



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 26 May 2011

Session 4

---

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - [www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk) or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

---

**Thursday 26 May 2011**

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Col.</b>
<b>FIRST MINISTER'S STATEMENT: TAKING SCOTLAND FORWARD</b> .....	65
The First Minister (Alex Salmond) .....	65
<b>TAKING SCOTLAND FORWARD</b> .....	75
Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab) .....	75
Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con) .....	80
Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP) .....	83
Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab) .....	86
Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD) .....	88
Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP) .....	90
Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab).....	93
Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) .....	95
John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP).....	98
Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP).....	100
Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab) .....	102
Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP) .....	105
Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP).....	108
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab) .....	110
Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP) .....	112
Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con).....	114
Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green) .....	116
Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP).....	119
Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP) .....	121
Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab) .....	123
James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP) .....	126
Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind).....	128
Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP).....	130
Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab) .....	133
Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP).....	135
Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con) .....	137
James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab).....	140
Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP) .....	141
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....	144
Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab) .....	147
The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy (Nicola Sturgeon) .....	151
<b>PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTIONS</b> .....	158
The Cabinet Secretary for Parliamentary Business and Government Strategy (Bruce Crawford) .....	158
<b>DECISION TIME</b> .....	159

---



## Scottish Parliament

Thursday 26 May 2011

[The Presiding Officer *opened the meeting at 10:30*]

### First Minister's Statement: Taking Scotland Forward

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The first item of business is a statement by the First Minister on taking Scotland forward. The First Minister's statement will be followed by a debate, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

10:30

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** Presiding Officer, I will start my statement with an apology and a revelation. The apology is that I am meeting the Secretary of State for Defence in Glasgow early this afternoon, which will necessitate me leaving the chamber, perhaps before the end of the morning session. No discourtesy is intended to you, Presiding Officer, or to the many new members who will have their first opportunity to speak today.

The revelation is that, only last evening, I found out that one of the things that our excellent civil service does during the *purdah* period is prepare for any scenario that might arise after the election campaign. My understanding is that a majority Government was not the favoured scenario, nor was it considered to be the most likely. However, one scenario that was considered to be likely was the possibility of a Labour-Conservative coalition. I have had a totally sleepless night over that, but I am thinking that, if anyone tires of the Government and the people who are in the chamber during the next five years, they should think about what the alternative might have been.

Presiding Officer, my statement sets out the Government's vision for the next five years. In a letter to Jackie Kennedy, John Steinbeck referred to Scotland as an "unwon cause". That is a nice phrase. In my younger days, I imagined that all that we had to do to prove Steinbeck wrong was to become independent. However, every society is an unwon cause. The struggles for fairness, equality, tolerance and the rights of free speech and thought are never truly won. They require constant vigilance and courage. That does not mean that the cause should not be fought or that the values are not worth the fight; they are. The quality of our society is my cause.

History shows us that a truly equal, fair and kind society is built on good education, good health,

and the strength and integrity of public services. It values happiness higher than money and sees that people share a bond with one another, connecting them from house to house, community to community, and across the world.

For the next five years, the Government will champion the unwon. Devolution was born for a purpose: to let Scotland find peace with herself and for our nation to become comfortable in her own skin. However, much of what was held up as a problem or a difficulty in 1999 is still a problem or a difficulty. During the past 12 years, we in the Parliament have done much good work, but not enough. The resounding vote of confidence in the Government came about because the people want more. They want real powers for real change.

The people of Scotland's desire for their Parliament to have economic powers is not academic, nor is it a small thing. It is at the very core of our future. Elsewhere in these islands, the tolerance of the poor is being tested. Budgets are being slashed, priorities have been changed, and hope has been crushed by the braying tones of people who claim to know best. We should aspire to be different. In Scotland, the poor will not be made to pick up the bill for the rich—at least not in the areas over which we have control.

When we control our natural assets as a sovereign power, the profit from the land should go to all. Too many of our people have been ill served by the union as it currently stands. There is a better way. Scotland should have control of her destiny. What we choose to do with that control—the alliances that we forge, the bonds that we make and the interests that we share—is ours and ours alone to determine. That is what independence means.

We are not rushing the journey. Do not let our steady pace fool anyone into thinking that we are not determined. We shall keep travelling and get ever closer to home.

For that journey, it is important that we have a Scotland Bill that is worthy of the name. The Scotland Bill is too important to be left to Westminster, which is why the Parliament should convene a Scotland Bill committee so that the voice of Scotland's Parliament can continue to be heard on the legislation. There is consensus for changes—often more consensus than we care to admit—across parties, and between the previous Scottish Parliament and the present Scottish Parliament. We should ensure that the bill incorporates those changes.

We should ensure that the Crown estate comes under the control of this Parliament, so that Scotland's communities can share the vast offshore wealth of our nation. We shall see that we

have borrowing powers appropriate to the size and ambition of this Parliament and this country—with the prize not the power, but more jobs and the chance to protect our recovery.

We should demand that corporation tax be devolved. The logic is irresistible: if Northern Ireland is capable of controlling its corporation tax rate, so is Scotland. If the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills in the United Kingdom Government says that the logic of the case is solid, who am I to argue with St Vince Cable? He is a Liberal Democrat who sees that the path to redemption out of the shame of coalition is to claim traditional liberal values—so he naturally finds himself in agreement with a Scotland that wants more powers. I am sure that, where Vince has led, the Liberal Democrat members in this chamber will enthusiastically follow.

We need control of excise duties, so that we can tackle the problems of alcohol abuse and can benefit the public purse. Many of our leading cultural figures have backed this Parliament's call for a Scottish digital channel. In the previous Scottish Parliament, the call for a Scottish digital channel was unanimous. We need regulatory influence in broadcasting to take that forward. And, of course, our key industries would benefit from more influence over European policy. The age of benign diktat is over.

This Parliament is not a lobby group—and it should not consider itself as one—begging Westminster for what should by right be ours. This Parliament speaks for the people of Scotland, and the people's voice should be heard.

Having a majority gives this Government more scope, certainly, but we must still act within the restricted powers of this Parliament. That does not confine our ambitions for Scotland, but it confines our ability to achieve those ambitions. That is why constitutional issues are a priority for this Government, and should be a priority for this Parliament, in the short term and the medium term. In the short term, the immediate priority is to convert the current Scotland Bill into a worthy successor to Donald Dewar's original, so that each and every member of this Parliament can honestly say of the new bill, as he said of the first bill: "I like that!" That is why, as we promised to the Scottish electorate, our referendum on moving towards independence and full financial responsibility should be well into the second half of this parliamentary session.

Constitutional change is not an end in itself but a means to a better nation. The Scottish National Party is sometimes characterised by others as only a constitution party. In fact, we are not. Constitutional progress is only part of our ambition for our nation. My passion is not to cross some

imaginary constitutional finishing line at some point in the future and think, "My goodness. The race is won." The challenge that drives me is not the constitution, but the people. My aim is now—as it has been in the past, and as it always will be—to deliver a better society for the people of Scotland. It happens that we need full powers to do that, but the people come before the powers, the community before the constitution, and the children before the state.

Today, I want to talk about the quality of the Scotland, and the type of Scotland, to which I think that we should all aspire, and to talk about the three elements that speak to who we are and how we govern.

First, there is the economics of security. Already, within the Scottish Government, we have secured a no-compulsory-redundancy deal covering 30,000 workers in this Government and its agencies. Our commitment is to seek to extend that—first to the 160,000 workers in our national health service—before working to ensure that a policy of no compulsory redundancies spreads across the public sector. Will that be easy? No. Is it important? Without any doubt whatsoever. It is, in fact, an essential part of economic recovery. With security of employment comes the confidence to invest as individuals, and to build and to spend. The benefits of that confidence will be seen in the corner shop, in our high streets, and in our housing market. It is one crucial way in which this Government can, and will, nurture economic recovery and growth in Scotland.

Secondly, I want to talk about the concept of a social wage. A social wage is part of the pact—the promise—between politicians, public services and the people. We will deliver the social and economic circumstances that allow people to dream, to aspire and to be ambitious, but it is for the individual to realise their dreams, to reach for their hopes and to meet their ambitions.

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has been in session this week. When it heard from a United Kingdom Prime Minister 23 years ago, the speech that she gave sounded to this nation like fingernails being dragged across a blackboard. Margaret Thatcher's address became notorious as the sermon on the Mound. Let us say to her political heirs and successors that there is such a thing as a Scottish society, and we intend to protect it.

We are, and should be, united in the effort to build a better nation. We are not individuals alone in a cold world, but a community that is united to protect all our people, and the steps that this Parliament has already taken—the provision of free personal care, the abolition of tuition fees, the scrapping of the tolls and the delivery of free prescriptions—are our side of the bargain. Many of

those advances took place under this Government in the previous session of Parliament, but it was the Parliament that started on that road by providing for free personal care and free bus passes across Scotland under previous Administrations. It was the Parliament's instinct to take those measures.

The next steps include the freezing of the council tax until the end of the present parliamentary session. As constituency MSPs, every one of us knows the pressure that there is on family budgets. We know that tough times force difficult decisions on homes the length and breadth of our nation. Many, many people have accepted a wage freeze. People understand that public spending must be restrained.

In return, we must stand alongside the family in Dumfries that wants to send their daughter to university; we must support the commuter in Dunfermline who travels daily across the Forth, or the family in Ayrshire who would otherwise have to choose which medicine they can afford for the family member who suffers from a chronic condition. We should remember that previously, 600,000 people in Scotland who earned less than £16,000 a year were forced to pay prescription charges. We will protect the pensioner in Inverness who lives off her savings and fears ever-rising prices and bills.

Free university education, no tolls, no tax on ill health and one bill—the council tax—that will not soar: that is the concept of the social wage. For the sacrifices that all of us are and should be making, there is a reward in the form of a society that is geared to our values. We do things differently here, not because we can but because we want to, and we should be proud of that.

For Scotland's patients, our commitment to protecting the health budget is all about delivering the better and faster treatment that we know they seek and need. For victims in society, we will take forward the necessary reforms to improve their rights and give them their proper place at the heart of our justice system. For our unpaid carers, men and women, young and old, who give so much of their lives to look after the people they love, we will work to ensure that they are true partners in the delivery of care and that their very special role is fully recognised. For jobseekers, students, pupils and parents, our commitment is clear: we will create opportunity. We will work to build the conditions here in Scotland where you and yours can flourish.

Those and others are the living embodiment of a social contract and of a new partnership between Government and the people. That is the society that we will build and protect. We guarantee that neither the market nor crazed ideology should be

allowed to tear us apart. There is such a thing as society—it is ours to defend and ours to celebrate.

The third element is our fund for the future. During the election campaign, we set out plans for a Scottish futures fund—a fund that was designed to tackle head on some of the endemic problems and capital underinvestment in our society and, more than that, a fund with a core purpose to create new opportunities across Scottish society.

Some in this chamber told us to use the private finance initiative to build the new Forth bridge. If we had listened to them, there could be no Scottish futures fund. Some said that we should scrap the Scottish Futures Trust but, without its expertise and the efforts of Transport Scotland, we would not have the prospect of a £250 million saving on the cost of the Forth replacement crossing.

The Scottish futures fund will stand as a testament to good government and sound financial management. Just as the Forth replacement crossing is a bridge to jobs, growth and economic security, so the futures fund will be a bridge to a better and fairer future.

Within the £250 million fund there are five separate initiatives, each with the potential to reshape our nation. The youth talent fund will draw out and encourage the very best of talent in all parts of our country. It will help to create the next generation of sportsmen and women, and the artists, playwrights and performers who will thrill and entertain us for years to come. More than that, the fund will change for good and forever the life path of thousands of young Scots.

The warm homes fund will deliver warm homes for thousands of Scots in our most fuel-poor communities. It will provide those communities with their own renewable generation and, from that clean green energy, an income that the communities will control. It will tackle, for once, not just the symptoms of poverty but the causes. This investment will prepare our nation to meet the challenges of the future. A future transport fund will enable us to make the necessary transition to more sustainable travel. The next generation digital fund will open up Scotland to the potential of the new digital revolution. Our sure start fund has at its heart the determination to transform the life chances of thousands of newborn Scots.

Our vision is of a nation that is fair and just, and fertile for ambition and talent, where the deepest challenges we face are first acknowledged and then tackled head on. The Scottish futures fund will create the opportunity to make a difference for families and individuals in all parts of Scotland. It will be a defining initiative of this Government, and one that begins to change our nation for good.

If we invest in each other, we invest in ourselves, and we will build a secure society—a place of equality, fairness and justice. This will be our offer to the world: live here because the life is good; work here because the people are well educated and ambitious; visit here because it has a beauty that radiates from the land and the people; and invest here because it is productive and ambitious. We shall deliver collectively a better quality of society, leaving room for the individual to flourish on these solid, Scottish foundations. Crucially, we will leave no one behind.

Part of the social wage is that we should work towards a safer society. In the age of Twitter and texts, the dreams of a free-speaking world are contaminated by viral strains of bitterness. Technology has given fresh energy to old hatreds and pustulant sectarianism again seeps across our land. It must and will be stopped. I will not have people living in fear from some idiotic 17th century rivalry in the 21st century. I will not have Scotland torn apart by the memory of battles that no one alive fought in, and by confected rivalry between faiths that long ago united in the ecumenical movement. We are all children of the past, but we are capable of growing up and saying, “Not here, no more.”

Sectarianism must stop, and it will, not because it is embarrassing to our national image, although it is, nor because it is embarrassing to ourselves, although it is that too, but because it is a pointless cause pursued by the pitiless. Such hatred—of the self, of others and of our society—shall end.

Sectarianism travels hand in hand, at least in part, with another scourge of our safety and happiness—the booze culture. I think that we have confused our appetite for fun with a hunger for self-destruction. We tolerate a race to the bottom of the bottle, which ruins our health, our judgment, our relationships, our safety and our dignity. At the core of our approach is the idea that there is a dignity in being human; a duty to behave with respect to one another and to ourselves; and merit in grace and kindness that far outweighs careers and profit. Drink robs us of our personal and collective dignity. It makes infants of the wise, and victims of the young. Thus, early legislation in this session of Parliament shall address both bigotry and booze.

Across this chamber, we know that Scotland must tackle those issues, but they are not the only priorities that we must address in these first weeks and months of our new parliamentary session. Jobs and growth, the pressures on our budgets, and finding new and better ways of delivering the public services that the people of Scotland expect and deserve must also be at the forefront of our minds and actions.

This summer, the Christie commission will report on ways to reform our public services. I do not wish to prejudge that process, but let me focus on one area of reform, and on how we can create and protect jobs and deliver a stable, safe society while doing things in a new and better way. It is an area in which we have shown that it is possible to have fresh thinking and in which creativity and ingenuity mean getting more for less.

Building a better nation means investing in housing and improving the living standards of those who currently live in unacceptable conditions. A child living in an overcrowded house will not realise his or her full potential. The health of a pensioner living in a damp house will suffer. Investment in housing is essential to promote economic growth. We will therefore bring forward new proposals to improve the quality and quantity of housing in Scotland. The people of Scotland deserve to live in homes that are fit for the 21st century, and this Government is committed to that goal. It is a goal that is essential if we are to achieve our vision of a better nation for all.

Driving forward that vision is a commitment to boosting our economy. The jobs agenda will be at the heart of our programme for government. Our own actions in the public sector will do all that we can to support employment, but ultimately it is the private sector that will be the key driver of job creation in this country.

Our ability to support job creation will succeed only if our workforce has the skills and training necessary to succeed. We have tailored our support to accommodate the different requirements of individuals across the labour market spectrum, from new entrants to people returning to employment, retraining for a new career or upskilling within existing employment. That focus will continue in support of employment.

We will continue our efforts through Scottish Development International and the enterprise agencies to make Scotland an attractive place for investment. Members will have seen yesterday's survey from Ernst and Young, which shows that this nation leads these islands in inward investment projects. What is even more important is that we lead in reinvestment: the world's greatest companies, already having had experience of investments in this country, are reinvesting in the future of Scotland.

In recent months, we have seen welcome and valuable investments from leading global companies, including more than 3,000 jobs—permanent and seasonal—announced by Amazon this year alone. Mitsubishi Power Systems, Ryanair, Gamesa and Doosan—these investments and others have been secured. That is good news for our economy, but it is only a start.

There is a world of opportunity for Scotland's job creators, our entrepreneurs and our businesses. Our economic strategy will position our nation to make the most of our natural and comparative advantages and to use the skills of our people and the depth of our research to create a decade of prosperity. Our ambition is a Scotland that flourishes: a Scotland that is open for business, where success is rewarded and nurtured, and where opportunities are seized quickly with both hands.

Our approach will mean a renewed focus on our growth companies, our growth sectors and our growth markets. In growth markets, we will prioritise the internationalisation of Scotland's economy, bringing new wealth and generating the high-quality, well-paid jobs that are an essential requirement for success in the 21st century. External trade, investment and the flow of knowledge and skills are crucial to our future as a dynamic, flexible and modern economy.

A legacy of the recession has been the creation of new opportunities for Scotland, particularly in emerging markets. There are 2.5 billion people in the fast-growing economies of India and China alone. They are customers who will look to the best that Scotland can offer. Today that market is, in many ways, still untapped for Scottish companies, but in the future it can be a cornerstone of our national prosperity.

Internationalisation provides opportunities for all parts of the economy, whether it is in tourism and events, the export of specialised services in oil and gas, education, financial management or the array of manufactured products that we export from Scotland. Building on those strengths and our overseas support networks, we have set ambitious targets for export growth for the economy. To match that ambition, we will deliver greater support for growth companies—big and small—who wish to sell their goods to the world, bringing about a vibrant and growing export sector with existing exporters expanding their share and new entrants discovering new markets.

A time of challenge is also a time of opportunity. We know of our great comparative advantage in natural resources and the opportunities that exist in transforming to a low-carbon economy. In renewable energy, we have just one of many growth sectors, and through our renewable wealth we can and will reindustrialise our nation as we research, develop, export, engineer, fabricate, install and then service the new energy systems that will power this century. That is a strategy that will take the nation forward to recovery and an approach that will create wealth and jobs.

This is a Government with ambition for Scotland. It is a Government that presses for new powers and responsibilities, not for its own sake

but as a means to achieve a nation of aspiration and achievement. It is a Government that seeks to work with all parties in this Parliament and all the people in this nation to create the Scotland that we all should wish to see—the nation that we all know Scotland can be.

This is a Government that wants to build the foundations for success, from this day forward, for future generations to enjoy—built on a clear Scottish vision of a fair society and a promise between politicians and the people that, together, we will make Scotland better.

## Taking Scotland Forward

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** We move to a debate on taking Scotland forward. I call Iain Gray to open the debate.

10:55

**Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** I thank the First Minister for his statement and for making it available in advance. As I have made clear over the past three weeks, we on this side of the chamber recognise the mandate that the Government has, and we want to identify the common ground on which we can take Scotland forward together. However, we must begin to explore the detail of that common ground—the how and the when. It is time to move from the poetry to the prose.

That is especially urgent in the case of action on sectarianism, as the First Minister has said that he wants to see new legislation on the statute book before the summer recess. We want to co-operate. The First Minister knows that we on the Labour benches are proud of Jack McConnell's initiative in facing up to sectarianism and believe that more could have been done over the past four years. He knows, too, that one of our former Labour colleagues, Trish Godman, was a victim of the incidents that have led him to his current proposals. We take the issue very seriously and believe that it is about more than football, as he acknowledged in his statement. Nevertheless, we have concerns about getting legislation right in a very short time. Legislating for cybercrime is notoriously difficult, although I agree that we should legislate. We want to co-operate but, to do so, we must start talking immediately about the detail of what is proposed and the process, which will have to draw on evidence from outside the Parliament, as all good law making must. We cannot afford to legislate on the issue in haste and repent at leisure or to begin this session with a law that the police, courts and judiciary do not use.

I wrote to the First Minister last week, offering to discuss that matter and his plans to reintroduce alcohol minimum pricing proposals. On the latter, a good start would be to implement quickly the laws that we have already passed—months ago—to stop drink promotions. Above all, in that letter, I said that I wanted to work with him on my highest priorities—jobs and getting the economy growing. Last week's unemployment figures may have been encouraging but there are still more than 200,000 Scots out of work and the number of women claiming jobseekers allowance in Scotland is the highest that it has been since records began.

We agree with the Government on a lot, in spite of the exchange that the First Minister and I had at

a Federation of Small Businesses hustings. Attacking my plan to create 250,000 jobs, he said that

“Government can't create jobs by diktat.”

He is right: we cannot do it by diktat—we need a plan. We need apprenticeships and job placements for the unemployed; we need support for employers in the small business sector to enable them to take on more staff; and we need investment in infrastructure. There is plenty of agreement there, and there is a lot more that we can do. A mortgage deposit scheme would boost construction and give young Scots the chance of getting on to the property ladder. Providing better support for students at college by extending the educational maintenance allowance would improve their opportunities. Extending co-investment funding, which has been so successful, would plug investment gaps in new and growing businesses.

We propose a plan for jobs and growth with more than 80 elements. We have a real chance to drive Scotland forward. The coalition Government at Westminster has no plan for growth and no plan for jobs. The regional development agencies have been abolished in England. I agree with the First Minister that Scotland can, right now, construct a comprehensive and coherent plan to get those 200,000 Scots back into the job market and let them take their families, enterprises and Scotland forward.

We can add to that the advantage that we have, on which we agree, in terms of green jobs and especially renewables. The Scottish Government's 100 per cent target for renewable electricity production is ambitious. Now it must deliver it. An increase in marine production from a consented 45GWh to a delivered 2,260GWh and an increase in offshore wind generation from a consented 650GWh to more than 20,000GWh in only nine years are heroic assumptions that are based on some fairly speculative plans.

