that helps us to ensure that more Scottish history is taught in our schools and is taught to young people is much to be welcomed.

If we are to teach Scottish history well, we must have high-quality courses and ensure that the correct teaching resources are available. That will require Government investment, including investment in our teachers. That point is also addressed in our amendment.

We must remember that we have never had a nationally set compulsory curriculum in Scotland, and therefore it is for individual schools to decide which subjects are offered. I do not want that situation to change. By all means, let us encourage the teaching of Scottish history, but let us avoid a top-down approach from the centre.

I hope that the Government is prepared to take on board the concerns that I have raised. I welcome the general thrust of its work on the

teaching of Scottish history and I have pleasure in moving the amendment in my name.

I move amendment S3M-1238.1, to insert at end:

“however, emphasises that it is important that Scottish history is taught in a balanced manner, which encourages young people to evaluate the evidence critically and come to their own conclusions, and that it is taught in its rightful context, namely alongside local, British, European and world history, and further emphasises that courses must be of a high quality with teachers being supported by new teaching resources and continuing professional development training as necessary.”

15:30

**Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD):** I am happy to speak to and move the amendment in my name and, indeed, to take part in this—dare I say it—historic debate. It is a real relief to be able to use the word “historic” without it being attached to the word “concordat” for a change.

The purpose of the debate is to focus on issues relating to history. As Murdo Fraser said, I was perhaps a bit more pointed in my amendment in expressing my concerns about the motion than the Conservatives were in their amendment, but there is an issue to be examined.

We must be clear that the legitimate responsibility for content and structure rests with the SQA and the teaching profession. There is no question about that. The Liberal Democrats endorse the SQA's decision to include a compulsory Scottish history element in the curriculum but urge caution on the Government—any Government but, given that we have an SNP Government, the remark is addressed to it in this instance—that interference in the specifics and context of subject matter is not a matter for Government of any political or philosophical complexion in any circumstances.

What we do about history matters. The often-repeated saying that those who forget the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them has a lot of truth, but we must ask what the lessons of history are. That is not a question to which politicians should necessarily give too much attention. The attempt at defining the lessons is a ground for new conflicts, as we have heard from some of the speeches and interventions thus far. History is not a recipe book; past events are never replicated in quite the same way in the present. Historical events are infinitely variable and their interpretations are constantly shifting. There are no certainties to be found in the past, nor should we attempt to drive any narrow political agenda by using the teaching of Scottish history to justify any particular party-political or philosophical perspective.

We can learn from history how past generations thought and acted, how they responded to the

demands of their times and how they resolved their problems. We can learn by analogy but not necessarily by example, because our circumstances will always be different from theirs. The main thing that history can teach us is that our actions and inactions have consequences and that once certain choices have been made, they cannot easily be undone and cannot be undone without further consequences.

**Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** Does Hugh O'Donnell agree that there is a further important philosophical point? History is also about the thought processes of people in the past and how to understand them within their settings. It is not necessarily about what happened or what the results were but about how people in the past thought and why they thought the way they did.

**Hugh O'Donnell:** That is a well-considered point and I am happy to accept it.

Student interest in history as a subject in Scotland is relatively stable, certainly at standard or higher grade. There were 34,900 pupils in total in 2007, slightly fewer in 2006 and 2005 and about 34,000 again in 2004. That shows a good interest in Scottish history and history as a subject in general.

As the minister said, the study of history also develops analytical, evaluative, investigative and communicative skills. Although we agree with the sentiments that the cabinet secretary has expressed outside this place about the importance of our young people understanding our historical roots and the experiences that brought us to this point, we must ensure that history is contextualised against the wider backdrop of European and world events.

Liberal Democrats are concerned about whether there will be enough time. Will the proposals require a rejigging of timetables and of opportunities for continuing professional development for the teaching profession? Is it likely that the cabinet secretary will consider cuts in other areas to accommodate history? That needs to be clarified, and I hope that the cabinet secretary will do that when she sums up.

To return to the issue of content, it would not be appropriate for any Government, and particularly—we cannot escape it—a nationalist Government, to use the teaching of history as a mechanism for blaming the trials and tribulations of our country on a near neighbour, regardless of how attractive that might be to a party that is bent on independence. I have had assurances from SNP back benchers that that is not the intent. Nor is it acceptable for any Government to do such a thing without a strong comparative and contextualised element. Otherwise, we head down the road of Joseph Stalin and Dr Goebbels.

It is not enough just to teach more Scottish history. If it is to be effective and engage young people, it must be about more than kings, queens and princes; it must include social history, local history and even personal history.

**Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP):** I hesitate to intervene once the names of Goebbels and Stalin have been mentioned. While I agree with the member that, obviously, no Government would wish to use history as a means of espousing nationalist propaganda, I am sure that he agrees with me that there have been instances—I can remember some from school—of history being used to espouse unionist propaganda.

**Hugh O'Donnell:** I am not quite sure how to respond to that—it just reinforces the points that were being made.

Let us welcome this opportunity to enlighten our young people about Scotland's role in the world. The Government must remember that we are not made by our history alone. It is our actions in the present and our responsibilities for our future that dictate the success of any country.

I move amendment S3M-1238.3, to insert at end:

“and believes that history should be taught without political interference.”

15:38

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** As a history graduate and a writer of history, I declare a degree of interest. As a member of the Scottish National Party, I hope to analyse the context and content of our history as it is applied in schools today. It is only three years since the previous Minister for Education and Young People, Peter Peacock, said publicly that history could potentially disappear as a discrete subject in S1 and S2 classes, for various reasons. Several Glasgow and Ayrshire secondary schools had axed the subject of history completely, yet Mr Peacock declined to make any public comment on that.

**Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Rob Gibson:** I am not taking any interventions at this stage.

We have come a long way to arrive at the Scottish Government position today, which underpins the confident expression of the importance of Scottish history in Scottish schools. When the SQA announced last November the near-future inclusion of a compulsory Scottish question in higher history, a spokesman for the Educational Institute of Scotland said:

“While it is important that pupils learn about the wider world, it is equally important that they have an appreciation of the history of their own country and its culture.”

I believe that the aims of the debate are to explore Scottish history content in the syllabus to ensure that continuity through school life gives pupils the general sweep of our country's story.

As Professor Christopher Smout, the Queen's historiographer, said,

“Exact dates aren't important. But if you lose a sense of the sweep and depth of history and of why things were happening, it becomes boring.”

Did not Peter Peacock say something about not subjecting pupils to boring subjects? Fortunately, Learning and Teaching Scotland has tackled the issue decisively through the curriculum for excellence. We are told:

“the quality of communication between primary and secondary schools has been variable. Hence the development of a balanced and coherent experience for pupils as they progress through the school system is far from guaranteed.”

That was the problem that we faced. We must solve it now, by seeing that that sweep is possible.

That suggests that new governmental direction is required to ensure that educationists place Scottish history firmly in the curriculum. As one of the liberal arts, the subject should be used to allow people to achieve the four capacities in the curriculum for excellence—to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

The context of the debate was summarised by the former chief inspector of schools, Douglas Osler, who said:

“In Scotland's present situation it's important that children know about Scottish culture and history and I don't think it is the kind of thing you can do in a single dose in S1 or S2 or even in primary”.

He continued:

“It should not be an option. It is as important as learning English and mathematics and other major subjects because Scotland is a nation, it has a parliament and it is important that Scottish children know about their own identity if they are going to be able to relate to the identity of other nations in Europe and beyond.”

At this point, I must comment on the amendments.

**Ken Macintosh:** Will Rob Gibson give way?

**Rob Gibson:** I will come to the member in a minute.

Murdo Fraser takes a time-honoured path. His amendment mentions the need for balance, good resources, high-quality teaching and a trajectory from local history to British, European and world history. As he accepts the importance of Scottish history in the school curriculum, his amendment

seems acceptable to me. However, he might spare a thought for Scottish children, perhaps in the north, seeing the links to our neighbours in countries such as Ireland, Norway and Iceland as being more than a nod towards the arc of prosperity; rather they should be viewed as links with fellow northern European peoples living in harsh climates whom the balmy south ignores and whose cultures tend to be democratic and communitarian, like ours.

Professor Duncan Rice of the University of Aberdeen noted that point in his 2005 Sabhal Mòr Ostaig lecture. He said that as a nation we are neither isolated nor at the end of the line. He said:

“To put it crudely, there is confidence to be found in not being alone”.

He continued:

“confident nations will become economically productive nations, which is what our generation of Scots is so desperately worried about.”

Even three years ago, people could see the difficulty of trying to make our history relate to the people with whom we must deal and who are all around us.

**Ken Macintosh:** Will Mr Gibson take an intervention?

**Rob Gibson:** I am coming to the member.

Surely, despite their amendment, the Liberal Democrats do not deny the facts behind the HMIE concerns about

“whether pupils in primary and early secondary were being given a full understanding of Scottish history because of the freedom given to schools over what is taught.”

We must consider means of giving pupils a broader opportunity. I hope that education experts will consider the broad curriculum that Professor Tom Devine has suggested and that we will not be diverted into talking about issues such as literacy—as the Labour Party has been—because we all agree on those issues. We should consider the content of the curriculum more carefully to ensure that our young people have the broadest possible view. I am sorry that I cannot say as much as I wished to about the detail of trying to inspire young people to take such a view. However, through song and story, dance and empathy, the young eyes of children of all abilities can be opened. Scottish history, with good local examples, is the key.

**Ken Macintosh:** Can I try to intervene once more, Mr Gibson?

**Rob Gibson:** Sorry—I am in my final minute.

There are great characters to explore in Scottish history. What sparks can fly from good history teaching! It is high time that Scottish history caught light in our school curriculum. We should

not shy away from deciding to stress its centrality in our schools, as the motion proposes.

15:45

**Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab):**

As Ken Macintosh said, the skills and discipline that are essential for the study of history are important in their own right. Young people who are trained in historical method learn how to question received wisdom, examine sources critically, test motive and judge evidence. All of those skills are relevant, regardless of the career path that a person chooses to follow. Today, we might have some critical examination of the claims of ministers to do something differently, which is a position for which they have advanced no evidence whatsoever. Indeed, Rob Gibson's shameless rewriting of recent history is the best evidence of the need to examine very closely the SNP's claims and motives in this debate.

I studied history at school and university and, on occasion, I have taught history to undergraduate students. My doctoral thesis was concerned with modern African history, but I also completed a course on modern Scottish history in the fourth year of my undergraduate degree, which had a strong focus on the last 200 years, including the Highland clearances, the industrial revolution and red Clydeside.

However, long before I read Karl Marx's interesting views on Highland history, I learned a good deal more about the history of Scotland in general and Gaelic Scotland in particular from my parents and grandparents. Stories that have been passed down from one generation to another in Gaelic culture are a collective memory of the history of communities and form an invaluable record of what has often been a marginalised part of Scotland's story.

