



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 6 August 2014

Session 4

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Scottish Parliament

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[The Deputy Presiding Officer *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

Portfolio Question Time

Training, Youth and Women's Employment

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Good afternoon. The first item of business today is portfolio question time. As ever, I would be grateful for short and succinct questions and answers, please.

Employment Tribunal Fees (Youth and Women's Employment)

1. Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what impact the introduction of employment tribunal fees has had on youth and women's employment. (S4O-03421)

The Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment (Angela Constance): The Scottish Government supports better regulation to assist sustainable economic growth, but we have consistently opposed policies that encroach on employees' existing rights. The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism wrote to Jo Swinson MP in June 2013 outlining this Government's opposition to the fees, and highlighting that, for many people, they will represent an unaffordable risk, regardless of the strength of the case. We believe that the introduction of such fees could lead to women and young people having an adverse experience in the workplace.

Alison Johnstone: The Trades Union Congress has said that women have, indeed, been among the biggest losers. A year down the line, now that we have the data, we see that equal pay claims have dropped by 84 per cent and sex discrimination cases are down by 81 per cent. Now that we are beginning to see the effects of the changes, will the cabinet secretary write to the United Kingdom Government again supporting the Law Society of Scotland's call for a review of that patently unfair fee and remission regime?

Angela Constance: Yes—I will be happy to cede to that request. As a Government, we have continually made clear our opposition to the fees. I am well aware of the positions of the TUC, Unison and the Law Society of Scotland, as well as of some important information that Citizens Advice Scotland published recently that shows that seven

out of 10 potentially successful cases are not being pursued.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): As the unions are paying the fees—which we all agree should not be imposed anyway—for their members, does the cabinet secretary agree that there is a strong need to encourage every worker in Scotland to join an appropriate trade union, to get the defence that they deserve?

Angela Constance: I understand the point that Dr Simpson is making. Although it is, of course, up to individuals to decide whether to join a union, I can certainly advocate the merits of joining a union to workers or employees the length and breadth of Scotland. This is a prime example of where people may indeed require a union to support them in the workplace.

Health Visitors (Training)

2. Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what involvement the Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment will have in the training programme for the recently announced additional 500 health visitors. (S4O-03422)

The Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment (Angela Constance): The Scottish Government is investing in additional refreshed training for health visitors as part of the wider package of investment in the health visiting workforce that was announced on 18 June, which will ensure the delivery of 500 new health visitor posts by 2017-18. Health visitors play a vital role in contributing to the health and wellbeing of children and families.

The lead responsibility for the work falls within the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing and will be taken forward by him. This welcome investment has potential outcomes across all areas of Government, and I will ensure that the areas under my remit fully support it, just as they already support a wide range of activity in developing the national health service workforce.

Jayne Baxter: It is vital that all young people, regardless of background, have an opportunity to develop their skills and to find employment that suits them. As the position of health visitor is rightly a highly skilled role, what steps is the cabinet secretary taking to ensure that there are appropriate pathways of progression into the profession for young people, especially those from diverse backgrounds?

Angela Constance: Ms Baxter makes an important and valid point. Over the past few years, we have developed an increasing range of modern apprenticeship frameworks in both health and social care. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and

Wellbeing has been a great advocate for use of those apprenticeships within the health service, and has plans for expansion. However, if Ms Baxter has any specific ideas, I would be more than happy to discuss them with her.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): At what stage will the Scottish Government be able to tell us the local authority breakdown of the 500 additional health workers?

Angela Constance: I will ask Alex Neil, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, to provide that information directly to Ms Smith.

Training Women Aged Over 25 (Skills Development Scotland)

3. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what support Skills Development Scotland provides to the training of women over 25. (S4O-03423)

The Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment (Angela Constance): Skills Development Scotland provides a range of training options to individuals including women aged over 25. I have asked SDS to deliver in each year of the current parliamentary session 25,000 modern apprenticeships that are open to those aged 25 and over, in key and enabling sectors; more than 17,000 pre-employment training places through the employability fund; 7,000 flexible training opportunities to support upskilling in the workplace; and targeted support for low-paid, low-skilled and unemployed individuals through the individual learning account programme.

In addition, through its all-age careers services, SDS provides professional advice to individuals, including women over 25, on the training options that it manages and on the wider education and skills offer that is available through our further and higher education institutions.

Malcolm Chisholm: Will the cabinet secretary look at the reduction in Skills Development Scotland training support for women aged over 25, many of whom are forced to seek work once their child reaches the age of five? Does she realise that that has had negative consequences for the childcare academy at North Edinburgh Childcare, which I know the cabinet secretary knows well? That organisation used to provide training for many women over the age of 25, but it now has to concentrate on those who are under 25.

Angela Constance: I am more than happy to meet Mr Chisholm to discuss the specifics of that issue, because it would be good to understand what is happening locally with that childcare centre. As I said, SDS provides a range of provision, which is available to those who are over

25 years of age, as it should be. Obviously, demand for provision such as apprenticeships is led by employers, so there are issues in this about the wider labour market, but I am happy to pick up that issue with Mr Chisholm directly.

Women's Unemployment

4. John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what percentage of the quarterly increase in unemployment between March and May 2014 was represented by women. (S4O-03424)

The Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment (Angela Constance): Women's unemployment represented 88 per cent, or 11,000 of the overall 13,000 increase in unemployment over the quarter. It is important to note, however, that female unemployment is down 2,000 over the year.

Women's employment is at a record high. There are now more women employed in Scotland than at any point since records began in 1992.

With Scotland's economy now back above pre-recession levels, more women are choosing to enter the workforce and are beginning to look for employment, and are moving from economic inactivity and, therefore, appearing in the numbers.

John Pentland: I believe the importance of the figures is in the fact that women are far more vulnerable to job losses. In this case, we are talking about 88 per cent. Is not it the case that the Scottish Government is failing to address the issue adequately? The UK figures for the period show a 25,000 reduction in women's unemployment. Does not that suggest that the Scottish Government has got its priorities wrong?

Angela Constance: It is always interesting when people in Mr Pentland's party expect the Scottish Government to take all the responsibility but only limited powers. I am more than happy for the Scottish Government to have all the responsibility for employment matters, but that will require a yes vote on 18 September.

It is important to look in the round at labour market statistics. Quarterly variations are not always pleasing. There are particular issues that make women more vulnerable in the labour market. If we are really to understand the experience of women in work, we have to look at all the statistics that are available. The record levels of employment should be welcomed, as should the fact that inactivity has fallen consistently in Scotland.

Since the establishment of this Parliament in 1999, economic inactivity among women has

fallen by 7 per cent, which has to be welcomed. That indicates that we are making some progress. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Angela Constance: There is more to be done, because one unemployed Scot, whether they be a young person or a woman, is one too many for me. A stream of investment and work is being led by the Government, through the strategic group on women in work, and through investment in skills and training, to do everything that we can within our current powers to get women in this country back to work.

I would like this Parliament to have full economic powers in order to have control over things such as Jobcentre Plus, and to rectify the failing work programme.

Women's Employment

5. Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support the 120 women who become unemployed each day into employment. (S4O-03425)

The Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment (Angela Constance): Female employment is now at more than 1.2 million—its highest level since comparable records began. We are determined to support those who are moving into the labour market and seeking work as the economy continues to grow.

Although employment remains, as yet, reserved to the United Kingdom Government, we know that the challenges that women face are complex and we are taking a cross-Government approach to supporting them. That includes our investment of more than £0.25 billion to expand funded, high-quality childcare from August; the implementation of the framework for women's enterprise, which aims to help more women to start their own business; funding to encourage more employers to introduce more flexible working patterns; and funding to tackle occupational segregation, particularly in science, technology, engineering and maths-related careers.

Dr Simpson: The cabinet secretary's response to the previous question, when she said that it would all come right with independence, now looks like a more distant prospect. We need to prepare for the supposition that we will remain part of the United Kingdom.

Does the cabinet secretary share my concern that of the 13,000 people who found themselves out of work between March and May, 88 per cent were women? What steps is the Scottish Government taking to encourage Scottish

businesses to work with the many women who want to have a career break to ensure that they have the opportunity to return to work at the same professional level as when they first took that career break?

Angela Constance: I am more than entitled to my view and to be a campaigner who advocates for independence. I will stick to my firm belief that Westminster continues to fail women in this country. We need only look at welfare reform as an example.

Dr Simpson quotes some interesting figures. He asked about the 120 women. That is not just the rise in unemployment; it is also the increase in the number of women who become economically active. We have to recognise that more women are actively seeking work within the labour market. We have to grasp that.

The point on which we could perhaps unite is flexible working. There is an issue about women who have high skills and high levels of qualification who take a career break to have children and, on returning to work, have to accept work or can only find work in which they are effectively underemployed. I can unite with Dr Simpson on that point. Underemployment is a serious issue for women. We are pursuing that workstream through the strategic group on women and work, and in our constant engagement with employers.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): If the cabinet secretary is so keen on getting women in Scotland back into work, why has her Government presided over 80,000 fewer women getting into college since it took power in 2007?

Angela Constance: I firmly believe that women in this country should have choices and opportunities about their education and the careers that they pursue—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Angela Constance: It is to Ms Marra's shame that she constantly blisters the information and the facts about college education. The reality is that women are not underrepresented in college education—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, Ms Marra.

Angela Constance: Ms Marra may shout from a sedentary position and, as usual, try to compare apples with pears, but the facts are that the only comparable measure is full-time equivalent. This Government has met its manifesto commitment to retain full-time equivalent places at 116,000—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please. We need to hear the answer.

Angela Constance: College reform is very important in terms of upskilling and helping to respond to the needs of the local labour market. The reality is that women are not underrepresented in the college sector. Our college sector is well up for the challenge of preparing young people—and women—for their journey into work.

Youth Employment Scotland Scheme

6. Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what employment opportunities have been created through the youth employment Scotland scheme. (S4O-03426)

The Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment (Angela Constance): The youth employment Scotland fund aims to help businesses with a threshold of 400 employees, social enterprises and third sector employers to create 10,000 job opportunities for young people across Scotland.

Bill Kidd: Can the minister provide the chamber with further information on how that success has benefited local communities such as those in my constituency of Glasgow Anniesland?

Angela Constance: The youth employment Scotland fund has been successful and has funded a wide range of sustainable employment opportunities and jobs for young people in a variety of sectors, such as retail, agriculture, tourism, catering and even the equine industry. The positions have included events co-ordinators and trainee paralegals in solicitors offices, and have been taken up right across Scotland. Our ambition is to reach our target of 10,000 opportunities, which we are confident that we will achieve. The scheme is a valuable one that is part of a range of schemes that are having a positive impact on young people in this country.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I broadly agree with the cabinet secretary's analysis of the scheme. Has she made any decision yet on continued funding for the scheme, given that it is due to run out in December? The organisers in Shetland tell me that it would help in their planning if the Government made an announcement about the scheme's future.

Will the minister clarify the position with regard to the Skills Development Scotland certificate of work readiness, which is seen as a valuable tool by young people in their passage into work? Will that be included in an enhanced scheme in the future?

Angela Constance: To clarify, the youth employment Scotland fund does not end in December. It goes across two financial years, and will continue until the end of this financial year.

We are undertaking a review of the youth employment strategy and will be taking a careful look at the future role of wage subsidies, particularly in light of the recommendations of the young workforce commission.

The certificate of work readiness has been very successful, and we will continue with it.

Minimum Wage

7. John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): To ask the Scottish Government what representations it has made to the United Kingdom Government about equalising the minimum wage regardless of age, given the impact on youth employment. (S4O-03427)

The Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment (Angela Constance): The Scottish Government believes that work should be fairly rewarded. With independence we would ensure that the minimum wage would rise by at least inflation and establish a fair work commission, which, along with assessing the minimum wage, would be asked to consider the appropriate minimum wage for young people and apprentices.

The Low Pay Commission's call for evidence for the 2015 minimum wage rate asks specifically for information on the minimum wage for young people, and the Scottish Government welcomes views on that issue, prior to submitting our response.

In response to the call for evidence in 2014, the Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism raised the importance of the national minimum wage for apprentices and called for it to be continuously assessed to ensure that it keeps pace with the rising costs that are faced by our young workforce.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Neil Findlay. Briefly, please.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Why does the minister not support using the powers—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry; I meant to call Mr Finnie.

John Finnie: I thank the minister for her response, although it sounded as though she was saying that we have made no representations. I encourage her to make representations.

In 1998, the UK Government made the national minimum wage law in order to ensure that employees in the UK are provided with "decent minimum standards and fairness in the workplace".

Any discrimination, including age discrimination, is unwelcome and I would encourage the minister to make those representations and to make a

commitment to eradicating such discrimination in an independent Scotland.

Angela Constance: I encourage Mr Finnie to read the *Official Report* of today's session.

In principle, people who are doing the same job should get the same rate of pay. That is an important principle. I believe that, in an independent Scotland, Mr Finnie and I will be on the same side and the fair work commission will have an important role. I am on record as supporting the Scottish Youth Parliament's one fair wage campaign.

Although I recognise that employers expect to pay people who are in training a different rate from those employees who are time served or fully qualified, we have a lot to learn from the European experience. In some European countries those differentials are not too great, while in others they are quite stark. I believe firmly that people should get the same rate of pay for the same job.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: And now, briefly, Neil Findlay.

Neil Findlay: Why does the minister not use the powers that she has at the moment and support, for example, the increase to the living wage, especially through the procurement process? She has the powers, so why is she not doing that?

Angela Constance: As Mr Findlay well knows, this Government, unlike the previous Labour Scottish Executive, has led by example on the living wage and done everything—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Angela Constance: —everything within its power—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Angela Constance: —within the current European Union rules.

I had hoped that Mr Findlay would have the grace to acknowledge that statutory guidance addressing issues such as terms and conditions and pay is a very important step forward. However, I, of course, want to make a bigger step forward and have a fair work commission because the big scandal is that, since 2008, the national minimum wage has not kept pace with the cost of living. That happened under Mr Findlay's watch, not the watch of this Government. I believe firmly that this Parliament should have the economic powers to address issues such as low pay and in-work poverty.

Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights

Commonwealth Games Legacy

1. Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what legacy is anticipated from the Commonwealth games. (S4O-03431)

The Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights (Shona Robison): I acknowledge Stewart Maxwell's role in helping to secure the bid in 2007 and in the first two years of planning the games.

I am sure that everyone agrees that the games were a spectacular sporting success and fantastic for Glasgow's and Scotland's international reputation.