It is right to provide support for the University of Strathclyde's innovation and technology centre and the offshore infrastructure fund, and we welcome that. However, we need quickly to start thinking about what else needs to be done. The plans need an extra 2,000MW of onshore wind generation delivered by the end of the decade. Should we not revisit the national planning framework to make it clearer where that might be installed? What are the grid implications? How quickly can all of that be consented?

Of course, this is not just about energy. Scotland should not just have the wind turbines; we should have the jobs, too.

I remember the jobs boom when the North Sea opened up. I was growing up in Inverness at the

time, and everyone who was just a little older than me seemed to be heading offshore or to the construction sites at Nigg or Ardersier. Scotland got 70 per cent of the jobs that were created then. Now, however, we get only 10 per cent of the jobs that renewables projects create. We need to do more.

I will give one example to illustrate the point. The diving school at Fort William, which was originally set up to train Scots as divers for the North Sea, should be training Scots now to be the divers—potentially thousands of them—that those offshore wind projects will need. However, it is not doing that; it is training divers from across the world—from everywhere except Scotland. We have to change that. We should be finding a way to fund that work, so that those opportunities are available here in Scotland.

The First Minister and I signed a pledge that higher education would be free. He has the mandate to deliver that and no excuse not to. However, we have to start answering the questions about how we do that without slashing student places and while keeping our universities world class, because the First Minister promised all that, too. We have to improve support for students and end the situation in which they have access to less resource to live on than their counterparts elsewhere in the United Kingdom. That is urgent because course planning and the student application process mean that we need to begin to answer those questions in weeks rather than months if the future of our higher education sector is to be secure.

Another promise that the First Minister made—surely part of any social contract—was to protect the national health service. The First Minister promised to maintain that protection throughout this parliamentary session. That was the right thing to do, and we will hold him to that. However, in the course of the election campaign, I met NHS workers from around the country and across many professions who told me the health service that we cherish is struggling: vacancies remain unfilled; beds are being closed; operations are being cancelled; and building projects are being delayed. Some said that the situation was the worst that they had ever known, which surprised me. I know that the First Minister heard those things too—an NHS worker challenged him in one of our television debates.

The truth is that protecting the NHS does not just mean protecting the budget; it means protecting the service. Yes, we should reject the reforms that are—perhaps—happening in England, but we need to face up to reform of the bureaucracy or even the number of boards. Surely that is common ground, just as reform of care services—moving forward on self-directed care as

the health secretary promised before the election—is common ground.

Another area in which we agree on direction but need detail now is policing. The First Minister has promised to maintain police numbers and we will hold him to that, but we do not know how many police forces the First Minister believes that we should have. I think that one force would maximise what savings there are to be made to protect the front line, provide more effective policing at a strategic level and strengthen the accountability and authority of local policing—if we get it right.

However, to do that we need to get governance structures right and build confidence in the reform within the police service itself and in the communities that it serves. We cannot begin to do that until the Government makes up its mind on how many forces are best. I think that one is best; if the Scottish Government decides that three or four are best, that will happen, given the parliamentary arithmetic, but we should move on that—and move quickly.

Those are just some of the areas in which we are in agreement with the Government about how to take Scotland forward, and I agree that Scotland's path should be different from that pursued by the Tory-Lib Dem coalition in Westminster. There is a fairer, better way, and we will hold the First Minister to his promises on the social wage, as he has characterised it: on free personal care, concessionary travel, free prescriptions and free education.

We agree with the need for pay restraint, but the First Minister must accept and understand that the public sector pay freeze is, in a time of inflation, a pay cut for many thousands of public sector workers and families throughout the country. He cannot assume that those public sector workers will bear that burden alone to pay for the social wage for five years to come. That would not be fair; what is more, if in Scotland—as he says—the poor are not to pick up the bill for the rich, that pay restraint must be moderated by the full implementation of a living wage to protect those on the lowest incomes so that they are not the ones paying the highest price for something that they did not create.

There is common ground—but not, of course, when it comes to the First Minister's ambition to separate Scotland from the United Kingdom. The First Minister was clear during the election campaign that an election result could not provide a mandate for such a separation, but I am clear that he can claim a mandate to hold a referendum on the issue.

I do not think that such a referendum is a good thing for Scotland, because it creates—and is already creating—uncertainty about the country's

future. It could damage investment in our economy, both internal and external, but I assume that it is going to happen because he now has no excuse for it not to.

That begs questions that the First Minister is now obliged to stop avoiding. When will it be? What will the question be? How much will it cost? What will the franchise be? How will campaigns be funded? What choice will be offered? He spent four years drafting the bill—was it three white papers that we saw?—but it never appeared because, we were told, there was a majority in this Parliament against it. There is no such excuse now.

It is simply not credible for the SNP to say after all this time that it does not know when or what the question will be or how many questions there will be, or, best of all, that it is not sure what it means by independence after all. That is not credible—and it is not convincing.

Last October, I said:

“I love my country too much to be a nationalist”.

**Members:** Oh!

**Iain Gray:** I meant that I do not think that Scotland is too small, too poor or too stupid to stand on its own; I think that it is big enough, rich enough in talent and certainly smart, creative and educated enough to take every opportunity afforded by being part of a bigger social and economic unit.

In any case, I know that the sentence enraged those SNP supporters sad enough to comment on my speeches in the middle of the night. It was meant to do so; indeed, it is still working. [*Laughter.*] However, I hope that some of them were literate enough to know that I did not coin it—it was a quote from Albert Camus, who also said:

“You know what charm is: a way of getting the answer yes without having asked any clear question.”

If that is the First Minister’s referendum strategy, it is not good enough. The question is too big and too important not to be clear.

I know that the election result means that we will have to make our case against separation—and we will do so. The First Minister should be prepared to make his case for it, honestly and openly. He has no excuse not to.

I know that the election result also means that we will in any case talk about the Parliament’s powers. I do not mind some of that; we even agree with the First Minister sometimes, including, for example, on the need to get capital borrowing powers more quickly. However, we will not move Scotland forward if the Government turns every challenge to it into a challenge to the constitutional settlement. We will not move Scotland forward at

all by talking about the powers that we do not have and failing to use those that we do.

In the spirit of last week’s parliamentary multilingualism—for the avoidance of doubt I tell Mr Crawford that this is Spanish, not Portuguese—I say:

“no hay camino, se hace camino al andar”.

In other words, there is no road; the road is made by walking. Yes, Scotland’s road forward is different—that is devolution—but we make it by walking, not talking. There are many directions that we agree on—on health, education and jobs, for example—and Scotland expects us to take those forward and to do so quickly.

11:13

**Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con):** I, too, thank the First Minister for his statement and for providing an advance copy of it.

We all want to take Scotland forward. The questions, however, are: which Scotland and how? It is fantastic to be Scottish; it is great to be British; and I am proud to be both. The two are not in competition or mutually exclusive; in fact, they are mutually inclusive and complementary and represent the best of both worlds. Many people share that positive assessment.

There is a difference between patriotism and nationalism. One can be a broad and widely shared sentiment of pride and cultural adherence; the other can run the risk of becoming narrow, restrictive and introspective. I want the best for my country, which, for me, means being Scottish and British and that we should work together for the good of us all. I know that not everyone agrees with that view. I respect their right to hold their view, but I do not share it. Our United Kingdom union is not broken but, like any other enduring institution, it needs to adapt and move with the times. That is why the Scotland Bill is the way ahead.

I remind the First Minister that implementing the Scotland Bill was a commitment of 53 of the 59 Scottish MPs elected to Scotland’s other Parliament last year. [*Interruption.*] I never thought that I would see Mr Swinney of all people mocking democracy. Alex Salmond’s mandate is not the only mandate. Scotland voted by referendum for a devolved Scottish Parliament with tax-varying powers. That is the settled will.

Let us nail the so-called independence-lite argument once and for all. People can no more be independent lite than pregnant lite. They are either one or the other; they either are or they are not. All the code and soft-shoe shuffling in the world cannot hide the simple truth that we are either Scottish and British or we are not.

At its root, the debate about our identity is not just about economics and balance sheets or profit-and-loss accounts. We can argue until the cows come home about how much worse off Scotland would be if it was rent asunder from Britain, but at the core of the argument is how we feel and whether Scotland has some deep-seated grievance and sense of disquiet that compels us to seek divorce from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, or whether it is at ease within the United Kingdom and positive about an enduring relationship promoting our mutual good.

**Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind):** Will the member give way?

**Annabel Goldie:** I do not propose to take interventions.

The debate is about who we feel we are and what we want to be. It is about whether we want to be as we are or on our own; whether we want to be part of the British family or just a northern neighbour looking on; and whether we want to work together for the common good, sharing our assets and spreading our risks, or take the separation gamble. At its simplest, the union is about doing what families do best. It is about just being together and being comfortable and at ease with one another with the occasional squabble and difference of opinion, but knowing that we are stronger together. It is about the best of both worlds and being comfortable with who we are. I repeat: it is fantastic to be Scottish and great to be British, and I am proud to be both.

I accept that the First Minister won his argument about holding an independence vote in this session, but there are two big questions that he must now face up to. The public have called his bluff, and they must know from him the question that will be in, and the timing of, his referendum. The question must be fair. It cannot be open to challenge or ambiguous. It cannot be a referendum lite. It cannot merely ask for the right to negotiate; it must give the people a fundamental choice about whether they want Scotland to remain part of Britain or to be a separate state. It is one or the other.

Now that a vote is inevitable, the First Minister needs to explain his change of view on timing. If holding a referendum was the right thing to do last year when he had a minority of seats in the chamber, why does he now wish to delay a referendum by years when he has a majority of seats?

The Scotland that I want to take forward is one that has learned from the past and is comfortable with its present and optimistic about its future. Let us consider how we can take Scotland forward and create a fair society.

Now that it has been established that the First Minister does not, on his own admission, have a monopoly of wisdom—I think that we all suspected that—let me put that to the test. My party's manifesto is packed full of good ideas that address Scotland's real and pressing priorities using all our existing powers. There are policies to boost the economy and create jobs, reform our public services and take Scotland forward. Over the coming weeks and months, the Scottish Conservatives will continue to do what we have done over the past four years. We will find every means that we can to deliver common sense for Scotland. We will put our case debate by debate, committee by committee and argument by argument, and we will test every assertion that the SNP Government makes. We will provide the opposition that is needed and the alternative voice that is required, and we will carry on telling it like it is, however much the SNP does not want to hear that. When the uncomfortable truth needs telling, we will tell it, and when there is a better way to do things, we will be its advocate.

I recognise that politics, especially when we are facing a Government with a majority, is the art of the possible and not chasing unrealisable dreams. During the debate, my colleagues will set out in more detail the policies that should be considered, but let me paint a picture of what the Scottish Government should be doing and could reasonably be expected to do.

On the economy, creating jobs and boosting economic growth are rightly the number 1 priorities that underpin everything that we strive to do. There is no question but that the jobs of the future will come from the private sector. So, although we must protect our vital public services, if we are to create more prospects, opportunity, jobs and wealth for all of us, we must grow the private sector. I want an entrepreneurial, dynamic and thriving Scotland—a Scotland that backs small businesses and provides a framework for them to succeed and prosper. Let those be the watchwords of the new Parliament.

On our public services, we now have a minister with a specific brief for public sector reform. However, that must be more than an elongated name on a business card; it must lead to real and meaningful change and it has to mean the end to the "aye been" mentality—the attitude that, "This is how it is, because that's how we've always done it." We have to break that status quo. We must embrace all the talents of Scotland, including its third sector and, yes, its private sector, and accept the simple premise that someone does not have to be a public servant to provide a public service. We must have a Scotland of all the talents, with a fairer and bigger society.

I turn to three specific areas in which I believe progress is possible and more can be done, and on which I hope there is common ground. The first is health visitors, who are the vital point of contact with parents and young families in the community and in homes. They speak to mum and dad and give reassurance, help and advice. We need to ensure that all families, regardless of income, have access to a universal health visitor service. I hope that the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy will agree to an early meeting with my colleague Murdo Fraser.

Secondly, more has to be done to rehabilitate prisoners in our jails. I know that the SNP will not see sense on short-term sentences, but I hope that it will use common sense on the urgent need to cut crime through proactive rehabilitation. We can do so much more on that front. My party has positive proposals and I hope that the Cabinet Secretary for Justice will take them on board and meet my colleague John Lamont.

Finally, I make no apology for again mentioning drugs abuse. As I said yesterday, I pay tribute to the Government for listening and producing the new national drugs strategy, which is based on recovery. However, that strategy is not enough if nothing really changes on the ground. It is a long and hard fight, but it is one that we must never abandon. I personally pledge to continue that fight and I know that the First Minister will join me in that battle. We might disagree on many things, but let us unite on that.

The Parliament has entered a new era in which we can either seek solutions or manufacture grievance, allowing discord to ferment. For me, it will always be the former. The constitutional debate will undoubtedly rage, but let nobody in the chamber forget why we are here—we are here to take our devolved responsibilities seriously and, by doing so, to take Scotland forward.

**The Presiding Officer:** We now move to the open debate. I advise members that speeches will be of six minutes. For members who wish to take interventions, we have a wee bit of time in hand, so the Presiding Officers will be flexible with the time to ensure that members are not penalised for taking interventions.

11:23

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** Constitutional change—independence—is not an end for its own sake. A quick glance at the world map tells us that independence is practical, ordinary and normal. It would give Scots the opportunity to have a more egalitarian society and to reduce health inequalities so that wellbeing and life expectancy might not be matters of a person's

postcode. In a rich nation such as ours is, it is a disgrace that one in five of our children lives in poverty and that an estimated 100,000 children live in homes in which there are drug and alcohol problems. As I say, independence and devolution are practical, so my speech will, I hope, be eminently practical and will focus on health issues.

I have chaired health committees in the Parliament for six years. I suggest to the First Minister that the remit of the Health and Sport Committee in the previous session of Parliament was excellent. I have no idea whether that will be continued, but bringing sport into the health portfolio took us away from a focus on elite sports towards simply ensuring that young and old in our nation become more active, thereby saving us a great health bill.

I also endorse what the First Minister said about the achievements of this Parliament when Labour and the Liberals were in power: free personal care—which we all supported—and concessionary fares are excellent levelling measures.

The achievements of the minority Government are not to be overlooked. Delayed discharges went down, the health service workforce increased and hospital infections, which are literally a great blight, went down. Hospital car-parking charges, which are very unjust, were removed where possible—apart from where public-private partnership or private finance initiative contracts were in place. The abolition of prescription charges, which the Labour Party supported, was a very just measure.

However, the biggest loss in the previous session of Parliament, to which Iain Gray referred in his speech, was the failure to endorse minimum unit pricing for alcohol. Annabel Goldie said that she had her commonsense hat on. I say to her that I do not support minimum unit pricing just because I think it is a good idea from Christine Grahame; I heard all the evidence, along with the rest of the Health and Sport Committee. The chief medical officers of all parts of the United Kingdom, the health professionals, the police, the social workers, youth organisations, the voluntary sector and the churches all supported minimum unit pricing not because it is the only means of reducing our alcohol problems—which are reflected in behaviour, health, broken marriages and lost work—but because it is a fundamental tool for dealing with those problems.

Those who opposed minimum unit pricing were some supermarkets and Whyte & Mackay, which came back to the Health and Sport Committee and admitted that there would not be 500 job losses in Scotland; there would be none. Whyte & Mackay was concerned not about its whisky but about the cheap vodka that it produces, so it had a self-interest in the matter.

I hope that when the new health committee is established, whoever is on it will approve minimum unit pricing. I am pleased that the Government is pursuing it. While I am at it, I want to mention my constituency. Scottish Borders Council—which has a Liberal-independent-Tory administration—has unanimously supported minimum unit pricing. That is pretty ironic, given that one of the arguments that opposition parties made against minimum unit pricing was that white-van man would go through the Borders to Berwick, buy the booze and bring it into Scotland. Scottish Borders Council is not bothered about that—neither are the Borders supermarkets. I hope that other local authorities will pick that up.

For the sake of the front bench and for the sake of new members, I refer to the Health and Sport Committee's legacy paper. I do not want the paper to gather dust, because there are really good things in it. The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy might already have dealt with some of the issues that are raised in it, so I will touch on just one or two of them.

First, the legacy paper dealt with something that has been much neglected over the years, and which has a very strange name: the clinical portals, telehealth and e-health programme. It is a good way of delivering health services to remote areas and it saves money, so it should be developed. We are 12 years into the Scottish Parliament, so let us get on with the job.

The committee also looked at pathways into sport, which was terribly important. There has been a commitment throughout the Parliament over the past 12 years to having two hours of physical education in schools. I do not think that that has yet been delivered, although I stand to be corrected. Whoever is running council authorities—they all bear this responsibility—has to recognise that two hours of PE is essential, given that we are in a sedentary age in which most of the work that children do is with their fingers at the computer.

Mental health services have long been Cinderella services, and I commend Mary Scanlon for pursuing the issue over the years. I will focus on one thing—I am looking at Richard Simpson as I say this—which is the transition from child and adolescent services to adult services. The committee was very clear that the services should be focused on the individual. Those services must not be neglected. Indeed, in times of recession, mental health becomes more of a challenge.

I will, in my speech's dying minutes, pick up on a final thing: the Commonwealth games legacy. We on the committee were not popular at the time for saying that all the evidence that came to us—there is that key word "evidence" again—showed

that there had never been a health or sporting legacy in any nation that had held a large games production, if I can call it that. We have a heavy task ahead of us. We can build the buildings and the sports centres, but the key question at the end of the day is this: "Is Scotland going to be fitter and healthier or is the legacy of the games going to be people sitting on their sofas eating their crisps, with their lager at their side?" There is a real challenge there. When all the members of the committee addressed that point, it was not popular.

I put down those practical markers. We could do so much more of a practical nature with independence. That is the key message that I want to leave: independence is eminently practical and eminently normal.

11:29

**Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I am pleased to have my first opportunity to contribute to a debate in a Parliament that is very different from its predecessors. Of course, we must congratulate the SNP on its election win; it is obviously not what we hoped for, but the party's clear victory is an achievement that is worthy of recognition.

A new majority Scottish Government places a new onus on the Parliament to hold the Executive to account and I in no way underestimate the scale of the challenge to which we must rise. Labour members must reflect on the changes that we should make in our party in the light of the election result. As Iain Gray made clear, when we can endorse the Government's actions, we should and will do so. However, we cannot shirk our responsibilities to scrutinise and to hold ministers to account, and nor should we accept that the Government has a mandate to do all that it wants to do simply because it has a majority.

The Scottish Government has spent the first few weeks since the election arguing for the new powers that it wants. Of course, all parties recognise that the Parliament's powers are a crucial issue. That is why we initiated and supported the work of the Calman commission, which resulted in the Scotland Bill. Such issues will be even more to the fore as we approach an independence referendum.

What concerns me most, however, is what the Scottish Government can do now with the significant powers that it already has to ensure that we meet the economic challenges that our country faces today. Thousands of Scots are worried about what the economic situation means for them, for their employment prospects and for the key services on which they and their families depend.

One area of clear common ground between Labour members and ministers is the need to make creating jobs the Administration's priority. I very much welcome the new focus on employment that has been brought to Mr Swinney's brief. In his speech yesterday, the First Minister acknowledged that the thinking behind that reflected Iain Gray's call for increasing employment to be at the heart of the new Government's work.

I join those who have welcomed the recent good news about new jobs—the announcement of the new customer service centre that Amazon will establish in Edinburgh, which will create 900 jobs. However, there is no room for complacency about employment. Recent figures have shown an overall improvement, but there are still 200,000 Scots out of work and youth unemployment levels are still too high. Our ambition to abolish youth unemployment is still worthy and should be pursued by the Parliament across parties.

We share the concerns that have been expressed about the tax changes that George Osborne announced recently for the oil and gas industry. We worry about their impact on an industry that is crucial to Scotland—particularly to my region, which is North East Scotland. Such issues make it all the more important that bold measures be taken during the parliamentary session to tackle unemployment. There are significant areas of agreement on how we might achieve that.

**Margo MacDonald:** I am interested to find out whether Richard Baker considers that the taxation from oil now would be of benefit and whether it should come to the Parliament or go to the Treasury.

**Richard Baker:** I say to Margo MacDonald that what concerns me is what we can achieve right now. Right now, we must make the case clearly that the proposed tax changes for the oil and gas sector are wrong and would damage Scotland and our industry in the North Sea.

**The First Minister:** If those tax changes are so wrong, why did Labour Party members—with the exception of two members from Aberdeen—abstain when they voted on the finance bill in the House of Commons?

**Richard Baker:** I am trying to build an agreement between us and the First Minister for a change. I had hoped that he might, in the new spirit of the Parliament, work with me on that, but that mood seems to be changing even more quickly than I had expected. We stand ready to make the argument with him, so I hope that he takes that offer in the spirit in which it is made.

If the First Minister will allow me to do so, I will describe other significant areas of agreement. We have said that we want to drive down youth

unemployment by expanding the use of modern apprenticeships, creating a future jobs fund, ensuring fairer pay through a living wage and working with businesses and trade unions to inform an economic strategy that promotes growth and job creation. We may not agree on every detail of each measure, but we are keen to work with the Scottish Government to make the measures as successful as possible.

We can be under no illusion about the challenging nature of the Scottish Government's finances. This year's budget cuts total £1.3 billion, which makes efficiency in the public sector all the more crucial. The issues around public sector reform to which Iain Gray referred will be important to ensure that we can protect investment in front-line services while also—crucially—protecting local accountability for the important decisions that are made in those services in our communities.

It will be important for the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth to be able to reassure Parliament that the £1 billion of efficiency savings that he is seeking to make will be savings, rather than cuts and reductions to the quality of services. Ministers will also need to be clear about how they will fund their commitments—not least their plans for infrastructure—at a time of huge pressures on capital spending. We did not have a three-year spending review prior to the election, but we need one now. If the Parliament is to do its job and to hold the Scottish Government to account, we need to have full transparency on the Government's budget.