As a boy, I also imbibed the history of Scotland that was supported by BBC schools radio and taught in primary schools. That is where many of my generation got their first formal taste of Scottish history, and the high quality of much of that material remains vivid for me.

I welcome the proposition that the history of Scotland should be part of the history that is taught in Scotland's schools, but it is essential that it is not taught in isolation.

The earliest written account of events in Scotland dates from the first century of the Christian era, which means that the present century will mark 2,000 years of recorded history in this country. In all of those 20 centuries, what is most striking is the extent to which Scotland's history has been intertwined with the history of other countries and of other parts of these islands. The truly historic events have been not those that

affected Scotland alone but those points in our history when our relationships with other countries changed—usually, when those relationships became closer than they had been before.

The arrival of the Romans in the first century, the coming of St Columba 500 years after that, the development of feudalism 1,000 years ago, the beginning and the end of the old alliance with France and the choice, instead, of alliance with England are all critical milestones in Scotland's history and they are all characterised by key decisions and developments in Scotland's relations with the outside world. The past 500 years are even more about the story of Scotland's relations with the wider world—the period of reform and union, of emigration and empire, of democracy and, now, devolution, of the war with fascism and the post-war welfare state. Scottish history is the story not of a self-absorbed nation looking in on itself, but of a country that has prospered in the world precisely when it has been most outward looking, forward looking and international in its perspective.

We want Scottish history to be a firm part of the curriculum, but we do not want that to happen by leaving out the common history that we share with our neighbours. We also want our children to be taught a British history that reflects the importance of Scotland and all our neighbours to the development of the British state and society in recent centuries. We cannot ask that others recognise the importance of Scotland's contribution if we do not, equally, acknowledge the importance of the British, the European and the global context in which Scotland has flourished.

History should not be taught as if the human experience can be divided into national silos, whether they be Scottish, British or even Argentinian. The Scottish history that is taught in our schools must be as relevant to those whose forebears lived in Pakistan or in Poland, in Donegal or in Durham, as it is to those who can trace their Scottish ancestry back through many generations.

The way in which our schools teach Scottish history must reflect the history of regions such as the Highlands and Islands, the north-east and the south-west, which have different historical experiences from the core areas of the medieval Scottish kingdom.

One of the past limitations on the appeal of Scottish history to our young people was the approach that a generation ago saw too many Scottish history books end in 1707 or 1746. If the teaching of history is partly of value because of the light that it sheds on the present and future, then the more recent the history, the clearer its relevance will be to those who learn it.

I welcome the recognition of the importance of history in general and of Scottish history in particular. I emphasise that those who teach history should first understand it and, therefore, the importance of advanced study for those who teach. The Labour amendment is right to emphasise the importance of basic learning skills for students of history. Those basic learning skills give access to the whole curriculum and the range of additional and critical skills that the study of history can bring.

The history that our young people are taught must be balanced, must reflect the whole of our historical experience, and must put Scotland's history in its widest context. If it does that, it will add to the skills and knowledge of future generations.

15:50

**Christopher Harvie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** The mark of the patriotic citizen is often less pride in his or her country than shame when it betrays itself. Let us think of Robert Burns's "parcel of rogues", James Joyce's "centre of paralysis", or Hugh MacDiarmid's splendid phrase that to stay in Scotland meant "being trampled to death by geese".

When we remember our history, there is a negative mood to it. As my old friend Iain Crichton Smith wrote, it is like coming back

"from a warm room  
to an old castle  
hissing with ghosts."

That element of Scottish history is not value free or terribly classroom friendly. Yes, there is a ginn element in it, but try to extract a Scottish history from a British account and what do we get? Let us consider Simon Schama's preposterous BBC "A History of Britain" and the six references to Scotland in the final volume.

History cannot teach lessons, but it can recreate a political landscape and show where changes occurred and what long-term effects were caused. It starts and ends local. I learned that at Kelso high school, where my fine teachers of history and geography were both Scots and English, but they lived in the shadow of the ballads and of David Hume.

I want to mention this David Hume quotation because it is so marvellous. When he gave up writing history in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, he said that he had given up because he was

"too old, too fat, too lazy and too rich".

I wish that I could say the last few words, but I cannot.

Scottish history in its various episodes has also been British, European and world history. That



does not make it as much unionist as ambiguous, which I will show by exploring one particular episode. It is highly relevant today, and it is perhaps our country's finest hour. I phrase this as an exam question. Subtract the Clyde munitions district from world war one and Germany would have won: discuss.

The Germans had not expected that a peaceable industrial region would convert itself in a matter of months into the biggest arsenal in the world. The district supplied the western front with tanks, artillery, aircraft and, above all, high-explosive shell. It made good the losses inflicted on the merchant marine by the U-boat warfare.

The adaptation was crucial but it ruined the Scottish economy. It was like the peasant in the Chekhov story who for a bet raises a huge load on to a cart, then falls exhausted and never rises again. By 1922, Scotland had gone from "workshop of the world" to "that distressed region". It was a shattering reversal and—this is the contemporary relevance—one from which the small manufacturing level of our economy never recovered. We saved ourselves in the big industries by nestling in the fur of the great beasts: the railways, which became a British entrepreneurial project in 1923; the banks; the British state; and ICI—the classic example of the large British company, which was sold about six months ago to the Dutch. Our entrepreneurialism was maimed. In the 1970s, we did something similar with North Sea oil—astonishing technical feats were followed, again, by exhaustion.

Now, with those experiences, which are accessible only through our history, we face having to adapt to an amazing third chance: the renewables revolution—God be praised. That is crucial. This time, we cannot afford to get things wrong.

We must not exaggerate Scotland's position and our historical landscape but keep them in proportion—Scotland in proportion to the infinite, as MacDiarmid once put it. We must get things right in schools, not by exaggerating the importance of our country's experience, but by equipping people to analyse how we got from there to here, as MacDiarmid said.

As the great German liberal Gustav Stresemann said—to be echoed by that fine English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams—to be an internationalist, one must first be a nationalist. That is not to produce any particular programme but the line of the disinterested patriot.

I return to a quotation from a poet who was also an economist—Alexander Gray. It moved me in Germany and it moves me today. It is:

"This is my country,  
The land that begat me.

These windy spaces  
Are surely my own.  
And those who toil here  
In the sweat of their faces  
Are flesh of my flesh,  
And bone of my bone."

That man was a liberal and not a nationalist, but the attachment to a place is not dishonourable and I hope that I will die still believing in it.

15:56

**John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD):** The debate is becoming more interesting as it goes along. What do we mean when we suggest that our history should be taught in our schools? What history are we talking about? Is it the history of Scotland or the international history in which the Scottish nation has been involved? Do we start here and now? Do we go back to the previous century, the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or even further, to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and before that? If we are to start teaching history seriously in schools, there will be quite a debate about where the starting point should be. Where do we propose to start and end the journey through our history, of which there is much to relate to our young people?

I am sure that, like me, many members easily remember their school days, when history lessons consisted of a list of dates that we had to memorise without having any great explanation of the event that the date recorded. We all remember the dates of the battle of Hastings and the battle of Sheriffmuir. We had to know the date, but we did not need to know anything about the event.

As a few members have said, when we teach our history, we must be careful not to create division and dissent among our colleagues and with other countries. That is a great problem. Members will have heard this week about commemorations of the Holocaust. When young people in the street were asked about the Holocaust, they did not know what it was. That is a great shame. I am sure that our young people would be glad to know about other important events, if they had the opportunity to learn about them.

We must be careful that whatever structures we put in place to teach history are monitored. It is most important to teach our own history, by which I mean history that is unadulterated by the politically correct. We do not want political interference in the curriculum. To avoid conflict, what is taught should be straightforward and should have no political slant. That said, I would like the syllabus to concentrate on the positive aspects of our history—not so much on the battles and dates as on the achievements of the Scottish people, to give students a positive, hopeful view of

the future and to let them know of the great achievements of the past. Although it is important for the young to learn about our kings and the Highland clearances, if I were to go around the Highlands today, speaking to primary school pupils about Patrick Sellar, would they know who I was talking about? No, I do not think that they would. They might think that he was an itinerant Irishman who came to the Highlands to earn a corn o' bread; they would not know that Patrick Sellar was the anathema of all estate managers.

It would be far better to focus on how Scots of the enlightened period have changed the world. Does the young gentleman who comes to school on his 21-speed bicycle, which he parks in the playground, realise that he is due that privilege because of another great Scotsman, Kirkpatrick Macmillan, who invented the bicycle? No, he does not, but he is glad to have his bike. He is also glad to have the surface on which his bike travels, but does he know that that surface was created by a Mr MacAdam from Dumfries—hence the word tarmacadam?

If I said to pupils, "James Watt", they would think that I was talking about a professional boxer from the Glasgow area; they would never realise that it was the famous James Watt of the steam engine fame. James Clerk Maxwell discovered electromagnetism, but pupils do not hear a word about him at school. And what about John Logie Baird, who gave us the miracle of television? I wonder how many kids in primary school know that the television was invented in Scotland, or that Alexander Fleming gave us the great drug penicillin, which has been of such benefit to mankind the world over. It all started here in Scotland. When they are running around, sending text messages on mobile phones, do they know that the forerunner of their telephone was created by Alexander Graham Bell, another great Scotsman? There was also Adam Smith, the father of modern economics. We have all those things to tell young people in our schools and I am sure that they would be delighted to hear about them. We must do a lot more to encourage awareness of those people.

As a nation, we have a lot to be proud of, and it is far better for us to concentrate on the positive, world-changing Scots in history. We should not navel gaze into the history of battles and oppression. I very much hope that the new Scottish history syllabus contains some, if not all, of what I have mentioned. I commend the Scottish Government for choosing to introduce Scottish history into the modern school curriculum.

16:03

**Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP):** Studying history should not be about

staring aimlessly into the past, reliving the glories or lamenting the honourable defeats. It is as much about understanding where we have come from, making sense of where we are now and, more important, helping us to prepare for the future with confidence.

When I was a schoolboy in Kilmarnock in the 1970s, the prospect of facing—in some cases, memorising—the next 10 pages on the Tudors came a close second to the attraction of a visit to the dentist to have a tooth pulled. It was dull, uninspiring and painful, and it had no relevance. It felt like a memory exercise to record and regurgitate facts, figures and dates and I quickly abandoned it as an academic interest. I knew little or nothing about my country and the contribution that local people had made to our development over the centuries.