It is an endorsement to all partners that a legacy from the games was in place before they even began. The planning started early, more than 50 national programmes and more than 80 supporting projects are now in place, and people are benefiting now. Focusing on sport alone, there has been a massive investment in school sport and sport facilities across Scotland, which will leave a lasting legacy from the games.

Stewart Maxwell: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer—in particular, her kind words about my role during the bidding process and the early years of planning. It was a pleasure and privilege to be involved at that stage. I add my thanks and congratulations to all our athletes, officials and volunteers who were involved in the highly successful Glasgow Commonwealth games.

What steps is the Scottish Government taking to achieve a lasting health benefit for the people of Scotland and a concomitant saving in health spending by encouraging all Scots to take up some moderate physical activity as a lasting legacy from the games?

Shona Robison: I thank Stewart Maxwell for his remarks, particularly on how fantastic our athletes and the rest of the team who delivered the games were.

To help achieve a lasting health benefit, a 10-year physical activity implementation plan to tackle physical inactivity in Scotland was launched in February of this year. It provides the framework for delivering the active legacy ambitions from the Commonwealth games.

In addition, Stewart Maxwell may be aware that the walking strategy was launched in June of this year. It encompasses a wide range of walking settings, including recreational and school-based activities. In addition to that, the updated cycling

action plan sets out our vision to improve the number of everyday journeys taken by bike in Scotland.

Finally, to support that work, we have invested almost £3 million in physical activity projects that are aimed at groups that, at the moment, do not take part in physical activity. We hope to see the results of that over the course of time.

Commonwealth Games Legacy

2. Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to build on the success of the Commonwealth games. (S4O-03432)

The Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights (Shona Robison): The Scottish Government remains committed to working together to secure a legacy that is fit for Scotland. With the excitement of those fantastic games still reverberating throughout the nation, the focus now is on building on the legacy that has already been achieved.

People across the country are already benefiting. For example, Scotland-based businesses won 69 per cent of contracts associated with the games; 1,900 young people are already being trained under the £5 million young persons fund; 133 community sport hubs are already operating across the country, complemented by 109 projects so far that enjoy funding from the active places fund; and more than 250,000 school pupils are involved in the game on Scotland programme.

Sandra White: I thank the cabinet secretary for her comprehensive reply. In her statement yesterday, she mentioned the fantastic work that was done by the many thousands of volunteers during the Commonwealth games. Does the Scottish Government have any plans to harness that excellent initiative for volunteering at future events?

Shona Robison: We do. It is essential to harness the passion of the nearly 51,000 individuals who applied to become Clydesiders. Details of Clydesider applicants—successful and unsuccessful—are being transferred to the national Volunteer Scotland database if they gave permission for that. That will allow them to stay informed about future volunteering opportunities. On 5 December last year, Volunteer Scotland unveiled its newly redesigned volunteer website, which provides a user-friendly way of finding such opportunities. We will continue to work with Volunteer Scotland and other legacy partners to ensure that those opportunities are varied and exciting.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I see that Dave Thompson has now entered the chamber, so I call him to ask question 3.

Commonwealth Games Legacy (Remote Areas)

3. Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): Presiding Officer, I sincerely apologise for being late to the chamber—I admit that I got caught up in other things and I forgot.

To ask the Scottish Government whether there will be a notable Commonwealth games legacy to the more remote areas of the country. (S4O-03433)

The Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights (Shona Robison): There will be. The Scottish Government is committed to creating a lasting legacy and maximising the benefits for the whole of Scotland from hosting the 2014 Commonwealth games. Local authorities have played an important role in spreading the legacy benefits the length and breadth of the country. The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers legacy leads network provides a platform for promoting opportunities, co-ordinating activity and working together to secure a legacy that we can all be proud of.

Dave Thompson: I know that the cabinet secretary is aware of Lochaber Sports Association's plans to develop a training facility and the great work that it has done in Lochaber to get all the sports clubs and others on board. Does she have further information about grants that might be available from sportscotland and so on for that facility?

Shona Robison: Since we met to discuss Lochaber Sports Association's plans for an indoor training facility, sportscotland officials have met a number of key stakeholders to explore ways of realising the association's plans. That includes the involvement of High Life Highland in operating the facility, which should remove a significant barrier to delivering the project.

I understand that the association is raising funds for the planning application, which Kilmallie community council will submit on its behalf. As Dave Thompson is aware, that is a crucial step in the process. Planning approval will allow funding bodies to consider applications that are before them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will take supplementaries, but the questions and answers must be brief, please.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): What will the Commonwealth games legacy be for Dundee?

Shona Robison: The member should be aware that a number of legacy projects are already operating in Dundee—for example, the development of six community sport hubs is under way across the city, and successful applications for active places funds have helped to supplement the local sporting offer.

The regional performance centre discussions are well under way, and I am sure that Jenny Marra could receive an update on them if she chose to ask for it. That centre is very much supported by local sporting organisations and will be a great asset to taking forward sport in the city.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am not convinced that Dundee is a more remote area of the country.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I think that my area qualifies for that.

Does the cabinet secretary accept the argument that addressing transport costs is a major part of the Commonwealth games legacy? Will she agree to meet a delegation of parents, coaches and volunteers from Shetland after Parliament returns in the autumn to discuss that vital aspect of ensuring that our athletes can compete with the best across Scotland?

Shona Robison: First, I take the opportunity to congratulate Erraid Davies again. She is a great ambassador for Shetland, and I am sure that the whole of Shetland will turn out for her return there.

Local authority colleagues have raised the issue of transport costs. We are working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities through the working group on sport to address a number of issues, including transport costs. We are looking at how we can better support people who require to travel from more remote communities to compete. I am happy to keep Tavish Scott updated on that, and I would be happy to meet any local delegation that he wants to arrange for me to meet.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I urge brevity in questions and answers; we might make a bit more progress.

Commonwealth Games 2018

4. Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the assertion in the *International Business Times* about an independent Scotland's participation in the 2018 Commonwealth games. (S4O-03434)

The Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights (Shona Robison): Scotland is already a member of the Commonwealth through the United Kingdom and so already meets the essential

requirements. Following a vote for independence, the Scottish Government will initiate steps to ensure Scotland's distinct membership as swiftly as possible.

Scotland is one of only six countries to have competed in every Commonwealth games, and I look forward to seeing Scotland compete at the Gold Coast games in 2018 and at every future games.

Stewart Stevenson: I hope to join the successful team in competing in 2018. More realistically, does the cabinet secretary think that we have laid the foundations for an even bigger success in 2018—using the powers of independence, of course?

Shona Robison: We already have a fantastic world-class sporting system through the sportsScotland Institute of Sport, which oversaw £50 million of investment in sporting performance in the previous funding period.

That investment led to a fantastic performance—53 medals, including 19 gold medals—at the Glasgow Commonwealth games. That will be a tough target to exceed at the Gold Coast games in 2018, but through support for our elite athletes, which will of course continue post independence, we will ensure that they continue to excel on the world sporting stage.

State Pensions (Independence)

5. Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether pensioners in an independent Scotland would be guaranteed their state pension and whether they would be paid at the same rate as in the rest of the United Kingdom. (S4O-03435)

The Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights (Shona Robison): In the event of independence, Scottish pensioners will continue to receive their state pensions as they do now, on time and in full.

This Government has committed to protecting the value of state pensions, and will uprate state pensions by the triple lock for the first term of an independent Scottish Parliament.

Scotland is in a strong position to afford a high-quality pensions system. Total expenditure on social protection, which covers pensions and broader welfare spending, has been lower in Scotland than in the United Kingdom during the past five years.

Gordon MacDonald: The UK state pension is the lowest in the European Union, at only 33 per cent of the average wage, or £113 per week, in comparison with the average European state pension of 41 per cent of average earnings. What

steps would an independent Scotland take to tackle pensioner poverty?

Shona Robison: As “Scotland’s Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland” sets out, savings credit would be retained in an independent Scotland. Savings credit, which is being abolished for new pensioners in the UK from 2016, is an extra payment for those who have set aside money for their retirement, and it helps poorer pensioners in particular.

In addition, we have committed to uprating guarantee credit each year by the triple lock. Guarantee credit ensures a minimum income guarantee in retirement, and again it supports poorer pensioners.

Both those steps will provide a level of security for state pensions that, under current plans, will not be available in the UK from 2016. This Government has also committed to setting the single-tier pension, which is due to be introduced for new pensioners from 2016, at £160 per week. The UK Government has yet to commit to such a level.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): If Alex Salmond has to resort to plan B, C, D or E, can the cabinet secretary tell us in which currency pensions will be paid?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That question is not particularly relevant, cabinet secretary.

Shona Robison: We will just stick to plan A, and we will pay our pensioners in pounds as they are paid at the moment.

State Pension Age

6. Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of recent comments by the cabinet secretary with responsibility for pensioners’ rights, whether it will rule out an increase in state pension age to 67 if Scotland decides to separate from the rest of the United Kingdom. (S4O-03436)

The Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners’ Rights (Shona Robison): Independence would give future Scottish Governments the ability to develop a fairer pensions system for Scottish citizens that is based firmly on our needs and circumstances.

If we form the first Government of an independent Scotland, we will establish an independent commission to consider a state pension age that is aligned to Scottish needs and circumstances and takes into account life expectancy, fairness and affordability. It will report within the first two years of an independent Scotland.

As I indicated to Hugh Henry in response to a similar question in May this year, this Government reserves judgment on the rapid increase in the state pension age to 67, as planned by the UK Government and supported by his party.

Hugh Henry: Of course, the commission could make a recommendation for any one of a number of ages. Will the cabinet secretary take this opportunity to guarantee that, if Scotland separates from the United Kingdom, there will be no increase in the pension age to 67? If she will not do so, why not?

Shona Robison: Because we would set up an independent commission to consider a state pension age that is aligned to Scottish needs and circumstances. Why would we do that if we had predetermined the outcome of the commission? As I repeated to the member in my first answer, we will set up a commission to look at all the circumstances, particularly Scottish circumstances, and—importantly—life expectancy, fairness and affordability. The commission will report within the first two years of an independent Scotland. The Government will then make a judgment on the basis of what the report tells us.

UK Sport Funding (Independence)

7. Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government for what reason it considers that an independent Scotland would continue to receive UK Sport funding given that UK Sport does not fund sporting activity in other countries. (S4O-03437)

The Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners’ Rights (Shona Robison): UK Sport is funded by the United Kingdom Government through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Currently, Scottish athletes who are identified to compete for Team GB and Paralympics GB are supported through UK Sport’s world-class performance programme.

Following a yes vote in the referendum, we will enter negotiations with the UK Government on many issues, including the transfer of resources. As the function that is currently performed by UK Sport will transfer to Scotland, it would be only appropriate that we seek a transfer of resource and assets of that organisation. It will then be for the Parliament of an independent Scotland to decide how best to generate and deploy that resource to the benefit of Scottish sport in future, but we will guarantee and ensure that our elite athletes continue to receive the support that they require to perform well on the international sporting stage.

Jenny Marra: It is reassuring that the cabinet secretary feels that there will be enough money in

an independent Scotland to maintain funding for elite athletes at its current level. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please. Briefly, Miss Marra.

Jenny Marra: I do not think that many people or athletes in the country would agree with the cabinet secretary. Under UK Sport funding criteria, athletes who are not British nationals are not eligible for funding. The national lottery does not fund elite sport outside the UK. Therefore, how does the cabinet secretary think that she will have enough money?

Shona Robison: The bit that Jenny Marra failed to mention is that Scottish taxpayers contribute to UK Sport funding and to lottery funding, so it is only right and proper that the resource of UK Sport, which is currently partially funded by Scottish taxpayers, remains in Scotland to fund elite athletes. Likewise with the lottery resource, we would want that to continue, given that Scottish taxpayers contribute to the lottery.

I should say that the fantastic performance of our Commonwealth games athletes was done entirely through the Institute of Sport and sportscotland resource. At the moment, UK Sport has £350 million-worth of resource, and we would be entitled to a share of that because we pay into it. Therefore we would use our share of UK Sport funding to supplement the resource to elite athletes. Elite athletes have nothing to fear. We will support them in a way that will enable them to perform on the world stage in the excellent way that they currently do.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will call question number 8, but I need brief questions and answers, please.

Pride House Legacy

8. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what legacy it expects to see from Pride House at the Commonwealth games. (S4O-03438)

The Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights (Shona Robison): The Scottish Government believes that Pride House, the first at any Commonwealth games, has increased the visibility, inclusion and participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people not only in sport but in society more generally. Human rights campaigners have commented that one of the legacies of Glasgow 2014 will be the focusing of attention on the homophobic legislation of 80 per cent of countries in the Commonwealth. On Friday 1 August, the Ugandan Constitutional Court annulled the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2014, which was strongly criticised by the Scottish Government. We welcome that development.

Patrick Harvie: I am grateful to the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council and Glasgow 2014 for the support that they have given to Pride House. It has reminded the LGBTI community in Glasgow of the importance of a non-commercial community space in the city—it is years since we had one. With the cabinet secretary's equalities remit, will she make contact with the organisers of Pride House to explore what support the Government and the city council could provide to realise the ambition of achieving a permanent community space, which would help to foster links with human rights activists around the world and meet local priorities?

Shona Robison: I am happy to look at that. The member's suggestion would have to be taken forward in a sustainable way. I am certainly happy to have further discussions with the organisations and Glasgow City Council to consider whether it is feasible.

Trident

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-10724, in the name of Keith Brown, on Trident.

We are tight for time this afternoon, and members who intend to speak in the open debate have been advised that speeches must be of five minutes' duration. I ask the opening speakers to be as brief as possible in the time that has been allocated to them, because any time that we save can then be used in the open debate.

14:40

The Minister for Transport and Veterans

(Keith Brown): It is extremely important that we consider the issues that are raised in the motion, for a number of critical reasons. First, we must consider the current opportunity to remove obscenely destructive and indiscriminate weapons from Scotland for ever. Then we must consider the findings of the Trident commission, which reported last month, including the determination of the three main Westminster parties to proceed with Trident replacement and the massive costs that are associated with that decision. Finally, we must consider the impact of those costs—estimated at more than £100 billion at 2012 prices—on our expenditure on conventional defence equipment and on future budgets in general. Each of those issues is crucial to Scotland's future, so it is extremely important that the Parliament consider them.

Six weeks tomorrow, the people of Scotland will have the opportunity to decide whether Scotland will once again take its place as an independent country. That choice, which I fully expect the people of Scotland to embrace, comes with this Government's commitment to secure the removal of Trident nuclear weapons from an independent Scotland.