The Scottish Government now has huge power and responsibility to change this country—for the better, all of us hope. Where we believe that it is failing to do that, it will be our duty to hold it to account, but where we can work together with it for a better and more prosperous country, we will do so to achieve that goal.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** I respectfully remind members to speak through the chair and not to each other.

11:36

**Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** I, too, thank the First Minister for giving me early sight of his statement this morning.

I pay tribute to former colleagues who were not elected. Their hard work and effort on behalf of their constituents ended suddenly, and often with little ceremony. Many of the new SNP MSPs who were elected in their place have been generous in their recognition of that hard work. Some of the members who lost their seats served for more than 12 years. I thank them for that effort.

I also pay tribute to David Cairns, who is a greatly respected man who will be deeply missed in Scottish politics. He served Scotland well, and I am proud to have had the chance to work with him.

As I said last week, this time people in Scotland have chosen not to equip us with strong Liberal numbers in Parliament. Those of us who remain will have to be strong Liberal voices to hold the Government to account.

During the election, the SNP urged voters to “secure three prizes for Scotland”—

prizes, we were told, on health, the police and council tax. However, last week, in the First Minister’s acceptance speech, those prizes were nowhere to be seen. There was not one mention of his five-year council tax freeze, which was on the lips of every candidate and on every leaflet before polling day, but about which the SNP went strangely quiet afterwards. Instead, last week we were treated to a long list of points on every other tax that there is. It sounded more like extracts from the manual of an institute of taxation practitioners than a programme for government.

Today, council tax is relegated to page 8 of the First Minister’s statement, and there is not much more information on the freeze.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Willie Rennie:** No. I do not have time.

At the statement’s heart, there is no explanation of how a Scottish Government can make a five-year promise on the back of two years of figures. However, on the radio this morning, we heard more: we heard the price of that prize. The deep suspicion is that a five-year council tax freeze will be at the price of a five-year pay freeze, which will cost public sector staff on modest wages very dearly. A nurse on an average salary will lose £2,500 as a result, which will never be made up. For a 25-year-old, that will mean that they will lose £125,000 over their career. Those are serious sums that need serious answers. People will want the answers about their future.

The people in Kelty who voted SNP did so because they heard the shouts about the three big prizes, not the whispers about the price to be paid. Their votes have been counted, and that is what they appear to have signed up to. They have not, however; the First Minister has saved them the trouble and has signed both sides of the social contract for himself, on their behalf.

We need to hear what the Scottish Government intends to do to measure the investment in Scotland’s universities, so as to ensure that they

do not fall behind other institutions in the rest of the UK and around the world.

We also need to know when the First Minister expects to start his preparations for the local income tax. As regards the long and growing list of new powers that the First Minister wants, it is only fair for him to set out for us the full list of things for which he is claiming his mandate. At its heart, the SNP’s revised set of claims for a revised mandate is absurd. The SNP is solemnly promising to spend the first two years of the session working on the Scotland Bill, and it confidently expects to spend the last two years abolishing it. How absurd is that?

When the First Minister was renominated last week, I said that we would work with his Government where we agree with it. On supporting business and creating jobs, we will be united; on protecting the local services on which we all rely, he will have our full support; and on restoring excellence in education, we will be with him every step of the way.

I look forward to discussing the Scottish futures fund, which is contained in both our parties’ manifestos. It places a priority on early intervention, on opportunities for young people and on the digital economy. I hope to persuade the First Minister to go further and to support our approach on science and green energy, too—the sort of sensible and sustainable investment that is needed to rebuild our economy, to strengthen our society and to shape a successful future.

I am pleased to follow in the footsteps of Tavish Scott in leading my party. He set a direction that put us firmly on the side of people who want to get up and get on, creating businesses and wealth, supporting young people in education and keeping people in charge of local services. I am pleased also to follow in the footsteps of that great man Jo Grimond

“towards the sound of gunfire.”

11:42

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** I begin by offering my personal congratulations to you, Deputy Presiding Officer, on being elected to your most distinguished role. I wish you every success in your work.

I have to say: the cheek of Willie Rennie in that speech! There we see the infamous five, sitting on the benches of the Orkney and Shetland party, a political shipwreck whose dreams of coalition in Scotland were crushed by its slavish devotion to the Tories at Westminster and a betrayal of its own Scottish voters. If Willie Rennie really wants things to move forward in renewables, he should take his begging bowl to the coalition Government

at Westminster and ask for the long-promised fossil fuel levy to be delivered to the people of Scotland.

It is a great privilege for everyone here in the Parliament to have been elected to represent and serve the people of Scotland. I am genuinely delighted to see so many fresh new faces, particularly on the SNP benches. I am confident that new members of all stripes will contribute positively during the session as we seek to make Scotland fairer, more successful and prosperous. I welcome them all to this, their first parliamentary debate.

The past few weeks have marked an unprecedented phase in Scottish politics, as the SNP secured a majority of seats under a banner of securing more powers and autonomy for the people of Scotland and their Parliament. There can be no doubt that the time is right for us to seek those powers, which will help Scotland to become the nation that we know it can and should become.

As the First Minister made clear in his speeches last week and today, there is much common ground between the parties on a number of issues, and I hope that we will be able to secure support from across the chamber in securing the powers that are necessary to take Scotland forward.

Political commentators and voices from the various opposition parties have cited a number of reasons for the SNP's emphatic victory. My local Labour candidate even suggested that he lost to Alex Salmond. I am therefore delighted to inform the First Minister that he is now also the MSP for Cunninghame North, with a healthy majority of 6,117—the constituency in which we secured the greatest percentage increase in the SNP vote in the country.

**Christine Grahame:** You are not one to blow your own trumpet.

**Kenneth Gibson:** Indeed.

The victory of SNP positivity over the negative campaigning of other parties featured in all the post-election analyses. We set out a positive and ambitious vision of Scotland's future, which offers safety, security, good health, employment choices, opportunities and aspiration. We focus on what Scotland can achieve, not on what people who would talk it down say we cannot do. We have faith and confidence in our own people and their potential and in what can be delivered. Our vision is not one of subservience to London's interests.

We will continue to work hard for Scotland, because independence is the natural state for nations like ours. We have the ability to determine our own destiny and to build the best future for our country. We are a nation with a distinct political

culture and distinct institutions and interests, and we need the full powers to match that, so that we can realise our full potential as a nation, with full access to Scottish resources and a full voice in the European Union.

As for the huge powers that Richard Baker mentioned, the Scottish Parliament does not even have the powers of Jersey or the Isle of Man, never mind the powers of other nations of the world. In case anyone wants to know what we aspire to and what we mean by independence and equality, let me say that we mean that Scotland should be equivalent to Denmark, not Viborg; to Canada, not Saskatchewan; and to Australia, not Queensland. We believe in the equality of nations. We think that it is our right to pursue that and we fully intend to do so during the next few years.

In taking Scotland forward, it is important that we look at what we can deliver with the powers that we currently have. We are committed to providing 25,000 modern apprenticeships each year during the next five years. We will continue the small business bonus scheme, which has given rates relief to thousands of small businesses. In North Ayrshire, 1,838 businesses have no rates to pay as a result of the policy. Labour opposed the policy for four years, but I am thankful that it now supports the scheme. We will also provide an export support package, to increase our exports by 50 per cent over the next 10 years.

As the First Minister pointed out, we have ensured that there are no compulsory redundancies, through negotiations with Government unions in the areas that we control. However, in these uncertain times it is important to extend that security to people who work throughout the public sector. In my constituency, I am sad to say, Labour-controlled North Ayrshire Council has reneged on its party's manifesto commitment to there being no compulsory redundancies in the public sector by seeking to sack dozens of classroom assistants.

We have pledged to maintain 1,000 extra police officers on Scotland's streets. That approach has seen crime fall to a 32-year low and has, in Ayrshire, contributed to an incredible 31.7 per cent fall in serious violent crime in the past year alone. We will reintroduce our proposal for minimum pricing of alcohol, which 160 independent organisations fully support—Christine Grahame mentioned many of them. We will also introduce the detect cancer early initiative, which will save 300 lives per annum.

Independence is about making Scotland more successful. At its most basic, it is about taking our own decisions rather than leaving them to our next-door neighbours. Other countries see Scotland as a society and a nation, and no one

cares more about our success than the people who live here. That is why independence is the choice for our future. It will mean a strong new relationship between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom—a social union, to replace the current political union. As a member of the EU we will have open borders, shared rights, free trade and extensive co-operation. It will be an independence of equality, which allows us to make major decisions. That is the reality of independence in this interdependent world, and I look forward to the day when we can secure it.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I again remind members to speak through the chair. I call Kezia Dugdale, who is rising to make her first speech.

11:49

**Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab):** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I am very pleased to be here, although I did not expect to be elected. In fact, I did my very best to avoid being elected. I spent the past 18 months campaigning for Ewan Aitken, the Labour candidate who stood against the Cabinet Secretary for Justice in Edinburgh East. Ewan would have been an outstanding addition to the Parliament—I am sure that that is one thing that Mr MacAskill and I can agree on. It was undoubtedly a bad night for our party, but we cannot afford to grieve for too long. More than 70,000 people in the Lothians trusted their vote with Labour, and I must do right by them.

However, every member in the chamber carries a weight of deep responsibility, not least the new Government ministers, whom I welcome to their roles. The potential that the SNP Government has to effect real and lasting change according to its party's values is far greater than that of any Government that has preceded it. No compromises means no excuses. It must use the opportunity wisely and focus on the issues that really matter to the people whom we seek collectively to represent.

With that sentiment, I turn to child poverty. Today, the First Minister said:

“Elsewhere in these islands, the tolerance of the poor is being tested. Budgets are being slashed, priorities have been changed, and hope has been crushed by the braying tones of people who claim to know best.”

That might be true, First Minister, but it is also happening here, in your Scotland. The brutal truth is that just over 200,000 children in Scotland live in relative poverty today. In the history of the Parliament, that number has only ever gone down under Labour and up under the SNP.

I have in my hand the “Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland”, which was launched by the Deputy First

Minister a week before Parliament was dissolved. Today, the First Minister said:

“Our vision is of a nation that is fair and just, and fertile for ambition and talent, where the deepest challenges we face are first acknowledged and then tackled head on.”

If that is true, why was the child poverty strategy document the final action of the last Government rather than its first? It is for the Government to prove that the strategy is more than a gesture or a box-ticking exercise through early and decisive action on child poverty during the lifetime of this Parliament.

To give it credit, the strategy document recognises that little progress has been made since 2004-05 and that

“further and faster progress must be made.”

It goes on to say that the

“recession does not widen the risk of poverty. It increases it for those people already most at risk of becoming poor, or remaining in poverty for longer.”

It therefore follows that the Government must double its efforts simply to maintain the status quo. Child poverty is so deep-rooted and entrenched in our society that this must be the Government that makes serious in-roads if we, as a nation, are to have any prospect of achieving the 2020 target of eradicating child poverty. We must have that 2020 vision. I admire the SNP for its chutzpah and its passion for separation, however misguided. I only wish that it had the same fire in its belly for tackling poverty.

We have heard much today about a social wage, but whatever happened to the pact or promise for a living wage? Why is the Government so coy about producing an early years bill, and so shy about providing nursery places for vulnerable two-year-olds? While the SNP hopes for and aspires to an independent Scotland, the Prince's Trust has produced a report that says that one in four young people has lost the ability to hope at all. It warns of a developing youth underclass in our country. Those young people want and are able to work, but they need real support in the transition from school to adulthood, and from training programmes to the workplace.

My first official engagement as an MSP was to visit the Canongate Youth Project, which is an innovative organisation that has been working with young people in Edinburgh since 1977. I was astonished to hear those young people talking about their lives—how they consider their community to be a dump and how they hate the police, and to hear them boast about living for the weekend and a chance to drink and lark with their friends.

When pushed and given the opportunity to really express themselves, they opened up a little and

explained how they felt harassed by the police. They walk in numbers because they fear for their own safety, but the police seek to break them up. They are regularly stopped and searched—sometimes, they feel, with good reason but sometimes without. Their experience of life in their community has left them without self-respect and without good reason to hope.

The voices of those young people must be heard in Parliament. Their stories and lives should inform what we do, for—ultimately—it is their Scotland that we in Parliament seek to make better in all the work that we do. I worry that the more that the Parliament wrangles over constitutions, procedures and powers, the further it gets from addressing the needs of the people who need that the most.

We have been elected to hope, aspire and lead. We have that luxury, but we must use it wisely.

**Margo MacDonald:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. For the guidance of old lags as well as newer members, can you rule as to what the protocol should be for maiden speeches? Should there be any interventions on those speeches? If there are to be no interventions, should those speeches be controversial?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We discussed this matter previously. There are no strict rules about first speeches, but the protocol seems to be not to have interventions. However, that is entirely a matter for members, as is what they have in their speeches.

11:55

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I congratulate Kezia Dugdale on what was a very thought-provoking maiden speech.

When the new Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning was the old Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, he told us in his usual quiet, unassuming and modest way that the education brief was never easy and that he was not someone who would run away from the difficult challenges. Again, in his usual quiet, unassuming and modest way, he told us that he would never do anything to undermine the success of Scottish education. Well, we should hope not.

I do not doubt that considerable progress has been made. For example, the Donaldson review and, I hope, the forthcoming McCormac review are jointly the most likely means of paving the way for enhancing the professionalism of teachers across Scotland. Both those reviews were tasked with addressing highly challenging but nonetheless vital changes that will raise attainment levels and give teachers resources and motivation and the

assurance that they are highly valued and are an essential link in the chain that will build a more successful Scotland.

We supported the SNP on many of its policies to develop a better strategy for the early years—the most important years. I pay tribute to the work of Adam Ingram in that policy area. We also supported the SNP on its Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and we support the need to review whether every section of that legislation will actually promote a more robust and transparent approach to decisions on whether to close individual schools. We agree with the SNP—or, rather, I think that it agrees with us—about the need to reform school management, even if I suspect that we will continue to disagree about what that reform should be. However, that is probably as far as it goes when it comes to agreement, so fundamental is the difference between our respective approaches to policy.

Let me turn now to what we regard as the most serious educational challenges confronting the new Government, which are not just the challenges in addressing the SNP's failure to deliver many of its 2007 manifesto policies but the other serious challenges confronting the educational establishment.

Let me turn first to schools. Writing in *The Scotsman* on Tuesday, Peter Jones said:

“Whether you do comparative studies of examination results between Scotland and elsewhere, look at the results of standardised testing carried out across numbers of countries, or listen to what employers say about the abilities of school-leaver recruits, you are forced to the conclusion that Scottish education is not the best we could have.”

Notwithstanding the occasional hyperbole and journalistic licence with which a few commentators have debated what is happening to educational standards, the vast majority, including Peter Jones, base their comments on fact—indeed, on exactly what parents, teaching professionals and business leaders have been warning about for a considerable time. Scottish schools, which were once in the vanguard of international educational achievement—where they must be again—have shown in too many areas for comfort that they are sliding down the UK and international attainment scales, despite having considerable additional funds.

**Kenneth Gibson:** Can the member explain how the Tory policy to have some children leave school at 14 will help their educational attainment?

**Liz Smith:** I certainly can, because it is a fundamental issue about those children for whom school does not work at all. It is about those children taking the opportunity in a fast-changing environment of new qualifications to move into the world of work, where they can train on the job.

That policy has been accepted by many chambers of commerce and other people in business.

The conclusion about the schools policy is either that the extra money that has gone into schools since the beginning of devolution is not being well spent or that money is not actually the issue. For us, a great deal of the debate is about the inherent failure of the concordat between central and local government and the fact that there is insufficient flexibility in the system to allow headteachers and, indeed, classroom teachers the freedom to decide what is in the best interests of our pupils.

Like every other member, I have heard over weeks and months the concern among members of the teaching profession about the straitjacket in which they find themselves when it comes to the ability of local authorities to look after their best interests. This week, we have also heard criticism of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities as it has tried to respond to the issue. Its submission to the McCormac review has been denounced as an attack on teachers when, in fact, the real reason behind what is in its submission is that it knows that the current structure for managing and funding our schools is no longer sustainable.

The clarion call for radical new thinking that has been led by the Scottish Conservatives is being echoed in many areas of education. The case for change has been made: deciding the nature of that change and how to deliver higher standards across the board now needs to be the priority.

I turn to further and higher education and the two issues that, above all the many others, will determine whether we can maintain the strong academic tradition of our colleges and universities. Quite apart from the SNP's fallacious argument that higher education should be free, there is the extraordinary continuing belief in SNP ranks that the funding gap that Scottish universities face is only £155 million. That sum was based on the assumption that the average fee in England would be £7,500 and that, crucially, fees would not be linked to inflation, yet we now know that 100 English universities—75 per cent of all higher education institutions in England—have declared that the level at which they will set their fees will equate to an average of £8,766. In addition, we know that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Office for Fair Access have said that the English universities will be able to raise their fees in line with inflation, so what credibility does the SNP have when it says that the funding gap is only £155 million?

I issue another stark warning to the cabinet secretary: he should not use his failure to address the funding issue to criticise what he says is a lack of accountability in the further and higher education institutions, for if one thing is clear it is that there is a fear in the sector that the Scottish

Government wants to centralise control and to compromise their autonomy. For them, sustainable funding and preserving their autonomy are non-negotiable. They are the inherent principles on which Scottish further and higher education are built, and they must remain so.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call John Mason to make his first speech in this Parliament. He will be followed by Maureen Watt.

12:02

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. It is a great honour to speak for the first time in this Parliament. I will be happy to take an intervention or two, if any come along.

The theme of the debate is "taking Scotland forward". I guess that all members agree that we want to take Scotland forward, and that any disagreement is only about how we might do that.

First, I would like to look back a little. I am privileged to have served on Glasgow City Council and at Westminster, and now to do so here at Holyrood. Some other time I will speak about how those institutions compare. My first lesson is that here the speaking-time clocks begin at zero, whereas at Westminster they count down to zero.

A good tradition at Westminster is to refer in one's maiden speech to the previous member for the constituency that one serves, so I would like to mention Frank McAveety, who covered the main part of my constituency, and Margaret Curran, who covered a substantial part of it. As members know, I have had a number of contests with them over recent years, which, on the whole, have been fairly civilised, and I thank them for that. All three of us have had victories and defeats. Both of them are well liked by many constituents in the east end of Glasgow, and I would like to put on record my thanks and those of the constituency to them for what they have done and to wish them well in their future careers. [*Applause.*]

Looking forward, there is already a lot of good news in Glasgow Shettleston, which I am extremely enthusiastic about. Next month, the M74 extension is due to open, which will take great pressure off transport, and the M8 in particular. On Tuesday, I spent a large part of the day visiting the Clyde gateway, which is a tremendously impressive project, especially because it will bring contaminated and disused land in the east end of Glasgow back into use, which will help with jobs, housing and all sorts of things.

A third major thing that is coming to our area is the Commonwealth games. Members would be welcome to come and visit the constituency to see

the buildings that are going up. I thank MSPs of all parties who have supported bringing the Commonwealth games to the east end of Glasgow.

**Margo MacDonald:** I am interested in the state of preparedness of volunteers in the local constituency, who might well learn new skills, including job skills, thanks to the Commonwealth games. Is that preparation as far forward as the member would like it to be?

**John Mason:** Other people are probably better able than I am to answer that question in detail, but I will give members an example. I visited one project at the east end of the Clyde gateway area. In a section where 40 people worked, eight of them were local people who had been taken on specifically because they were local. Many of the contractors have committed to and are enthusiastic about doing that. Right at the beginning of the process, when contracts are put out to tender, councils should insist that contractors bring in local people.

Today, I want to speak about more than just physical engineering projects, which are, in one sense, easy to achieve if one has the people and the money. Perhaps one of the more challenging things for my part of the east end of Glasgow and the west of Scotland is sectarianism. When I was first elected as a councillor in 1998, Glasgow City Council had a list of problems that it faced—poverty was a challenge, and there were many other issues, including women's issues and race and gender issues—but sectarianism was not on that list. Iain Gray was correct to point out that we could all have done more historically, not just over four or 12 years but over hundreds of years. We all look back on many aspects of our lives and think that we could have done more. The important thing is to see sectarianism as a challenge on which we are making progress.

We have to thank people across the board in all parties who have helped to raise the issue of sectarianism. I believe that the first person to run with it in this Parliament was Donald Gorrie, and I realise that Jack McConnell, who has been mentioned, also treated sectarianism as a major concern.

Is there an easy answer to the problem? I do not believe that there is. We have hundreds of years of tradition to deal with, and there are people who have strong loyalties to their group even though their personal faith might be very limited. In the 1500s and 1600s, most people in Europe would have said that they were either Protestant or Catholic. Minorities, such as those in the Baptist Church, like me, were persecuted by both the Catholics and the Protestants. In this 21st century, we live in a fairly secular age, where Christians—and probably all religious people—are in the

minority. On one hand, in most of the denominations, there are people with a strong, personal, committed faith who are working together better than they have ever done in the past. Yet, at the same time, there are still strong divisions, often among the many people in society who never or seldom attend mass or church services.

This is where we are, and there is no point in pretending that we are not. We need to move forward. Iain Gray is right that we need to think about the legislation and get it correct. We also need to try things and take risks to move ahead. Schools have a part to play. A good example of that is in Barlanark, where the different schools work together well.

The Scotland that I want to see is one that embraces and encourages a wide range of interests, especially minority interests—religious people, disabled folk, younger and older people, gay and black. I want a Scotland in which we are free to disagree with each other, even strongly disagree with each other, but where we still respect the other person and count them as part of our community.

12:09

**Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** I congratulate John Mason on his first speech in this Parliament. It is clear that he will have a lot to offer, especially when we discuss our sectarianism bill.

This is not my maiden speech in this Parliament, but it is my maiden speech as the constituency member for Aberdeen South and North Kincardine. I pay tribute to my predecessor, Nicol Stephen, and wish him well in his chosen destination of the House of Lords. I also pay tribute to Mike Rumbles, who represented the North Kincardine part of the new constituency.