If someone had told me about the strong connections that Bruce and Wallace have to my part of Ayrshire and the huge part that they played in shaping Scotland; or that the Kilmarnock radicals such as John Kennedy, Thomas Baird and Alexander McLaren had the audacity to demand parliamentary reform in the 1820s and were imprisoned for their efforts; or that local men such as Andrew Barclay, John Fulton and Alexander Fleming made a significant contribution to engineering, science and medicine that benefited the world; perhaps then I would have been a worthy scholar like my friend and colleague Professor Harvie. Alas, history fell from my radar and I focused on science and technology, which had meaning and relevance and gave me the prospect of a job. It was an easy choice to make at the time.

Thankfully, we have travelled a long way since then. An examination of history teaching and its place in the modern context of social studies within the curriculum for excellence shows an approach that is light years away from that taken in my schooldays. LTS's draft outcomes and experiences paper shows clearly the intention to allow teachers to

"raise the bar", permitting greater depth and challenging young people to be ambitious in their learning".

For the first time, our children can learn about their communities and Scotland's development as a nation, and can begin to see the world around them from a Scottish perspective. That is a crucial change in the curriculum for excellence framework.

The framework specifies clear outcomes relating to people, past events and societies, and that young people should be expected to develop a "wider sense" of their

"heritage and identity as a British, European or global citizen",

which rather neatly incorporates the Conservative amendment and should reassure us all that there can be no political interference, as mentioned in the Liberal Democrat amendment.

The approach that is taken in the curriculum for excellence is consistent, whether it is applied to the social sciences or to literacy and numeracy. It proposes clarity in teaching, experiences that will enhance learning and meaningful outcomes for the children. The concerns and issues that are expressed in all three of the amendments are dealt with in the curriculum for excellence framework.

Some of the material that is available to enrich the learning and teaching of history is quite incredible and is a testament to the great work that has been achieved and is continuing in Scotland. The power of technology to offer rich new learning environments to our youngsters is a huge benefit in helping us to deliver the outcomes of the curriculum for excellence. It would be remiss of me not to mention some of the projects and organisations that bring those ideas to life. The future museum project, involving the Ayrshire councils and Dumfries and Galloway Council is a fantastic online resource. It is full of materials that help youngsters to appreciate their local heritage, which might have been ignored for many years.

LTS has developed and produced a wonderful variety of material to support learning and teaching and it currently offers a wide range of Scottish history titles that youngsters and adults can enjoy online. So, too, do many other organisations, such as the Scottish cultural resources access network and the Scottish interactive technology centre. If I may, I will pay tribute to an old friend, Tony van der Kuyl, who died last week. He was the director of SITC, and larger than life. The rich learning experience that many of our children enjoy is down to the vision and dedication of people like Tony van der Kuyl. We shall be forever in his debt.

Scotland has nothing to fear and everything to gain from placing its own history at the heart of the curriculum. It is a move that has been born of a new and developing confidence that recognises the past, establishes a new context for Scotland in the present and offers our young people a glimpse of what the future might hold. The framework of the curriculum for excellence allows us to explore all those possibilities in a mature and critical fashion. The application of technology can unleash the potential of exciting new ways of learning and teaching.

Studying Scottish history today is a far cry from a visit to the dentist. Let us embrace the approach and support the Government's motion.

16:09

**Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab):** As always, I am happy to be taking part in an education debate. Last week, some members raised concerns about how few health debates there have been since last May's election. The same cannot be said of education; we seem to have at least one education debate a week and I am pleased about that. I am pleased that our SNP Government agrees with Labour that education should be a top priority because of the benefits and opportunities that it affords children, young people and, yes, older learners and because of the role that it plays in Scotland's economy.

I fully support what the motion refers to as

"the recent decision by the Scottish Qualifications Authority to include questions on Scottish history as a compulsory component of the Higher History examination."

The motion also welcomes

"the publication of the draft social studies outcomes and experiences by Learning and Teaching Scotland".

As Ken Macintosh said, the review was initiated while my colleague Peter Peacock was Minister for Education and Young People. I, too, recall the over-reaction to that review from certain SNP members, including the now Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, who came up with the very catchy phrase that the Executive was trying to "make history history". That was not true then and I hope that the cabinet secretary accepts that it is not true now.

It is right that consideration is given to how social studies were and are taught. Although the study of history is vital to children and young people's understanding of who they are and why Scotland developed in the way that it did, consideration also needs to be given to how such subjects are taught to ensure that they are relevant. The fact that that could be said of any subject does not make it any less applicable to history. I wonder whether I am alone in noticing that fewer young people now choose history as an option. That might say something about the way in which history is taught and about young people's views of its relevance, or it might be simply a practical issue about how schools group the subjects that students can choose.

**Maureen Watt:** Does the member accept that, like me, young people might have given up history precisely because it is not relevant to their situation or their country? If they are required to learn about William the Conqueror for the umpteenth time, they really will be put off history.

**Mary Mulligan:** I agree that history needs to be relevant, but there is also a practical element to the issue. I know that my own children chose modern studies because, much though they wanted to study history, it was not a timetable

option. The practical issues also need to be addressed.

My own experience of being taught Scottish history was of being taught about the Stuart monarchy. That was all. Although that was perhaps of interest to someone who went on to become the MSP for Linlithgow—the birthplace of Mary Queen of Scots—it was clearly not a wide-ranging and comprehensive view. I wish that I had learned about Scotland's industrial history and the great scientists, engineers and inventors to whom John Farquhar Munro referred, who came from Scotland and had such an impact worldwide. As a woman, I would have been interested in learning about James Young Simpson, who was born in 1811 in Bathgate and went on to discover the anaesthetic properties of chloroform—for which many women who have experienced childbirth are very grateful.

Having mentioned scientists, I will make my one criticism of today's debate, which is that it might have been more productive if the motion had been broader, as the minister's opening speech was. For example, we need to consider how we encourage more students to study sciences and languages. We know that the study of scientific disciplines in school is a prerequisite for a degree in science, engineering or medicine, all of which are essential for the economy and our social welfare. Beyond that, scientific knowledge is important not only for those who want to pursue such careers, but for all of us, so that we can make informed personal decisions on issues such as climate change or energy policy.

I support the amendment in the name of my Labour colleague Rhona Brankin. It makes eminent sense to acknowledge that, if school pupils do not have basic literacy and numeracy skills, there will be no way that they can benefit from history or any other subject. Just last Friday, I met young people from Burnhouse School in Whitburn in my constituency—I know that the cabinet secretary has also visited the school—who have made it to high school without the basic numeracy and literacy skills that they need. There may be many reasons for that, but it is up to us to find solutions. Our first priority should be to tackle those reasons and to give all our children basic skills.

I will also support the Conservative amendment. History should be wide ranging, and young people should feel able, when studying it, to challenge the record of the past that is given to them, recognising that the individuals, the time and the place concerned all have an impact on what is recounted.

I will also support the Liberal Democrat amendment—even though Liberal Democrat members may not do so, given that they are no

longer in the chamber. [*Interruption.*] I apologise to Mr Purvis, who is on his feet at the back. I cannot imagine whom Mr O'Donnell may have had in mind when he decided to lodge his amendment, but it is in the *Business Bulletin* and I am happy to support it.

This has been a relatively consensual debate, as I expected. The SNP Government may have missed an opportunity to have a more wide-ranging debate on the curriculum. However, I suspect that, given the number of education debates that we have had, we will return to the issue at some stage. I am happy to support the motion and the amendments.

16:16

**Gil Paterson (West of Scotland) (SNP):** I welcome the opportunity to support the Government's motion and will do so. My initial instinct was to support the amendments, but some of the interpretation and ill-informed innuendo from Ken Gibson, in particular—[*Laughter.*] I meant to say Ken Macintosh. I apologise to Ken Gibson for associating him with Ken Macintosh's comments, which were not fitting in this chamber. I hope that the member who winds up for Labour will indicate what the Labour Party thinks about those comments.

**Ken Macintosh:** Will Mr Paterson identify some of the comments to which he took exception?

**Gil Paterson:** If you are not big enough to understand what you were saying, I will not do your research for you. Frankly, that shows the level to which you have dropped.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan):** Please do not address the member in the second person.

**Gil Paterson:** I am sorry, Presiding Officer. Will you tell the member to behave himself?

This debate is not just about teaching Scottish history for its own sake, but about our children understanding their heritage and why Scotland is where it is today. I will use my speech to highlight some of the areas of Scottish life that our children need to understand and to relate those to topics in Scottish history about which our children should be taught.

Why are there so many whys in Scottish history? Why did a Scot establish the American navy to fight the British? Why were Scots involved in writing the American declaration of independence? Why did so many Scots, especially at leadership level, fight on the American side in the American war of independence? Why were Scots involved in writing the American constitution and bill of rights? Why is the American Congress based on and almost identical in its layout and procedures to the

General Assembly of the Church of Scotland? Why were so many men who were involved at the siege of the Alamo Gaelic speakers, some wearing tartan and playing the bagpipes? Why did so many Scots, especially at leadership level, fight on both sides in the American civil war? Why were so many Scots in America in the first place?

**Rhona Brankin:** Would the member care to share with us why so many Scots died down mines in Scotland that were controlled by Scottish owners?

**Gil Paterson:** I will encompass such matters in a broader sense as I develop my point.

Why is Scotland's population only 5 million when it should be nearer 12 million? Why are market towns such as Inveraray in Argyll and Lanark in Lanarkshire not the size of Inverness or Aberdeen? Why are there only four major cities in Scotland? Why is three quarters of Scotland empty of people? Why were vast parts of Scotland ethnically cleansed? Why did the London Government allow and encourage that ethnic cleansing? Why is so much of Scotland owned by so few individuals? Why were Scottish aristocrats almost exclusively educated in England? Why did the state persecute the great social thinker and reformer Thomas Muir? Why were the 1820 martyrs fitted out and murdered by the state? Why are all those incidents connected? Why was I taught some American whys with no attached Scottish perspective? Why was none of the Scottish whys taught?

**Murdo Fraser:** I wonder whether Mr Paterson listened to the earlier part of the debate, in which Mr Ingram, who is on the SNP's front bench, made an important point. He said that we dwell too much on the gloomy aspects of Scottish history. Does Mr Paterson accept that?

**Gil Paterson:** I accept that something is missing from my experience and education when I look around Scotland and realise that I have never been taught why certain things happened.

**Bill Wilson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Gil Paterson:** Not at the moment, thank you.

Why is it impossible for someone to teach history in the United States of America without knowing their national and state history? Why is it possible for someone to teach history in Scotland without knowing a single thing about Scottish history? Why does every other country in the world think that it is good and important to teach its own history?

**Ken Macintosh:** Will the member take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is winding up.

**Gil Paterson:** Why are there so many whys about Scottish history? Why would anybody want to suppress such questions?

16:23

**Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** I have pleasure in speaking to the amendment in the name of my colleague Hugh O'Donnell.