The Scottish Government and my party are determined to seize the opportunity to begin, in six weeks' time, the discussions that will lead to the removal of nuclear weapons from Scotland. I cannot believe that there are not members of parties in the Scottish Parliament other than the Scottish National Party and the Green Party who would not be excited by that project, given that among the Parliament's members are lifelong campaigners against nuclear weapons. Whatever their view on constitutional change, who would not be excited by the prospect of getting rid of nuclear weapons, especially when the alternative is a lifetime spent under the shadow of a new generation of nuclear weapons and delivery systems, and the yoke of their massive cost?

The vast majority of countries in the world neither have nor want nuclear weapons. Of the 193 United Nations independent member states, it is believed that fewer than 10 possess nuclear warheads, or aspire to do so. Three of the five states that currently host United States nuclear weapons have stated their wish to see the weapons' removal.

The Scottish Government is a firm supporter of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Although some people might question the non-proliferation treaty's success in relation to its ultimate aim of securing the reduction of nuclear arms, the NPT provides a clear basis for international management and control of nuclear material, technologies and information. We must build on that framework, to take the next step.

The Scottish Government believes that, rather than renewing and further developing their nuclear weapons systems, nuclear-weapons states need to focus their efforts on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. That is why, when we debated the issue in March last year, the Scottish Government lodged a motion that endorsed the five-point plan for nuclear disarmament that was set out by the secretary general of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon. The plan builds on the NPT and calls on nuclear and non-nuclear-weapons states to fulfil their obligations under the treaty to pursue negotiations that lead to disarmament. I am glad to say that a majority in the Parliament supported that motion.

Having set out the context, I turn to the United Kingdom Government's plans for the renewal of Trident nuclear weapons. The Prime Minister has said that in 2016 the UK Government will decide whether to replace the Trident submarine fleet. The decision, which prepares for Trident missiles with nuclear warheads being based on the Clyde through to 2060 and beyond, could have massive implications for the UK's conventional defence forces, but if we look at the position of the three main parties at Westminster, we see that the so-called Trident "main gate" decision appears to have been made. Both coalition parties and Labour have signalled their support for a new fleet of submarines carrying Trident ballistic missiles, and questions remain around only the size of the fleet and whether nuclear weapons should be on patrol continuously.

It is particularly important for Labour back benchers who feel strongly about nuclear disarmament to understand that the alternative is the basing of massively powerful nuclear weapons and their delivery systems in central Scotland for the next 50 years or more. That is the alternative to what we propose. The current UK Government is sticking to its line that it has no plans to move those weapons from Her Majesty's Naval Base

Clyde. However, we believe that information that is critical to that decision—information on the costs and the consequences for the future of the UK's armed forces—has not been made available either to members of Parliament at Westminster or to the general public.

On 1 July, the Trident commission, a cross-party inquiry led by representatives of the three main Westminster parties, published its concluding report. I disagree strongly with its support for the UK retaining nuclear weapons, and I was greatly concerned by its comments on the cost of Trident renewal and the impact that those costs could have on conventional defence personnel and equipment. The UK Government has provided estimates of the capital costs of replacing the submarine fleet that carries its nuclear weapons, of extending the life of the Trident missiles and of other infrastructure and warhead developments. According to the Trident commission's report, those costs alone come to £50.6 billion at 2012 prices.

The Trident commission also estimates an annual in-service outlay on Trident running costs of around £1.5 billion at 2012 prices. Over an assumed operational lifetime of 35 years, that suggests a further £52.5 billion in running costs, taking the total potential cost of the UK Government's Trident successor programme to over £100 billion at 2012 prices.

The Trident Commission's overall financial assessment, which discounts future costs, suggests that the annual net present value of the Trident replacement system would average £2.9 billion per year. That is the equivalent of spending 9 per cent of the UK's current defence budget on nuclear weapons each year. It also equates to between 20 and 30 per cent of the entire capital budget of all three services. However, as construction of the successor submarine fleet reaches its peak, the actual annual cash costs are projected to be even higher than that, at almost £4 billion a year by the mid-2020s, at 2012 prices. As the Trident commission recognises, that will

“place a heavy strain on MoD's capital budget: in the period 2018 to 2030, between 20 and 30% of the whole defence capital budget shared between the three services will be spent on Trident renewal.”

Given the appalling cost overruns that tend to be typical of the Ministry of Defence's projects—for example, the cost of the UK aircraft carrier programme rose from £3 billion to £6 billion in the blink of an eye—nobody really expects that the figures that I have just mentioned for the renewal of Trident will remain static.

The Trident commission's concern echoes the comments of Professor Malcolm Chalmers of the

Royal United Services Institute, who said in January 2013 that

“sharp increases in spending on Trident renewal in the early 2020s seem set to mean further years of austerity for conventional equipment plans.”

That will mean, among other things, not enough helicopter support, not enough personal equipment for the troops and perhaps not enough troops. Those things are part of the price of Trident.

The Trident commission's report goes further and states:

“Important defence projects currently in the pipeline will surely suffer delay or cancellation.”

Even more worryingly, it states:

“Retaining the deterrent could negatively impact on other valuable security and defence capabilities.”

It is clear that renewing Trident nuclear weapons will impact on the future procurement of defence equipment such as the T26 global combat ships that will be needed by UK forces at home and overseas. In that respect, the Scottish Government supports the Trident commission's conclusion that the UK Government needs to be

“transparent about the cost to the public purse.”

A decision that commits to the spending of over £100 billion of taxpayers' money and that has major consequences for future defence contracts at the expense of conventional defence capabilities is being taken without transparency about the costs and the impacts on other areas of defence spending.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): It has been stated clearly by Angus Robertson that savings from Trident will go into conventional defence—a policy that was repeated by Alex Salmond in his speech to the SNP conference in October 2012. Does the minister agree with that?

Keith Brown: Jackie Baillie has already had the answer to that question. It is in the independence white paper, which says that we will spend £2.5 billion a year in Scotland on defence. Compare that with what we currently pay, which is £3.3 billion, even though only £1.7 billion, which is the amount from the last year for which records are available, was spent in Scotland. Therefore, we can both save on the budget and spend more on defence, which seems to be a pretty good solution for the people of Scotland.

On 8 July, the Deputy First Minister wrote to the Prime Minister calling for the true costs of Trident renewal to be made clear to the public. That includes transparency on the future UK defence projects that could be delayed, scaled back or cancelled in order to fund the replacement programme. To date, we have received no reply.

This Parliament should support the Government's motion that such critical information be made available to defence personnel, to industry and businesses, to MPs and MSPs and, most important, to the public.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Is it not a bit rich for the minister to lecture other people about financial transparency, given that when people ask the Government about the transparency of the finances for an independent Scotland, they are rebuffed every time?

Keith Brown: One can provide information for people who do not want to see or acknowledge that information. We have provided substantial information in the white paper and elsewhere on the matter. I would have thought that the UK Government's lack of transparency on renewing Trident nuclear weapons would concern Neil Findlay, but we have not heard a word from him on the issue, which is unfortunate.

The call for greater transparency on the UK's nuclear weapons programme is even more pressing when members consider that—this is another matter on which we have heard nothing from Neil Findlay—the UK Government has recently updated the UK-US mutual defence agreement, including on the transfer of nuclear weapons information, technology and material, without informing the House of Commons. In fact, that update came to light only because President Obama reported to Congress on the matter. Surely members other than those on the Government benches must be concerned about the lack of transparency.

The Scottish Government expects to be preparing for independence in 2016. A vote for independence is the only option that comes with a commitment to securing the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Scotland. It is this Government's aim to withdraw Trident from Scotland in the first term of the Scottish Parliament following independence. We believe that that is achievable and we look forward to sitting down with the UK Government to discuss the detailed timetable and to agree the arrangements. I assure the Parliament and the public that we would approach those discussions responsibly and that we would work closely with the UK Government to manage the withdrawal of Trident safely and securely.

On HMNB Clyde, the Scottish Government will maintain Faslane as an independent Scotland's main naval base and as the home to our joint forces headquarters. The military personnel numbers based there will continue at around current levels, and Faslane's conventional naval and forces HQ roles will support significant numbers of civilian personnel. We have given a commitment to work with the Westminster

Government to preserve continuity of employment for all staff during the transition.

Jackie Baillie: How many naval jobs and how many civilian jobs to support those naval jobs would be at Faslane?

Keith Brown: The crucial point is that we have said that we would retain those jobs because the number of naval and civilian jobs changes over time, as Jackie Baillie is well aware. We will retain the same number of military jobs, base the joint headquarters for our Scottish defence, and have the associated civilian jobs, at Faslane.

Under the UK Government, our armed forces personnel have been reduced to about 11,000. We intend to have 15,000 such personnel. That is an expansion of the armed forces rather than the issuing of P45s to people on the front line, as is the case now.

Some people will say that maintaining Trident at any cost is a price worth paying to protect our national security. I disagree. I support the view of former UN weapons inspector, Hans Blix, who has commented that he does not consider Britain to be more protected by Trident. He also noted—quite correctly—that other countries, including Germany and Japan, are managing well without nuclear weapons.

This Parliament should signal its opposition to the renewal of Trident nuclear weapons and commit to working with nuclear and non-nuclear states in the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

Scotland's population share of the equivalent annual costs for the Trident replacement programme equates to about £240 million a year. To put that into perspective, that is more than we spend on the concessionary bus travel scheme and on our support for the bus industry. With a lifetime cost of around £100 billion and a peak cost of around £4 billion a year, Trident renewal, which we oppose on moral, economic and strategic grounds, could be achieved only at the expense of conventional defence programmes and procurement.

The choice that is facing Scotland is clear. On 18 September, vote for independence and for the withdrawal of Trident from Scotland, or leave that decision to the UK Government and face the possibility of another half century of nuclear weapons sailing from the Gare Loch.

I move,

That the Parliament supports the speediest safe withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Scotland; opposes the renewal of Trident nuclear weapons; believes that the predicted cost of around £4 billion a year in the mid-2020s for Trident renewal is totally unjustifiable; calls on the UK Government to set out which major defence procurement projects, or other areas of public spending, will have to be cut to pay for Trident renewal; notes that only a Yes vote in

the independence referendum will guarantee the withdrawal of Trident nuclear weapons from Scotland; supports the aim of removing Trident within the first term of the Scottish Parliament following independence, and confirms its commitment to working with nuclear and non-nuclear states to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons.

14:55

Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): This afternoon's debate perhaps gives us an indication of why the nationalist cause—the independence campaign—is struggling. The nationalists focus on 5 per cent of the total defence budget and leave ignored the 95 per cent of that budget that remains. That is perhaps why the independence campaign is struggling, and it is perhaps why people are concerned about the fact that a rather restricted campaign has been running and feel that we need a more comprehensive answer from the nationalists across a range of issues. I will try to address that.

This afternoon's debate could be a big opportunity for the Government. After last night's debate, perhaps it is licking its wounds and hunting for a game changer that will resurrect its campaign for September. Given that the public have a thirst for answers, the minister and his back benchers could provide some of those answers, but so far they have been far too limited.

First, I want to tackle some of the assumptions that the nationalists make on the issue. They imply that a person is not serious about nuclear disarmament unless they support independence. I put to one side the fact that, in this chamber, we are all disarmers—some of us are multilateral disarmers and some of us are unilateral disarmers. That is because the NPT requires all signatories to it to work towards nuclear disarmament.

We must consider the fact that there are many Labour members who support unilateral nuclear disarmament, but their commitment to that cause has been questioned by the SNP. I think that that is unfair and is something that they should reconsider.

I also believe that the SNP tries to apply that approach to a whole range of issues. It says that a person is not fully committed to childcare unless they support independence. I believe firmly in expanding childcare and have shown my commitment to that in this chamber. Do SNP members question my commitment to childcare?

The SNP also questions people's commitment to Scotland. I have tremendous ambition for Scotland. I want Scotland to do more. I want us to have the best possible platform for Scots to achieve the great ambition that we have, using the great talent that we have, but I am questioned

because I do not believe in an independent Scotland.

The nationalists also argue that Scotland becoming independent would automatically result in fewer nuclear weapons in the world, would benefit the country financially and would keep us safer, including on the Clyde. Some people have been convinced by those arguments, but let us look at each of them in turn. I turn first to cost. Scotland's share of the cost of Trident is £200 million. I accept that we would no longer have to pay that. That is a small fraction of the total defence budget, but it is not insignificant—it is a reasonable sum.

However, if we compare that with the significant economic loss that would as a result be incurred in Jackie Baillie's constituency—

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): Will Willie Rennie take an intervention?

Willie Rennie: I will not, just now.

Although the Scottish Government would benefit by £200 million potentially, 8,000 jobs would be lost, because the vast bulk of the annual cost of Trident is spent within the Faslane area. That would be lost to Scotland.

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): You are making it up.

Willie Rennie: Gil Paterson says that I am making it up. I invite him to explain exactly how I am making it up.

Gil Paterson: I thank Willie Rennie for inviting me to do so.

We will replace the jobs in question with the same number of jobs; it is just that they will not involve working on nuclear weapons. It is untrue that there will be fewer jobs.

Willie Rennie: So, every penny of the £2.5 billion that is currently invested in the Trident nuclear weapon system, the vast bulk of which goes to Faslane and the Helensburgh area, will automatically be replaced—that is the commitment from the SNP Government. In an independent Scotland, we would spend £2.5 billion in that area alone. That is a new policy from the SNP, which has not been costed in the white paper. It would be very interesting to see the exact numbers.

Chic Brodie: I am not sure whether Mr Rennie is aware of this, but in 1983 the then Secretary of State for Scotland, George Younger, said that oil had been found in very exploitable quantities in the Clyde south of Arran. Indeed, a production licence—PL262—was given to BP in February 1984. Two months ago, Michael Heseltine confirmed that the MOD, for which he was secretary of state—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): And your question is, Mr Brodie?

Chic Brodie: The secretary of state had blocked all oil efforts in the Clyde. What does Mr Rennie actually support when he talks about costs, given the revenue that we had—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. Mr Rennie.

Chic Brodie: and the jobs of young people—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Brodie. That is enough.

Chic Brodie: that have been lost to Scotland?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Brodie! Sit down!

Willie Rennie: If Chic Brodie wants to rejoin the Liberal Democrats, sit on these benches and make a speech—indeed, he could even lead for the Liberal Democrats on this subject in the future—I am sure that his constituents will be interested in the proposition.

We have just heard from Gil Paterson about an extra financial commitment of £2.5 billion for the Clyde. That is a tremendous commitment, and I would like to see the costing for it.

Gil Paterson: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I must ask you not to allow Mr Rennie to put words in my mouth. We were talking about employment, not about money being spent in Helensburgh.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Paterson. That is not a point of order, as I suspect a member of your experience is well aware. However, you have made your point.