It is a privilege to represent the oil capital of Europe in this Parliament. Little did I think when I worked in the oil and gas industry that I would later come to champion it in this Scots Parliament. Scotland's oil and gas industry has driven economic activity in Aberdeen and across Scotland for many years, and it has been a cash cow for Westminster. It is a resource that, as documents that have been released show, Westminster mandarins thought was too much for Scots to manage on their own. Can anyone truly believe that the resource has been well managed by successive Governments at Westminster? Where has been the union dividend for Scotland?

Scotland's oil and gas will play a critical part in taking Scotland forward in years to come, but only if the UK Treasury stops its short-sighted approach to the industry. It is shameful that a

politician from the north of Scotland—Danny Alexander—claimed the credit for the tax raid on the industry earlier this year. Following the tax raid, the UK Treasury will this year rake in £12 billion from the North Sea oil and gas industry. The way that the additional £2 billion is being applied will strangle investment in new fields and the jobs that they bring with them. It treats the small companies—which are making the bulk of the investments in new development—as if they are the large players in established fields, and it is squeezing them all equally hard. That approach is short-sighted in the extreme and will stymie growth in the industry for many years to come if it is not addressed. That is why I know that those in the oil industry will be heartened that the First Minister made the issue a key priority during his meeting with George Osborne. I only hope that George Osborne will listen to reason.

In his report, the renowned oil economist Alex Kemp said that the number of new developments in the North Sea could be cut by more than 35 per cent in the next three decades as a result of the tax. Nearly 350 undeveloped fields in the UK continental shelf could fall at the first hurdle as companies assess whether they are now economically viable. Alex Kemp also estimated that the UK's oil and gas production could fall by 2.25 billion barrels because of George Osborne's new tax regime. It is estimated that the oil and gas industry accounts for around 120,000 direct and indirect jobs in Scotland, while a further 75,000 are supported through induced and export activity as a result of the industry in the north-east of Scotland.

If the approach to the recent tax hike on the North Sea industry indicated that the UK Government does not understand the oil and gas industry, the debacle over the air passenger duty surely confirmed it. The proposed changes would have meant an additional £165 million tax penalty for the sector, on top of the taxes that have already been levied. However, the swiftness with which the UK Government has backed down on the issue suggests that it should be given the benefit of the doubt—in all probability, it merely forgot about the importance of helicopter flights to the oil and gas industry. Surely one cannot say that our oil and gas industry is better run from Westminster when Westminster clearly does not understand the nuts and bolts of the industry.

Scotland needs to control its own resources, rather than the Treasury being allowed to continue with its narrow, short-term focus. Annabel Goldie talked about sharing our assets within the UK, and of course we are prepared to share our wealth, but we are not prepared to have it raided and have nothing to show for it. While Norway built up an oil fund worth many billions, which has allowed it to stave off recession and invest in the country, the UK Government has squandered the wealth of the

North Sea for decades. We would not be so short-sighted; we would both nurture the industry by supporting the development of new fields and use the tax that it generates.

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Does the member mean that Scotland would receive none of the Crown Estate's wealth from south of the border?

**Maureen Watt:** We are currently supposed to receive money from the Crown Estate south of the border. However, as the First Minister said, it would be much better if Scotland, rather than Westminster, had control of the Crown estate around the Scottish shores. We would not be so short-sighted and would use the money for the benefit of Scotland.

Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland as a whole have an exciting future in the renewables industry—one of my colleagues will go into that in more detail. Last week, an even bigger all-energy conference was held in Aberdeen, where there is great enthusiasm to develop renewables in our country and a great desire not only to see the fossil fuel levy that we have been promised but have never seen, but to have the green investment bank here in Scotland. If we are to reach our full potential, there must also be a change to the unfair and discriminatory system of transmission charges. We have not seen a great deal of benefit from the union dividend, but we can see a great deal of potential with independence.

12:16

**Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab):** Presiding Officer, I am honoured to be given the right to speak in the Parliament today and I thank you for the opportunity. You can be assured that I will enjoy my lunch far more as a result of your timing.

I congratulate the SNP on its electoral success and remind SNP members that, as they bask in ebullient pleasure, many Scots are quietly desperate about their home situation, worried about the state of our economy and about security, unemployment, education and local government services. The election campaign rightly focused on those issues. Now we have learned from the First Minister that there is an urgent need to revise BBC broadcasting policy, to change Crown estate ownership, for new controls over excise duty, for new European representation, for corporation tax and an agreed need for capital borrowing powers—a whirlwind that is bound to create conflict with UK colleagues at a time when we need to work effectively together.

Many Scottish households now worry about the falling purchasing power of their incomes and a

lack of employment that means, for many, part-time work rather than a full-time occupation. At the same time, too many youngsters are unable to get work because they lack the basic skills and our universities complain of huge shortfalls in their funding. Meanwhile, the Government's message, delivered in detail via media bites, has focused on a creeping independence and tackling sectarianism as the means by which Scotland will turn around all that is wrong in our world.

The arc of prosperity represented by Ireland and Iceland has become a non-truth.

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

**Graeme Pearson:** The SNP has five years for intervention.

The arc of prosperity has joined the promises of bullet trains between our cities and smaller class sizes—all airbrushed from history.

Now, the focus is on sectarianism as the threat to Scotland's future—a threat provided by a minority of inadequates whose activities can be dealt with by the proper enforcement and prosecution of existing law, backed by Scottish football authorities and clubs taking their full responsibilities seriously. Many religiously aggravated charges that are reported each year in Scotland relate to breach of the peace—a common-law crime that is not subject to any statutory limit on imprisonment. The Government's commitment to dealing with sectarianism may be judged from official statistics that show that the number of recorded religiously aggravated crimes is currently around 600 to 700 a year. Compare that with race crimes, which run at around 4,000 annually. How many religiously aggravated crimes resulted in convictions? We do not know. If the passing of new laws is intended to display our collective disgust at sectarian behaviour while answering the threat of related internet activity, fair enough, but if the Cabinet Secretary for Justice cannot ensure enforcement, detection and prosecution, the rest is a waste of time.

The level of commitment may be judged by the speed with which the serious organised crime task force has pushed on with the Scottish crime campus project. It is seven years old and has seen more Government launches than a Clydeside shipyard but, as yet, no buildings.

While I am on the topic, I should say that our performance in terms of asset recovery in Scotland—at around £6 million to £7 million a year—pales into insignificance when compared with the official assessments that identify crime business in Scotland as being worth around £2 billion a year. Even our newspapers can identify the top 25 crime families in the country, with an identified net worth of more than £140 million. The

Government must get real to ensure that criminal assets are seized. It should also abandon its current policy of allowing recovered assets to fund prosecution and law enforcement activities. All recovered assets should be returned to the communities from which they were stolen.

Against that background, the preoccupation with constitutional change needs reassessment. The proposition that Scotland should be independent cannot rely on romantic notions of "Braveheart", kilts, the gathering and the national conversation. *[Interruption.]* The First Minister is oft attracted to quote the greats of Scottish literature. He should remember that it was Robert Burns who thought that the Edinburgh politicians were "a parcel of rogues" who, in 1707, sold out this nation in the wake of the Darien scheme that had impoverished Scotland—a situation that chimes with the current difficulties. This nation does not deserve a second sell-out in the interests of a current elite who are happy to seize power and status for themselves.

Should the Labour Party shoulder some blame for our financial ills? Of course it should. Instead of being mesmerised by big money and cheap credit, it should have stuck to genuine Labour principles of fairness, integrity and honesty. However, lest we forget, all the parties who are in this chamber had representatives at Westminster and Holyrood who were happy to enjoy the good times. In fact, if I remember rightly, the First Minister was a Westminster member during those years of plenty, before he returned to the opportunity of Scotland, praising as he came the Royal Bank of Scotland and HBOS as supreme examples of Scotland's inherent strength. Let us therefore not be mesmerised by the rhetoric nor bemused by the direction of the Government's intentions and let us not misunderstand the Government's intentions, which are, above all, to leave the United Kingdom. *[Interruption.]* At a time when the world is dominated by the mega states of China, America and Russia, is our unique selling point to go small, and thereby risk alienation?

I look forward to representing the constituents of South Scotland, and I hope that, as an opposition, we will hold to our sovereign duty to hold this Government to account in a constructive fashion and in good faith.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Although there are no rules in the standing orders about first speeches, I remind the chamber about demonstrating courtesy when people are speaking.

I call Joan McAlpine, to be followed by Linda Fabiani.

12:24

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** I congratulate Graeme Pearson on his election and his maiden speech. I am sure that he will make the same robust contribution to this chamber as he has made to the world of fighting crime. I intend to take a slightly different tone with my maiden speech, however. Five minutes after I was elected, one of my journalistic colleagues asked whether I was going to be a poacher turned gamekeeper. Of course, I completely denied the accusation, but what I have to say may vindicate that journalist, because I intend to break with the tradition of newspaper columnists by complimenting politicians on all sides.

I will consider what the First Minister said today about devolving Crown estate administration to Scotland and show how that is a continuation of some of this Parliament's achievements.

In the long campaign to have this Parliament established in 1999, one argument was persuasive to unionists as well as to people from my own party. There was general agreement that large areas of Scotland's governance were neglected, not out of malice or avarice—although some of us did think that—but simply because the UK Parliament did not have time to scrutinise and reform areas of Scottish life that were stuck in the past.

One of those areas was land reform. Although feudalism was abolished elsewhere in Europe centuries ago, in Scotland we were still in the grip of a system that sounded as though it came from the days of Robin Hood, with vassals, sub-vassals, superiorities and burdens. While that sounds comic, it was not funny for those who faced arbitrary charges from absent overlords.

I therefore pay tribute to the Labour and Liberal Democrat Administrations that passed—albeit with Scottish National Party support—the Abolition of Feudal Tenure etc (Scotland) Act 2000. It is to the credit of those previous Administrations that they did not stop at abolishing feudalism, but went on to pass progressive land reform legislation. We now have public rights of access and provision for community ownership as a result.

In Scotland, the ground beneath our feet is more than a mere commodity: it is part of who we are. To put it in the words of the old rousing crofting anthem beloved of Highland Liberals:

"The land, the land,  
'Twas God who made the land"

—and so too with the sea. Most Scots find it offensive that the shoreline or the sea bed could be bought and sold, and they are quite right: it cannot be bought and sold. There is a lot of misunderstanding about that issue on all sides of the chamber.

Our shoreline and continental shelf out to the 200-mile limit are public land. They are part of what is called the Crown estate, but that title is misleading and archaic. The Crown estate does not belong to the Queen or any other private individual or organisation: it is public land that falls within the jurisdiction of this Parliament and is subject to Scots law. That assertion does not come from me or the SNP Government: it is the conclusion of the Treasury Select Committee at Westminster, which it reached last year after a lengthy inquiry.

However, by some quirk of history that precious public asset is administered by an unaccountable organisation that calls itself the Crown Estate Commissioners. It is an archaic quango that is based in London's Belgravia, and it hoovers up the resources from our shores and seas and gives nothing in return.

When the First Minister asserts our rights to the Crown estate, he is not asking for the land: we, the people, already own the land. He is asking that its administration and revenues be transferred back to Scotland, as was the case until 1832. Many of us of different political persuasions already agree on that.

It is not often that you hear someone from the SNP sing the praises of the former Labour minister at Westminster, Brian Wilson MP, but he has been a stalwart campaigner on the Crown estate since the 1970s. He recently wrote in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* that he first became interested when the Crown Estate decided to lease sea lochs to multinational salmon companies in the west of Scotland without consulting anyone, not least the affected communities. He said:

"Quite literally, people whose families had lived and worked in these places for generations woke up to find that the entire rights to use of a loch had been flogged off".

Brian Wilson wants the administration of the Crown estate to be devolved to this Parliament, and so do many Highland Liberals—those that are left. In 2006 no fewer than five Highland Liberal Democrat MPs introduced a Westminster bill that called for the management of the Crown estate to be transferred to the Scottish Parliament. They included one Danny Alexander, who I understand now has some influence in another place.

My favourite quote on the matter is from the member for Shetland, Tavish Scott—it is a shame that he is not here to hear it—who went into battle against the Crown Estate in 2007. He said:

"They tax our aquaculture industry ... our harbours and marinas",

and that it is unacceptable. He went on to say:

"And, with marine renewable projects in the offing, they will ... tax the wave and tidal power developments and the cables which bring the power ashore."

Mr Scott showed considerable foresight when he made those remarks back in 2007 because renewables hold the key to prosperity in our country for not just the coastal communities that gain revenue from direct access to the royalties, but Scotland's cities and urban areas, which will benefit from the manufacturing jobs that, as Iain Gray mentioned earlier, are forecast to come in this sector. However, we need the powers to develop renewables as well as a democratically accountable body in charge of planning, not some unaccountable body based in Belgravia.

I appeal to all sides of the chamber to recognise that the First Minister's call for devolution of Crown estate management is no radical break; it is actually a continuation of the Parliament's previous achievements. This is not just a financial issue—it is a moral imperative. This Parliament has, from the outset, paid attention to Scotland. For example, after centuries of stalemate, it abolished feudalism inside two years. Let us hold true to our record and rid Scotland of this relic of the past and impediment to our progress, the Crown Estate Commissioners, and remember instead the crofter's clarion call that "the land, the land"—and the foreshore—belong to the people of Scotland.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I apologise to Linda Fabiani; the meeting was due to be suspended at 12.30 pm. However, the member will be called first when we resume in the afternoon.

12:31

*Meeting suspended.*

14:30

*On resuming—*

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is the continuation of the debate on taking Scotland forward. Speeches will be six minutes. However, we have time in hand so, if members wish to take interventions, the Presiding Officers will make allowances for that.

14:30

**Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP):** I am pleased to kick off the debate this afternoon. It is fitting that our first debate in the new session of the Parliament is about taking Scotland forward, because that is something to which we should all aspire.

The First Minister's statement outlined the Government's aspirations to build on the record of the past four years and the SNP's vision for our nation's future. It is crucial that a nation and a people have a vision and something to aim for, as should our cities, towns, villages and communities—geographic and thematic.

I am delighted to represent the community of East Kilbride, which is Scotland's first, largest and most successful new town. I wish my predecessor in that honoured role, Andy Kerr, well and hope that he has a good future in front of him.

East Kilbride is full of aspirational people with a great pride in their town. Although it is a new town, it was built round East Kilbride village, which has a fine history. For example, it was the home of renowned medical pioneers the Hunter brothers. Sadly, South Lanarkshire Council has decided to close the Hunter house museum and I hope that the Government's proposed community empowerment bill will enable active East Kilbriders, such as those in the East Kilbride Development Trust, to maintain that asset for the town.

The voluntary sector in East Kilbride is strong. Across the public services and the arts, people of all ages contribute to the wellbeing of the town's residents. That is why the Government's commitment to public services and the voluntary sector is welcome. I look forward to further information from the Government about social impact bonds, for example. I also look forward to the results of the Christie commission on public services and to an expansion of social and charity banking. I hope that credit unions and the co-operative movement will be very much involved in that. I also look forward to procurement policy that will assist the third sector as well as local businesses.

East Kilbride has a successful business community too, from large firms such as Rolls-Royce and Robert Wiseman Dairies to international award-winning companies such as Controlled Therapeutics (Scotland) Ltd and Glencairn Crystal Studio. It also has many small companies that have benefited from the SNP's small business bonus scheme over the past four years and will continue to benefit from it. The export growth fund is also ripe for companies such as those in East Kilbride to benefit from.

The town has many innovative companies and new industries based in the technology park. They are backed up by world-renowned scientists in facilities such as the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre and, in South Lanarkshire College, a further education facility that is second to none.

East Kilbride has aspirational people who moved to Scotland's first new town from 1947 onwards. The East Kilbride Development Corporation was wound up in the early 1990s and local government was restructured so that East Kilbride District Council disappeared and the town became subsumed within South Lanarkshire Council. Although the aspiration still exists, there is a sense in the town of lost identity and a perception that East Kilbride has been disadvantaged by being part of the larger South Lanarkshire Council. There is a view that the town has deteriorated and that its fine assets have been stripped in order to fund initiatives in other parts of the bailiwick of South Lanarkshire Council. Perhaps East Kilbride has been the victim of its own success. At the moment, that is particularly clear in the huge issue with social housing in the town. Under the right-to-buy scheme, there was an aggressive sales policy, as a result of which social housing is now suffering—or, perhaps I should say, the residents who wish to maintain their families and communities within the town are suffering.

**Margo MacDonald:** As someone whose family got a new house in East Kilbride, I can remember when East Kilbride was accused of skimming off the best of the development money from Lanarkshire, as it did. Good came out of that, but if some of the money is now going back to the older parts of Lanarkshire, I would understand that.

**Linda Fabiani:** I would advise any local authority to consider the best towns in its area and bring the others up to that level. Levelling down is not a mark of success.

As I say, there is a huge issue with social housing in East Kilbride. Families who are proud to live there have sons and daughters who cannot get houses. Under the Government's housing proposals, opportunities will arise. The proposals are hugely aspirational and innovative. I have

written to the Minister for Housing and Transport to ask for an early meeting on how we can address some of the problems. I also hope to discuss with South Lanarkshire Council its allocations policy and whether it acts in the best interests of communities across South Lanarkshire.

East Kilbride should move forward, along with Scotland. Many residents believe that. They have a sense of civic pride and want to work to achieve the best. Last week in the local paper, a letter from a Mr Bill McGowan called on people to get in touch in order to start something for the town. The town needs its own identity again. For example, the most successful business hub in South Lanarkshire does not have its own business forum. I will take the opportunity to write to the appropriate minister to ask for assistance on that issue.

The Government will help Scotland to move forward; I hope that I can rise to the task of helping East Kilbride to move forward as part of that.

14:37

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate. Like others, I will start by making an observation about the character of the new Parliament. The SNP has an overall majority, which is a substantial achievement, but the achievement comes with a need to exercise power with responsibility. The First Minister is often keen to say that he and his party do not have a monopoly on wisdom. In that regard, he will be pleased to know that I already agree with him. However, I would like to offer him a positive suggestion: where we agree, and where there is common ground, let us make early progress, and where we disagree, let us have robust debates. Just on occasion, the Government may compromise. If we can do all that, we will be serving the people of Scotland well.

On health, our common ground offers opportunities for progress in driving down cancer waiting times; in eliminating hospital-acquired infections from the NHS so that there will be no repeat of the tragedy of the lives lost at the Vale of Leven hospital and at other hospitals across Scotland; in protecting staff and investment in the NHS; and in integrating health and social care so that we can improve care for older people.

We face challenging times, and we need to be honest with people about that. The NHS has not been provided with a real-terms increase over the next five years, as the Government claims. In any event, with the rate of inflation in the NHS running much higher than the normal rate of inflation, there will, in effect, be a cut in the NHS budget. Health boards are already struggling, and we need to

acknowledge that. They are struggling to cope with reduced bed numbers, which is why more operations are being cancelled, and they are struggling to cope with tighter efficiency targets. The workforce plans that the boards produced last year indicated a loss of 4,000 jobs, of which 1,500 were nurses. If the rumours emanating from health board corridors are to be believed, the situation this year and next will be much worse.

The First Minister said in his statement that he would seek to extend the no compulsory redundancy policy to the 160,000 workers in the NHS. I hope that that was a slip of the tongue, because I gently remind him that the commitment already exists—Labour made that promise in the first session of the Scottish Parliament and his health secretary reaffirmed the commitment before the election, which was welcome. Therefore, I hope that what the First Minister said was not a watering down of the commitment—I hope that it applies now, and I look forward to receiving confirmation of that. I would also be interested to know when the SNP will apply it to all of the public sector, including local government, because if it is not done this year, it will be too late in the context of the cuts that we know are coming.

I have a question for the First Minister, in his absence. In his speech, which I listened to extremely carefully, he talked about the society that

“we will build and protect”.

He offered protection from the market and from ideology but, although the text that we received in advance included the offer of protection from “barbaric budget cuts”, he did not make that offer. Does that mean that he will not offer protection to the vulnerable, the old, the unemployed and people who rely on services from budget cuts? That is too important to be dismissed as a simple slip of the tongue. I look forward to hearing the SNP give a commitment to protecting people from budget cuts.

We agree on the scale of the problem and on the need to take action on Scotland’s relationship with alcohol. Although it will come as no surprise to hear that I do not believe that minimum unit pricing is the silver bullet, I recognise that the SNP has a mandate to introduce the measure, but I point out to the Government and to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy that it is not necessary to pursue control over excise duties to implement the policy because, after all, according to what Nicola Sturgeon and Shona Robison said in the previous session—I will dig out the quotes—that is what the social responsibility levy is for. I look forward to continuing that debate with the cabinet secretary.

I will finish by touching on what I believe is one of the biggest social challenges that we in the Parliament will face in the years ahead. We know that the number of older people is growing substantially and that, if we do nothing, that will increase the impact on our care services. All of us, with the exception of the Liberal Democrats—none of whom I can see in the chamber at the moment—agreed on the need to integrate health and social care to improve the experience of older people, their families and their carers. Equally, we know that prevention is essential if we are to meet the challenges ahead, yet the eligibility framework on the basis of which decisions about social care are made prioritises those in most critical need and prevention is no more than just wishful thinking.

This week, we hear of the unacceptable treatment of older people at the Elsie Inglis nursing home. Today, we hear of the degrading treatment of an older woman with dementia in one of our Scottish hospitals. Our older people deserve more than that—they deserve dignity and respect.

Whether they are young or old, advantaged or disadvantaged, and whether they live in rural Scotland or urban Scotland, people will look to the Parliament to ensure that we focus on what matters to them in their everyday lives and, frankly, that does not include independence.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Kevin Stewart, to be followed by Nanette Milne. It is Mr Stewart’s first speech in the chamber.