Mr Paterson gave a list of whys. I suggest that he should study for the standard grade exam in history next year. If he did so, he would find out that the examination covers immigration to and emigration from Scotland from 1880 to the present day. He would study the Highland clearances; changes in employment and working conditions on the land and in the textile factories; changes in social conditions, health and housing in rural and urban areas; reasons for the growth of the Scottish economy; the role of trade unions; and changes in employment and working conditions for women. I suspect that Mr Paterson is not aware that those subjects are all part of the standard grade Scottish history course. Why he is not could be added to his why questions.

I listened to the introductory speech by the Minister for Schools and Skills. The debate has in general been interesting, although there have been one or two omissions. I have thoroughly enjoyed the speeches by Professor Harvie, Willie Coffey, Murdo Fraser, John Farquhar Munro and other members. I understood from the minister that

"The teaching and learning of history in school is well placed to help enable our young people to develop as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

The curriculum in Scotland is not based on statutory prescription. It is for schools, in the light of the curriculum framework within which they operate, to determine how best they organise the syllabus for all subjects, including history, in schools."

I hope that that was an accurate paraphrase of the minister's speech. It was also an accurate, verbatim quotation from the written answer that the previous Administration's Minister for Education and Young People gave on 1 March 2006 to question S2W-23059, from Adam Ingram. There is a consensus on the teaching of history. The new Government is not saving history as a course in schools, because it was not under threat. Part of the slight rewriting of history that has been done this afternoon has been a misinterpretation.

It was Winston Churchill who remarked that history would be kind to him because he would write it. The medieval chroniclers in Scotland and historians through the ages have had a special place in what we understand to be our history.

Quite a few history graduates have spoken in the debate. As a politics and history graduate, I know how students can be shaped by an inspirational teacher. However, students' views can be influenced too much. History in school should provide us with a knowledge and understanding of events, but it should also whet the appetite of the learner and encourage them to question motives and the versions of history that they are told.

Since I was elected, I have seen some excellent projects in schools in my constituency, where history is delivered by outstanding teachers. We must continue to allow professionals to do their job. As Murdo Fraser and others have said, we have not had a top-down national curriculum approach and, thankfully, political interference has largely been absent from the development of teaching. I disagree with Willie Coffey in that I think that it is possible to have a system that is free from political interference, and we should continually strive to ensure that that is the case.

It is simply not true that the previous Government neglected history as a course or attempted to diminish its status. Unit 1 of standard grade history offers a comprehensive approach to changing life in Scotland and Britain and, within the curriculum for excellence, the essence of citizenship education is about enthusing children and making them confident because of what they can do, not because of where they have come from. That is why I was wary of Rob Gibson's monologue. The BBC's "Who Do You Think You Are?" is a fascinating history programme because the participants often find out that they are not who they thought they were.

No one owns history, even if they try to present one part of it. Last week's question time provided an interesting illustration of that fact, when the Lewis chessmen were discussed. The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture said that the Lewis chessmen should not be in the British museum because they are Scottish, but should not the Roman artefacts in the national museum of Scotland be in Melrose, the ancient Roman fort of Trimontium?

**Rob Gibson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Jeremy Purvis:** I give way to the member, just to show how painless giving way can be.

**Rob Gibson:** Indeed.

Does Jeremy Purvis agree that it will be necessary for us to adopt a process whereby, through the provision of appropriate means, it will be possible for people to display artefacts from across Scotland and that our idea of museums and national museums will have to change as a result?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I would prefer it if the member did not spend too long on museums.

**Jeremy Purvis:** They are a crucial part of our history, Presiding Officer, but you are right. We should not treat the teaching of history as we treat artefacts—as possessions. However, if Rob Gibson is indicating that the new approach of the new Government is that the objects that we have in our national collections and, indeed, our local government collections should accurately reflect their source, that is an extremely dangerous path to go down, if we do not have a full understanding that collections in Scotland would be open to the same level of scrutiny as those in the British museum or in collections around the world.

Christopher Harvie remarked on the ballads, the historical tradition of which was kept alive by Walter Scott and which, to this day, are taught in Borders schools. Scott kept history alive, especially that of the Highlands, which he made fashionable, but his "Ivanhoe" is a blend of fact and fiction. Too often, we fall into that trap when we interpret our historical facts.

John Farquhar Munro, who told us that Scots invented the modern world, asked what history we should teach. At a hustings during the election campaign, a supporter of another party attacked me for not wanting to restore what she called the ancient border of Scotland. I am a Berwickier, born and brought up in the Borders, and there is no ancient border of Scotland. My home town changed hands 13 times between the two nations before 1482.

I agree with Christopher Harvie that the best start is local history. Local history was taught in an exciting way when I was at school and has remained a passion of mine ever since. If we are to continue to teach history, regardless of the period or the perspective, we should make it exciting. We should make it a passion for young people in our schools. The best thing that we can do with our education system is to have no political interference and to make education exciting.

16:30

**Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I remember that when I was 14—which was not yesterday—I had a great debate in my mind about whether the social science that I should take in addition to economics should be history or modern studies. A teacher put the matter firmly into focus by telling me, "History educates people; politics usually destroys them." I leave it to members to decide which subject I chose.

The debate has been good. I want to put it on the record that there is no need to convert the

Scottish Conservatives to the importance of Scottish history and the subject's inclusion in the Scottish curriculum and SQA examinations. Scottish history's rich diversity and our deep-rooted links with many other parts of the world, to which Dr Macdonald referred, are good reasons to study the subject but, in addition, all people in Scotland should learn Scottish history, because by doing so we become much better equipped to understand ourselves, where we came from and the complexities of our cultural, economic and social heritage.

Tom Devine has written that Scottish history is a subject

"of enormous dynamism and relevance".

Scottish history also provides the necessary insight into many other academic disciplines. Without a good understanding of Scottish history, our understanding of our nation is at best incomplete and at worst insular and sectarian. Jeremy Purvis alluded to that.

Tom Devine has made the valid point that the erosion of Scottish history teaching began with the insistence of some education zealots that there would be a place for history on the curriculum only if it was shared with geography and modern studies. As a result, history was no longer part of the compulsory curriculum beyond the second year. I agree with Tom Devine's analysis, but I add that that approach coincided with a belief on the part of the same zealots that skills were far more important than knowledge. Knowledge, whether it was about dates or anything else, was thought to be boring and irrelevant; skills were much more important, so it was incumbent on all teachers to change their methods. Perhaps there was a need for change, but the pendulum swung far too far. In many cases, children and teachers were left confused by an emphasis on skills that was not always accompanied by the knowledge that is necessary if people are to make best use of their skills.

Conventional wisdom was again challenged by people who thought that history could be taught only in the context of concepts, such as war, industrialisation or revolution. Such an approach is fascinating at university and postgraduate level, but how can we expect children to understand events that are not put into chronological context? Great damage has been done to the teaching of history in our classrooms by the obsession with skills to the detriment of knowledge and by the absence of chronology.

As the minister said, the curriculum for excellence is one of the most exciting things on the education horizon. I do not mean this in a political context—that is surprising for me—but at long last we appear to be taking seriously the

need to ensure that what we teach is relevant to the lives of young people, so that they can understand their responsibilities and have the appropriate knowledge to understand who they are and how their nation has been shaped. Scottish history must be part of that process. However, as Kenneth Macintosh and Murdo Fraser said—and, as Duncan Tom said in *The Scotsman*—it is vital that Scottish history is put firmly in its context. We must never succumb to the trite and inaccurate characteristics of "Braveheart" history.

Scotland has a proud history; we need no contortion, twist or attempt to alter our past. Our pupils deserve to learn Scottish history. Whether they are being taught about Bonnie Prince Charlie or Mary, Queen of Scots, they deserve to be taught by evidence, not myth. Above all, they deserve to have their history well taught and put in the correct perspective.

16:35

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** As a history graduate and trained history teacher, I am passionate about the importance of Scottish history to the school curriculum. Indeed, at Aberdeen, I benefited from being taught by Sydney Wood, a terrific Scottish academic historian.

I was somewhat bemused by the minister's remark that the SNP was the only party to support the curriculum for excellence in its manifesto. I can only assume that the minister's civil servants did not write that rather unfortunate line. Of course, like all the rest of us, they know that the previous Government initiated the work on the curriculum for excellence. Let us knock that silly political point scoring on the head straight away.

Like other Labour Party members, I welcome the draft social studies outcomes and the SQA's decision on compulsory history questions. Also, like other members, I fail to understand what the SNP Government has done that is different from the actions that the previous Government initiated. I look forward to the cabinet secretary giving us chapter and verse on that.

Adam Ingram rather gave the game away when he intervened on Kenneth Macintosh. He said that Scottish history should be about the glories of past achievement. Well, there we have it: we can be proud of our country only if our children learn about the glories of past achievement. As a history teacher, I am filled with dismay by that. Of course, our children need to learn about the glories of past achievement, but they also need to learn about Scotland's less than glorious role in the slave trade. Surely they also need to find out about the appalling conditions that women and children suffered down our mines. I agree that Scottish

manufacturing industry led the world, but social historians and political writers have taught us about the cost in human lives of rapid industrial development. I hope that we are a more compassionate society as a result of what we have learned about the human cost of change in the past.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Does the member agree that it is important that young people should learn about history in the context of their local community? In her constituency, the mining of coal by the monks of Newbattle abbey in the 13<sup>th</sup> century offers an illustrative way of bringing to life the cost that the people of Midlothian have borne over many years. The social and industrial history of Scotland is brought to life if it is related to the local context and community in which people live.

**Rhona Brankin:** It would be brought even more to life if the children were to visit the Scottish mining museum. I hope that Linda Fabiani will give the museum the funding that it needs.

Several members referred to the need to teach skills in the history curriculum. Of course, that is vital. History is an integral part of the curriculum. The fundamental truth is that we should inculcate in our pupils a love of history. Pupils have to love history and enjoy it. Primary school pupils should be able to learn history from talking to their grandparents or pretending to be a history detective. A genuine love of history has to be inculcated in our pupils at primary school. They need to learn how to use primary and secondary source materials and make objective judgments about our past. They also need to discover how it contributes to our present and what they can learn from it.

I turn to Labour's amendment on the importance of literacy and numeracy. The Presiding Officers had some difficulties in determining whether the amendment was relevant. If we are to teach research skills and the use of primary source material, literacy and numeracy problems present a real barrier to learning. Members do not need to take my word for that, as it is also the word of the many history teachers I have worked alongside who undertook curriculum development. Like other teachers, history teachers say that they are expected to differentiate their teaching according to their pupils' capacity for understanding and reading comprehension age. It is a genuine challenge for history teachers and it is of fundamental relevance to the teaching of history.