Willie Rennie: Perhaps I did not need to write a speech; my colleagues on the other benches would have helped me with it.

As I have said, we would have to weigh up the £200 million from which the Scottish Government would benefit with the 8,000 jobs that we would lose on the Clyde.

Secondly, on world peace, it is argued that the UK would have nowhere to put its nuclear weapon system and that it would somehow be forced to abandon it after Scotland had forced it from these shores. If the SNP thinks that along the very long shore of England and Wales there is no place at all to base those nuclear weapons, it is naive. The result is that we would have no fewer nuclear weapons in the world—

Members: Look behind you!

Willie Rennie: I am sure that someone is holding up the CND report that claims that apparently there is nowhere else to base these

weapons along the UK's very long coastline. Perhaps that organisation has an agenda. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can we have a bit of order, please?

Willie Rennie: Perhaps it is in favour of doing that at any price and at any cost. The reality is that there is a place for the nuclear weapon system in the rest of the UK, so such a move would not advance world peace.

The third argument is about safety on the Clyde. It has been implied that Glasgow, Greenock and Paisley are somehow under greater threat because the nuclear weapon system is at Faslane in Helensburgh. I suspect that if a nuclear bomb went off in Plymouth, Glasgow might be affected at some point and that there would be casualties in Scotland. The reality is that it has never happened and that there has never been an accident, but the SNP has tried to exaggerate the consequences. Glasgow and the west of Scotland would be no safer if we moved the nuclear weapons south of the border.

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): Will Willie Rennie give way?

Willie Rennie: I will not, just now. Some people have been convinced that if they believe in an independent Scotland they will secure a nuclear-free world.

Jim Eadie: My intervention will be a short one.

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

That is naive, and I think that those who are voting for independence on that basis have been misled. I would far rather maintain my influence over the weapons system to advance multilateral disarmament around the globe than abdicate our responsibility and refuse to take part in any discussions or contribute to the debate by creating an independent Scotland. That, for me, is far from looking to the global interest or trying to advance world peace; it is about turning in on ourselves and considering only what we regard as pure for ourselves and not what is in the interests of the wider world.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should be drawing to a close, Mr Rennie.

Willie Rennie: To those who are considering supporting independence on that basis, I say that they should reconsider. They should not listen to the people on the SNP benches; they are selling them a pig in a poke, and it is not going to work.

I move amendment S4M-10724.1, to leave out from first "supports" to end and insert:

"recognises the Liberal Democrats' commitment to reduce the UK's nuclear arms and support global

disarmament; notes that local SNP branches called for the refurbishment of Trident to be carried out at Rosyth; further notes that the removal of nuclear weapons from Scotland will not result in any fewer nuclear weapons in the world; notes that the SNP wishes Scotland to remain part of the NATO nuclear alliance; believes that the SNP's defence policy is more of a slogan than a full policy; calls on the Scottish Government to use the 42 days until the referendum to explain from where it will recruit the personnel required for a Scottish military, how the correct balance of skills would be achieved and the timescale for achieving balance in the event of independence, and further calls on the Scottish Government to be clear on what will happen to the security of Scotland in the intervening period, given that this basic information has not so far been provided."

15:05

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate and to restate, as we should, a reminder that a majority of Scotland's people and Scotland's representatives at Westminster and in the Scottish Parliament have consistently opposed current UK policy on the nuclear weapons that are based here.

Yesterday, the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on nuclear disarmament heard from Bruce Kent of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Ward Wilson from the rethinking nuclear weapons project. Bruce Kent's voice in the debate is a familiar and much-respected one. He reminded us of the history of the anti-nuclear movement in the UK and shared with us something of the hope that is felt by activists north and south of the border that Scotland can lead the way by voting yes to independence and then giving an unequivocal no to nuclear weapons.

Many members will have heard before Bruce Kent outline the moral arguments against weapons of mass destruction, principal among which, of course, is the inability of nuclear weapons to discriminate between civilian and military targets. They are capable only of the mass slaughter of innocent people.

In the past few weeks, the world has reacted with horror to the civilian deaths that have been meted out in Gaza and the indiscriminate action that has not discriminated between civilian and military targets. It should be crystal clear that any country that used nuclear weapons in any context would be a pariah state for generations to come.

In addition, there is a moral dimension to what nuclear weapons symbolise—their cultural meaning. As my favourite fictional Prime Minister, Harry Perkins, put it when announcing the dismantling of Britain's nuclear weapons:

"with this action, we shall also be dismantling the idea that our freedom somehow depends on the fear of annihilation. It is an absurd and obscene idea. We want no part of it."

I hope that we can capture the ambition to turn that fiction into reality.

Ward Wilson, on the other hand, used yesterday's meeting to outline the strategic arguments. His case, which is compelling, is that the ideology of nuclear weapons is based on myths that need to be exposed. There is the myth that nuclear weapons won the second world war. We can and should mourn the lives that were lost in such vast numbers in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but even after all this time, there remains no definitive reason to believe that either nuclear attack was the key event that led to the Japanese surrender. The Soviet Union's entry into the war precipitated the immediate political response by Japan's Supreme Council. The Japanese historian Tsuyoshi Hasegawa has stated:

"The Soviet entry into the war played a much greater role than the atomic bombs in inducing Japan to surrender because it dashed any hope that Japan could terminate the war through Moscow's mediation".

The second myth is that nuclear weapons represent a leap in decisiveness. Even at the time of their development, that was a dubious claim. The bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki certainly killed on a mass scale, but so too did the firebombing that preceded them. The firebombing of Tokyo alone killed well over 100,000 people. That was on a par with the bombing of Hiroshima.

Seen from today's perspective, that argument is even less credible. Nuclear weapons are the messiest and clumsiest of the weapons available. They are not only incapable of discriminating between civilian and military targets; they are incapable of reliable geographical targeting. To use them against a neighbour would be suicidal; even to use them against a distant state would have an incalculable impact on others nearby. At a time when military innovation is focused on precise, targeted and so-called surgical weapons, Trident and its like begin to look like an absurd relic and as convincing a piece of technology as the blunderbuss.

Thirdly, there is the myth that deterrence is safe and reliable. Nuclear weapons have shown themselves to be unable to deter states from taking illegal and unacceptable conventional action against their neighbours, as the situation in Ukraine demonstrates, despite that country's membership of NATO's partnership for peace. Beyond that, we should acknowledge the long history of near-miss incidents in which threats, accidents and even weather phenomena have been misinterpreted and could easily have led to nuclear exchanges with catastrophic consequences.

Nuclear deterrence is inherently unsafe, unstable and precarious. On the myth that nuclear

weapons have kept the peace for 60 years, can anyone seriously look at the history of the past 60 years and say that, as we were told at the time, there is a clear dividing line between the pre-nuclear age and the post-nuclear age? We can look around the world and see the proliferation of conventional weapons. We can also see the UK's record in wars, whether or not the involvement was for reasons we called justified, and the continued power of the arms industry. Nuclear technology has not kept the peace.

Finally, there is the myth that the nuclear genie cannot be put back into the bottle. The argument that nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented may be true, but that does not confer utility on a technology that has no useful purpose. There is a clear possibility and a growing momentum for a global ban on nuclear weapons, as was shown at the conference that was attended by more than 140 Governments in Mexico earlier this year.

A written constitution can achieve a ban on nuclear weapons in Scotland. Not only that, it can challenge the nonsense that a journey from unilateral disarmament to multilateral disarmament is in any way compatible with the UK's policy of unilateral rearmament. I can only imagine the Commonwealth standard of mental gymnastics required to make that link. A yes vote is not simply about moving nuclear weapons from one place to another; it is about tipping the balance in the rest of the UK as well and winning the case against the renewal of this vicious system.

I move amendment S4M-10724.2, to leave out from “, and confirms” to end and insert:

“and a constitutional ban on nuclear weapons in Scotland; confirms its commitment to working with nuclear and non-nuclear states to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons; supports a global ban on nuclear weapons, and considers that the removal of Trident from Scotland would strengthen the case against renewal of the UK Government's nuclear arsenal.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Iain Gray, who has six minutes. We are very tight for time today.

15:11

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Deterrence and disarmament is a profound and complex issue, which encompasses geopolitical calculation and moral argument, too. Beyond the absolutist position of pacifism, drawing distinctions between weapons and different modes of war is always difficult and often ambiguous. Patrick Harvie touched on this: we should note and remember that it was 69 years ago today that over 50,000 died at Hiroshima as the result of a single bomb blast. Yet we also remember this week world war 1, in which on a single day in a single battle over

50,000 men died on one side alone, victims of the most conventional of weapons.

I have never been a member of CND, but I campaigned against land mines, which kill just as indiscriminately but one person at a time. These issues are never black and white and none of this is made any simpler by the unpredictable nature of conflict. The cold war has ended but tension in Europe has not, and conflicts in the middle east seem never ending but always changing. Drones and cyber warfare pose completely new questions of defence, security and deterrence.

It is a pity, then, that we once again find ourselves debating such an issue as a tactic in the Scottish Government's pursuit of independence. It is a tactic that its members return to because—Mr Brown did this today—they think that they have been terribly clever to spot that people in the Labour Party have different views on Trident. Well, here is a surprise: it has been like that since the 50s, when Britain first had a nuclear weapon. It has been like that since Nye Bevan made his famous “naked into the conference chamber” speech in the year I was born. We are a democratic party and we tolerate debate and argument and different views. I know that that is hard for the SNP to understand, but there it is and it has moved us in the right direction.

Keith Brown: On the issue of tolerating different points of view, the member might remember that during a previous debate Michael McMahon described CND as

“the campaign for nuclear delusion.” —[*Official Report*, 20 March 2013; c 18010.]

Was that tolerant?

Iain Gray: That is Mr McMahon's view, and many of his colleagues would take a different view. That is the point that I am making. It is a difference and a debate that has taken us in the right direction over time.

Since the end of the cold war, the UK's nuclear capacity has reduced by 75 per cent. The most recent Labour Government alone reduced available warheads from 300 to 160 and got rid of aircraft-borne nuclear weapons altogether. We have not committed to the replacement of Trident, either. I personally believe that multilateralism can work, but I acknowledge the views of many of my colleagues. I know that there is a perfectly respectable moral case for unilateralism. What there is not a moral or even logical case for is moving nuclear weapons a few hundred miles south and calling that disarmament. That is not disarmament; it is redeployment.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member take an intervention?

Iain Gray: I am sorry.

That is not dismantling, which Harry Perkins did in the novel. It is dissembling. Worse still is the Government's position that Trident should be moved to England, and then Scotland should join NATO, thus positioning itself four-square behind NATO's nuclear deterrent, which would of course include the very Trident that we had just expelled.

"As far as I'm concerned, it's hypocritical to say we shouldn't have nuclear weapons and we want to belong to NATO. How dare we say that?"

Those are not my words but the words of Sandra White MSP, and she is right.

No wonder the SNP is split on this policy.

The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Roseanna Cunningham): What?

Iain Gray: No wonder the SNP is split on the policy of NATO. Kenny MacAskill is no Nye Bevan, but he it was who had to be sent into the SNP conference to plead with it not to send the SNP into the referendum campaign naked on defence. However, that NATO position is hypocritical and dishonest.

The SNP is dishonest, too, on Trident savings, where we have a different story every day. They will pay for a conventional defence force. No, they will pay for childcare. No, they will pay for youth unemployment and colleges. And that is just what Alex Salmond has told us in recent months. I have a list of his colleagues spending the same money on pensions, schools, welfare, teachers and a dozen other things. Mr Brown is laughing, but he is going to spend the money on export opportunities. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry, but that is what he said. His colleague Angus Robertson is going to spend it on more diplomatic missions. The SNP may not be able to tell us what currency we will have, but at least we know that it must be a magic currency that can be spent over and over again on different things.

The truth is that the running costs of Trident are about £160 million per annum in Scottish share, and that would barely pay for this Government's plans to cut air passenger duty.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: As you draw to a close.

Iain Gray: It would pay for only a fraction of the corporation tax windfall that the SNP has promised our big companies. It would not replace the £230 million that Faslane injects into the local economy or the 11,000 jobs that the SNP's policy places under threat there.

Disarmament is one of the great moral and political questions of the last three generations.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close, please.

To reduce it to a referendum tactic, as the motion does, is simply wrong and we will vote against the motion.

15:17

Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con): This is the third time in less than 18 months that I have spoken in this Parliament on Trident. Of course it is important, but given what is happening to our country in six weeks' time, should we not be debating other things to do with Scotland becoming independent, such as the risk and uncertainty over the currency, European Union membership, pensions, the national health service and jobs? To judge from the pasting that the First Minister took last night, those would seem to be more pressing issues.

Indeed, it seems that not everyone agrees with the Scottish Government on Trident. According to a poll, 41 per cent of people agree that, if Scotland becomes independent, Britain's nuclear weapon submarines should continue to be based here and 37 per cent want them to go elsewhere, so the Government does not even have a unanimity of position within Scotland.

As I have said before, nuclear weapons have an awesome capacity for destruction and they are expensive, but for the moment they are necessary. The SNP's position that if we banish Trident from Scotland's shores, our country will be safer and our conscience will be clear is both misconceived and completely flawed.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Annabel Goldie: No, thanks.

First, to achieve a safer world, as other speakers have said, we must use the forum of international influence and debate. We need to promote and deploy the existing non-proliferation treaty and focus the attention of the major world powers on multilateral de-escalation and disarmament.

Secondly, how credible is the argument that, by simply plucking Trident from Faslane and moving it down the coast without caring where it ends up, the world somehow becomes a safer place? That is a facile proposition, and I profoundly disagree with those who argue that removing Trident from Scotland will somehow make it a safer place.

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Joe FitzPatrick): Will the member take an intervention?

Annabel Goldie: No, thanks.

We remain safer by retaining Trident at Faslane.

Thirdly, the fundamental principles that are relevant to nuclear deterrence have not changed since the end of the cold war and are, sadly, unlikely to change in the immediate future. “Deterrence” is the key word.

It is precisely because of its destructive powers that nuclear weaponry has the capability to deter acts of aggression. That scale of deterrence is completely different from any other form. Last month, the Trident commission—an independent, cross-party commission—said that it is in the UK’s national interest to keep the Trident nuclear weapons system.

We simply cannot dismiss the possibility that a major direct nuclear threat to the UK might re-emerge. The fact is that since acquiring Trident, and its predecessor Polaris, we have had four decades of non-nuclear conflict. At present, as part of the UK, we have a strong defence capability. An independent Scotland’s defence capability would be much more limited, giving it much less clout and influence on the international stage. I genuinely believe that we all want to achieve multilateral disarmament but it cannot be negotiated from a position of weakness; it does not work that way.