14:43

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** Thank you very much, Presiding Officer. I welcome you to your new post and let me say, in the Doric manner, weel done, quine—I hope ye dee brilliantly in the job and I’m sure that ye will.

I will begin by following on from Jackie Baillie, who called for compromise from the Government. I think that there also needs to be some compromise from the Opposition in future years of the session.

I am honoured to have been elected to serve the people of Aberdeen Central in the Parliament, and I will work for all my constituents to the best of my ability. I am proud that the previous SNP Administration froze the council tax, put more bobbies on the beat and froze prescription charges. Those are issues that matter to people out there. I am also pleased that Aberdeen gained a new, state-of-the-art dental school in the previous session. We have new council houses in places such as Tillydrone, with more to come in areas such as Stockethill. I was also immensely proud to chair the 3Rs board, which has seen the

construction of 10 new schools in our city, including at Mile End and Seaton.

However, I was disappointed that the previous Government's attempt to review the local government funding formula was defeated by 31 votes to one at COSLA. That was a brave attempt by Mr Swinney to review the formula but it was, unfortunately, overturned by others. I believe that that formula required to be changed because it disadvantaged Aberdeen. I am gratified that the SNP manifesto pledged that no local authority will get less than 85 per cent of the funding average. That will benefit Aberdeen City Council by £4.1 million annually, which is good news for our city and for the citizens who rely on the services that Aberdeen City Council provides.

Many people believe that the streets of Aberdeen are paved with gold but, in truth, we have poverty amid plenty. In the Ashgrove, Seaton and Stockethill areas of my constituency, more than a quarter of the population has a disability or limiting long-term illness. Although policies for which we have responsibility, such as free personal care, free prescriptions and free concessionary travel, can make a big difference, the benefits system is still entirely controlled by London. Last week in Aberdeen, all the political parties on the council united to express their concern about the proposed changes to the mobility element of disability allowance. I hope that all parties in the chamber will unite in opposition to the benefits cuts that will have a major impact on the disabled members of our society.

To change the subject matter slightly, I hope that we will also see the end of the court case that is holding up the construction of transport projects that are vital to the future and economy of the north-east. The western peripheral route was first envisaged in 1948 and our area has waited for far too long for it to become a reality. It is a great pity that two objectors are holding up that project, which has a knock-on effect on projects such as improvements to the Haudagain roundabout and the dualling of the Balmedie to Tippetty road. I notice that the transport minister is sitting here and I am sure that he will take notice of all that I am saying about those matters. I hope that the courts, too, will take notice and reach a decision shortly.

Aberdeen is the powerhouse of the Scottish and UK economies and I want that to be true for many years to come. Private and public investment in areas such as the extension of the airport runway, the deepening of Aberdeen's harbour mouth, and the development of the energetica corridor show that there is still confidence in our area. However, that confidence can so easily be shattered by others making wrong decisions elsewhere. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's decision to raise the supplementary rate of corporation tax on the

oil industry from 20 to 32 per cent has knocked confidence and has already led to the cancellation of a number of projects. Optimism has plummeted. This morning, Annabel Goldie talked about sharing our assets but, in this case, our assets are being plundered for short-term gain rather than being used for long-term investment in the north-east and the rest of Scotland. For far too long, the oil industry has been Westminster's cash cow but, this time round, the overmilking might well lead to the cow running dry long before it should. That would be immensely damaging for the people of Aberdeen, the north-east and Scotland as a whole.

It is for those reasons and many others that I believe that Parliament should hold all the levers of power so that we can take long-term, strategic decisions for the good of our people rather than have others taking short-term decisions that, at the end of the day, will benefit no one. That is why I believe that there should be an independence referendum and that the people of Scotland should decide their own future.

14:49

**Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):**

We have heard a great deal from the First Minister since 5 May about his mandate to govern Scotland for the next five years, and that is undoubtedly true. We have also heard from him, and from Jackie Baillie, that he and his party do not have a monopoly on wisdom and that he is keen to listen to and work with opposition parties for the benefit of Scottish people. The truth of that remains to be seen.

I thought that I would use the opportunity of this debate to set out some of our ideas in the field of health policy that we feel would help towards improving the health of Scottish people and their access to health services.

Some of our manifesto pledges were very similar to those of the SNP. We promised to protect NHS spending in Scotland, by increasing it in line with inflation; we promised to reduce top-level management costs in the Scottish NHS by 30 per cent over the course of the parliamentary session; we promised a new in vitro fertilisation fund to broaden access to fertility treatment; and we promised to preserve free personal care and to streamline care for the elderly by merging health and social care budgets, placing social care under the control of the NHS.

All those Conservative policies are comparable with equivalent policies in the SNP manifesto. In a cross-party hustings about women's health, organised by Breakthrough Breast Cancer just before dissolution of the Parliament, there was consensus across all the parties on the need for

early diagnosis and treatment not only of cancer but of other common conditions in Scotland today, such as diabetes, asthma and cardiovascular disease.

Beyond the policies that I have just described, Scottish Conservatives have other proposals that we believe would help to prevent illness where possible and, if not prevent it, allow symptoms to be picked up early to ensure the optimum treatment to improve the wellbeing of our fellow citizens. For example, as Annabel Goldie touched on this morning, investment in a universal health visiting service, available right across the social spectrum to give advice and support to families from a child's birth through the early years to age five, would go a long way towards helping people to adopt a healthy lifestyle and would enable conditions such as asthma and type 1 diabetes in the young to be picked up early.

Attaching such health visitors to general practice, as was the norm until fairly recently, would allow problem families to be flagged up, difficulties to be identified and health issues to be brought to the doctor's attention as soon as possible. I have seen that in practice when my husband was a general practitioner, when the health visitor was an invaluable member of the health team, and I think that all families could benefit from a return to such an arrangement right across Scotland.

The walk-in centres that we would like to see piloted in Scotland would allow busy working adults and those who are reluctant to visit surgeries to access health advice and treatment for minor conditions at a time and place convenient for them. Our proposals for free health checks for 40 to 74-year-olds would encourage those who are most at risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer to have their health checked before symptoms appear so that warning signs of impending illness could be picked up.

Those are a few of our manifesto proposals that I commend to the new SNP Government, as well as encouraging it to consider setting up a cancer drugs fund to level the playing field across the UK for access to drugs that are currently not available north of the border and to review the provision of out-of-hours services, which we know are not uniformly satisfactory across the country.

I do not intend to go into the issue of minimum unit pricing of alcohol today, because the arguments for and against it will be well rehearsed when the Government reintroduces its proposals. I just stress that the price of alcohol is only one factor influencing the drinking culture that is damaging so many people in Scotland today.

**Kevin Stewart:** Does Mrs Milne agree with her colleague Sandy Wallace, who worked in the social work sector in dealing with alcohol? He has gone on record on many occasions to say that the Conservative Party should have backed minimum pricing. What does Mrs Milne think of his comments?

**Nanette Milne:** Sandy Wallace did not hear all the evidence that my colleague Mary Scanlon and the Health and Sport Committee listened to before the decision was made.

The cost of alcohol is undoubtedly a factor, but we are not convinced that minimum pricing is the answer. The drinking culture is damaging many people in Scotland, but cost has to be placed alongside all the other causes, such as the number of licensed premises, the licensing hours, and the lack of enforcement of existing legislation on underage drinking—they are just a few of the on-going causes. We undoubtedly have a serious problem in Scotland—no one would disagree with that—but the attack will have to be multifaceted if a change in culture is to be achieved.

Workforce planning in the NHS is of great concern to me and to several groups of people whom I have met in Parliament and at hustings during the election campaign. New nurses and midwives are already finding it difficult to obtain employment in the NHS. Specialist nurses who are, in my opinion, invaluable and cost effective in the service that they provide for patients with many long-term conditions find that they are an easy hit in difficult financial times and face being put back into the wards instead of continuing in their specialist role. Physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists cannot find work, there are not enough podiatrists to cope with demand and even young medical graduates are potentially under threat of unemployment. The situation is becoming serious: we cannot train highly skilled professionals for non-existent jobs. I urge the new health committee to undertake an urgent inquiry into workforce planning in the NHS, bringing together the expertise that might assist the Government in finding a solution to the problems that lie ahead.

In Scotland, we have an excellent NHS with dedicated and hard-working staff, but it is not perfect. I would like the new Scottish Government to listen to us and to the other opposition parties, using good ideas wherever they originate to bring about the achievable improvements that would benefit the health of our nation.

14:56

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** This morning, the First Minister raised some important questions about purpose: the purpose of a

Government, of a Parliament and of the Parliament having more powers not as an end in its own right but as a vehicle for something better. He talked about the quality of our society and said some things that should be of broad appeal to anyone on the centre left who subscribes to the idea of a good society as a counterpoint to the UK Government's ideological cuts agenda. If he meant what he said—I hope that he does—we will not see the UK Government's cuts simply being passed on to Scottish public services. The previous Scottish Government explored at least one way of raising additional revenue through large retailers. Let us at least keep that idea or something like it on the agenda; let us not just pass on the UK Government's cuts if we mean what we say about a good society.

History shows that a truly equal, fair and kind society is built on good education and good health and that it values happiness higher than money. I believe in that profoundly. An important element of what the green parties around the world argue is that there are things that matter more than money and things in our economy that matter more than gross domestic product, which has become a narrow obsession. We even measure recession just in terms of GDP. I suspect that, if we took a broader view, we would find that equality, wellbeing and health have been in recession for very much longer than GDP has been in recession. Even at times when GDP has been growing for years, those aspects that we want to see in our society have been in recession. If the First Minister meant what he said in his statement, he will take a broader view than one that is based simply on GDP and he will replace that as the central measure of the economy.

I agree with the First Minister that there is a need for Scottish control of additional economic powers, but—I come back to where I began—for what purpose? We need to be clear about the purpose. Is it to create tax breaks for big business? Is that why we would like to have control of corporation tax? Not in my view. I also agree with the First Minister about the need to ensure that the poor are not made to pick up the bill for the rich and for the damage that the wealthiest in our society have done. If he meant what he said, we will see a restoration of the concept of the common good in Scotland. If he meant what he said about the profit of the land going to all, we will be implementing something that should have been implemented more than 100 years ago—a land value tax—instead of packaging up the planning system and selling it to Donald Trump.

Everybody takes the jobs agenda extremely seriously. The impact of the loss of jobs on our economy and on people's lives is important and I welcome the commitment to try to achieve no

compulsory redundancies in the public sector. However, even if we achieve that, we are still looking at substantial job losses. I do not think that anyone is able to put a figure on those losses yet—would it be 5 per cent of the Scottish public sector workforce? Seven per cent? Let us not kid ourselves that no compulsory redundancies is the end of that debate. We need to be clear about the value of the public sector and the value of public services. I should state that, yes, unlike others, I believe that public services are best delivered by the public sector.

The importance of education has been touched on. I entirely subscribe to the idea that we should aspire to keep access to higher education free in Scotland. However, that is not the end of the debate, either, because, as well as making it free to access, we have to fund it properly. If the First Minister means what he has said about this issue, there will be a reversal of the cuts to further and higher education as well as attempts to address the governance issues. The SNP has given signals that it is ready to address governance issues in our higher education institutions in particular, some of whose leaders have lost the trust of their entire academic communities as a result of some of the choices that they have made. I suggest, therefore, that the Government add to its list of constructive changes that it would like to be made to the Scotland Act 1998 a provision that would end the situation whereby the Privy Council scrutinises legislation on our universities. Let us bring that degree of scrutiny and governance here to the Scottish Parliament as well.

**Margo MacDonald:** I endorse everything that Mr Harvie would wish for in terms of equity and fairness in Scotland. However, this Parliament is a creature of Westminster. We must abide by the rules that it has bound us by. How does he suggest that we break the rules in order to find the capital to invest in services to the extent that both of us would want to?

**Patrick Harvie:** I think that, for quite some time, I have been the only member of the Scottish Parliament who has suggested that substantial capital cuts be made from projects that we frankly do not need and which take us further from the low-carbon targets that we value.

If the First Minister means what he says about the importance of investing in housing, that would have been the priority for safeguarding capital investment, not the road-building programme.

There is far too much to go into in the time that I have left. I am sure that we will have time to address other issues in the days to come. I will close by saying that a willingness to debate the purpose and even the meaning of the concept of independence is important. It is important from the SNP's point of view because, if it is going to have

a referendum, it ought to have some confidence that it can win it, and the argument has not been won among the public. It will not be won until we have a debate about the purpose and meaning of independence. However, it should also be a debate that the other political parties are willing to have. They all have a vision of the kind of society that they want and of the purpose of Government and Parliament. That is the same debate as a debate about the purpose of whatever powers come to this Parliament in the years to come.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Annabelle Ewing. This is the first speech from Miss Ewing in this Parliament.

15:03

**Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Thank you, Presiding Officer, for giving me the opportunity to speak in this important debate on taking Scotland forward. As you have said, this is my maiden speech in this Parliament and I want to say at the outset that I am honoured to have been elected to serve the people of Mid Scotland and Fife.

Like it was for many people, Friday 6 May was an enjoyable day. For me, it was also an extremely long day, as mine was the last result to be declared. I hope very much that, in this Parliament, it is a case of last but not least. I also hope that I can acquit myself as well as some of my family members who have been privileged to serve as members of this Parliament. I speak of my mother, Winnie Ewing; my late sister-in-law, Margaret Ewing; and my brother, Fergus Ewing, the Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism, who is here today—I hope that that is a help and not a hindrance to my performance.

I have parliamentary form, of course, as I have some experience of another Parliament. I promise to be on my best behaviour in this Parliament, however. I suspect that there will be less provocation in this Parliament than in that other place south of the border. I clarify that I am happy to take interventions because I plan to be controversial, which picks up on the fair point that Margo MacDonald made this morning.

The election on 5 May was an historic event in Scottish political life, for it emerged quite clearly that the people of Scotland had voted for the politics of hope over the politics of fear. The vote also made clear that Scots are ambitious for their country and want their politicians to be ambitious, too.

The people of Scotland have put their trust in the Scottish National Party to move Scotland forward, and we in the SNP will never betray that trust. However, the results on 5 May raise certain key questions as to how the other political parties

that are represented in this Parliament will react to these changed times. I sincerely hope that they will take the necessary time to reflect on the results and be bold in their new thinking, so that they can catch up with the ambitions of the people of Scotland and are not left behind. However, after some of the contributions that we have heard during today's debate, I am perhaps less sanguine than I was when I started off this morning. I refer in particular to the comments from the leader of the Lib Dems in this Parliament; I see that neither he nor any of his colleagues is in their place. I feel that some further reflection on his part on the role that his party previously enjoyed in Scottish politics and the role that it now enjoys would be instructive.

One of the first key opportunities for everyone to demonstrate that they have caught up with the voters' aspirations is to support the SNP Government's efforts to revisit and improve the Scotland Bill that is currently back at Westminster for legislative consideration. There is common ground there: on devolving the power to set corporation tax, as has been discussed, and on enhanced borrowing powers. Those powers are being sought not for some constitutional point-scoring exercise, but because they are necessary for our Parliament, so that we can have at our disposal some of the economic tools that are necessary to create jobs and to promote sustainable economic growth.

**Patrick Harvie:** I would be grateful if the member would explore how the First Minister's commitment that the poor should not be left to foot the bill for the mistakes of the rich in the economic recovery is compatible with the idea of the nations currently within the UK beginning a race to slash corporation tax.

**Annabelle Ewing:** The key point about having control over economic levers such as corporation tax is that it can help to shape the economy in accordance with our priorities. Having control over corporation tax is a key economic lever. We want to seek investment in this country to create jobs and to grow our economy in a sustainable way.

The SNP obtained a clear mandate from the people to argue that the Scotland Bill should be strengthened in that way.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** Will the member clarify the rate of corporation tax that she envisages? In Ireland it is 12.5 per cent, in Greece 20 per cent and in Germany 33 per cent. Which economy is stronger?

**Annabelle Ewing:** I am intrigued by the honourable member's question—I am sorry; that is from the other place. I am intrigued by the member's question, which he seemed to be taking from his notes. Obviously it would be a matter for

the Scottish Government, in accordance with the economic conditions pertaining, to set the rate of corporation tax that would be most advantageous for our country's economy.

This morning, the First Minister said that Scots want real powers for real change. That is the key element of this constitutional debate. We need to bring home powers that, just like those that any other normal country enjoys, will allow us to make decisions in the interests of the people of our country. As we promised in our manifesto, there will be a referendum on independence later in this parliamentary session. The people of Scotland have voted for the opportunity to have their say—and they will do so.

Independence is not an end in itself—it is just the beginning. It is our means of ensuring that we create a successful and socially just Scotland that plays its part in the community of nations.

15:10

**Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP):** First, Presiding Officer, I welcome you to your place and wish you the best in it.

It would, in my first speech in the Parliament following the election, be remiss of me not to mark Tom McCabe's contribution to public life. He was the first member to be elected to the Scottish Parliament in 1999 and for 12 years served Hamilton South in that capacity; he also served as a minister under three First Ministers. His speech at the count three weeks ago was gracious and dignified and showed the kind of character and good manners that are all too often missing in politics. I am sure that the chamber will join me in wishing him well for his future. [*Applause.*]

The future, of course, is what this debate is all about. It is about how we build a future for Scotland that will provide an enhanced living to all the people who live here and, importantly, how we build a nation that takes a full role in the world. As far as I am concerned, that is what is meant by taking Scotland forward. I do not imagine that I will agree with everyone in the chamber over the next five years, but I hope that this Parliament will take that time to debate and share positive ideas and imaginative solutions to Scotland's problems. In other words, we need Scottish solutions for Scottish problems. Now there is a phrase that has already been coined.

We face big challenges. The recession has cost this nation dear, not least in my constituency of Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse, all of which have, like other towns in the county of Lanarkshire, been among the hardest hit. Redundancy and unemployment have become a daily reality for too many of my constituents and

the plans and ambitions of too many young people are faltering in the face of employment uncertainty. Across the country, public sector budgets are starting to shrink as the Whitehall Government administers the harsh medicine that it claims is needed to address the UK's economic problems—problems, it should be pointed out, that are not of our making.

Those challenges are not insurmountable. The Scottish Government has over the past four years already shown that even with the limited powers that we have it is possible to move Scotland forward. The SNP emerges from this election with a mandate to implement the vision for Scotland's future that we set out in the campaign and which contains clear and concrete plans to drive economic recovery and growth, create jobs and expand employment opportunities in a way that will deliver tangible benefits for communities and households across our nation. That vision quite rightly rejects the received economic wisdom that the answer to deficit and recession is to cut and cut again and instead sets out a path of investment, growth and building—indeed, literally so, in the case of the many major infrastructure projects that the new Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment will ensure deliver maximum benefits with regard to jobs and opportunities. This morning, the First Minister made it absolutely clear how central that job and wealth-creating agenda will be to the SNP Government's work in the coming years and I welcome his strength of commitment.

We promised 25,000 apprenticeship places, offering youngsters the length and breadth of the country the opportunity to train in a trade. Crucially, those apprenticeships are directly linked to high-quality jobs. The SNP is not in the business of recreating the notorious youth opportunities programme of the Thatcher years, which wasted the time and lives of young people in an attempt to fiddle the unemployment figures. Our modern apprenticeship programme will provide real training and employment outcomes; it will invest in our young people and equip them with the skills that they need for a modern jobs market. After all, Scotland will need to build sustainable economic growth.

The 7,000 flexible training opportunities that will be created for small to medium-sized enterprises will, along with the continuation and growth of the highly successful small business bonus policy, create new jobs and protect existing ones. That will help local high streets, services and amenities to survive and thrive and it will provide a crucial focus on the SME sector, which will be a key driver of Scotland's future prosperity. Our ministers have the opportunity to deploy new ideas and imagination in the way that they direct the £202 million of investment in skills and training

and more than 30,000 new training opportunities that we have already pledged to deliver.

Like many others, I am energised and excited by the First Minister's vision for the reindustrialisation of Scotland through our green energy sector, which offers up much potential for the future.

This programme is about Scotland's future, making it a better country and delivering for the people of Scotland. We will continue to put the case for independence, as many of my colleagues have done very well today, in the hope of completing the Parliament's powers for Scotland's future. In the meantime, we will do all that we can to improve Scotland with the powers that we have. My priority will be to ensure that my constituents receive the full benefit of the Scottish Government's plans. Our ministers and cabinet secretaries can expect to hear me fighting the corner of Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse for their share of capital projects, infrastructure investment, training places and funding for local public services. That is my job, and I know that they will expect nothing less from me.

I also know that our Government has the task of implementing the SNP's vision and plans in a way that benefits the whole of Scotland, for communities of all shapes and sizes and every section of our society. The Scottish people entrusted the SNP to do that, and I trust our Government team to deliver on the promises that we made.

We face difficult times, but with the right positive attitude and a belief in ourselves and our country, we can face those difficult times with some hope, optimism and faith in the future. Today's debate is about taking Scotland forward. That job starts now for me and for us.

15:17

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I am pleased to be taking part in today's debate, which is important, and congratulate all the new members who have made their maiden speeches today. We have heard thoughtful and meaningful contributions. The debate is wide ranging; I would like to focus on a few of the key challenges that the Government faces in the education portfolio.

This is only the first week back, but two education issues have already hit the headlines. First, COSLA's leaked submission to the McCormac review into teachers' pay and conditions has reignited the debate on them. Changes to the teaching profession that were introduced in the early years of the Parliament brought stability to the classroom and established a proper procedure for negotiations. Of course, nothing in public policy is set in stone, particularly

during times of financial constraint, and it is right that we should reflect on the best possible arrangements in our classrooms to deliver for every child and young person, but the reported COSLA proposals are far reaching and have been met by concern from parents and teachers.

The Scottish Government will have a task ahead of it when the review is concluded in the autumn. If it is to make fundamental changes to teachers' terms and conditions, that must be done in partnership with the teaching profession. If the changes are reasonable and in the best interests of Scottish education, I am sure that they will garner support, but I urge the Government, in approaching the debate that will follow the findings of the McCormac review, to ensure that the reasons for change are clearly articulated. They cannot just be about savings; they must be about how we can raise standards in our schools and ensure that no child is left behind.