The Government simply refuses to show any leadership. Far too many pupils are unable to access the curriculum because of literacy and numeracy problems. The Government has a responsibility to come to Parliament with a plan to eradicate illiteracy and innumeracy. Our pupils, parents and teachers deserve no less.

Alasdair Allan's intervention implied that a nationalist take on history is preferable to a unionist one. Most of us believe that neither is acceptable.

Rob Gibson claimed that Scottish history was abandoned because of the introduction of social studies, and Fiona Hyslop has criticised that too. Two years ago, she said:

"The minister may want to reflect that he has yet to confirm that he believes that history should be taught as a discrete subject in S1 and S2."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 2005; c 21305.]

Will she today clarify whether she intends to make any such changes to the S1 and S2 curriculum? Will she introduce Scottish history as a discrete subject in S1 and S2, which she called for in 2005, or is this just another example of the SNP saying one thing when in opposition but then, when in government, suddenly changing its position? The cabinet secretary's SNP members need to know. Perhaps she will enlighten them.

John Farquhar Munro gave us—how can I describe it?—a classical rendition of the great man school of history. I think that he and I should have a wee chat later about some of the great women in Scottish history. Seriously though, history is about much more than just famous Scots, important though they are.

Why, tell me why, does Gil Paterson know so little about the Scottish history curriculum?

Labour supports the Government motion and we are happy to support both the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat amendments. I urge members to support our amendment. It is aimed at opening up the subject of history to all our young people in Scotland. The subject is too important not to be accessible by all.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Cabinet secretary, we have to finish by about 3 minutes to 5, but that is clearly up to you.

16:42

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. This has been a very interesting debate. I counted about eight members who had studied history—they shared their knowledge with us—and we heard one professor. I very much enjoyed listening to all the speeches from all sides of the chamber. The contributions from Opposition benches by Lewis Macdonald, John Farquhar Munro and Elizabeth Smith were all fitting; they were thought-provoking and tested our knowledge and they made us consider some of the key questions that we have to address in the education system.



Maureen Watt highlighted in her opening remarks the role that the curriculum for excellence can and will play in enabling Scotland's teaching profession to teach our young people in a more exciting, engaging and relevant manner. Jeremy Purvis made a similar plea.

Scotland already has a great deal of excellent teaching—I see examples of it regularly when I visit schools around the country—and the OECD was at pains to stress the point when we met it in December. Inspirational teaching can have a lasting and profound effect on children. With the roll-out of the draft curriculum outcomes, the challenge to teachers to own, embrace and drive forward the curriculum themselves is clear. It will also be appropriate to discuss the draft social studies outcomes when they come out. As the OECD emphasised, curriculum reform has to come from schools—not from politicians, not from officials and not from education theorists. Teachers are best placed to meet the needs of individual learners. We need exciting, engaging and relevant teaching from every teacher in every pre-school centre, school and college. In pursuing that aim, we will be creating the institutions that nurture, foster and give life to the talents and ambitions of all our young people.

We have been asked about the development of the curriculum and about what will be prescribed and what can be decided by teachers. High-quality materials will be essential if we are to ensure that teachers are able to make such decisions. The development of website application and the glow project will offer a fantastic opportunity for teachers to choose their materials.

Members including Rhona Brankin asked—reflecting, I suspect, an unfortunate Liberal Democrat amendment—about the extent to which the Government prescribes the content of the curriculum. It is acknowledged throughout Parliament that Government should prescribe not the content, but what Scotland's children are entitled to experience up to certain levels. I hope that Parliament returns to that issue, because the Government will have a strong view of what a Scottish general education should be, without being prescriptive or having too narrow a perspective.

**Rhona Brankin:** I hope that the minister will come to the specific question I asked her about history as a discrete subject in S1 and S2.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I will come back to that point.

The activity of organisations such as the Scottish Association of Teachers of History in lobbying and petitioning Parliament over the past few years on the important role that the teaching of history can play in Scottish education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is testament to a profession that is aware

of and energised by that challenge. We want to ensure that Scottish history is taught in our schools, but it is not just history teachers who can teach it. Many members have spoken about other subjects, such as geography and science. In addition to history as a core subject, the facts that our young people need to know can be taught by other teachers as well.

I take this opportunity to mention the literature forum for Scotland, which lodged a petition with Parliament on St Andrew's day in 2005, emphasising the significant role that the teaching of Scottish history, literature and languages can have in education in Scotland. History fulfils a crucial role in illuminating the past and the present. By explaining the causes and effects of changes in the past, it contributes to a sense of perspective that is essential to understanding the present.

A successful Scotland will need a population of young people who have hope, faith, vision and a fundamental belief in themselves. The teaching of history helps to create that individual self-belief and a sense of belonging to a society that has a past—a society that has been constantly changing over time. As Robin Harper said, self-belief and confidence are based on opportunity and taking chances. Rob Gibson quoted Professor Duncan Rice on the same issue. In Scotland, many people do not believe that they can realise their talents, so we must urgently tackle that failure of aspiration if we are to fulfil our ambitions. The curriculum for excellence will help us to tackle that by building people's capacity, ability and belief that they can achieve.

We talk a good deal these days about the need for a country of creative and confident Scots. How can we expect people to enjoy a sense of self and self-esteem unless their national consciousness is informed by a thorough understanding of their country's experience? How can someone know something, let alone understand it or gain wisdom from an understanding of it, if they are not taught it? Professor Harvie posed an interesting challenge: how can Scotland in the modern world understand the renewable energy revolution without learning from the Scottish industrial revolution?

The teaching of Scottish history does not seek to impose a value system on pupils, but seeks to allow them to examine how past values influence people's actions and how many of those values continue to influence the present. It is tremendously important that our young people understand what has happened in Scotland's past, and when it happened. It is possible to have a clear perspective on the past only if one's understanding of chronology is sound. I am particularly taken by Professor Tom Devine's thinking on the teaching of Scottish history in

chronological order—the Scottish spine. It will be important and informative to explore that further in the pursuit of good learning and teaching, and of the materials that will support the outcomes. I spoke to Professor Devine yesterday and he supports my position on the role of Scottish history in the curriculum. We also have the support of other academics.

**Ken Macintosh:** Will the education secretary expand on that point? It goes to the heart of the concerns that I feel—and which others may feel—about the SNP's perspective. No one would disagree with ideas about familiarity with the Scottish experience, for example that knowing about Scottish chemists can make the chemistry curriculum more accessible and more alive, but surely it is important to study chemistry itself and not to study the fact that a Scottish chemist made a difference. Which is more important: the fact that one studies chemistry or the fact that one studies Scottish chemistry?

**Fiona Hyslop:** In his excellent speech, Willie Coffey made the point that he might have been more enthused about some subjects had he understood the local context. However, the point that I was making was about the importance of chronology, order and reference points in Scottish history to a sense of place and belonging.

It is also clear that an understanding of the history of one's place builds a sense of belonging and community. That resource is everywhere—in cities, in towns, in the countryside and on our islands. We have only to look around us today to see it: this Parliament building has, on one side, a park that is rich in prehistoric and medieval farming settlements and forts and, on the other, the street of the medieval burgh of Canongate and the royal palace that was at the heart of the religious strife of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

By giving people a clearer understanding of who they are, we can address some of Scotland's current social ills. For example, sectarianism can be tackled adequately only with a proper understanding of its provenance as well as its current ill effects. There is enormous social value to be accrued from teaching real history instead of mythology and promoting democratic and inclusive agendas. Scotland has always been made up of a rich and varied mix of people. That is where I challenge Lewis Macdonald and John Farquhar Munro, who asked where Scotland's history starts. It does not start with the Romans; there is a pre-Celtic and Celtic component that must be analysed.

**Lewis Macdonald:** My reference was to the written history of events in Scotland written in Scotland. I recommend that the minister read Tacitus's account of Agricola's conquest of Scotland.

**Fiona Hyslop:** This is a debate about Scottish history; I ask Lewis Macdonald not to get me started on Latin or we might have a lot to debate.

Oral history and the female line that has generated it are interesting. The modern feminists of our country might want to learn from that oral history and young women might want to learn about the prominence of women in Scotland's history in many centuries gone by.

We have had Romans, Anglo-Saxons, the Norse, Irish, Picts, English, Normans, Italians, Jews, Ukrainians and Poles in Scotland. History also teaches us that Scots have been migrants themselves. Indeed, there were so many Scots in Gdansk in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that there was an area there named Little Scotland.

The education of young people in this country would be incomplete without our ensuring that they have an understanding and appreciation of Scotland's past alongside and within the wider British, European and world contexts—which is where the Conservative amendment is coming from. The teaching of history can provide insight into the key events and personalities that have shaped our nation. Moreover, many Scots have made significant contributions to the development of countries in all four corners of the world.

Members have asked about what the Government has brought to that. We see it clearly in the concept that, as part of the science outcomes, young people should understand what has happened in the past and understand our contribution to science to inspire them about what they can be in the future. We also look forward to the literacy outcomes, in which the Scots language should be pre-eminent.

I echo Maureen Watt's commendation of the recent decision to include a compulsory Scottish element in the higher history examination. That change will undoubtedly contribute to fulfilling the ambitions that I articulated earlier.

I say to Rhona Brankin that, yes, literacy and numeracy are important, but the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats had 10 years in government to tackle some of the literacy and numeracy problems in Scotland. This Government is determined to tackle them because we want to equip our young people with the skills to understand their history.

**Jeremy Purvis:** I am sure that the cabinet secretary does not need to tackle anything that the previous Administration did on that. If she wishes to continue on that line, there will be overall support for her. However, one of the concerns that was expressed during the consultation on the review of higher history was:

“Could we be accused of altering the syllabus to reflect the ‘flavour of the month?’”

That quotation is from a teacher. As we develop our education system’s approach to history, we must avoid simply teaching in the topical fashion.

**Fiona Hyslop:** There must be coherence, continuity and national understanding, which is why we emphasise the need to ensure that teachers have an understanding of the context of Scottish history. The materials that will be produced to support the curriculum reform are essential to that, but we must also have the flexibility to make the subject exciting. That is where local references are critical; they bring history alive to young people. That is the context that many members have spoken about and which is behind many of the arguments that have been made.

The development of the curriculum for excellence offers professionals an opportunity to take stock of why they teach what they teach. I remind members that we are discussing draft outcomes, which the debate will finalise.

There is an opportunity to improve pupils’ understanding of Scotland and its relationship with other countries. There is also an opportunity for professionals to consider the aspirational and enterprising aspects of the people of Scotland, be that in a local, national or international context. That is why the Government is wholly committed to ambitious curriculum reform, and it is why we welcome the publication of the draft social studies outcomes and the inclusion of questions on Scottish history as a compulsory component of the higher history examination.