Mark McDonald: Will the member give way?

Annabel Goldie: In fact, unilateral disarmament will only weaken the momentum for multilateral disarmament.

The other aspect of the debate is the consequence of independence for thousands of jobs in Scotland, many of them in the area of the west of Scotland that I represent. Those jobs are in the armed services and the many defence companies that rely heavily on contracts from the Ministry of Defence. The defence sector is a hugely important part of Scotland’s industry, employing more than 12,600 people in highly skilled, high-value jobs in areas such as design, manufacture, assembly and maintenance. Faslane sustains around 6,700 military and civilian jobs and that is projected to increase to 8,200 by 2022.

For the communities of Helensburgh and West Dunbartonshire and their local economies, precipitate removal of Trident from Faslane would have a disastrous effect. Faslane contributes £250 million to the local economy and the base indirectly supports more than 7,000 jobs in the area. If anyone wants to know how passionately people in that area feel, they should go to a public meeting on the issue. There will not be much support there for the Scottish Government’s motion.

We all aspire to a world that is free of nuclear weapons. The only way to achieve that is to work proactively and vigorously on the international stage to expand and enhance the non-proliferation

treaty. The UK has an excellent track record in that respect. Unilateralism would be an absolute gift to any rogue nation or hostile power that was developing illegal nuclear capacity.

Mark McDonald: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in her final minute.

Annabel Goldie: Let us not hide our heads in the sand; such rogue nations and hostile powers exist. At present, because of the existence of nuclear arsenals around the world, the possibility of further proliferation of nuclear weapons by rogue states and the continuing risk of worldwide instability and tension, the UK’s nuclear deterrent remains an important element of our national security.

That being said, and in line with the non-proliferation treaty, we are taking steps to reduce our nuclear arsenal. The Government is reducing the UK’s stockpile of nuclear weapons to no more than 180 warheads and a maximum of 40 per vessel. That will be complete by the mid-2020s.

As part of the UK, we are able to defend our own nation and citizens, and influence international debate. We all want a nuclear-free world, but the unilateral removal of Trident is certainly not the way to achieve it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. Before we move to the open debate, I remind members that interventions from a sedentary position are no more welcome than they have ever been.

15:23

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): I declare that I am co-president of parliamentarians for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and the Scottish representative on the global council of abolition 2000.

Members across the chamber favour nuclear disarmament, as indeed do members at Westminster, lest it be forgotten. Amongst others I have worked with are my good friends Jeremy Corbyn MP of Labour and the Liberal Democrat Baroness Sue Miller. I have worked with them and spoken to them at many international conferences overseas on achieving our joint aim of a world without nuclear weapons.

With that in mind, I believe that we should all see today as an opportunity to think about how Scotland, as the sole repository of the entire UK nuclear weapons arsenal, should look towards the removal of Trident and the timescale for that. As a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the UK has a duty to work towards ending these weapons of mass destruction. It is our duty here,

whether as unilateralists or multilateralists, to work in honest good faith to achieve that end, not just to talk about it.

That must mean not upgrading or replacing Trident, at a cost of up to £100 billion, with the intention—because it is the intention of the British Government to do so—to maintain that system for the next 40 to 50 years. That does not demonstrate good faith with the NPT. It is our duty to work towards nuclear disarmament as quickly as possible. That is because we represent not only the people of Scotland but people around the world who believe that nuclear weapons are a danger to us all.

Why not continue to keep established nuclear weapons such as Trident? One or two voices in the wilderness are crying out, “Nuclear weapons are a good thing. They’ve stopped us from having wars.” I have not noticed them stopping us from having wars—there are plenty of wars going on. They might not be nuclear wars, but they are wars. In other words, Trident has not stopped a single war; there just has not been a nuclear war.

Nuclear weapons are not a force of nature. As Patrick Harvie said, they are not a magic genie from a bottle. They are an invention of man. They do not keep us safe in perpetuity because, like all man-made equipment, they are capable of failure. Like Karl Wallenda, the greatest tight-rope walker ever, we can walk the rope, suspended in the air, day and daily for more than 60 years, but one day, as unfortunately happened to Mr Wallenda, even with great skill and knowledge our luck can run out and devastating tragedy will be the outcome.

It might be asked, “What good are nuclear weapons against cybercrime, or in the war against illegal drugs? What good are they in the battle against the criminal madness of ISIS—the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria—as it rampages across the middle east? What good are nuclear weapons against the terror threats on our own shores?” Long-term security without nuclear deterrence involves investment in international cross-border co-operation and conventional armed forces.

From major military figures such as General Sir Hugh Beach, former master general of the ordnance of the British forces; General Ramsbotham, former commander of the field army; General Bernard Norlain, former chief of the French air force; to my friends and colleagues who have worked at the sharp end of missile delivery in the Royal Navy, retired Lieutenant Commanders Feargal Dalton and Robert Green—all of those are officers who have had to see oversee nuclear weapons in the real world. All of them believe that Trident has no utility to the military. All of them would rather have fully trained and equipped forces to defend their people than a genie with a

magic wand that is supposed to cause fear in the ranks of enemies and keep us safe for ever.

Yesterday, in committee room 3, I held a meeting with guest speakers: the international lecturer and author Ward Wilson, who is in the gallery, and Bruce Kent of CND UK, who has said that he supports Scottish independence as a faster route to getting rid of Trident. It was a great meeting. It said a great deal. On top of that, I just received an email from the former mayor of Hiroshima, Tadatashi Akiba, who says that he is looking forward to a successful debate today in the Scottish Parliament, paving the way to an independent Scotland joining the 2020 vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.

15:29

Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab): The principles that apply to war of any kind are that we have an obligation to avoid war if at all possible and the use of force must be a last resort. As Patrick Harvie rightly said, the use of force must be discriminate. Civilians and civilian facilities may not be the object of direct intentional attack and care must be taken to avoid and minimise indirect harm to civilians. The use of force must be proportionate. The overall disruption must not outweigh the good to be achieved and there must be the probability of success.

Having considered those principles, I cannot arrive at any other conclusion than that the fighting of a nuclear war must be rejected because it cannot ensure non-combatant immunity, and the likely destruction and enduring radiation would violate the principle of proportionality. The real risks that are inherent in nuclear war make the probability of success impossible. In a nuclear war there are no victors, only victims.

The argument for the possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent is, for me, not an adequate strategy as a long-term basis for peace. It is a transitional strategy that is justifiable only in conjunction with the resolute determination to pursue arms control and disarmament.

We cannot make the world safer through the threat of nuclear weapons, and we can make the world safer from nuclear weapons only through mutual nuclear disarmament. That will require bilateral, multilateral and, if possible, unilateral decisions, but all done in co-operation. That is where the SNP’s position unravels beyond credulity.

Patrick Harvie: Would Mr McMahon acknowledge, simply as a matter of fact, that during this era of nuclear deterrence as a strategic concept the world has seen an increase in the number of nuclear states, not a decrease?

Michael McMahon: That is absolutely factually correct. There is no disputing that.

The end does not justify the means, but the end can and should inform the means.

Abolishing nuclear weapons is not a partisan or nationalistic issue; it is an issue of fundamental moral values that should unite people across national and ideological boundaries. However, in order to achieve nuclear disarmament, we must carefully assess every nuclear policy proposal in light of its potential to bring us closer to a world without nuclear weapons.

What we cannot do in an international debate on nuclear disarmament is use a constitutional debate that would do nothing more than move an existing nuclear facility from one side of a border to another, if we are serious about pursuing genuine nuclear disarmament throughout the world.

It is essential to translate the goal of a world without nuclear weapons from an idealistic dream or pious hope to a genuine policy objective to be achieved carefully and in the context of international dialogue.

There are valid questions about what new risks might arise as the world moves toward zero nuclear arms, and those questions deserve concrete solutions, which can be crafted only by committed international policy makers and experts.

Most world leaders, religious figures and other people of good will who support a nuclear weapons-free world are not naive about the task ahead. They know that the path will be difficult and will require determined political leadership, strong public support and the dedicated skills of many capable leaders and technical experts.

The non-nuclear aspirations of the SNP are welcome, but the contradictions between NATO membership and independent state action are incongruous. The SNP argues that an independent Scotland would have an independent defence and foreign policy that would defend Scotland's national interests. However, the reality is that, as a member of NATO, it would be impossible for a Scottish Government alone to get rid of Trident.

The SNP also speaks about the "speediest safe removal of nuclear weapons"

and argues that we could see the dismantling of nuclear weapons within two years and their removal within the first term of a post-independence Government. However, the obstacles to that would be huge, not least from within the NATO alliance itself.

Whether we approve of Trident or not, it cannot be ignored that it is an assigned weapon to NATO, but the SNP wants us to believe that a Scottish Government would be asking to join that military alliance while, at the same time, wanting to undermine a core part of that alliance's strategic strike force.

Replicating the existing facilities of Faslane and Coulport elsewhere in Britain—I agree with Willie Rennie that a new site would be found—would take at least a decade.

I do not doubt the sincerity of those in the SNP who wish Trident to be removed from our shores. I support that ambition, but I cannot support the SNP's policy or the motion.

15:34

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): Trident is the elephant in our back yard—weapons of mass destruction that will cost us around £4 billion a year by the mid-2020s. Do we want them there? Do we want secret night-time convoys of warheads driving along the M8, or through my constituency, via the M74, or through the largest centres of population in Scotland? I do not think that we do.

Just in case anyone is unsure, I point out that moving those nuclear weapons and radioactive materials around by road is far from safe, whatever propaganda Annabel Goldie wants to give us today. A freedom of information request to the MOD revealed that there had been 70 safety lapses across the UK in five and a half years. Vehicles got lost, a fuse box failed, fuel leaked, brakes overheated, alarms malfunctioned and the gun flap of a vehicle "opened inadvertently."

Members should not delude themselves: nuclear weapons are not safe. If there was to be some kind of accident—and the MOD concedes that that is possible—our Westminster defence chiefs would refer to it as "an inadvertent yield." That language tells me something about how the MOD views a potential accidental Hiroshima. I suppose that the entire population of greater Glasgow would be not only an inadvertent yield but collateral damage.

It is not about the cost either. Just as important is the moral price—no, the price of immorality, because the very presence of Trident is an affront to any concept of morality.

David Cameron does not want Trident anywhere near his voters. Neither do I. He knows very well that he has a choice to make and that that choice will cost him voters but, after a yes vote on 18 September, Mr Cameron will have his own reality to face.

Scots have already paid too big a price to have those abhorrent weapons in their back yard. According to the Westminster Scottish Affairs Committee in October 2012,

“nuclear weapons in Scotland could be disarmed within days and removed within months.”

CND thinks that it would take a couple of years to decommission the weapons fully. The Government plans to have them out of here by the first post-independence session of the Parliament.

We in Scotland—and not only yes voters—have made it very clear that we do not want Trident. In fact, 80 per cent of Scots have said that it should not be replaced. In the chamber, members have repeatedly and conclusively voiced their opposition.

On Monday, Bruce Kent, vice president of CND UK, gave his backing to a yes vote because, as he points out, it

“would lead to the removal of immoral and illegal Trident from Faslane and Scotland”

and, most likely, the rest of the UK. He added:

“It is quite clear that ... the ... Westminster parties have no intention ... of getting rid of”

Trident.

When I first heard Bruce Kent speak, I was 15 years old and he inspired me to join CND. My young son, who is 16 years old, is sitting in the public gallery listening to the debate. I do not want his son to be sitting in the public gallery at 16, listening to the same debate years from now.

Bruce Kent spoke yesterday and has lost nothing of his conviction: Trident must go. How can anybody justify having the power to wipe out half the world? The real threats to world peace come from extremist terrorists, the 9/11 attacks, the irreconcilable divide between Israel and Palestine, the many tragic civilian deaths that we have seen in Gaza, the Sunni and Shiite split in Syria or the continuing internal battles in Afghanistan. Is anyone seriously suggesting that nuclear weapons will act as a deterrent to the Taliban?

I am not pretending that aggression is not a risk against which we must equip ourselves as far as practicable. I am saying categorically that nuclear weapons are not the way to do that. The reason that most countries in the world are trying to stop nuclear proliferation is very simple: they recognise that the more weapons of mass destruction are available, the more they will proliferate. Countries that had not considered acquiring the capacity start to feel under pressure. They think that they have to acquire it because everyone else is doing so. You know what? Halliburton will do them a

great deal. That is not a good base upon which to build defence policy.

We have spent too long in enforced silence. It is time for the people of Scotland—the voices of our electorate—to say no to Trident, no to Westminster and yes to an independent Scotland where we have the freedom to make our own decisions according to our own choices and priorities.

Instead of wasting billions of pounds on Trident, let us make a positive choice for ourselves and employ another 3,300 nurses or 2,700 teachers. That is investing in the future; Trident is an investment in global murder.

15:38

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): I have forgotten to declare my membership of CND on my register of interests, so I put it on the record now. It may be helpful if, in the interests of transparency, others do so as well during the debate if they have such interests.

I also apologise to Bill Kidd for being unable to make the meeting yesterday. I intended to go but could not for other reasons.

I have been an opponent of nuclear weapons all my adult life, and my position is reflected by many people in the Labour Party and across the wider labour and trade union movement, so the fact that there are different views and opinions on nuclear weapons and Trident renewal is hardly a revelation or a secret. As Iain Gray pointed out, there have been differences in the Labour movement since the nuclear issue raised its head.

That range of opinion is further reflected across the wider political spectrum and society. People such as Labour’s former chief whip Nick Brown, Lib Dem MP Nick Harvey and former Tory MP and minister Michael Portillo, churches, trade unions and civic organisations are all coming out against Trident renewal. Such broad coalition building is important and is what organisations such as CND should be doing—they should build the broadest coalition in support of their aims, to convince people from all backgrounds through argument and debate that the case against Trident is strong and just.

It was therefore a great mistake for Scottish CND to break with consensus building by taking a position on the referendum. I think that, on reflection, it might regret that in the longer term.

Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP): I note that Mr Findlay said that he is a member of CND. I remember well the vote at the Scottish CND meeting. Mr Findlay was not there—can I ask why?

Neil Findlay: I was not there for a variety of reasons, but I know people who were there and who were disappointed by the position that CND took. Unfortunately, people cannot be at everything, as the member knows.

Let me be unequivocal.

Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Neil Findlay: No, thank you.

For ethical, financial and practical reasons, I oppose nuclear weapons and the renewal of Trident. Such weapons, which were designed with the use of some of the most fantastic and sophisticated engineering skills and ingenuity available, have only one purpose—the destruction of human life on an unprecedented scale.