This Government and previous Governments have invested in education, but we must continue to ask ourselves whether we are seeing the best results—the results that Scotland deserves. We will continue to debate in the Parliament how much progress is being made on the school building programme and whether we are providing enough employment opportunities for probationary teachers, but we need to raise our eyes to the future of Scottish education. Too many inequalities are evident in educational attainment in our schools, and that legacy leads on to inequalities at other levels of the education sector. That is particularly evident in our figures on widening access to university. As Kezia Dugdale highlighted this morning, Children in Scotland has reported a stalling in progress on tackling child poverty, which is a problem that impacts heavily on educational attainment. That is not to talk down Scottish education in any way, but we must not become complacent. Scotland has seen a stalling in pupil achievement in recent years; we have not seen the progress that we all want to see, particularly for the lowest-achieving pupils.

We all hope that curriculum for excellence will go some way towards addressing those difficulties, but we appreciate that, for many children and young people, the answer is more complicated and cannot be found in education alone.

The second issue that has been highlighted in the early days of this session of Parliament has been that of further and higher education. On Tuesday, the University and College Union and the Educational Institute of Scotland held the first Scottish Parliament lobby of the new session to protest against redundancies and course cuts in our colleges and universities. We have just returned from an election in which the majority of

parties that are represented in the chamber supported broad principles about taking a different route on higher education from that being pursued by the UK Government. However, the Scottish Government now has the responsibility of delivering on its promises. No one who was at the rally this week can be under any illusion about the significant challenges in the tertiary sector. There were representatives from many institutions that are faced with the threat of compulsory redundancies and course cuts.

The sector seeks clarity on how the funding gap for universities will be closed and it is looking for the Government to take action on governance. As Patrick Harvie highlighted, governance is becoming the dominant issue. Staff feel undervalued and staff and students are not always persuaded by the changes that some principals are pursuing. There are concerns that strategic decisions by individual institutions will impact negatively on course provision across Scotland. The Government proposes to find answers through another green paper, but there is growing concern that we need a more immediate response to the situation. Once some provision has gone, it will be difficult to recover. It might be incumbent on the sector to direct itself towards industries that will drive the economy and deliver greater employment opportunities, but we must be careful that it does not lose the breadth of Scottish education in doing so. The Government needs to be mindful of that and should start to identify its strategy to respond to those concerns.

The final issue that I will touch on is that of support for college students. In the previous session of Parliament, there was an annual furor over bursary pots running dry. Each year, the Scottish Government had to step in with more money to keep the system afloat. We could manage the system better. College students should be entitled to the same level of security in their student support that university students have. In the election, Labour committed to building on the education maintenance allowance scheme to introduce a college maintenance allowance of up to £90 a week, which was to be funded centrally but delivered locally. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with the new minister how we can improve support for college students. I am happy to share modelling on the proposal, which I hope he will consider.

Much of today's debate has focused on the constitution. As I have highlighted, there are pressing issues in education that require no greater power than the willingness of Government to get on with it.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** I call James Dornan. This is his first speech in the Parliament.

15:22

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** It is with immense pleasure that I take part in the debate as the constituency MSP for Glasgow Cathcart. I pay tribute to my predecessor, Charlie Gordon, as other members have done to their predecessors. Charlie and I had political differences, but I am thankful to him for the mature way in which he conducted his campaign and any dealings that we had in the period when he was in office and I was a councillor in his constituency. I wish him and his family well for whatever the future holds.

The debate provides the Parliament with the opportunity to reflect on what the election result means for the future of Scotland. The people of Scotland voted for an agenda of positivity and aspiration. They returned to government, as the only majority Government in these islands, the party that focused on what we can do as a nation and on what our potential would be if we were on an equal footing with every other nation in the world.

The title of the debate is "Taking Scotland Forward", and that was the theme of our election campaign. We went door to door and spoke to people about how all of us can live in a better land. The challenge for all members in the Parliament is to ensure that we deliver on those aspirations of the vast majority of the 5 million Scots. This is an exciting journey and a time of great opportunity for all of Scotland. We have a responsibility to live up to the challenge. As a new member of the Parliament, I fully intend to do so.

My constituency is home to one of the gems of our national health service and a perfect example of it: the new Victoria hospital, which is known locally, along with its elder partner, as the Vicky. It is a thriving and modern hospital that provides first-class healthcare to those in my constituency and beyond. I am delighted that the SNP Government will not only reject the right-wing privatisation that the Tory-Lib Dem Government is pursuing down south, but will invest heavily in our NHS and protect its budget.

We are also blessed to have in the constituency Langside College, whose students are being protected by the SNP Government, and Hampden Park. Under an SNP Government even the Scottish team is getting better; last night was one of the very few occasions on which we have come from behind to win.

Glasgow, like all major cities, has a number of serious and difficult problems, which is why I particularly welcome the Government's commitment to introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol. Alcohol abuse is a huge issue in my constituency and other constituencies in Glasgow.

We as a Parliament would be guilty of sheer negligence if we were not to tackle that issue head on. Minimum unit pricing will not solve everything; it is not a silver bullet but a bold first step to ridding Scotland of one of its biggest social ills. The health and wellbeing of the nation must be a high priority for all parties in this chamber. I look forward to working with members to ensure that that is the case. This is not an issue on which to have party politicking.

The First Minister and others have already talked about sectarianism—another major issue that has had a lot of public attention over the past few weeks and which, unfortunately, affects Glasgow more than any other area of the country. I know that all members of the Parliament and the majority of decent Scots want to see sectarianism gone from our society. The vile hatred that is on display during some football matches and elsewhere has no place in a civilised society and I welcome the commitment from the Government to cast the remnants of a troubled past to the confines of history.

However, the main challenge that we all face is jobs and the economy. There is not a street in my constituency where someone has not been affected in some way by these tough economic times. Iain Gray said during the election campaign—he has reiterated this on a few occasions in the chamber over the past couple of weeks—that the main focus of the next Government should be jobs and the economy. I agree with him—and clearly so does the Government. I look forward to seeing the progress that this Government makes as it takes on that challenge over the next few years.

I also look forward to working with the Deputy First Minister, with her new responsibility for cities, to ensure that Glasgow fulfils its economic potential in the years ahead. I hope that she can put in a decent word for Glasgow when it comes to funding and so on.

Our relationship with local government will be key to that. As a councillor in Glasgow City Council, I acknowledge the work that John Swinney has done to build relationships with local authorities of all complexions. It is important that the Government now builds on that work to achieve the goals that it has set on job creation and infrastructure investment and to ensure that the delivery of public services is the best that it can be.

I also acknowledge the fantastic work that Alex Neil did in and for Glasgow as Minister for Housing and Communities. He is spoken of very highly, not just by the Glasgow Housing Association but by other housing associations throughout Glasgow and organisations such as Croftfoot housing action group, which I know he has met in the past.

I welcome the new house-building project that started under the previous SNP Government and I look forward to some of that new housing coming to my home city in the near future.

For Scotland to move forward to independence through a referendum, Glasgow has to move forward. Four years ago, we began that forward movement and on 5 May it took a massive surge forward, based on the SNP Government's outstanding record of delivery for Glasgow: the M74 finally being given the attention and funds that it requires; the east end to Edinburgh rail link; the new Southern general hospital; modernisation of the Glasgow subway; funding for the new fastlink; new schools all across the city; and a fully funded council tax freeze for the past four years, which is being extended for another five years—all good news for Glasgow and all delivered by the SNP.

Glasgow has a political history like no other—a history of radical politics, where it led from the front for social and political change in this country. Back in 1919, at the famous battle of George Square, the coalition Government at the time was so concerned about ordinary Glaswegians demanding better living and working conditions that it sent tanks and troops to George Square—surely not. Thankfully, it will not take tanks and troops to get those better living and working conditions next May—just the introduction of an SNP administration to the city chambers through the votes of the people of Glasgow. Then comes the referendum.

When I was a young man, I left my family home to make my own way in the world. I got a job, got married, raised a family and did all the things that an independent, normal adult would do. I left my home not because I did not like, or love, my family but because that is what adults do. When we leave the union, it will not be because we dislike the English, hate the Welsh or despise the Northern Irish; it will be because we have now reached that stage of maturity when it is time to leave the hoose, stand on our own two feet, deal as equals with our friends and be a free and independent nation again. I look forward to that journey.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Margo MacDonald, to be followed by Jamie Hepburn.

15:29

**Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. Suits you—sir. [*Laughter.*] I believe that there is more than one way to be addressed in the chamber.

I very much appreciated Patrick Harvie's speech, almost all of which I agreed with. That was also why I liked Alex Salmond's speech. They

both aimed high—they were thinking big and beyond the Parliament's day-to-day work. We should all do that now.

The one thing in Patrick Harvie's speech with which I disagreed was the implication that we could somehow buck the trend that is set from Westminster. Westminster has decided on a strategy that means curtailing expenditure—people there hope to shrink the deficit. Patrick Harvie and I might disagree on how that should be done, but Westminster is the sovereign power.

We should not start by saying that we will not try to make the best of a bad job; we should explain—as Alex Salmond attempted to today—what more could be done and what could be done better with sovereign powers in this Parliament to cope with the economy and to secure the employment expansion that we hope to have. I was glad that Alex Salmond concentrated on that, because notions such as improving employment prospects and expanding the workforce are not divided from political independence. Everything that we have heard today underlines the fact that, if we do not have the independence of action to customise strategy and policy to suit our condition, we will not achieve the optimum.

I loved Iain Gray's speech, too—it was thoughtful, obviously considered and humane. When he spoke, I thought that it was marvellous that we were on the same track and were beginning to think of the optimum that we can do for Scotland and not of doing a little more or a little better. Then he went and spoiled it. He talked about a single police force—no way, as long as I am here. We cannot think of having a single police force, because of the civil liberties implications. We could have two or perhaps three forces; I would settle for more than one. That is not said in a spirit of anything other than my hope for a consensual opportunity.

The other comment by Iain Gray that disappointed me was the implication that the United Kingdom was okay. If the United Kingdom is okay, why is one in four children born to fail? Why is that endemic? That situation did not arise under the previous SNP Administration and it would be wrong of Ms Dugdale to suggest that it did. I am old enough to remember the production in the west of Scotland of a publication called "Born to Fail?" Previously, one in 10 Scots children was born to fail; the figure is now one in four or five. As far as I can recall, the SNP was not in power and we did not have independence of action on social policy at that time.

**Kezia Dugdale:** Does Margo MacDonald think that the SNP Government has done enough to tackle child poverty with the powers that it has?

**Margo MacDonald:** As members know, I am an old girn. I will give no Government in here the credit for doing as much as could be done—we can all think of different and better things that could be done. However, within the limitations of the powers and the spending powers that it had, the SNP Government did not too badly. I will say no more than that.

Ms Dugdale's party leader asserts that the United Kingdom is the best that we can do for Scotland. If it is, why do we have such a health record? Why do we continue to lag behind even the rest of the United Kingdom, never mind similar communities or nations? The legacy of the union relates to growth and the opportunities for young people. The one issue on which I really agreed with Iain Gray was that people who believe in the union will have to prove that it is the best that we can do before we opt for it, just as the SNP will have to flesh out much more the difference between sovereign power—and what can be achieved by and through it—and devolved power from Westminster.

Annabel Goldie disappointed me, because she said that her unionism was an emotional thing. She said that, when we get down to it, the issue is how we feel about the situation. No—it is not touchy-feely at all. It is about delivering quality of life, delivering opportunity for people and doing the best that we can. That is very practical—it is about how we organise our economy and social policy. Incidentally, I point out to the person who did not understand the emphasis on the social wage in Mr Salmond's statement that Harold Wilson first used the term. I agreed with Harold Wilson then and agree with Alex Salmond now.

We can point to too much in Scotland that suggests that our present system of governance does not work. If it does not work, we must find something that does.

Before I finish, I will make a special plea—as I usually do—to the very nice finance minister. I add my voice to that of Linda Fabiani, who spoke about credit unions. We will need credit unions and a fund for them, because—like it or lump it—we will have cuts, unemployment and more poverty. The folk who have least will get least, unless we do something to ensure that we even up the score.

15:36

**Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP):** I notice that today there has been talk of controversy in some members' speeches. I do not know whether what I say will be controversial—I suspect that people's views will be subjective; it is in the eye of the beholder—but I hope that it is not controversial for me to begin by congratulating

you, Presiding Officer, and welcoming you to your role. I look forward to your astute chairmanship of meetings of the Parliament.

I congratulate new members who have made their maiden speeches today. I agreed with the content of only some of them, but I will turn to that issue later.

I return to Parliament in a new role. In the previous session, I was a member for Central Scotland, but I am now the member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. I want to say a few words about the previous member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth, Cathie Craigie. She and I did not always see eye to eye politically. However, although she may not have been the first member of the Scottish Parliament to be elected in 1999—Tom McCabe filled that role—she was the first ever member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. No one can take that away from her. Before her time as an MSP, she was a councillor for many years, so she had many years of dedicated public service. I join others in wishing her well for the future, personally if not politically.

I turn to the content of today's debate. The First Minister's statement this morning clearly set out a vision for the future. Let us make no mistake—it was a visionary statement, not an attempt just to take a managerial approach to government. Margo MacDonald's comment that the statement aimed high was well made. The statement was literally about trying to take Scotland forward—the subject of today's debate.

Given the time restrictions to which we are subject, as ever in such debates, I will focus on only a few areas of the Government's plans for the coming five years. The first is housing. I am proud to represent Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. When Linda Fabiani spoke about East Kilbride, I was struck by the similarity between the experiences of Cumbernauld and East Kilbride. Perhaps that is not surprising, given that both are new towns of a certain age. At one time, Cumbernauld was looked on as a desirable place in which to live. It is still a desirable place in which to live—I say that as a resident of the town—but some of its older housing stock needs a bit of repair. There is a certain pressure of housing need in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth.

Some progress has been made in the past few years. I pay tribute not only to Alex Neil but to Stewart Maxwell, who filled the role before Alex took office. Many new houses have been built across Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. I was delighted to hear the First Minister set out an ambitious target for housing for the coming five years. With Keith Brown now in post, I look forward to more new housing for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth.

On education, it is clear that the SNP Administration has a record of achievement over the past four years. It was the SNP that restored the principle of free higher education. I am delighted that we went into the election with a firm commitment to maintaining that position. It is worth remarking that, of the four main parties—three and half now, perhaps—only the SNP has consistently supported free education.

On the earlier years, I am delighted that we have a continued commitment to lower class sizes. Work is being done with COSLA in that regard. The commitment to continue with the education maintenance allowance is very important, and it shows a different direction of travel compared with south of the border.

The sure start fund ties in neatly with the subject of education, as it involves getting it right in the early years. I declare an interest, as a father of an 18-month-old daughter. I welcome the idea of the fund very much. It builds on the work of Susan Deacon, who was commissioned by the Government to look into the matter. I especially like the idea of children and family centres, which can help families in marginalised areas. I will be looking into how areas of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth might benefit from such centres, and I look forward to working with the Government in that regard.

I will now focus on the destination that the Scottish Government is aiming for. The First Minister quoted John Steinbeck in his statement. Following the election just passed, we might also turn to a writer of older vintage and pose the question:

“Stands Scotland where it did?”

On the one hand, the answer might be yes. Prior to the election, we had an SNP Government exercising its devolved functions, and that remains the case today. Beyond that simple analysis, however, it is clear that Scotland is now in a very different place compared with before. As has already been well remarked upon, we have the first majority Government since devolution, and the re-election of an Administration that is committed to meaningful constitutional reform—to independence.

It has been suggested that such reform might somehow be at the expense of making progress across the areas of life that are devolved to this Parliament. The achievements of the past four years and the priorities set out in my party's manifesto and by the First Minister today testify to the fact that that is not the case. I do not think that there is any contradiction in wanting to alter the constitution of Scotland to seek a better society. We need additional powers for the Parliament in order to make greater progress.

This morning, we heard Kezia Dugdale voice concern about tackling poverty. Incidentally, I vehemently object to her suggestion that SNP members are not similarly concerned. If she is so concerned, she must support tax and welfare powers coming to this Parliament. Would she prefer that the Tories retained those powers, instead of this Parliament exercising them? Perhaps that is why she secured Tory praise for the content of her maiden speech from Liz Smith.

There must be some consensus on the need for more powers for this place. The First Minister spoke about that upon his re-election to the post. If so, we should work together, hand in hand, to that end. It is clear, however, that there continues to be no change of opinion among the various parties as to the necessity of independence. The outcome of the election does not seem to have changed that.

I hope that, as the referendum on independence nears, there is an end to the tiresome use of the term "separation". An independent Scottish state will be no more separate from the rest of the world than the British state is now—or any other sovereign nation. As Kenny Gibson and Christine Grahame pointed out this morning—and Annabelle Ewing this afternoon—independence is normal.

15:43

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** I am delighted to make my maiden speech in this important debate on how we take Scotland forward. I am honoured to have been elected to serve the people of West Scotland in the Scottish Parliament. I have lived in Renfrewshire all my life, and I am proud to represent my community and many other communities across the region.

I became involved in politics because I want to ensure that the young people who attended my school and all other schools in West Scotland get a good education and get the chance to have a decent job, a decent wage and decent living standards. Those issues led me to join the Labour Party and to stand for the Parliament. Those issues and priorities will guide me in taking decisions in the Parliament. I will always put the interests of the people of West Scotland and opportunities for our young people at the very core of what I do.

Raising standards in education and creating job opportunities must be at the heart of the Government's agenda. I welcome the SNP's commitment to a youth talent fund and to improving education across Scotland. I look forward to seeing the details of its plans.

The Government has gained a mandate that many thought would be impossible to achieve, and I congratulate the SNP on achieving it. The

Scottish Government now has a responsibility to rise and meet the expectations of the people of Scotland.

During the next five years Scotland faces huge challenges, but right now across the country the cuts are biting and opportunity is being snatched from the grasp of many of our young people. Across West Scotland we are seeing the true human cost of these tough economic times—the highest rate of unemployment in the UK and the highest rate of youth unemployment in the UK are in West Scotland, in North Ayrshire. In West Dunbartonshire the situation is not much better. In Clydebank there have been reports of 40 people applying for every available vacancy. Many applicants have the qualifications and are able to do a job but simply cannot find one.

The Government must rise to the challenges that face Scotland and confront such issues head-on. We must invest in the next generations, so that young people have greater opportunities than their parents and grandparents had. My constituents want a Government that abides by that principle and stands up for our young people.

I do not want to fill my entire speech with the problems and challenges that face the West Scotland. That would not do justice to the area. The west of Scotland is filled with some of the most dynamic and inspiring people we could meet. They rise to the challenges that confront them every day, and they succeed.

West Scotland also has many excellent schools. We must do all that we can do to support them and help them to continue to thrive. A perfect example of that approach is provided by East Renfrewshire Council. The authority is run by a coalition of Labour, SNP, independent and Liberal Democrat councillors—it is a non-partisan example, unless you are a Conservative. The council has shown what can be achieved when we work together with teachers, parents, pupils and staff. East Renfrewshire schools are the best in Scotland—indeed, Williamwood high school regularly comes out as the best school in Scotland, with 46 per cent of pupils achieving five or more highers. That is a remarkable achievement. I would like every school to be like Williamwood.

Educational achievement is not and should not be confined to the more affluent areas. Across East Renfrewshire, from Barrhead to Busby, at schools such as St Luke's high school, opportunities are being created for our young people. In fact, educational excellence and opportunities are being achieved throughout West Scotland. In East Dunbartonshire, Douglas academy is a shining example, and my former school, Gryffe high school, and other excellent

schools in Renfrewshire have given me and many other people the opportunity to aspire.

It would be wrong to think that full-time education is the only path to opportunity for our young people. Apprenticeships must be at the forefront of the Government's agenda for young people. I was proud to support the work that Labour did in the previous session of the Parliament to secure thousands of extra apprenticeships for young people in Scotland.

I was elected because 92,000 people in West Scotland put their trust in Labour. I want to repay that faith and work for all the people of West Scotland. With that in mind—and as Iain Gray said—we will work with the Government when we agree and debate vigorously when we do not.

When I arrived at the Parliament, a poem on the wall caught my eye. It was the poem by Edwin Morgan that spells out the Scottish people's hopes and aspirations for the Parliament. It outlines what the Scottish people want and what they do not want:

"And perhaps above all the droopy mantra of 'it wizny me' is what they do not want."

I hope that the Government and all members take note of that and go forward, rising to the expectations of the people of Scotland and always putting opportunity in the hands of our young people.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Rob Gibson.

15:48

**Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. I welcome you to your role. I also welcome Neil Bibby's speech on the interests of young people and the people of West Scotland in general. We all have so much in common. These must be regarded as some of the most exciting times in which to represent our constituents; I certainly think so in relation to my constituents in the north Highlands.

I pay tribute to Jamie Stone and John Farquhar Munro, who represented two constituencies of which parts make up the Caithness, Sutherland and Ross constituency. They played a full part in the first 12 years of the Parliament and I hope to follow on from their legacy and to do even better for the constituents that I represent. That is a great honour, indeed.

We can see the lucrative opportunities that need to be grasped now to get Scotland and the Highlands working better. The newly re-elected Scottish Government has the vision and determination to make the most of the opportunities ahead and to improve life in the

Highlands and throughout the country. Nearly 50 per cent of my constituents voted for that vision to be achieved.

We in the north have not always had a fair deal in the past. However, with a rejuvenated political representation and a Government on our side, we can turn those problems of the past into Highland opportunities to benefit the whole of Scotland—not least in deep-seated land reform.