**Elizabeth Smith:** I do not disagree with any of that, but could the cabinet secretary be a bit more precise about the timescale? When does she envisage the new proposals being put into operation?

**Fiona Hyslop:** I am tackling the speed of roll-out now. The appetite of schools themselves to become pilots for some of the outcomes that have already been delivered is striking; all of them will be out by early summer, so progress will be fairly rapid. I hope that Parliament and the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee will return to the matter in the weeks and months to come.

What other European country would even have to consider the importance of teaching its own history? [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order. There are too many conversations going on.

**Fiona Hyslop:** That indicates where we have been and, perhaps, where we need to go to seek new ways to give our children an understanding of

their own country. The Government is determined that all children will be able to learn about their Scottish history, heritage and culture. We owe it to them, and they deserve to know their own country and where it has been in the past in order that they become the people who will fire future Scottish success and a Scotland of possibilities in the wider world.

The story of Scotland and the history of Scotland need to be told and the Government is delighted to play its part in that. We welcome the opportunity to debate the subject today.

## Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is consideration of motion S3M-1201, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, on the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill, reintroduced in the House of Commons on 7 November 2007, relating to investigation of bribery and corruption by foreign officers, violent offender orders and repatriation of prisoners, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.—[*Kenny MacAskill.*]

16:57

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** I note that the legislative consent memorandum refers to three specific areas of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill. I was concerned when I saw it last week—I understand that the motion does not include clauses 113 to 120, which relate to pornography. I would be grateful if the minister could confirm that the issues around possession of extreme pornography, which are covered in the Westminster bill, will be dealt with by Scottish legislation, as was indicated by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing in response to an oral question from me. She stated:

“We have consulted on new law to prohibit extreme pornographic images, and will now work to implement the outcome of the consultation”.—[*Official Report, Written Answers, 15 November 2007; S3O-1282.*]

Women’s organisations in Scotland and organisations with an interest in tackling violence against women would welcome having input into the implementation of that process and are keen to ensure that the issue will still be dealt with as a devolved matter.

16:58

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill):** I am aware of Elaine Smith’s track record in quite correctly pursuing the matter. The point that she raises is perfectly valid, and it is appropriate for me to explain clearly that, as is mentioned in the legislative consent memorandum, we are seeking to address various gaps, for example relating to violent offenders doing something significantly wrong. I refer to actions that are taken—as is sought south of the border—regarding those people if it is felt that they might escape punishments or requirements by

moving north of the border. Clearly, people have been seeking to do that.

There are matters under the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill that are being legislated on south of the border that relate to pornography. As Elaine C—I mean Elaine Smith—mentioned. [*Laughter.*] I apologise: I have a track record of previous convictions on that. As she has correctly said, legislation that will apply south of the border is being introduced in that regard. As was mentioned and has been dealt with by my ministerial health colleagues, there was a joint Scottish Executive and Home Office consultation on extreme pornography. We have legislative competence on that area here in Scotland.

We are working on proposals and are more than happy to meet Elaine Smith because of the valuable input that she and the people with whom she has communicated and whom she has represented can give. We intend to legislate on the matter in due course, rather than introduce measures that have been decided on south of the border and which are predicated on the situation there. To an extent, the member answered her own question. I can say that, in due course, we intend to address the matter that she correctly raises, but we will do so within the competence of the Parliament and in a manner that is appropriate for Scotland.

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

## Business Motions

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-1259, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on a suspension of standing orders.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that, for the purpose of allowing up to 2 hours 5 minutes to debate motion S3M-1256 (Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2008) on Thursday 7 February 2008, the final sentence of Rule 10.7.1 of Standing Orders be suspended.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-1252, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 6 February 2008

2.00 pm Time for Reflection  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Stage 3 Debate: Budget (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Legislative Consent Motion: Education and Skills Bill – UK Legislation  
*followed by* Business Motion  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 7 February 2008

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Ministerial Statement: Support for Survivors of Historic In-care and Institutional Abuse  
*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Commercial Forestry  
 11.40 am General Question Time  
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time  
 2.15 pm Themed Question Time  
 Europe, External Affairs and Culture;  
 Education and Lifelong Learning  
 2.55 pm Scottish Government Debate: Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2008  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 20 February 2008

2.30 pm Time for Reflection  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Business Motion  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 21 February 2008

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business  
 11.40 am General Question Time  
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time  
 2.15 pm Themed Question Time  
 Health and Wellbeing  
 2.55 pm Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is consideration of motion S3M-1254, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the referral of a Scottish statutory instrument, and motion S2M-1253, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the approval of an SSI.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2008 be considered by the Parliament.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Management of Offenders etc. (Scotland) Act 2005 (Members' Remuneration and Supplementary Provisions) Order 2008 be approved.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

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

## Decision Time

17:02

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** There are seven questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S3M-1238.2, in the name of Rhona Brankin, which seeks to amend motion S3M-1238, in the name of Maureen Watt, on the importance of Scottish history in the school curriculum, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**FOR**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)

Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 104, Against 0, Abstentions 15.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The second question is, that amendment S3M-1238.1, in the name of Murdo Fraser, which seeks to amend motion S3M-1238, in the name of Maureen Watt, on the importance of Scottish history in the school curriculum, as amended, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The third question is, that amendment S3M-1238.3, in the name of Hugh O'Donnell, which seeks to amend motion S3M-1238, in the name of Maureen Watt, on the importance of Scottish history in the school curriculum, as amended, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The fourth question is, that motion S3M-1238, in the name of Maureen Watt, on the importance of Scottish history in the school curriculum, as amended, be agreed to.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Parliament recognises the importance of ensuring that young people understand Scotland's and their place in the world, both currently and in a historical context, and in pursuit of this aim welcomes the opportunities for more exciting, engaging and relevant teaching presented by the Curriculum for Excellence and, in particular, the publication of the draft social studies outcomes and experiences by Learning and Teaching Scotland, along with the recent decision by the Scottish Qualifications Authority to include questions on Scottish history as a compulsory component of the Higher History examination; further recognises that without basic literacy and numeracy skills young people have difficulty accessing the curriculum, including history; calls on the Scottish Government to provide leadership to tackle literacy and numeracy in Scottish schools which will facilitate an improved understanding of history; however, emphasises that it is important that Scottish history is taught in a balanced manner, which encourages young people to evaluate the evidence critically and come to their own conclusions, and that it is taught in its rightful context, namely alongside local, British, European and world history, and further emphasises that courses must be of a high quality with teachers being supported by new teaching resources and continuing professional development training as necessary, and believes that history should be taught without political interference.

**The Presiding Officer:** The fifth question is, that motion S3M-1201, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, on the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill, reintroduced in the House of Commons on 7 November 2007, relating to investigation of bribery and corruption by foreign officers,

violent offender orders and repatriation of prisoners, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

**The Presiding Officer:** The sixth question is, that motion S3M-1254, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the referral of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2008 be considered by the Parliament.

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S3M-1253, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the approval of an SSI, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Management of Offenders etc. (Scotland) Act 2005 (Members' Remuneration and Supplementary Provisions) Order 2008 be approved.

## Migrants

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-1145, in the name of Margo MacDonald, on maximising migrants' opportunities.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament welcomes the contribution made by migrants from eastern Europe to the economy of the Lothians and Scotland; recognises that many are in employment that does not utilise their skills and qualifications; notes the current shortage of skills in the Scottish workforce and suggests that the Scottish Government undertakes a pilot scheme to better match the education and work experience of migrants with the skills shortages in Scotland, and further suggests that a welcome centre in Edinburgh airport could identify migrants' qualifications and facility with the English language and provide advice on employment, training courses and other services.

17:06

**Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind):** The genesis of this debate lies in a spell that I had in hospital about three years ago, when I made the acquaintance of Monika, who had recently arrived from Poland and was putting in 12-hour shifts cleaning mainly toilets and bathrooms in the infirmary. Had she not come to Scotland with the first of the young Poles after her country became a European Union member, she would have been studying for her third-year exams in law. That made me quite interested in Monika, and I got to know her. Her English was not great and my Polish is on a par with my command of Urdu or Gaelic, but she had a bureaucratic problem that my office was able to resolve for her. Since then, we have kept in touch and have worked out a couple of other wee difficulties—concerning housing, as I recall—and, through her, I have gained an insight into the community that we are all aware of but which we cannot quantify. We do not know what size the community is or what the average age of people in the community is, even though the overwhelming majority of Scots have—I am happy to say—welcomed these hard-working migrants from eastern Europe and their skills.

I will concentrate on the Polish community because—although we do not know for sure—there appears to be a greater concentration of Poles in and around Edinburgh than of other people from eastern Europe, and it is certainly the group that I know a bit about.

The welcome that the Poles have received is not just because of the delicious treats to be found in the new Polish delis, or even because of the universal appeal of Polish plumbers, but because they have filled a gap in Scotland's ageing, shrinking population. Last year was the first year in



quite a while in which our population grew. However, there are no figures showing how many of those welcome children were born to migrant mothers or how many are likely to stay long enough to pull on the dark blue jerseys of Scotland's sporting teams.

The motion asks for a better way of incorporating all the positive aspects of this new pattern of migration into Scotland, both for those who stay here to become new Scots and those who live and work among us for some months or a few years.

The Irish, in particular, are philosophical about the people who go to Ireland for a few months or years and then go back to their country of origin. The Irish want them to have as good an experience of Ireland as possible, so that, when it comes to doing business or organising school or university exchanges and so on, those people have the best possible opinion and experience of Ireland. That is another good idea that we can copy.

With the fresh talent initiative, the previous Executive, under Jack McConnell, set the tone of the relationship between migrants and indigenous Scots. He is to be congratulated on and thanked for his foresight. We should cheer him for his persistence in the face of the lack of interest and even hostility that was displayed by Whitehall and Westminster. However, now that the Scottish advantage that was established by the fresh talent initiative has been eroded by Westminster's adoption of the same procedure for keeping overseas students around for longer after graduation, we need to refresh fresh talent. That is the spirit in which I would approach any strategic overview in relation to the people who have come from eastern Europe.

Basically, we need to make migrants' experience in Scotland so satisfying that, first, a greater proportion put down roots and stay with their energy, talent and families, and secondly, as I said earlier, those who return to their native countries carry with them a positive picture of a country that made them welcome and with which they are happy to do business.

I do not want to seem to be suggesting that nothing has been happening in building relationships and so on. There are networking groups around the country, particularly for the Poles, and they do a pretty good job, drawing on their own resources, of providing personal support, advice and information for their countrymen and women. I visited such a club, which runs on Monday afternoons and evenings in Fort primary school in Leith, and I was struck by the almost palpable energy and vitality. Malcolm Chisholm, the constituency MSP, may have visited that club, too. If he has not, I advise him to go because it is

uplifting to see so many dynamic young people thinking that Scotland and Leith are great places— but then, Leith is a great place.