Each of the current missiles has a range of up to 7,500 miles, is extremely accurate and has the destructive power of eight Hiroshima bombs. If that is just one bomb's level of destruction, an all-out nuclear war or a unilateral attack that used modern weaponry would result in death and destruction on a scale that has never been seen before. In all conscience, I cannot support a system whose only purpose is to kill my fellow human beings on such a large scale.

However, I find the motion's terms cynical and opportunist. The motion makes no attempt to build a broad parliamentary coalition against Trident replacement or to reach out and build the moral or practical case; it represents just a cynical and partisan attempt to use Trident as a referendum issue.

If a vote for separation—which is somewhat less likely now, given the First Minister's performance last night—would bring us closer to Trident removal, why did the SNP decide, after years of opposition to the idea and just when it thinks that it is about to achieve its political *raison d'être*, that it would support joining NATO, which is a first-strike nuclear alliance? Is that not an odd position to take?

Even if the nuclear fleet sailed out of the Clyde to be moored in Barrow, the Tyne or the Mersey, would that make the world a safer place? Would it mean fewer nuclear weapons in the world? Of course it would not. It would simply displace the weapons. Moving Trident a few hundred miles south would not make me sleep more easily in my bed at night or salve my conscience one bit. Trident is not an out of sight, out of mind issue for me.

We have a far better chance of getting rid of Trident if we can convince UK public opinion, the military and politicians at all levels that Trident renewal is wrong and that the UK and the world will be a safer place without Trident.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I ask you to draw to a close.

Neil Findlay: Then we should negotiate Trident away, as we will have much more negotiating power.

I will finish with a quote from the late, great Tony Benn, who opposed independence but was a lifelong peace campaigner.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Briefly, please.

Neil Findlay: Tony Benn said that, if we can find money to kill people, we can find money to help people. As always, he found a few simple and profound words to explain a complex issue.

15:44

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Today, we should show leadership and try to persuade others in the world to follow our lead and eradicate nuclear weapons not only from Scotland but from the entire planet. Many arguments have been made today, but interesting things that former pro-nuclear supporters have said about Trident replacement must be brought to the fore.

Michael Portillo, the former UK Secretary of State for Defence, said on the BBC's "This Week" on 2 November 2012 that Trident is

"completely past its sell-by date"

and

"a waste of money",

and that it is

"no deterrent for the Taliban."

Des Browne, the former Labour defence secretary, said in the *Telegraph* on 5 February 2013 that updating Trident with a like-for-like replacement

"will demonstrate to the international community that we intend to keep nuclear weapons on permanent deployment for decades while seeking to deny those weapons to everyone else. In the process, it will destroy any chance of building the broad-based international support required for a stronger non-proliferation and nuclear security regime".

I agree with both those gentlemen.

I spoke about the need to take the lead. Treaties and moves to eradicate weapons systems have always required leadership. It took leadership from some nations to establish the respective United Nations conventions on biological and chemical weapons. Iain Gray mentioned landmines; it took leadership from some nations to establish the Ottawa treaty.

Iain Gray: Does that not illustrate exactly what I was saying? The landmine treaty was agreed multilaterally. A significant number—indeed,

dozens—of nations agreed together to give up those weapons. That was multilateralism.

Kevin Stewart: No, it was not. In most respects it was unilateralism, as individual countries reached a point at which they could come together, although unfortunately some countries did not reach that stage and have still not signed up to the treaty. Individual countries got rid of their landmines before signing the treaty. That is unilateralism, and that is the way that we should go.

With regard to the comments from Neil Findlay and other members, I do not want to see nuclear weapons moved from Faslane to other parts of these islands, and I do not think that that will happen. Folk need to have a look at the evidence, some of which is gathered in John Ainslie's publication, "No place for Trident: Scottish independence and nuclear disarmament". It makes for interesting reading.

On page 12, Mr Ainslie says:

"In January 2012 the Telegraph, quoted an MoD source as saying, 'Berths would not be a problem—there are docks on the south coast that could be used without too much fuss. But there simply isn't anywhere else where we can do what we do at Coulport, and without that there is no deterrent.'"

He goes on to say:

"A former commander of Faslane poured cold water on any plans to relocate. Rear Admiral Alabaster said, 'it would be very difficult—in fact, I would almost use the word "inconceivable"—to recreate the facilities necessary to mount the strategic deterrent, without the use of Faslane and Coulport, somewhere else in the UK.'"

That is one of the reasons why, if we vote for independence and say no to nuclear weapons in Scotland, they will be eradicated completely and utterly from these islands. I hope that, after that has happened, others will see that we have taken the lead and will do likewise.

In my book, spending £100 billion on Trident at a time of austerity is plain wrong—in fact, it is evil. As I have said in the chamber before, I would put teachers before Trident, nurses before nukes and bairns before bombs. I hope that every member will agree and support the motion today.

15:49

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): As Iain Gray said, there have been different views in the Labour Party about nuclear weapons since the 1950s, and I fully respect the views of colleagues who take a different position from my own.

I have supported campaigns against Trident in the three and a half decades since it was announced in the early years of the Conservative Government of the time. However, I have never

supported Trident nimbyism and the futile distraction of moving it somewhere else.

That would not help the cause of international disarmament one little bit—any more than, for example, the movement of missiles from Belarus and Kazakhstan to Russia after the cold war had any disarmament consequences whatsoever. I argue that Trident nimbyism would actually make the situation worse, as it would strengthen the resolve of those in the rest of the United Kingdom who want to renew Trident, psychologically as well as strategically, and it would weaken the multilateral possibilities that still exist at UK level.

We have heard many examples of how thinking is changing, even within the military and political establishments. The previous speaker referred to Des Browne, the former defence secretary, but I could mention Michael Portillo, a former Conservative defence secretary who is now against Trident. Therefore, things are different now from 35 years ago. There are multilateral possibilities, but Trident nimbyism would weaken those possibilities.

Kevin Stewart: Mr Chisholm says that he supports the likes of Des Browne, but can he tell us categorically here and now what the Labour Party position will be in the run-up to the next election? His defence spokesperson at Westminster, Mr Coker, seems to be very much in favour of a Trident replacement, as are the Tories and the Liberals.

Malcolm Chisholm: I began my speech by saying that there are different views on that. The final decision will be taken in 2016.

Obviously, in general terms I am opposed to Trident, but another consideration is that if, in the event of a yes vote, the SNP sticks with the policy in an inflexible way, it will have to face the reality that there will be a heavy price to pay in the negotiations after independence. We already know that the fiscal situation will be more difficult in an independent Scotland than in the rest of the UK, but the fiscal challenges would become even greater because of the billions that it would cost to remove Trident, and we already know from the UK Government that that would be an important consideration in the negotiations.

That is why some strong voices in the peace movement do not believe that the SNP would stick with its policy. For example, Tim Duffy, who is one of the great peace campaigners in Scotland of the past few decades, in an editorial in the most recent edition of the Justice and Peace Scotland magazine, said that there were several problems with the logic of voting yes to get rid of Trident. One example that he gave was that the realpolitik of the situation would make it very tempting for the Scottish Government to accept a deal with the UK

Government. It is interesting that, in the debate with Alistair Darling last night, the First Minister was keen to mention again and again the mysterious unnamed UK minister who said that there would be a shared single currency, but the First Minister did not mention that that unnamed minister said that there would be a single currency because the UK Government would do a deal on Trident. I am not saying that that will happen, but that is the kind of thinking that would be involved because, actually, Trident is the single most important bargaining counter that the Scottish Government has.

Another problem or doubt is that the Scottish Government might well have to choose between joining NATO and getting rid of Trident.

Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): Will the member give way?

Malcolm Chisholm: I do not have time to take an intervention, but perhaps Jean Urquhart was going to say that there are lots of countries without nuclear weapons in NATO. However, there is no precedent for a country that has kicked out a nuclear deterrent becoming a member of NATO.

We know that the story for the next six weeks will be that Trident will go and the money that is released will be spent on everything. The money is only a 20th of the defence budget, but we are told that it will go on conventional defence—a lot of Keith Brown's speech was about that—while the previous speaker talked about spending it on health and education, and somebody else wanted to spend it on new jobs at Faslane. Of course, that is just a referendum ploy. Removing Trident would not solve the financial problems that an independent Scotland would face and it would not contribute to international disarmament—it is just an anti-Westminster stick and a pawn in the referendum game. As someone who has opposed Trident for three and a half decades, I strongly object to Trident being used as a pawn in the referendum game. The more that people think about the argument, the more they will see that it is not a good argument for voting yes.

15:54

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I come from Gourrock, on the Clyde, and my family still lives there, so the subject is close to my heart. I come from a family of Clyde sailors; my father and grandfather always kept modest boats, at Inverkip, Greenock and Port Glasgow. My childhood memories are of sailing to different parts of the Clyde and exploring lochs and coves in Cowal and Kintyre. I remember that such places seemed like God's country. Going to places such as Loch Long and Carrick castle was a formative experience; we got a real sense of freedom.

However, even as children we soon began to realise that this country was not our own and that that freedom was illusory. I remember sailing up Loch Long on my father's boat and being stopped by a military patrol boat and told that we could not sail to the western side of the loch because we would be too close to the Coulport base. It is clear that God's country has been polluted by a great evil.

The destructive power of nuclear weapons is almost beyond our comprehension, so it is important that we remind ourselves just how destructive they are. The bomb in Hiroshima killed 200,000 people; the bombs that are carried on the Clyde subs are eight times more powerful than that, and there are a great many of them—each sub carries up to 16 missiles, each of which carries 12 bombs. Therefore, a submarine that is based fewer than 10km from where my family and thousands of other people live carries a destructive power that is 1,500 times greater than that of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. I find it strange to hear members suggest that removing the weapons from Scotland would not make us safer.

The MOD modelled the possibility of an accident at the ship-lifting facility at Faslane and concluded that the "societal contamination" that could result is such that

"the risks are close to the tolerability criterion level".

"Tolerability criterion level" is one of those bits of military jargon, like "collateral damage". The MOD meant that lots and lots of people would be killed, but that such loss of life—from the UK MOD's point of view—would somehow be tolerable.

It is clear that the weapons have nowhere else to go. In *The Guardian* last year, Rob Edwards reported:

"The MoD has revealed that the safety arrangements for Devonport do not permit the presence of submarines carrying Trident nuclear warheads."

In a response that was provided under freedom of information rules, the MOD told *The Guardian*:

"Neither the Devonport naval base nor the Devonport dockyard ... safety case permit the berthing of an armed Vanguard class submarine".

The Guardian went on to say that the MOD

"also disclosed that its internal safety watchdog, the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator 'has not provided any advice on the feasibility of docking of an armed Vanguard class submarine in Devonport dockyard'."

The Guardian explained that that is because 166,000 people live within 5km of Devonport, compared with the 5,200 who live within 5km of Faslane.

The lives that could be lost if there was an accident at Faslane are just as precious as the

lives that could be lost in a similar accident at Devonport. Of course, we do not know what kind of accident we are talking about. Given the destructive power of the weapons, a great many more lives could be lost.

It is clear that the MOD's freedom of information response showed that the weapons cannot go to Devonport. The MOD considered alternative UK sites in 1981 and 1982 and concluded that it would be too controversial and expensive to start from scratch. It took 14 years to adapt Faslane and Coulport for Trident, and building a base from scratch would take much longer.

Therefore, removing Trident from the Clyde would remove it from the UK, whatever other members have said. That is why CND has taken the position that independence is the easiest and most achievable way of removing nuclear weapons from the UK, and that is why I have great pleasure in supporting the motion.

15:59

Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP): Today we have another opportunity to set out the case for or against Trident renewal. I suspect that the vote at 5pm will be akin to previous votes, but that does not make the debate any less important. Such a debate is important at any time, and one thing is sure: the policy decision on Trident renewal matters to many people throughout Scotland and the rest of the UK. As such, it matters in the debate on Scotland's future.

I have stated before and I state again that I disagree with the renewal of the Trident programme and with nuclear weapons. The money for the nuclear programme could be better invested in other policy areas. I genuinely believe that Trident renewal is a missed opportunity by the UK Government and that the only way that we can remove Trident from Scotland is by voting yes next month.

We are consistently told that nuclear weapons are a deterrent against some big, bad bogeyman. In the past, that was the USSR and we saw an increase in the nuclear arms race as a consequence. Nowadays, however, the threat need not come from a country; it can come from individuals or from groups that have a particular cause, and the existence of nuclear weapons in Scotland has not stopped such individuals and groups undertaking their actions. Having nuclear weapons did not prevent an attack on Glasgow airport nor an attack on public transport in London.

One of the areas of discussion in the referendum debate is the future of Faslane. Faslane will have a future. The white paper states:

"We plan that Faslane will be an independent Scotland's main conventional navy base, and will also be home to the

HQ for the navy and the Joint Forces HQ for all of Scotland's armed forces."

I am sure that we all agree that an independent Scotland requires defence capabilities and a base. That is where Faslane will come into its own. It will require to be reshaped, which will create job opportunities for conventional forces.

Jackie Baillie: When I asked Keith Brown how many naval personnel would be retained at the base, he said that it would be the same number. Yet, on page 239, the white paper states:

"These arrangements will require around 2,000 regular and at least 200 reserve personnel."

Where have the rest gone?

Stuart McMillan: I am coming to that issue right now.

The comments that people from the no campaign have made about there being thousands of job losses are disingenuous and do little to inspire confidence in politicians and the work that we are supposed to do. By all means, they should highlight legitimate concerns where they exist, but they should not pluck numbers out of thin air, claim them to be fact and pass them off as being above scrutiny. They should stop taking the electorate for fools.

At the weekend, when I was out canvassing, I spoke to a teacher who was not aware that the UK does not have a written constitution—a dubious accolade that it shares with Israel and New Zealand. She was furious and asked how any nation can act in such a manner. With independence, Scotland will have the opportunity to have a written constitution. Furthermore, we will have the opportunity to ensure that, constitutionally, we can rid Scotland of nuclear weapons. What a fantastic legacy that would be for our future generations. With independence, we can secure the future of Faslane and the jobs that are there; we can rid Scotland of nuclear weapons, which we aim to do in the first term of an independent Scottish Parliament; and we can create a new Scotland by having a written constitution, which is sorely missing at the UK level. In that constitution, we can guarantee that there will be no nuclear weapons in Scotland again. In the years to come, I will be proud to explain to my daughters that I helped to create that legacy. It is a legacy that future generations will thank us for, instead of blaming us for failing to act when we had the chance.