The SNP Government's ambitious commitment to renewable energy will be a key plank in securing future prosperity in the Highlands. We must do everything that we can to reindustrialise the Highlands and to make the most of the underused but world-class facilities that are on our doorstep. To the east of my constituency lies Nigg yard on the Cromarty Firth. Having been mothballed for years, that world-class fabrication yard is due to get back on its feet this year and has the potential to create more than 1,000 new jobs in the north. Over in Wester Ross lies Kishorn port—a fantastic facility that will in the future launch Atlantic offshore wind turbine towers made of concrete. In the north lie Scrabster harbour and Wick, which will both kick start the marine industry boom in the north of Scotland. Those facilities offer exciting job prospects and energy developments for the north. I call them a Highland golden triangle—from Caithness to Wester Ross to Easter Ross.

In Scotland, we are blessed with talent and the resources to research, develop, build and launch the onshore and offshore devices that will power our country in the years to come. Not only are we building the energy devices of the future, we are building the foundations of a new job security and of prosperity. Right at the heart of the Government's vision is the creation of jobs that will allow lives to escape from the awful experiences of recession and youth poverty that have been mentioned.

Such ambitious projects require a Government that shares that ambition. We are ambitious for Scotland because we have faith in the country's capacity to govern itself and to do it a whole lot better than has been done for us in London in the past. We are ambitious to ensure that such simple things as the fossil fuel levy are returned immediately to kick start our renewable enterprises.

I have set out the positive difference that a renewable energy revolution can make for Scotland. However, without the urgent devolution of the Crown estate, those opportunities will be missed. As my colleague Joan McAlpine mentioned, many members will be familiar with the views of people across the Parliament on the matter. I have been saying since the 1970s that we need to control the Crown estate in Scotland.

To the vast majority of those who are trying to improve Scotland's land and seas, the Crown Estate looms like a medieval robber baron rubbing his hands with glee at the potential of the offshore wealth that it seeks to plunder. Those are not my words, initially, but those of constituents who see the organisation in that fashion. However, I believe that "plunder" is the most appropriate word.

In its current form, the Crown Estate is no better than the mischief-making characters in "Pirates of the Caribbean". The Crown Estate Commissioners look to the potential of areas such as the Pentland Firth and the Cromarty Firth and all they see is pound signs—not for the community and not even for Scotland, but for their coffers, down in London. Such is their lack of interest in community benefit that they appear to be about to abolish the post of wave and tidal project manager from Caithness, the area where we most need to develop such energy.

We need folk in the Crown Estate who are grounded in local communities, not only in Caithness, Sutherland or Ross-shire, but in every part of Scotland. I heard much about localism being bandied about during the election campaign. Scattered small communities, such as those that I represent, are close knit, and each faces unique challenges and opportunities. Currently, those communities are not best served by the size of our more rural mainland local authorities, such as the Highland Council. Small communities have little influence over local decisions in their areas, which makes for poor local government.

To my mind, localism is about doing what I admit I have just been doing, which is moaning about a situation. What we need is local control and decentralisation of power. I therefore look forward to working with the Government and with councillor colleagues during this session to put communities in charge of local priorities, because when communities take responsibility, they reap the rewards.

Our energy ambition will deliver a Highland solution to Highland job shortages. The devolution of the Crown estate will allow Highland communities to reap the maximum benefit from our land and territorial waters. The decentralisation of basic local services will empower Highland communities to make life better, because they know best. I am looking forward to shaping the new Highlands, one that works to make the area attractive for investment and to make life easier for people there. It has been a long time coming; let us make it soon.

15:55

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)**  
**(Con):** I congratulate the First Minister on being

reappointed, and the new cabinet secretaries and ministers on their appointments. They are the people in whose hands Scotland's immediate economic, cultural and social future lies, and they have a daunting task. We on this side of the chamber will certainly not be shy in holding them to account if they start to fail.

There will be no room for passengers or for self-indulgence on pet schemes. The hideous debt that was left by the last Labour Government has left no spare room for anything other than practical, sharp and efficient policies that can cut waste and deliver prosperity and hope for people in Scotland. Keeping efficient front-line public services is paramount, as is keeping things such as small rural primary schools in small rural communities.

Growth is also paramount, and we Conservatives think that a duty to promote economic growth should be placed on all public agencies and that they should report on whether the impact on growth of any of their decisions has been positive or negative. In that way, we will know whether their decisions were right or wrong.

We must also help small business, which means having low tax. We think that the business rates poundage must be no higher than that in England, and we would like to see a business rates reform bill that would consolidate legislation on non-domestic rates and make permanent the small business discount that we secured from the SNP Government in the previous session of Parliament.

The SNP Government should also extend the scope of the small business rates relief scheme in this Parliament. In the 2010 revaluation, far too many businesses found out that their valuations had increased at very short notice, which can obviously affect their ability to budget properly. We therefore urge the Government to increase to at least six months the notice period for a change in business rates. Small businesses have told me that when they appeal against a higher valuation, they have to pay the new extra tax until their appeal has been heard. That can be difficult for them to manage, so we ask that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth allow businesses to defer payment of the disputed amount until an appeal has been heard and decided on.

During my recent campaign in Argyll and Bute—I am sure that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Michael Russell, will agree with me on this—the people of Argyll and Bute raised again and again the issue of the appalling state of the roads infrastructure there, which is officially the worst in Scotland. If the Government wants to take Scotland forward and encourage growth and small business, especially tourism-related business, it must do something drastic to improve our roads infrastructure, look at the

relevant Audit Scotland report and stop passing the buck to hard-pressed local authorities, which cannot stretch their budgets.

I hate to bring in a sour note at this point, but e-mails poured in this morning about the conclusion of the tendering process for the Dunoon-Gourock CalMac ferry route. People in Dunoon are outraged that despite their previous MSP, Jim Mather, promising them two shiny new vehicle ferries for the route, there are now to be no vehicle ferries at all and it is to be restricted to a passenger-only service. That will upset the commuter plans of many and all others who have used that useful service for generations.

However, what staggers me most are the remarks of the new Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment, Alex Neil—a man whom I have often admired but who seems to consider that the destruction of the vehicle ferry service to Dunoon is an achievement. Let me take the liberty of quoting his statement on the issue:

“The Scottish Government has committed to delivering an improved ferry service for the people of Cowal and Inverclyde, understanding the importance of this continued ferry route for our remote and island communities and this winning bid achieves that.”

Has he moved to another planet?

First, people in Dunoon may consider that his description of their historic and distinguished town as a “remote ... island” community is a shade inaccurate, to say the least, and some of the more touchy among them may even feel insulted, but he has actually and factually succeeded in making them even more remote. If the SNP Government really considers that that is an achievement, God help all of us for the next five years.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell):** Will the member give way?

**Jamie McGrigor:** In a moment.

I am quite certain that Alex Neil will go to Dunoon along with his fellow cabinet secretary and local MSP, Mike Russell, to explain to the people who live there the benefits of the so-called improved service. He will probably say that they are better off than the people of Campbeltown and he would be right, because they have no ferry service at all, despite having been promised one. In a spirit of co-operation, let me remind him, before he travels, to remind his chauffeur to take the route to Western Ferries at McInroy’s Point because, sadly, the Gourock terminal will no longer provide him with a vehicle service.

**Michael Russell:** Will the member give way?

**Jamie McGrigor:** If I am allowed to.

**Michael Russell:** During the election campaign, I had the great privilege of appearing with the member at half a dozen hustings. Will he confirm that on no occasion did he give a commitment to continuation of the provision of a vehicle ferry from Dunoon to Gourock? He was asked to do so, but he refused. Will he reconsider his remarks, given that he knows that European law does not permit what he seeks?

**Jamie McGrigor:** I remember a good many things about the campaign—very pleasurable the hustings were, too—but I do not remember refusing to give a commitment, because I did not make such a promise in the first place, unlike the cabinet secretary’s predecessor, who promised two shiny new ferries. Now, there is not even a rowing boat to take a car.

16:02

**James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab):** I welcome the opportunity to take part in the taking Scotland forward debate. I begin by congratulating all the new members who have made maiden speeches today. There have been many competent and able contributions, and I am sure that the new members whom we have heard from will go on to make a significant impact in the Parliament over the coming five years.

At the outset, I acknowledge the victory that the SNP achieved on 5 May and wish the ministerial team well in the years ahead. With that victory comes a significant responsibility for how the SNP exercises its majority in Parliament and for how it exercises its power. That responsibility will be tested soon, when we look at the proposed sectarianism legislation that is to come before the Parliament shortly.

It is clear that sectarianism is an issue that concerns all in the Parliament and many in communities throughout Scotland. Scotland has moved forward a great deal from the time when some people were barred from taking up employment in certain factories because of the schools that they went to. Modern Scotland has moved on but, sadly, as recent weeks and months have shown, with parcel bombs being sent to leading individuals in public life, sectarianism is still rife in certain groups in our communities. If there are gaps in the legislative process for tackling sectarian abuse and outrages and the hate campaigns that are run on the internet, Labour will be supportive of legislation that the Scottish Government introduces to fill those gaps.

However, it has become clear that the Government is keen for the legislation that it seeks to introduce to be passed by the end of June. The timetable that has been outlined means that the parliamentary process, from stage 1 to stage 3,

would take only a week, when it has usually taken considerably longer in previous sessions of Parliament. Although there will be agreement on the bill's policy intent, there are likely to be significant legal and technical issues. Serious questions need to be asked about whether those can be addressed within a week's consideration. That is one of the first issues on which the Government will face a test.

Another key issue in the justice arena is the implications of the Carloway review, which was set up in the aftermath of the emergency legislation that the Parliament passed in relation to the Cadder case. Lord Carloway has set out his interim thoughts, which indicate that central tenets of the Scottish justice system, such as corroboration and the right to remain silent, should now perhaps be up for consideration. That is a key issue that the review, the Government and all the parties will have to consider.

Linked to the issue of corroboration, there is an opportunity to consider how rape cases are examined. An issue of serious concern across the whole Parliament is that only 10 per cent of complaints of rape are translated into prosecutions and only 4.6 per cent of complaints result in successful prosecutions. I therefore suggest that the law on corroboration needs to be examined to establish whether it would be correct to change it so that we switch the emphasis in favour of the victims of rape, in order to address these distressing statistics.

Now that we have all left the election campaign and returned to the Parliament, it is important not to forget the voices that we heard when we were on the election trail. One of the areas that I represent—Blantyre—sadly experienced eight murders, a number of which were a result of knife attacks, in 18 months. It is important that we do not give up on the victims of crime and that we ensure that they have a voice in this Parliament. It is important that we are not complacent as we go about our business.

Clearly, the Scottish Government has a major task on its hands over the next five years. The voices that I heard during the election campaign were saying that the priorities for Scotland have to be jobs, standing up for the victims of crime and ensuring that our elderly people have dignity in retirement. I urge the Government to tackle those priorities with the powers that it has in the Parliament over the coming five years.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** It gives me great pleasure to call Chic Brodie.

16:09

**Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. On a personal basis, I

congratulate you on your election to your elevated position. Having done battle with you in another place, I assume and hope that there will be no need for further battles in this place.

It is a privilege to be here as a member for South Scotland. In making my maiden speech, I hesitate as I remember the words of that well-known Scots bard William Shakespeare, who wrote:

"For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,  
Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,  
To stir men's blood; I only speak right on;  
I tell you that which you yourselves do know."

My hesitation and trepidation are due to the fact that those words were ascribed by Shakespeare to Julius Caesar, and we know what happened to him after he made that speech. With that consequence in mind, I took the liberty of e-mailing a copy of the quote to the leader of the Lib Dems at lunch time. However, with my innate and inborn sense of humility, I tell you that which you yourselves do know.

A thread that ran through the election campaign like a commentary and which was confirmed in several speeches today was the theme of jobs and job creation. Leaving the sometime cosmetic of election tribalism aside, I believe that that issue should and, I hope, will bind us together. Having said that, I believe that we should recognise the worth in the fact that unemployment is falling faster in Scotland than in the rest of the UK and that growth has increased in all broad sectors of our economy in production and services.

Through the competence of the Government, we have demonstrated the confidence and capability to meet the challenges of creating more job opportunities in the future—none more so than the opportunities, which the First Minister alluded to this morning, that are provided by encouraging the development of exports and the generation of inward investment and foreign income.

Internationally, Scotland now walks much taller than it did pre-devolution. As the First Minister highlighted yesterday, events such as the homecoming, the Commonwealth games, the Ryder cup and the world gymnastics championships have all incremented the profile of Scotland abroad, as did our earlier involvement in Malawi and southern Africa under a previous Labour-Lib Dem Administration.

In commerce and industry, established industrial giants such as Clyde Blowers, Aggreko and many others continue to add to our international business profile, as no doubt will new incomers such as Amazon, Mitsubishi and Doosan. For long-term job sustainability and growth, however, we must and will transfer that culture of the importance of exporting and foreign income

generation to our small and medium-sized businesses. That culture embraces innovation, quality, and customer service and care.

Our Government's proposed export support initiative—a £2.5 million comprehensive programme to prompt and support around 100 SMEs to develop the capability to export to and exploit growth opportunities in new markets and to create significant jobs—should be welcomed unanimously and wholeheartedly. It is also to be hoped that the private sector—some of those SMEs—will use the benefits of the proposed modern apprenticeship programme to develop international sales and marketing skills, language skills and local custom awareness.

Whether it be in renewables and the manufacturing base to support that sector, the food and drink sector, the life sciences sector, tourism, financial services or the knowledge industries, we have a unique and focused export opportunity. Sweden is successful by largely being focused on mobile phones and the telecom industry, Switzerland is successful by being focused on timepieces and chocolates, and Italy is successful by being focused on tourism, fashion, furniture and food and drink. We have a huge raft of opportunities in the sectors that I have just mentioned—opportunities that can be set in a true perspective. We in Ayrshire and South Scotland are ready to play our part.

Also, transport infrastructure and digital highways have been developed, are developing and will be developed to support an international push.

We must encourage our exporters, our airport owners and port authorities to use the likes of Prestwick airport—which I hope will soon be renamed Robert Burns international airport—for export freight consolidation and forwarding, and we must have our deep-sea east coast ports linked with Rotterdam, which has a fast rail link to the middle of Germany that could take our products to the heart of Europe. It is a financial, logistical and climatical nonsense to consolidate Scottish exports and then take them by road for distribution from Heathrow and the ports on the south-east coast of England.

Henceforth, for our small and medium-sized businesses, let exporting and foreign income generation be bywords for long-term jobs and economic success. Let Scotland's businesses once again flourish in the international fields and let Scotland's jobs boom and bloom. As we face the world, we can then say that we achieved that together.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We now move to closing speeches. I call Murdo Fraser to close

for the Conservatives. You have a generous nine minutes.

16:16

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):**

Thank you, Presiding Officer, for your generosity. I thank Chic Brodie for his erudite and entertaining speech. I saw the Presiding Officer smiling at his reference to the renaming of Prestwick airport, which has always been a cause dear to the Presiding Officer's heart. I also thank all those other members who made their maiden speeches: Kezia Dugdale, John Mason, Graeme Pearson, Joan McAlpine, Kevin Stewart, Annabelle Ewing, James Dornan and Neil Bibby—I do not think that I have missed out anybody. I congratulate them all on their excellent speeches and on their fortitude in sitting through four and a half hours of debating time in the chamber today. I do not know whether the cream of the crop spoke in the debate, but if the standard that has been demonstrated by those new members is indicative of the new intake, we will be in for five years of very high-quality parliamentary debate.

I turn to the First Minister's statement and the debate that has followed. It was perhaps unsurprising, but nonetheless depressing, for us on this side of the chamber to hear so much focus on constitutional change. I do not believe that that is what even the people who voted SNP in the recent election, out of the 45 per cent of the Scottish electorate who cast their votes, want to see. The First Minister's statement was light on policy detail and light on proposals for legislation, excepting sectarianism and minimum pricing for alcohol, of which more in a moment. To me, the big issues that concern the voters are the economy, jobs, help for business—particularly small businesses, to which Jamie McGrigor referred—and the future of our public services: how do we provide excellent public services when there is less money to go around?

Another big issue is the need for early intervention, particularly in health. Annabel Goldie talked about the necessity of providing a universal health visiting service. There is also a need to improve standards in education, to which Elizabeth Smith referred, and a need for a properly funded higher education system instead of a second-class one that is falling behind universities elsewhere in the UK and Europe and instead of the cuts to services, cuts to courses and compulsory redundancies that we are seeing in higher education. Those serious issues require to be addressed.

**Margo MacDonald:** The member has raised the matter of the importance—or lack of it—of the constitutional question. How are we to improve on all the situations that he has just outlined if we do

not improve our system of governance? All of those things currently depend on a stitched-together system of governance.

**Murdo Fraser:** The Scottish Parliament has a huge range of powers and a budget of more than £30 billion. Even with its existing powers it is quite capable of addressing a range of problems, and the Scotland Bill will bring many more powers to the Parliament to expand that range still further. We should not use the perception of the Parliament's lack of powers as an excuse for not tackling those serious issues, otherwise we will never make any progress.

The SNP made many promises to get elected. It promised full employment for teachers, free higher education, free bus travel for the over-60s and so on. The point has been fairly made by others that, with a majority Government, the SNP has no one else to blame if it does not deliver those things. I dare say that it will try to blame Westminster and a lack of powers, but for the rest of us the buck stops here.

The First Minister referred to the social contract. I want to make it clear that we on this side of the chamber believe that there is such a thing as society, but we believe that it is not the same as the state. Society is more than Government. It is the complex tapestry of individuals, families, communities, voluntary groups and charities—Edmund Burke's "little platoons"—that make up our country. The crucial element in that is the voluntary sector. Many organisations in the third sector will have looked on ruefully as the First Minister praised society at a time when they are experiencing funding cuts and uncertainty about their future and are having to make redundancies. The protection of society should be about protecting all the groups that I have referred to, not just arms of the state and those who are directly employed by it.

Two legislative proposals were mentioned. The first concerned sectarianism. I agree that action is required in that regard, but I share some of James Kelly's concerns about the detail of what might be proposed. We should bear two issues in mind. First, we should not outlaw the legitimate celebration of anyone's cultural heritage, whether that be an Irish heritage or a Scots Protestant one. The issue will come down to a matter of detail: where do we draw the line? We cannot have people being offensive or stirring up hatred, but it is not helpful to have uncertainty about where the line is drawn. I hope that the Cabinet Secretary for Justice will carefully consider the matter when he draws up his legislative proposals. The second issue is enforcement. It is comparatively easy for Parliament to pass laws; it is much harder to enforce them. Last night, I heard Les Gray from the Scottish Police Federation make the fair point

that Graeme Pearson repeated today, which is that the police need the resources to ensure that enforcement is effective. There is no point in passing a law without giving the police the tools to back it up.

The second piece of legislation that is proposed is on minimum pricing of alcohol. Like Dr Nanette Milne, I have still to see evidence that minimum pricing will work. No simple equation links price and consumption. I spent last weekend in Gibraltar, and as part of it I did a little bit of hands-on research into the availability of alcohol. The interesting thing about Gibraltar is that, as in other European Mediterranean countries, the cost of a pint in a pub is substantially lower than it is in this country. Indeed, the price of alcohol, particularly spirits, in off-licences is much lower than it is here, yet those places do not experience the public drunkenness, loutish behaviour and alcohol-related problems that we do in Scotland. Therefore, the problem is more complex than is suggested by those who simply propose a minimum price.

**Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP):** I hear what Mr Fraser says about low alcohol prices in southern parts of Europe not causing trouble, but that is a myth. If he considered the most recent research and the evidence of the increasing problems of drunkenness and particularly youth disorder and crime that are caused by cheap alcohol in southern Mediterranean countries, perhaps he would change his mind and stop repeating that myth.

**Murdo Fraser:** I do not regard it as a myth, because I have seen it with my own eyes. The issue is one of culture. As a northern European country, we have a hard-drinking culture. It is not as simple as proposing the silver bullet of increasing the price.

The First Minister raised the constitutional issue—which he has repeated over the past three weeks—that there is a mandate for constitutional change, despite the fact that the constitutional issue was not at the top of voters' concerns during the recent election campaign and was hardly raised on the doorsteps at all. Many people who voted SNP were not interested in independence or constitutional change; they believed that the SNP's team offered a better opportunity for Scotland than the likeliest alternative. Pushing constitutional change might be the Government's priority but it is not the people's priority. I am sure that, deep down, SNP MSPs must know that.

I was concerned to hear the First Minister say, in relation to Westminster, that it was time to end the "benign diktat". That is a misrepresentation of our constitutional settlement. Westminster is not the Parliament of a foreign country. Westminster is our Parliament, too. Just over a year ago, 59

Scottish MPs were elected with a mandate to look after Scottish interests. Our two Parliaments should work in partnership; they should not be in conflict or continually at war, which is what the SNP seems to offer.

The SNP leadership now raises the prospect of independence-lite: all the taste but none of the calories of real independence—or, for Pat Kane, perhaps it is all the calories but none of the taste. I look forward to seeing the standard bearers of SNP fundamentalism—Alex Neil, who is now in the Cabinet, and Christine Grahame, who sadly is not yet in the Cabinet—rally to the independence-lite banner and the cry of, “Freedom—but only in the context of a confederal United Kingdom with a shared defence and welfare system within a social union.”

I suspect that the red meat of real independence is what really stirs the breasts on the SNP benches. Let us have a referendum: a straightforward yes or no on real independence. On that I hope that we can all agree, so let us have it as soon as possible.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):**

I call Johann Lamont to close on behalf of the Labour Party with a generous 13 minutes.

16:26

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):**  
Good grief.

I did not realise that there was anything in independence that I would find attractive, but if it is low calorie, I could be persuaded in that regard if no other.

I do not want to start my first speech back in the Parliament by attacking the Tories, but I was going to pad out my generous 13 minutes by reading out the list of fabulous maiden speakers, and that has now been denied me. I offer my congratulations to all those who made their maiden speeches today. Murdo Fraser is right to point out that their substantial contribution to today’s debate augurs very well for this session of Parliament. I will talk about some of them in particular, but that should not reflect on the contributions of those whom I do not mention.