Are we doing all that we could be doing to help the migrants progress? From work undertaken for Scottish Enterprise, we know that many of the migrants come to Scotland to enhance their skills and qualifications. It is in our interest that they should do so, which takes us back to my comments about encouraging more people to stay.

Is there a strategic overview of the next 10 years that encompasses information on how migrants might help us to meet the demand for high-end skills, whether they have the skills to move from production to service jobs—we know that that is where the growth is going to be—whether a sufficient number of migrants will reverse the decline in Scotland's working-age population, and whether Poles and other eastern Europeans will continue to come here, either temporarily or permanently, as our economy slows and theirs expands? Poland's economy, for example, is growing at 5 per cent per annum. We are in competition with Germany and the other countries that have lifted the barriers to people moving there.

It seems daft to say that this is one area in which we must be competitive, but I believe that to be the case. We must consider the people who are coming to Scotland. We must quantify the numbers, and we must know who they are and what interventions are sensitive to the fact that they have done a great deal for themselves and that they are not used to state or official agency intervention that is as benign and liberal as ours.

The suggestion in the motion is simply that there should be a pilot welcome desk scheme, which could be operated in conjunction with, for example, the company that runs the excellent portal on the web for Poles. That would identify the people coming in and give us some idea of how many there were, where they aimed to go to and, roughly, the information that we need. Booklets and a telephone line could be provided—I do not need to spell out the scheme for members as I am sure that they can work it out for themselves.

The idea behind the motion is not to provide a whole answer but simply to make people aware of the additional work that we must do to ensure that the people who are coming to Scotland and the people who are receiving them get the best of everything for both groups.

17:13

**Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con):** I welcome the debate and much of what Margo MacDonald proposed in a very good speech.

We welcome the contribution that is being made by migrants from eastern Europe. Although we do not have figures to prove it, we agree that many such migrants are not utilising their skills to the full. We know about the skills shortage that we have in our Scottish workforce. The idea of piloting a scheme to match experience with skills shortages is excellent.

I am slightly sceptical about the idea of the Edinburgh airport welcome centre, for the simple reason that I am not convinced that it goes anywhere near far enough towards what we need to be competitive. Margo MacDonald used the word “competitive”. She is right: there is a global search for talent, and we need to be among the most competitive. I am not convinced that the airport idea in itself goes far enough.

I will discuss the positive points before I consider how we need to be more competitive. We need positive net migration to fill our shortages at all skill levels—I emphasise that they are at all levels. We have a lower birth rate, although it is not as low as it was a couple of years ago, and an ageing population—that has not changed—so we need to strengthen the country through human talent. An important part of that is getting in migrants from eastern Europe.

After a recent survey of its members in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, the Confederation of British Industry said that the influx in recent years of migrant workers had contributed to massive growth and to positive experiences at almost every company that was spoken to. One interesting statistic was that migrant workers generate 10 per cent of the UK’s gross domestic product, despite forming only 8 per cent of the workforce. That results in better businesses and more money for public services. Migration offers good economic gains and, at the same time, good cultural gains for Scotland.

The idea of helping somebody whose skill level is higher than that which is needed for the job that they do is good—Margo MacDonald referred to her contact with Monika. Productivity is one of the weakest points of our economy. We need to improve our productivity in all areas, and encouraging good people to be more productive is the key to success.

The global context is that we face worldwide competition for good talent. According to *The Economist* recently, other countries are actively luring highly qualified people. France has established a scientist visa to attract people, and Singapore’s Ministry of Manpower has an international talent division that seeks out talented people.

The CBI has said:

“By welcoming their people, we are in effect building relationships with other countries—in effect setting out our

stall, as it happens, in some of the world’s fastest growing marketplaces.”

I note that, although the figures are a little patchy, we have probably attracted fewer young central Europeans than most English regions have, so there is more for us to do.

The Scottish Conservative perspective is that people are more likely to come to a country if it has more economic freedom and if we create the minimum of fuss for employers in giving migrants the jobs that they want and deserve.

My personal view is that we should go further than an office at Edinburgh airport and that we should pilot going into cities overseas to fix arrangements in people’s home towns. We could establish an office in Warsaw, for example, so that people can sort out employment, training, housing and support networks before they catch the plane, instead of waiting until they arrive in Scotland. We must get the system right, because the battle for talent will only intensify.

17:18

**Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I congratulate Margo MacDonald on bringing the motion to us. I support its sentiments, on which I will comment briefly.

One week after remembrance Sunday, a ceremony takes place at the Polish war memorial near Invergordon in my constituency. It sticks in my mind that, 10, 15 or 20 years ago, a small and dwindling band of very old veterans attended that ceremony, whereas it is now seriously big and rather moving. Every year, that ceremony reminds me how many Poles have come to live in my constituency. I dare say that Margo MacDonald is right to say that there are more Poles in Edinburgh than in other parts, but we in the Highlands are very much aware of the situation.

Members—and certainly the minister—know that some of the finishes we see in the Parliament were built by migrant workers. We did not have the joinery and cabinet-making skills to do some of the fine work in the Parliament. I agree entirely with what Gavin Brown said about the ageing population, which means that a smaller number of young workers will have to support an ever-increasing number of older retired people but, in an audit sense, we still need to be aware of why we have lost some skills, such as those in joinery and plumbing, to which Margo MacDonald referred.

Margo MacDonald talked about somebody who was studying law—I think that her name was Monika—coming to clean the toilets in the hospital where she was staying. There must surely be some recognition of overseas qualifications and an expediting of that process. I bet that every

member has heard of that problem, not necessarily involving overseas qualifications, but the recognition of qualifications from south of the border.

**Margo MacDonald:** I hope that I can reassure the member to some extent. There is a publication—I am looking for it among my papers, but I cannot find it—that is available to employers that enables them to equate, roughly, qualifications, but he is still correct. Gavin Brown talked about our going into Poland to provide information. The previous Executive tried distributing leaflets, but there were not enough and it was a fast-moving game that it could not keep up with. Someone is trying to address the problem, but it needs to be pulled together.

**Jamie Stone:** I thank Margo MacDonald for that informative, useful and encouraging intervention.

The part of the Scottish psyche that says we are all Jock Tamson's bairns is shown to be useful in the way in which we have welcomed migrant workers from wherever they have come from. That points to the inherent liberalism at the heart of Scots and Scottish society. I will return to that in a minute.

Unwittingly—it is not their fault in any way—migrant workers present some problems to Government and local government. For example, housing provision is overstretched because of them—welcome though they are—and there is a knock-on effect on housing waiting lists that we all recognise. Where there is a dwindling school roll, as in some parts of my constituency, the advent of migrant workers' children is welcome, as they keep some remote schools open. Nevertheless, in more built-up areas, their arrival presents problems. There is an issue, too, about teaching English to those who do not have the language skills. That, again, stretches our resources. I do not wish to be interpreted as in any way saying that these people are not welcome; the problems that I have mentioned merely need to be tackled in a workmanlike way. They are problems for local authorities and, ultimately, for the Scottish Government.

I do not know whether Gavin Brown was right to say that Margo MacDonald's proposal for a welcome centre at the airport should go further, but I am attracted by what Margo suggests. If we can bolt on more, that is all well and good, but the main point is that her suggestion is welcome.

The minister hails from Italian stock and the gentleman who is sitting to my right, Mr Hugh O'Donnell, comes from Irish stock—both communities that are now totally integrated into Scottish society. I hope and have no doubt that the new migrants will be integrated, too—perhaps not in generations, but in years to come.

I leave members with this recommendation. If they go into a Polish bar or a bar where a Pole works, they should say, "Dwa piwa, proszę."—"Two beers, please."

17:22

**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab):** I congratulate Margo MacDonald on securing this important debate. I assure her that I have visited on more than one occasion the excellent and well-attended Polish drop-in at the Fort community wing. From my constituency experience, as well as everything else, I am well aware of the significant contribution that ethnic minority communities—including the new migrants from eastern Europe—make to Scottish society.

In general terms, I support the sentiments of Margo MacDonald's motion. She focuses on skills and highlights the fact that people's skills could be utilised even more. It is important, however, that we all recognise the enormous contribution that the skills of ethnic minority communities already make. I spoke at a conference on Europe on Monday. Although I was extremely alarmed and concerned at the UK Independence Party speaker who was there, who was complaining about—among other things—new migrants coming to this country, I was reassured by another speaker, who said that the new migrants are contributing between 0.5 and 1 per cent to Scottish gross domestic product growth every year. I have not seen that figure before, but we all recognise the fact that they already make a significant contribution. The figure could be even higher if their skills were fully utilised, as Margo MacDonald suggests.

I am not sure about the details of Margo MacDonald's proposed welcome centre at Edinburgh airport, but we need to make available advice on employment, training courses and the full range of services that are required. I had an interesting meeting a week or two ago with two women from other parts of Europe—one from Belarus, the other from Italy. They persuaded me of the desirability of providing a service that combines language teaching, cross-cultural understanding and information about services for new migrants. We all recognise the importance of all three for integration, but they suggested that they should be combined into one service.

I wrote to the Scottish Government on the matter and got a reply from Stewart Maxwell. I am always glad to see Linda Fabiani in debates; I suppose that she shares this issue with Stewart Maxwell. Among other things, he said:

"Following on from the spending review, the Equality Unit is currently redefining its funding process for 2008 – 2011 which will, amongst other things, take account of community cohesion and integration issues."

It would be good to know whether the Scottish Government has come to any conclusions about how it will spend its money on “cohesion and integration issues”.

There have been pilot projects in many areas—I was responsible for them in a previous life, as Minister for Communities. Margo MacDonald’s idea for a pilot is certainly worth consideration by the Scottish Government.

**Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab):** I am sure that Malcolm Chisholm is aware, as I am, of the role of the community education service in Edinburgh. It has had some fantastic open days at which migrant workers from across Europe and further afield have been able to access council services. A range of welcoming events has also been held. Does Malcolm Chisholm share my concern that potential cuts in the City of Edinburgh Council budget could undermine the welcoming process if no alternative is put in place by the Scottish Government?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Chisholm, you are going into your final minute.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I intended to say something about the local government angle, but I will not have time to do that.

Sarah Boyack makes an important point. I meet Polish people every Saturday when I go to one of my surgeries in the Royston/Wardieburn community centre. They are being supported in the English language and in other ways by the community learning and development team there. I am concerned that there is a proposal to cut the City of Edinburgh Council budget by £850,000 and I hope that it will be reconsidered.