Independence offers us the opportunity to take responsibility and to rid ourselves of Trident, thus saving our economy billions of pounds in wasted expenditure. It is estimated that, by the mid-2020s, Trident renewal will cost the UK £4 billion per annum, which is a huge amount of wasted money. It is estimated that Trident renewal will cost up to

£100 billion at 2012 prices—what a huge waste of money. Just think of the other opportunities that could open up if we did not have nuclear weapons and nuclear submarines. We know that there is oil off the west coast of Scotland and that Westminster Governments have refused drilling licences to extract that oil. We also know that the extraction of oil requires huge investment in equipment, rigs and service vessels, not to mention workers. What kind of oil boom could we generate for Ayrshire, Inverclyde, Argyll and Bute and West Dunbartonshire?

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

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): The member is out of time, I am afraid.

Stuart McMillan: The economic case for nuclear weapons does not stack up but threatens job security, job creation and investment. I will support the Government's motion tonight.

16:04

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): I declare my membership of Scottish CND.

The Trident weapons system is the easiest way to illustrate a perversity of thought and futility of expenditure that are not unique to the UK, as the Trident nuclear system is heavily dependent on the US in many ways.

The obligation on every country—this applies no less to the minister here—is to assess the risks that a country faces and put in place mechanisms to address those risks. I commend the Jimmy Reid Foundation's report, "No Need To Be Afraid", which highlights that the risks shared by many countries relate to things such as continuity of energy supply, food, water—which is not a challenge for Scotland—and cyber attack. As many others have said, Trident and other such systems have done nothing to offset those risks.

We need human security. In 2003, the UN Commission on Human Security said:

"Human security means protecting vital freedoms. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood ... To do this, it offers two general strategies: protection and empowerment. Protection shields people from dangers ... Empowerment enables people to develop their potential and become full participants in decision making."

I like the use of the words "speediest safe withdrawal" that are in the minister's motion. I do not see that as a withdrawal from Scotland, but as a withdrawal from service. That is a rich prize to gain and a rich contribution to give the world. I also like the words that suggest collaborative working. I commend Patrick Harvie's amendment,

which enhances that aspect and brings in the constitutional element. I hope that the Government will support that call.

We occupy a small planet. I see an important role for the UN. The UN General Assembly's very first resolution, which was adopted unanimously, called for the elimination of nuclear weapons. There have been many fine words along those lines and I will quote some more of them.

"I call upon the scientific community in our country, those who gave us nuclear weapons, to turn their great talents now to the cause of mankind and world peace: to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete."

Those are very fine words indeed. However, when one knows that they were uttered by President Ronald Reagan, that perhaps takes off some of their edge.

How has the scientific community turned its attention to the cause of mankind? The cause of mankind will never be served by the creation of more, better or smarter weapons. The drone wars are a cowardly compact, with an equally flawed legal basis for waging them.

It is interesting that a US President called on scientists to turn their great talents to "world peace". In this unequal world, peace will always be more likely if we see progress for mankind, which would come with the eradication of malaria or AIDS. Indeed, that would do far more for humanity than nuclear weapons.

There is growing inequality around the globe, which could lead to conflict. Therefore, it is important that we share our resources with the developing world.

I see arms diversification as the future. I commend the reference in the Government's white paper to that issue. We know that foreign and defence policies are inextricably linked. I commend some of the actions that have happened in Scotland. This city played its part, at a time of thawing relations in the cold war, when the Edinburgh conversations, which were high-level discussions between academics and military people, contributed to making the world a better place. Talks took place in Craigellachie about the dispute in the caucuses. That is the future that I want to see for Scotland: talks not tanks; talks not Trident.

We have a glorious opportunity. I differ from the minister, in that the issue is not about defence procurement; rather, it is about having a new outlook and a new Scotland—an outward-looking Scotland that is committed to social and environmental justice. We have one world; we have one humanity. If we work together and if Neil Findlay, for example, focuses his mind on the issue, he will see that, if he is genuinely committed

to the eradication of nuclear weapons, there is but one route to go.

Neil Findlay: I hope that Mr Finnie will reflect on his emphasis on the word “genuinely”. Many people on the Labour side genuinely have that interest. He should not just assume that it is only on one side of the argument that people’s convictions are genuine. That is an insult.

John Finnie: Mr Findlay misheard what I said, because I was commending his position and saying that, given that position, we should all work together for a better cause. The likelihood is that the withdrawal of Trident will not be delivered within the present constitutional settlement, but that it would be delivered with a strong will. Bits of paper will not deliver it, but a commitment to deliver it will. I do not doubt for one second the commitment of the Scottish Government and those on the yes side to deliver that better world.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Christian Allard, who will be followed by Lewis Macdonald. Speeches must be under five minutes. *[Interruption.]*

Fiona McLeod has a point of order.

Fiona McLeod: On a point of order, Presiding Officer—it is a genuine point of order. I seek your advice. Is it possible for a member to intervene in the middle of another member’s speech when they have not been present to listen to that speech? I would appreciate your ruling on that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is entirely up to the member who is speaking whether they wish to take an intervention. That is something that they must make a judgment on.

We are now extremely short of time, so the next three members to speak will have to adjust their timings accordingly.

16:10

Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP): I am delighted to speak in the debate on the day that we mark the 69th anniversary of the first use of nuclear weapons against the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Tonight, I will join the Aberdeen and district Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament group, of which I am a member, to commemorate that event at the fishermen’s hut on the River Dee in Aberdeen. I will speak at the event as a member of the Scottish Parliament for the north-east, as a member of Scottish CND and as a member of the international group, parliamentarians for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament—PNND—which I joined just after I became a parliamentarian in May last year. Like me, Neil Findlay is a member of Scottish CND, but I am a lot more active than he is. I invite him to come along to CND debates, because he is

missed. We need to hear a voice such as his so that we can hear different views on the suggestion that, somehow, we can get rid of nuclear weapons in 50 years’ time.

As in previous years, on the beautiful banks of the Dee, speakers from a variety of political, community and faith groups will commemorate that catastrophic event and will warn the many people who will attend against the renewal of the UK’s weapon of mass destruction: Trident. I take the opportunity to call on the people of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire to join us from 8.30 pm.

One of the speakers will be the Aberdeen Mosque and Islamic Centre imam, Imam Ibrahim. When Scotland’s Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Kenny MacAskill, came to give his support to Aberdeen Mosque and Islamic Centre last month, the Aberdeen Central MSP Kevin Stewart and I heard how much Imam Ibrahim appreciated the Scottish Government’s support on Palestine. A few weeks later, I shared a platform with Imam Ibrahim, who was speaking on what is happening in Gaza today. Again, he welcomed the Scottish Government’s actions in support of Palestine. Imam Ibrahim talked of peace and how his family was trapped in Palestine. If nuclear weapons had succeeded—as they were supposed to do—in keeping the world at peace, I would not be talking about Gaza today. I really look forward to hearing what Imam Ibrahim has to say tonight.

I am also looking forward to hearing the contribution of Hilda Meers, a 90-year-old poet in the north-east who is a member of Scottish Jews for a Just Peace. She will not be able to attend tonight, but her words will resonate as some of us read a selection of her poems.

One voice that I will struggle to agree with tonight is the voice of another Labour politician telling the world that countries should disarm while voting for the UK to renew its Trident nuclear weapon system. Many other voices have parted company with that nonsense and have joined us in the campaign for an independent Scotland that is free from nuclear weapons. The people of Scotland are seeing through the same old endless rhetoric from Labour and all the other Westminster parties, which have no intention of getting rid of the UK’s nuclear weapons. I agree with Bruce Kent, who came to see us this week. He said that a yes vote in September would lead to the removal of the immoral and illegal Trident system from Faslane and Scotland.

Despite the fact that I have said in many public meetings that I and many other members, although perhaps not Mr Findlay, have attended over the past few months that a yes vote will not change a thing and that it is what we do afterwards that matters—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please draw to a close.

Christian Allard: Let me assure the chamber that one thing will change: Trident is for the dustbin and will not be renewed.

Today we commemorate what happened in Japan 69 years ago. In 40 days, our answer will be yes—yes to a nuclear weapons-free Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much. I call Lewis Macdonald, to be followed by Mark McDonald. I apologise, but I can give both of you only four minutes each.

16:15

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): In this week of all weeks, we should not make the mistake of thinking that we can address our strategic issues of defence and security in isolation from the wider world. A hundred years ago this week, the British Government of the day had to decide whether to resist Germany's conquest of Belgium, and 75 years ago next month, another British Government had to make a similar decision about whether to go to war over Germany's invasion of Poland.

In 1914 and 1939, those Governments took the tough decisions to go to war and like so many other Scottish men and women my grandfathers and my father lived with what happened in front-line service on land and sea. If this week we are serious about commemoration and learning from history, we must not abstract the question of defence from our shared experience or from the realities of the strategic choices facing our country and our friends in the 21st century.

The key driver of strategic policy since 1945 has been the unity of western European and north American countries in the north Atlantic alliance. Unlike the European Union, NATO is not an economic association; it is a military and strategic alliance, in which each member state promises to come to the aid of any other member state that is attacked by a third party.

The first question, therefore, for any candidate member of NATO is not the nuclear question, but the question whether to give the undertaking to meet armed force with armed force if the need arises. However, if the SNP's answer to that question would be yes and that it would be willing to give that commitment if it were the Government of an independent Scotland, it would also have to answer the nuclear question.

The fact is that

"As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance."

That is not a matter of opinion, it is a matter of policy, as spelled out in the strategic concept that was adopted by member states in 2010 as NATO's road map for the rest of this decade and, indeed, as spelled out in every previous strategic concept. Of course, there are other member states of NATO that do not have nuclear weapons on their territory. By definition, however, no member state of NATO rejects the deployment of nuclear weapons as a component of NATO's collective defence. The strategic concept is the agreed policy of all members of the North Atlantic Council and is by definition supported by every NATO member state.

As a result, the then members of the SNP who said in 2012 that those who voted to join NATO would not get rid of Trident were absolutely right—and they are right in that respect to this day. NATO strategy is to retain and deploy nuclear weapons; the UK is one of three nuclear-armed NATO members; and Scotland is where the UK's nuclear weapons are currently deployed. As a result, an independent Scotland whose first strategic priority was to remove those weapons would clearly be opposing the policy not just of the UK but of NATO as a whole. The idea that an independent Scotland could simultaneously expel Trident and join the Atlantic alliance is not credible from either side of the argument.

Keith Brown: Much of the member's case is built on the US and wider NATO view as he sees it that they would insist on Scotland retaining nuclear weapons. Is he aware of an article in the *International Herald Tribune* that quotes a US official as saying that the UK

"can't afford Trident, and they need to confront the choice: either they can be a nuclear power and nothing else or a real military partner"?

The US does not want us to have this.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Macdonald, you are in your final minute.

Lewis Macdonald: The minister has made a very helpful point, because the decision about the future of Britain's nuclear weapons capability after 2016 has yet to be made. That is a decision on which many people in Scotland would want to have a say as citizens of the United Kingdom. A decision by the UK to remain a nuclear-armed power would carry much the same risks for a Scotland outwith the UK as it would if we were to remain part of the union, and a UK decision not to replace Trident would have significant implications for NATO and likewise would impact on Scotland whether or not we were part of the UK.

Surely the best way to influence the future debate on nuclear weapons in Britain, in NATO and on a global scale is to stay in the UK and the Atlantic alliance and ensure that our voices are

heard and our interests considered when those decisions are made, not to walk away and leave the big strategic decisions of our century for someone else to make.

16:19

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): One day, Mr Smith, who lives in a quiet street, feels unsafe and insecure, so he decides to go out and buy himself a gun to protect himself and his family. He arrives home with the gun, knowing that it is only for protecting himself and deterring any threats that might occur. His neighbour across the street spots him arriving home with the gun and thinks to himself, "We must live in an unsafe street. I'd better go out and buy a gun."

So it is with the idea of nuclear deterrence: it is there to protect us from a threat that does not exist. Annabel Goldie said as much in her speech. It is a threat that no longer exists, but there are nuclear weapons just in case somebody out there develops a nuclear capability and chooses to target it against us.

The point about renewing the Trident nuclear capability, whatever the size of that capability, and the idea that reducing the size of a nuclear deterrent is somehow an acceptable thing to do, is that one nuclear warhead is one too many, as far as I am concerned. Reducing the size of the capability does not matter. Unless it is reduced to zero, I am not interested, frankly.

The message that renewing the Trident system sends out to states that may or may not be trying to develop nuclear weapons capability is not that we are serious about nuclear disarmament; it is that we are serious about the continuation of nuclear deterrence or lack of deterrence in the current international system. We need to get beyond the idea that we are defending ourselves by having Trident on our shores. I am not suggesting that we are necessarily making ourselves a target, but there is no defence for Trident, because Trident itself is no defence.

I understand and accept that there are jobs that are linked to the presence of Trident on the Clyde, but I have a difficulty with supporting something of the ilk of nuclear weapons on the basis that jobs are attached to them, because I believe that the amount of money that is spent on Trident would be far better spent supporting far more jobs that are deployed in other ways.

John Finnie: Will the member take an intervention?

Mark McDonald: I am sorry, but I have only four minutes. Trust me: we are on the same page on the matter anyway.

A 2007 report that was commissioned by Scottish CND and the Scottish Trades Union Congress—the Labour MSP Claudia Beamish, who was chair of Scottish Labour at the time, was among its authors—concluded that a renewal of Trident

"could place at risk up to 3,000 public service jobs. Few jobs resulting from investment in Trident replacement are likely to come to Scotland."

We are therefore likely to see risks elsewhere because of the removal of funding in order to front-finance Trident.

I do not doubt for one second the sincerity of members in their position on disarmament, but I doubt their faith that the matter would be resolved by means other than a yes vote. The Labour Party often tells us that its position on the referendum is not so much to vote no; it is to vote no and then, hopefully, vote for and elect Labour in 2015 and everything will be all right. That is a leap of faith and a leap of logic that it has to justify.

The leap of faith on Trident that has to be justified involves not just voting no and then voting Labour in 2015; it involves voting no, voting Labour in 2015 and hoping beyond hope that the prevailing voices in Labour are those of Malcolm Chisholm and Neil Findlay and not those of Jim Murphy and Jackie Baillie. That is the difficulty that the Labour Party has to reconcile. It cannot come to the table and say with any categorical assurance that a no vote would result in a no to Trident.

What we can say categorically is that, while the world sits around the table waiting for somebody to blink, a yes vote gives us the opportunity to be the first ones to do so and to lead the way internationally.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now turn to the closing speeches. I remind members that, if they have participated in the debate, they should be in the chamber for closing speeches.