I am exceptionally grateful to be back in Parliament after going through an exceptionally tough election night. At a personal level, I am grateful to the voters of Glasgow Pollok for returning me here. In these tough times—they were tough for the Labour Party on that night—I have been given an added challenge. I know that, in these days of co-operation and the new politics, and in recognition of the SNP’s victory, I will have to be very good. However, to speak for a generous 13 minutes while continuing that approach might

stretch even my capacity, so I hope that members will forgive me if I say anything that is not absolutely in the spirit of the new politics.

Of all the speeches that we heard today, I remark in particular on that of our own leader, Iain Gray. We are exceptionally proud of our leader, and no more so than today. He captured not only the challenge for Labour of co-operating with a majority Government in these new times but the challenge for the Scottish Government of listening to others, doing the hard work of moving from aspiration to delivery and recognising that we have ideas—as have members on all sides of the chamber—that we wish to contribute to that very important job.

The new word is positivity, and members will know that I ooze positivity from every pore. However, I say gently to some of the SNP members in the chamber—particularly to those who spoke this morning rather than this afternoon—that we have got it: we know that the SNP won the election. We are determined to co-operate where we can, but SNP members should understand that co-operation is not capitulation. It seemed this morning that they were happy to be congratulated but became slightly more disgruntled when they were being criticised.

SNP members have a very strong platform, but they must recognise that, throughout Scotland as well as in the chamber, there will be times when we disagree with them and we are entitled to be heard. I present a further challenge, this time to Scottish Government back benchers, because it is important that, if they challenge their own Government, their voices can be heard.

As for maiden speeches, I was very struck by Joan McAlpine’s comments about this young Parliament’s proud legacy, particularly with regard to the land question. I find it interesting that her view on land took her to the SNP while my view of the Scottish landowners and what they did to my forebears made me a socialist, not a nationalist.

I hope that, in recognising the importance of the Commonwealth games, John Mason also recognises Glasgow City Council’s critical role over a long time in putting in place the buildings and capacity that resulted in our winning the bid. Too often Glasgow is vilified; in fact, it showed vision in understanding sport’s power to change lives and how something like the Commonwealth games can not only present the city and Scotland in a positive light but support community regeneration and local employment. There is a powerful message in all of that for the Scottish Government not only about the importance of its partnership with Scotland’s biggest city but about how public funding and procurement can tackle low-pay issues in the public, voluntary and private sectors.

I was surprised to hear that Kezia Dugdale's speech has been regarded as controversial, because I felt that it said something very powerful about our role in the Parliament. It is not sufficient for any of us simply to talk about what we care about or believe in; we have to do the heavy lifting of Government to deliver on targets. For example, I regret the fact that, over the past four years, child poverty increased instead of going down. Government needs to focus on such questions.

While acknowledging Graeme Pearson's wealth of experience, I nevertheless want to highlight in particular his comments about the proceeds of crime, which are harvested from some of our poorest communities. That money ought to be directed back into the communities that suffer most from organised crime.

I welcomed Kevin Stewart's speech, in which he made the case for support for his own city. We will all have to face that challenge; indeed, the Scottish Government itself faces the challenge of balancing these demands for justice and fairness.

James Dornan said that we now have a can-do Government. However, the problem is that, over the past fortnight, we have heard excessive comment about what we cannot do because of the powers that we do not have. It is important that the can-do message is made stronger.

I thought that Annabelle Ewing was deliberately trying to wind me up when she described 6 May as a very "enjoyable day". If I remember correctly, it was not quite so enjoyable for some of us. She also mentioned boldness of thinking, but the fact is that she will have to tell us what the plan for corporation tax will be if it comes to the Parliament. If it means simply giving tax cuts to big business, I have to say that I do not believe that that will be in tune with the views of the people of Scotland.

On the purpose of devolution itself, the First Minister said:

"Devolution was born for a purpose: to let Scotland find peace with herself and for our nation to become comfortable in her own skin."

Well, maybe—but for some of us it was also about bringing power closer to where people lived, understanding their experiences, listening to the solutions that they had devised and using Government's power to implement them. It is about protecting people in these very tough times, given what is coming from Westminster.

There is, for example, a challenge in health. I agree with Christine Grahame about health inequalities. None of us can allow ourselves to get to the point where we simply say that the statistics prove that the health service is okay, despite the fact that those who use it and work in it are saying something entirely different. Moreover, we know

that we are committed to free education, but what are we actually saying about the further education sector and what are we doing to resist the trade-off between having no tuition fees and closing down places in higher education, which will discriminate against the poorest in our communities? We opened up higher education to those in my generation who had not been allowed to go to university and such places should not be closed and denied to the same people.

Neil Bibby and other members have mentioned youth unemployment. I reiterate the request or demand that we look at low pay and the living wage. There is a pay freeze that is mitigated for the lowest paid in the health service and the Scottish Government, but that mitigation is not happening in local government. Some 70 per cent of those in low-paid jobs in local government are women. I ask the Government again to consider that issue and whether there is any sense of justice, to ensure that the poorest do not bear the burden of these challenging times.

We must also consider what is happening in the voluntary sector. We say that there are no compulsory redundancies in the public sector, but we know that, with contracts that are delivered inside the voluntary sector on behalf of the public sector, women are losing not 2 or 3 per cent of their wages but a third of them. That is happening in a restructuring that has been brought about because of pressures on contracts that are going into the voluntary sector. It is important that procurement protects those jobs and workers.

We all have aspirations for Scotland, of course. The advance copies of the First Minister's statement included the words "Check against delivery". We will also check his and his Government's commitments against delivery. He said that the Government will make housing a priority, but it is a fact that investment in housing has been continually deprioritised in the past four years. The capacity of housing associations to deliver has been reduced by a reduction in the subsidy.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment (Alex Neil):** I point out that we will build more than 6,000 houses next year, which compares with fewer than 5,000 houses built when Johann Lamont was the minister.

**Johann Lamont:** Alex Neil will find that the housing numbers have fallen in the past year and that a funding structure has been put in place that will mean that housing associations and co-operatives will not be able to deliver the developments that they said they would.

I urge the Government to look at the issue of co-operatives and mutuals, which we said a lot about in our manifesto, and to consider our financial

inclusion strategy. There is no doubt that legal and illegal loan sharks are circling in some of our communities that are pressured by wage cuts and so on. It is the job of Government to protect and sustain credit unions and do the broader work of financial inclusion in those terms.

On justice, I echo our commitment to support the Scottish Government in tackling inequality and discrimination in whatever way they are expressed in our communities, but it is important to listen to the lived experience of people in our communities. If tough sentencing is a lever against sectarian abuse, it must also be a way of addressing the scourge of knife crime in our communities. The First Minister said that we can have ambitions, and he talked about powers. He said that acting

“within the restricted powers of this Parliament ... does not confine our ambitions for Scotland, but it confines our ability to achieve those ambitions.”

We want the Government also to focus on what it can achieve with the powers that it has. The First Minister’s statement must not be an alibi. We want him to be ambitious with the capacity that he already has to address the needs of carers, to support women and children who face domestic abuse, and to tackle inequality in our communities.

In conclusion, the Labour Party has had a tough time, from which we will rebuild and restrengthen ourselves, but it is as nothing compared with the tough times that families and individuals in our communities are facing. We know that there will be a constitutional debate; we understand that and recognise the SNP’s majority. However, I reiterate the demand that the referendum be brought forward and sorted. As the debate on constitutional powers continues, the importance of giving equal attention to the needs that we saw in the election campaign and before must be recognised. It must be understood that equal time must be given to the tough job of delivering on the priorities of the people in this country in respect of jobs, education and health, which members across the chamber recognise. Where the Government focuses on those priorities, it will be guaranteed the Opposition’s support.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I invite Nicola Sturgeon to close the debate on behalf of the Scottish Government.

16:39

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy (Nicola Sturgeon):** Thank you. I begin by welcoming you and your fellow Deputy Presiding Officer to your posts. On today’s evidence, the Presiding Officers will do a fantastic job of keeping us all in order.

I say sincerely that I am pleased to follow Johann Lamont in summing up. I do not think that I will bag any exclusives in the newspapers tomorrow by saying that Johann and I perhaps do not always see eye to eye on political matters. However, as a result of boundary changes, Johann now represents a large number of my former constituents in central Govan, Drumoyne and Linthouse. For that reason, and for many others, I wish her well in the lifetime of this session. I hope that she looks after my former constituents very well indeed.

Johann Lamont said that she did not want to open her speech by attacking the Tories. In an early attempt to build Labour-SNP consensus, I say to her that attacking the Tories is an approach from Labour that the SNP much prefers to that of attacking the SNP. So I encourage Johann to spend as much time as she wants in the next five years attacking members on the Tory benches. Johann also said that she might struggle to fill her 13 minutes, although in the end she did not struggle, and I never really expected that she would. However, just to prove how helpful I always am, I inform her that I was standing ready with a list of the previous SNP Administration’s achievements. Had she run into any difficulties in filling that time, I am sure that she would have been delighted to read out all 84 manifesto commitments—out of 94—that we delivered.

I am pleased to be making my first speech as the member for Glasgow Southside in the new session. I am also pleased to be summing up what has been a good and high-quality debate on the new Government’s vision for taking Scotland forward. I want to do three things in my summing up: first, to reaffirm the vision that the First Minister set out when he spoke this morning; secondly, to say something about my priorities in my portfolio; and thirdly, to respond throughout my remarks to the points that have been made by speakers from all parties.

I have been incredibly encouraged by the positivity of most of the speeches that have been made and the quality of all of them. I emphasise the point, already made by the First Minister and other ministers, that the new Scottish Government, as a majority Government, is determined to work with all parties as far as we can and to work with all members, just as we did as a minority Government. Although members differ on many issues, I believe that we share the common objective of taking our country forward and building a better nation. The more that we can work collectively to achieve that goal, the better we will do for all those in Scotland whom we serve and represent.

In announcing the ministerial team, the First Minister said that the Government blends the “tried

and tested” with “new talent”. I think that what he meant was that it blends old and new. Bruce Crawford and Mr Swinney—and perhaps even me—represent the old, and there are several new members of the Government. That mix of experience and new talent that is evident in the Government has also been evident in this debate. We have heard good and insightful speeches from a number of parliamentary veterans. I stress that I use the term “veteran” to refer to experience rather than age, in most cases. Some members who have spoken in the debate have more than a decade’s experience in the Parliament, and many of them have ministerial experience. We benefit greatly from that experience and from the background that they brought to bear in making their speeches.

Iain Gray said at the start of the debate that now is the time “to explore the detail” of the “common ground” that exists. That will be the work and duty of the Parliament in the months and weeks to come.

Annabel Goldie demonstrated that although her party may have lost the election, she has certainly not lost her sense of humour. She suggested that the Scottish people had called the SNP’s bluff. If giving us a whopping majority in Parliament is calling our bluff, I hope that the Scottish people do it many times in the future.

Annabel Goldie, Nanette Milne and others in the chamber made a number of serious points about health, drugs, crime and education, to which the Government will respond in the weeks, months and years ahead.

We have had a lot of experience on display today but, equally, many new members—nine in total—have spoken for the first time in this chamber. Many of them have no former parliamentary or ministerial experience, although Annabelle Ewing and John Mason have experience of another place. What struck me in listening to the new members making their contributions was how much experience they bring collectively to this chamber, whether from council chambers, the voluntary sector, the media, the private sector or other areas of public service. That wealth of experience was on display today. I congratulate everybody who made their maiden speech today. I will not single anybody out, but the excellent contributions that we heard bode well for the standard of debate, deliberation and scrutiny, not just in the chamber but in our committees.

The First Minister set out a vision this morning. Margo MacDonald was right to say that it focused on the bigger picture—it did so deliberately. It was a vision of the Scotland that we seek—unashamedly ambitious. In setting out that vision, the First Minister did something that I think will be an important theme of this session: he drew the

clear relationship between means and ends. The constitutional change that we seek, both in the short term and the longer term, is not an end in itself; it is a means to a greater end. Everything that we will do, we will do because we believe that it will create a better future and a better nation for the Scottish people. Above all, it will be because we believe that it will help those of us who are most in need and most deprived. I hope that that is a goal around which everyone in the Parliament can unite. I hope that it is exactly because we are united on the goal, the objective and the destination that we will not fear impassioned, rigorous debate and discussion about how we achieve that. What matters to the Government and, I believe, to the Parliament is delivering for the Scottish people.

We as a Government have delivered over the past four years. We froze the council tax, put extra police on the beat, abolished bridge tolls and abolished prescription charges—the social wage that the First Minister spoke about. The electorate responded to our ability to deliver on our plans. Now they expect more of us. Having a majority gives us more room for manoeuvre; it gives us more ability to fulfil the ambitions that we have for Scotland. We will use that increased room, but it is not unlimited room; we are still constrained by the limited powers of this Parliament.

Kezia Dugdale—in a strong maiden speech from someone who I have no doubt will make a massive contribution to this Parliament—focused on child poverty. She was right to do so, but in her speech there was no attempt to make the fundamental link between the powers over tax and benefits on the one hand and the ability to tackle child poverty effectively on the other hand. Surely that moral imperative—I use that phrase deliberately—to tackle child poverty is the biggest and best example of why the limited powers of this Parliament must be extended. The inability of the Opposition sometimes to see that link between the means of new powers and the ends of addressing these big, driving, social and economic challenges can be staggering.

We seek to strengthen the Scotland Bill, in line with the desire expressed by parties throughout the Parliament in the previous session, precisely so that we can achieve the kinds of powers that we need to build a better, more prosperous and more just Scotland.

Our vision is of a Scotland renewed, reindustrialised and responsible for its own affairs—a vision of a fair and equal Scotland with opportunities for everybody to flourish. Yes—in the latter half of the parliamentary session, we will give people in Scotland the choice of moving to independence.

In a debate that has been of high quality—

**Murdo Fraser** *rose*—

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I will give way, because I was just about to mention Mr Fraser.

**Murdo Fraser:** I look forward to that.

When we eventually come to the referendum, will it be on real independence or the independence-lite that is being spun to us by sources at the top of the SNP?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** As I am sure Mr Fraser knows, there is only one type of independence: the independence to control our own affairs and to choose how the powers are used to the betterment of our country.

I was just going to talk about Opposition members sounding like broken records, and up popped Murdo Fraser, right on cue. On the issue that we are discussing, some members sounded like the proverbial broken record. During his very good speech, Iain Gray responded to gentle heckling from SNP members by saying, "That just shows that my script is still working." I say with the greatest respect that the election result shows that the script was never working.

People in Scotland are tired of a sterile, negative and scaremongering debate about our country's constitutional future. It is time for the Opposition to change the record and to engage in the debate, which will and must be rigorous. There are different views, but let us make the debate a battle of positive ideas about our country's future—the people of Scotland deserve that.

I will talk about some priorities in my portfolio. Many members have mentioned an issue that touches on all three of my responsibilities—health, wellbeing and cities. Surely nothing is more harmful to our health, more injurious to our wellbeing and more destructive to some of our cities than our relationship with alcohol is. To be frank, the Parliament demeaned itself in the previous session by voting against minimum alcohol pricing. That was not because the Government failed to compromise, as Jackie Baillie implied. We demeaned ourselves because we could not collectively rise above party politics and take a measure that would be in the interests of our country's health.

When we reintroduce the relevant legislation, we will have a chance for redemption, and for more than redemption. As the Labour Party said repeatedly, through excise taxes, even more could be done to tackle the alcohol problem. We need to follow through on that logic. Let us unite as a Parliament to ensure that no excuse exists for not devolving the taxes to the Parliament through the Scotland Bill.

**Patrick Harvie:** I share the cabinet secretary's disappointment that we did not pass legislation on

minimum pricing in the previous session, but I was also disappointed that we did not pass legislation from opposition parties that also put forward good and positive ideas. Will she assure me that, when legislation is reintroduced to establish minimum pricing—which I will back again—the Government will be open to constructive ideas on the same subject from parties other than the SNP?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Yes. I have said throughout the debate—in the previous session and since the election—that I am open to anything that will genuinely tackle the problem of alcohol. If Patrick Harvie—who made an excellent speech earlier—wants to make such proposals, or if anybody else wants to do so, and they pass muster, we as a Parliament should of course unite to support them. I look forward to the alcohol debate, which we cannot and should not duck.

The Government's health agenda goes beyond alcohol, important as that is. As has been said, we have guaranteed that the NHS's revenue budget will be protected. That means that, four years from now, that budget will be more than £1 billion higher than it is today.

I agree with Iain Gray that protecting the budget is not an end in itself—it is the means to protecting the services that people across Scotland value, cherish and rely on. That does not and should not mean always protecting the status quo. Society does not stand still and neither can our national health service.

Christine Grahame made an excellent point about the potential of technology to transform how we deliver healthcare in this country. The Government must face the challenge of driving down unnecessary costs in our health service and designing a health service that is truly fit for the challenges of the future, not least the demographic challenge that Jackie Baillie and others mentioned. We will protect staff by having no compulsory redundancies and will continue to improve services through our quality strategy, focusing on more community care and earlier intervention, including our detect cancer early initiative.

**Margo MacDonald:** This issue has been troubling me for quite some time. I accept 100 per cent the cabinet secretary's sincerity when she says that she will protect the NHS, but how can she give a 100 per cent guarantee when she does not control interest rates and does not know what will happen to the pound—in other words, when she does not have the economic levers to ensure that she can move her finances around?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** As always, Margo MacDonald makes a valid point. We have given a commitment to pass on to the health service all the consequentials during the next spending

review period, to protect the budget as far as we can. However, to illustrate Margo MacDonald's point, a big chunk of the pressures that are bearing down on health boards at the moment come from changes to VAT and national insurance and from the rising costs of energy, all of which are outwith the Parliament's control. The argument for full powers for the Parliament is as true even in an area that is already devolved as it is in many other areas. We will continue to make that argument.

I am running out of even my very generous allocation of time, but I want to touch on the issue of wellbeing. In the last speech that he ever made—the historians among us will remember it well; I do not, as it was made slightly before I was born—Hubert Humphrey, who lost narrowly to Richard Nixon, said:

“the moral test of Government is how that Government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.”

The Government will meet that moral test. For the children, we will bring forward a range of measures: new legislation to end the postcode lottery of early years services and to ensure that the getting it right for every child approach is developed nationwide. For the elderly, we will maintain free personal care, free bus passes and the council tax freeze, which benefits all but helps the elderly, in particular. We will deliver a single, integrated system of health and social care, to ensure that older people are at the heart of service delivery. For those in the shadows of life, we will continue to support our social care services. In particular, we have given a commitment to prioritise support for carers by ensuring that at least 20 per cent of our new change fund is dedicated to supporting them to continue to care.

I conclude by again saying that this has been an excellent debate to kick off the fourth session of the Scottish Parliament. I have not responded to all the points that members have made, but I am sure that we will discuss those issues again on many occasions over the next five years. The Government looks forward to working with all members, regardless of party and of whether they are old or new members, because we have the shared goal of taking Scotland forward to a better future. The Government is committed to delivering that goal.

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Bruce Crawford to move motions S4M-00106, on parliamentary recess dates, and S4M-00107, on the office of the clerk. I am sure that Mr Crawford will take his time when doing so.

16:59

**The Cabinet Secretary for Parliamentary Business and Government Strategy (Bruce Crawford):** It gives me pleasure to move the motions on parliamentary recess dates and on when the office of the clerk will close as a result of those dates. I should let the Parliament know that the coming summer recess will begin on 2 July and end on 4 September. That should be just enough information for the Parliament at this stage.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following parliamentary recess dates under Rule 2.3.1: 2 July – 4 September 2011 (inclusive), 8 – 23 October 2011 (inclusive), 23 December 2011 (pm) – 8 January 2012 (inclusive), 11 – 19 February 2012 (inclusive), 31 March – 15 April 2012 (inclusive) and 30 June – 2 September 2012 (inclusive).

That the Parliament agrees that, between 1 June 2011 and 31 January 2012, the Office of the Clerk will be open on all days except: Saturdays and Sundays, 2, 23 (pm), 26 and 27 December 2011, 2 and 3 January 2012.—[Bruce Crawford.]

**The Presiding Officer:** I thank Mr Crawford for being so helpful. The questions on the motions will be put at decision time.

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** There are two questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S4M-00106, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on parliamentary recess dates, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees the following parliamentary recess dates under Rule 2.3.1: 2 July – 4 September 2011 (inclusive), 8 – 23 October 2011 (inclusive), 23 December 2011 (pm) – 8 January 2012 (inclusive), 11 – 19 February 2012 (inclusive), 31 March – 15 April 2012 (inclusive) and 30 June – 2 September 2012 (inclusive).

**The Presiding Officer:** The second question is, that motion S4M-00107, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the office of the clerk, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that, between 1 June 2011 and 31 January 2012, the Office of the Clerk will be open on all days except: Saturdays and Sundays, 2, 23 (pm), 26 and 27 December 2011, 2 and 3 January 2012.

*Meeting closed at 17:01.*

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice to SPICe.

Members who wish to suggest corrections for the revised e-format edition should e-mail them to [official.report@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:official.report@scottish.parliament.uk) or send a marked-up printout to the Official Report, Room T2.20.

---

Available in e-format only. Printed Scottish Parliament documentation is published in Edinburgh by RR Donnelley and is available from:

All documents are available on  
the Scottish Parliament website at:

[www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk)

For details of documents available to  
order in hard copy format, please contact:  
APS Scottish Parliament Publications on 0131 629 9941.

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact  
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000  
Textphone: 0800 092 7100  
Email: [sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk)

e-format first available  
ISBN 978-0-85758-636-0

Revised e-format available  
ISBN 978-0-85758-637-7

---

Printed in Scotland by APS Group Scotland

---