I referred to the skills pilot that Margo MacDonald proposed. The Government could also consider combining language teaching services with cross-cultural understanding and information about public services. Such a pilot project would be desirable. The Scottish Government has to consider its role, although I accept, of course, that local authorities have an enormous role to play in this issue.

The Edinburgh partnership board is doing good work. When I wrote to the council about that, it said that it is going to set up an Edinburgh migration network. That is positive step forward for Edinburgh but, as Sarah Boyack reminded us, without funding, all such initiatives will be put at risk.

17:28

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** As we all know, over the centuries Scotland has exported many of its able and young, whether willingly or otherwise, and, regrettably, it

continues to do so. It is therefore ironic that young and talented people are migrating here—they are very welcome.

Many migrants come from eastern European countries. As Margo MacDonald said, they are making their home here temporarily, or they are making a permanent future here and multiplying the diversity that is modern Scotland. We do not want their talents to be wasted or misdirected. Even here in the Parliament, we can be served by a waitress who was a lawyer, an accountant or a medical practitioner. We do not want that to happen. Plumbers and roofers are as scarce as hen’s teeth—I do not mind where they come from. On the subject of teeth, we could do with many more dentists, as well as medical practitioners and nurses.

However, as Jamie Stone said, issues are being raised for local authorities. Pressures on housing and schools can cause tensions within communities, so we have to address those pressures. The same is true for health boards, which might find that they need more maternity units and so on. We must address those serious issues sensitively with the migrant population and the indigenous population, which must be taken along. We must not let some of the anecdotal evidence that we hear out there become facts that cause tensions.

Migration is not just an urban issue, as Jamie Stone rightly said. I am delighted to say that, in Galashiels, we have a Polish delicatessen, and my newsletter is translated into Polish. Indeed, this Saturday, the main street in Galashiels will be closed to celebrate Chinese new year—complete with dancing dragon—and it will be great fun.

There are serious issues about how we assist migrants. Margo MacDonald made the important point that we do not have data on the number of migrants or their skills. Migrants should not feel that that would be something sinister, as if we were some police state that wanted to find out about them. We really need data so that proper provision can be made.

**Margo MacDonald:** Malcolm Chisholm and Gavin Brown expressed similar concerns about the suggested pilot, but we already know that people coming from eastern Europe have a sensitivity to official intervention. Perhaps a face-to-face, informal welcome will reassure them. When they then go down to the Fort community centre or other community networking places, the word will spread that the pilot scheme is okay.

**Christine Grahame:** That is an important point. We must recall that many migrants do not come from what might be called a relaxed democracy such as we have enjoyed in Scotland.

I want to raise three quick issues in the dying minutes of my speech. My first concern is that

advice be given to migrants on how they may not be paid less than the minimum wage. Accommodation and board are sometimes scooped up into migrants' wages so that employers exploit not only the migrants but the local workforce. We have had incidents in Scotland of local workers losing their jobs to migrant workers and both lots being exploited by unscrupulous employers.

Secondly, I have reservations about Gavin Brown's suggestion that we should actively recruit in migrants' native countries. I have a certain unease about poaching skilled people and medical professionals from countries that may well need them. There is an issue about such people coming here voluntarily, but a balance must be struck. I would not like us to take from countries that are in need.

Thirdly, another issue that must be addressed in tonight's short debate is disclosure and enhanced disclosure. I have raised the issue in the chamber on previous occasions. In many eastern European countries—through no fault of the migrants—there are not sufficient police records on those who come here to work in sensitive areas such as social work and care homes. Whereas indigenous employees are subject to strict enhanced disclosure checks, it is not possible to carry out such checks on immigrants. That can cause tensions. I know that the Cabinet Secretary for Justice is considering how we can iron out those difficulties.

17:32

**Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP):** In her comprehensive and informative opening speech, Margo MacDonald referred to Scotland's ageing, shrinking population. I am part of that ageing population and, like the population, I am probably shrinking as well. I speak to support Margo MacDonald's positive motion.

Given our huge skills shortage in Scotland, it is right that we look to enthusiastic and talented migrants from eastern Europe. Those of us who have recently stayed in hotels in Scotland will have come across those young people. Eastern Europeans now service many of our industries. However, much more could be done. That young chambermaid might well have a university degree that could be of use to us. The waiter might well be a qualified teacher. Some migrants need help in finding the most appropriate job to suit their talents and others might need courses in colloquial English, the Scots tongue and local customs and culture.

As part of Scotland's long tradition of providing hospitality to people from other nations, we have particular links with Poland. Several of those links

have been mentioned tonight, but I draw members' attention to the link between medicine in Poland and medicine in this country. During the dark years of world war two, the University of Edinburgh gave hospitality to the entire Polish school of medicine. Many Polish doctors graduated from the school by doing all their studies in Edinburgh and some of those stayed on and worked in this country. The senior tutor, Dr Tomaszewski, became a practitioner on the south side of Edinburgh and many people look back on his services with fond memories.

For many years, I had a Polish dentist who had qualified in this country. He was a marvellous dentist. At first, his English was slightly limited but, towards the end of his time as my dentist, I heard him say to his receptionist, who was also his wife, "When I say, 'Open the mouth,' I mean the patient and when I say, 'Shut the mouth,' I mean you." His knowledge of colloquial English had developed apace in that time. He also gave the most fantastic parties. On new year's eve, everyone would go into the garden to see the first star; once they had seen it, they would drink a lot of vodka. I can testify to the visual talents of the Poles, because they could always see a star in the sky, no matter how cloudy it was.

I support the motion. We badly need migrants. We need their youth, their dynamism and—dare I say it, given that I may be on the verge of depending on the state much more—their taxes.

17:35

**The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani):** The debate has been extremely interesting and is timely. I thank Margo MacDonald for bringing the subject to the Parliament. It was great that every speaker, from all parties, welcomed migrants to our country and recognised the skills that they bring. Migrants are generally welcomed throughout the country, but sadly that is not reflected in some of the reporting in the press.

I thank Christine Grahame for offering a realistic view of the situation. The general public probably lack knowledge about migration. Throughout recorded time, there have been waves of migration across Europe, and I am sure that they will continue. A couple of years ago, the Polish ambassador told me that the Poles were quite relaxed about their people moving away, because they knew that at some point they would come back and be joined by others—such is the history of Europe.

The Government's economic strategy, which was published in November 2007, sets out our ambitious targets for economic and population growth. We aim over the next 10 years to match

the average population growth of the original European Union 15. Migration will play a key part in helping us to meet that target. Gavin Brown and Margo MacDonald mentioned that there is competition for migrants. Other countries also have skills gaps. Although I cannot confirm this figure, a representative of Denmark told me yesterday in Brussels that Denmark recently set the target of attracting 500,000 people to fill its skills gaps. There is big competition out there.

Members have mentioned that we do not know the facts about migrants who are already here. We know from the worker registration scheme that more than 58,000 people from the accession 8 countries have registered to work in Scotland since 2004, that more than 70 per cent of them are from Poland and that around a fifth of them have registered in the Lothians. We also know that those figures give only a rough indication at best, because not everyone is obliged to register under the scheme.

**Jamie Stone:** Does the minister recognise that, in parallel with the worrying figures that she has given, there was some evidence in the run-up to the Scottish election that many migrant workers were not registered to vote, although as citizens of the EU they had the right to do so?

**Linda Fabiani:** That is absolutely true. Political parties, agencies and everyone else involved in public life must try to address that issue for the next election.

Migrant workers are not found only in the Lothians or the cities. When I visited the Highlands recently, I found that they are making a huge contribution to the local economy and society, as Jamie Stone said. I heard at first hand about the experiences of a couple of lassies from Poland and the Czech Republic who are working with migrant workers.

We need to do what we can to encourage many migrant workers to stay in Scotland in the longer term, although there is always room for those who do not want to do that and want to be part of the migratory pattern to which I referred. However, we must help those who want to stay here to build a new life to achieve their personal goals—after all, they are helping us to achieve our economic goals. Recently, we updated our Polish information guide, which has been distributed in hard copy to more than 25,000 people here and in Poland. Interestingly, our Polish website has had more than 100,000 visitors.

**Margo MacDonald:** I have a suggestion. If we pilot the welcome desks, the people who run the Polish website should be partners in the project, so that it is not seen as a patronising gesture.

**Linda Fabiani:** We should always work in partnership when we tackle such issues. Malcolm

Chisholm also referred to that, and expressed concern about local government funding. I will ensure that he receives an update on the latest position.

I am considering the help that we can provide through the relocation advisory service, which was launched in 2004 as a three-year pilot project. Recently, I extended the project so that it will run to October 2008, to allow us to thoroughly review it. We are contacting stakeholders, including employers, business representatives, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and local authorities, to seek their views on how we can develop the service to best meet the needs of employers and employees. We are working in partnership.

We are also considering how we can develop the fresh talent policy framework. Like Margo MacDonald, I welcome the brave step that Jack McConnell took to establish the fresh talent scheme. It is a shame that the differential that we had has been lost. We must consider imaginative ways of making up for that loss.

**Sarah Boyack:** There is currently a lot of good practice, and Margo MacDonald's motion has brought to the chamber a sense that it would be good to pull it together. In my constituency, for example, many workers get off the airport bus and cross the road to the employment service, where many leaflets in Polish are available. Good things are happening, but we need to build on the momentum.

**Linda Fabiani:** I say again that partnership is important to us, which is why I extended the time for the crucial relocation advisory service pilot project.

I will have to rush through the other things that I want to say. Qualifications have been discussed. There are services that help people to have their qualifications recognised in the United Kingdom. In that regard, I should mention the National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom—UK NARIC—which provides comparison information and advice.

In response to demands from employer organisations, the Scottish Qualifications Authority has started to map Polish qualifications and the Polish education system against Scottish qualifications and the Scottish credit and qualifications framework. Information on that is now available on the SQA website.

I agree that airports can be a prime location for informing people about Scotland, but I am not convinced of the cost-effectiveness or, indeed, the general effectiveness of a welcome portal at Edinburgh airport. Many migrant workers come through Edinburgh airport and other airports, but we know that many others come to Scotland by other modes of transport, directly or via England.

However, as I have said, we will consider support for migrant workers in our review of the relocation advisory service.

It is important that we do not forget the role of employers. The Government has a part to play in encouraging people to come here to help employers fill their vacancies, but employers also have a role in helping their employees to achieve their full potential. We should always ensure that we get as much information as possible, including anecdotal evidence, from stakeholders, including trade unions, on where there is potential for exploitation. Christine Grahame mentioned that.

I commend the role that the consular corps plays in supporting fellow citizens in Scotland. I agree that support for migrant workers needs to be provided, but we must work alongside all our partners in local government and other agencies, the consular corps and employers to achieve our goals. I think that we all have the same goals.

*Meeting closed at 17:44.*





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