16:23

Patrick Harvie: I begin by taking on the suggestion that those of us who will vote yes and support disarmament all disrespect or resent in some way the diversity of views that exist on the other side of the independence debate. People would be pretty hard pressed to find anyone in the Green Party who wants to hang on to Trident, but they will find some. A small minority of our members will vote no and are not convinced of the case for independence. We are capable of having that debate in a spirit of respect and friendship. It is important for me to say that, because that is the spirit of debate that Scotland deserves.

Even though I disagree with it, I respect the position that is taken by some in the Labour Party who recognise that only a small minority of their members or MSPs might consider voting yes but who support the principle of disarmament.

I agree with Michael McMahon that this is not a nationalistic issue; this goal should be able to unite us across the independence divide. I merely suggest to those in my party and to others who are voting no and who want disarmament that we should apply the same test of realpolitik that Malcolm Chisholm suggests that we think about in the context of post-yes negotiations.

There may well be people on the Labour benches and elsewhere who are utterly sincere—I am convinced that they are—about their values over disarmament, but we know which way the 2015 decision will go. If the UK Parliament, in any conceivable balance of power after the 2015 election, makes that decision we know that it will renew Trident—let us be honest about that reality.

The economic argument has also been made and explored. There is an economic argument for getting rid of Trident. It is not the one that I put at the top of my list most often in these debates because, frankly, I would be for scrapping the thing even if it cost us money to do so instead of saving us money. I acknowledge that we will hear of a range of priorities for how best to use the £100 billion or so that would be saved over the long term by not replacing Trident. I could write a long list of priorities myself. Personally, I regard as the icing on the cake the privilege of being able to debate what our priorities for that money would be. Let us face it: there is work that needs doing that will have social, economic and environmental benefits for our society. The opportunity to create dramatically more jobs than Trident could ever create is one that I look forward to being able to debate.

Kevin Stewart: I, too, want to be able to have that debate about priorities for where we spend that money. Does the member think that the UK Government should be open and transparent and say what will be cut to pay for the new nuclear weapon system, if it goes ahead with it?

Patrick Harvie: I suppose I would welcome that but, let us face it, that will not happen either, because we are dealing with an ideological position.

The strategic argument—any kind of strategic argument that says why possessing a nuclear weapon system is a good idea—has often been lacking. Annabel Goldie got closest to it, although she seemed to suggest that the strategic concept has not changed much since the cold war and that somehow we need nuclear weapons in order not

to have nuclear war. That seems a very bizarre argument to me.

Let us remember that the promise at the beginning of this bizarre psychological experiment of mutually assured destruction was that it would keep the peace; it was not only that it would prevent nuclear war, but that it would prevent the power blocs from attacking each other conventionally. That has monumentally failed. Of course it failed, because it is based on the dehumanising ideology of game theory. At no point has anyone proposed an actual strategic benefit from possession of a weapon that could only ever be used if the finger on the button belonged to a psychopath.

The arguments around having a written constitution have also been raised. I know that there are arguments for and against having a single, codified written constitution. Iain Gray and I have debated that previously. However, whether we look at a single constitutional document or hundreds of years of constitutional documentation, constitutions should not just be a dry approach to the mechanisms of government but convey something about how we conceive ourselves, what kind of country we are and our values and ambitions. A commitment to peace should be central in that. A written constitution should have, as John Finnie said, not only a commitment to oppose weapons of mass destruction but a commitment to build economic, social and environmental justice around the world, which is the only long-term protection for human security and the only way for our world to move beyond the obsession with war and the aggressive projection of military power.

The final point that I want to make is to colleagues in the SNP. I have not heard this argument from their leadership—I am pleased about that—but I have heard it from colleagues in the SNP, who suggest that Trident has been used by the MOD to block the exploitation of oil on the west coast. If so, that is the only useful utility that Trident ever gave us. Swapping one weapon of mass destruction for another is not the vision that I subscribe to. If anyone ever sees the abolition of Trident as an excuse for the exploitation of oil on the west coast, there will—believe me—still be protest and debate and I will still be willing to risk arrest to stop it.

16:29

Willie Rennie: As predicted, this debate has been marked by tired slogans and old songs. I suppose that it gives some confidence to the nationalist supporters in a campaign that is failing to secure the necessary momentum, but I suspect that it will fail to convince many undecided voters. I suspect that the argument will not carry much

traction on the west coast and that it will not attract much support across the country. It has been seen as a bogus argument that will not result in what has been claimed.

The debate also poses a challenge to those who believe that the SNP proposition will save money, advance world peace and keep us safer. The proposition has been exposed—forensically, I think—this afternoon by numerous members including Malcolm Chisholm, whose phrase “Trident nimbyism” was an excellent description of the SNP position. Neil Findlay, who is a passionate supporter and member of CND, quite rightly believes that he can achieve his ambition through the route of the United Kingdom. Iain Gray described the proposition as redeployment rather than disarmament and said that moving Trident south of the border—flitting it to another part of the United Kingdom—would not necessarily make the world any safer.

Iain Gray also rightly criticised the SNP for using the issue as a tactic in the referendum and claiming that, somehow, only through this route can we achieve nuclear disarmament. The passion for disarmament that has been shown by many on the Labour benches is an indication that there is a strong group of people who are campaigning relentlessly for that ambition. We know that the tactic has found favour in many other areas as well.

On the one hand, the SNP argues that we should be nuclear free while, on the other, it argues that we should be a member of NATO. However, we know that being a member of the NATO alliance and the umbrella that that provides will require agreement that nuclear weapons and nuclear submarines be allowed into Scottish waters. On the one hand, we are sending Trident down south but, on the other hand, we are allowing it back into our waters. That is an inconsistent position, as Jean Urquhart rightly highlighted. She has said that membership of NATO would be a barrier to the removal of Trident, and she is right in that one respect.

In the 1990s, in my part of the world, the SNP campaigned vigorously for the refitting and refuelling facility to be based at Rosyth, somehow managing to bring two inconsistent positions together. The SNP does not want the submarines in our waters but is quite happy for them to be refitted here in Scotland. Its policy is riddled with such inconsistencies. That is why many people are rightly sceptical.

Keith Brown: Will the member take an intervention?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

The tactic also extends to the position on savings. Iain Gray highlighted the many times that

the money saved has been spent. It has been spent over and over again on defence, childcare, youth employment and many other areas including personal care, pensions, free tuition fees, welfare, schools and teachers. Not only is it going to be spent on the defence of Scotland, it is also going to be spent on those many other areas. Many people who have been promised that extra spending will be extremely disappointed after independence to discover that it will not be possible to fulfil that promise.

We also discovered this afternoon from Gil Paterson that not only will every single penny of the Trident expenditure be spent in Faslane but there will also be cuts to other public services in order to fund the full amount—up to the 8,000 jobs. We know from Jackie Baillie that the 8,000 people who are employed in Faslane would be reduced to 2,000 because that is what the white paper says, so I assume that there must be cuts to public services in other areas. Perhaps Gil Paterson is in full support of that.

The debate also revealed a lack of interest in other areas of defence. As I said earlier, Trident accounts for only 5 per cent of the defence budget, but the other 95 per cent has been ignored this afternoon.

Let us consider the issues that need to be scrutinised. For example, the white paper says that we will have two frigates, four mine countermeasure vessels, two offshore patrol vessels, four to six patrol boats, auxiliary ships, 12 Typhoon jets, six Hercules C130J aircraft, 15,000 permanent personnel and 5,000 in reserve. All those figures are based on the assumption that every single Scottish member of the UK armed forces will agree to come back to an independent Scotland and serve in a Scottish defence force in the exact configuration that is required. Those figures are also based on the assumption that the UK Government will agree to the division of assets. What I want to hear from the minister, perhaps during his winding-up speech, is what the alternatives are if that does not come about. What is the plan B? What happens if the people do not come back and we do not get that division of assets?

The Government is more interested in the old songs and tired slogans than in the realities of a defence budget, and the sooner it understands that, the greater the chance it will have in the referendum.

16:36

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): The debate has thrown up a mix of speeches. There have been some excellent speeches from

members on both sides of the divide and some right rubbish in the middle, as usual.

Patrick Harvie talked about the history that got us to where we are today. However, in spite of the fact that he gave a good description, he failed to go right back to the start of nuclear weapons. History tells us that back in the 1940s, it became clear that a fascist regime that was waging unconditional war across Europe was developing nuclear weapons and the means by which to deliver them using missiles. The Governments of the allied nations at that time decided to come together to work on a single project to develop a nuclear weapon that would act as a counter threat to any nuclear weapon with which we were threatened.

The Manhattan project brought together the best brains that were available to us in the United States and here in Britain and, ironically, many Jewish exiles from the countries that were occupied by the fascist regime.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member give way?

Alex Johnstone: By the time the Manhattan project had succeeded in creating that weapon, the war in Europe was over. The research project in Germany had failed to deliver that weapon.

Patrick Harvie: Will Mr Johnstone give way?

Alex Johnstone: Those scientists were the first people to campaign against the use of the nuclear weapon that they had devised.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member give way?

Alex Johnstone: No, thank you.

As we reach the point that has been mentioned by some members today—the 69th anniversary of the use of that weapon on Hiroshima and Nagasaki—I have to express my regret that the decision to use them was ever made. However, unlike Patrick Harvie, I do not have the benefit of 20:20 hindsight, and the people who made those decisions made them for reasons that were available to them at the time.

Before we leave history, it should also be noted that many people in the United States and the United Kingdom were convicted of treason for deliberately leaking the secrets of those weapons to the Soviet Union and other countries, believing that they were doing so to create the balance that we have talked about today as having kept the peace for many generations.

Mark McDonald: Will the member give way?

Alex Johnstone: No, I will not give way. I am expressing a view that differs from yours and, like your leader, you seek to talk over those with whom you disagree.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Through the chair please.

Alex Johnstone: That is not an acceptable practice in politics and I will not permit those who wish to do that to intervene.

We went on to hear from Annabel Goldie about the issues around the cold war that concern us. Yes, nuclear weapons brought about the cold war and kept the peace, but they did not keep the peace in conventional terms. That is why we should always be concerned to ensure that, as we go forward, we understand what nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are about. This country has done a great deal to encourage and develop non-proliferation. Sadly, the number of nations that have acquired nuclear weapons in recent years has increased. However, this country has done its bit to ensure that they did not find that technology here.

However, nuclear disarmament is something that people understand in different ways. There are those who argue for unilateral nuclear disarmament. I will never argue for that, because I believe that unilateral nuclear disarmament, especially in a country that has done its bit to keep the peace, will not deliver our objective in the long term. In the distant past, the strategic arms limitation talks succeeded in vastly reducing the number of weapons that were being held by the major protagonists in the cold war. What we need to do now is to ensure that that multilateral approach continues.

Here in Scotland, we have to understand what the right position to take is. Those within the Scottish National Party and certain others—but not all—who support the yes campaign have made the mistake of believing that the presence and renewal of Trident are subjects on which they can gain some political credence. I believe that they are wrong. I believe that information contained within recent opinion surveys demonstrates that the people of Scotland have a far more substantial understanding of what nuclear weapons are about and how we would best dispose of them than do those who have spoken from the Government party's back benches today.

The truth is that the loss of Trident would cost Scotland jobs and it would cost Scotland credibility in the longer term. What would we get from that? The money that would be saved in an independent Scotland's budget by not having to fund the replacement of Trident would not achieve the objectives that Trident's opponents have set out. As members have described, Angus Robertson says that it will all go into the military budget. Annabelle Ewing regularly says that it will plug the gap on welfare, in spite of the fact that, if we add it up, it does not come to a quarter of what would be required. It has been spent on youth employment,

education, colleges—you name it, they will spend it. That, unfortunately, is a cynical ploy of a desperate campaign running out of steam. Not in my backyard is not a basis for a system of government and it is not a basis for a constitutional change.

16:42

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I am not naturally a cynic—[*Laughter.*] It would appear that the members of the front bench disagree. However, I suspect that much of our time in the next few weeks will be spent debating issues that are the UK Parliament's responsibility, all in an attempt to further the cause of the SNP's campaign for independence.

Might I suggest to SNP members as gently as I can that, after the First Minister's performance last night, they might want to have a debate about currency? After all, the people of Scotland deserve answers to that most fundamental of questions. That said, I fully understand and sympathise with the SNP's clear need to create a diversion. It is the oldest political tactic in the book—create a distraction and debate anything but the issue of the day, which is currency. However, the people of Scotland were not fooled last night and they will not be fooled in the future, so let us have the transparency SNP members have been calling for in this debate. Let us clear the parliamentary diary to have a debate on currency because I think that people would welcome that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: However, the debate today is about Trident.

Jackie Baillie: Let me turn to Trident, Presiding Officer. My timing is impeccable.

I have always acknowledged that there are many different views in this chamber—across parties and even within parties. However, wherever we stand—as a unilateralist or a multilateralist—we have a responsibility to consider the consequences of our actions. Members have heard me speak before about the economic impact on Faslane and Coulport, and I make no apology for doing so again.

At the moment, 11,000 jobs depend on the base. There are 6,700 employed directly at Faslane and Coulport—that is the most up-to-date figure supplied by the MOD—and there are a further 4,500 jobs in the supply chain, using standard income multipliers for local economic impact—

Patrick Harvie: Will the member give way?

Jackie Baillie: I want people to hear this because it is constantly questioned. The base provides £270 million a year spend in the local area. I have not made these figures up. They are

sourced from the EKOS survey done for Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire about the economic impact of the base.

Because of the decision of the UK Government to make Faslane the base for the entire UK submarine fleet, the number directly employed is expected to rise to 8,200 by 2022.

I am used to the cybernats hurling abuse at me on Twitter and I am used to members in the chamber trying to shout me down—the members of the front bench did it again today. However, there is no getting away from those figures. They are facts. We are talking about real people who deserve to know whether they will have jobs if Scotland becomes independent. My local community needs to know what the likely impact will be. The jobs at Faslane are not low-paid, minimum-wage jobs. The people there are highly skilled workers, on good salaries. They account for one quarter of the full-time workforce in West Dunbartonshire. Their loss would have a devastating impact on the local economy.

The SNP claimed that only 500 jobs are at stake. Then the figure doubled, to 1,000. However, the reality is that there would not be a strategic need for the base, as currently configured. Angus Robertson, the SNP's defence spokesman, consistently refused to guarantee that the number of jobs that would be retained after separation would remain the same. I will come back to Keith Brown in a minute. John Swinney slashed the budget for defence by more than a third, more than using up any notional savings from Trident.

At the same time, while ministers promise extra spending on health and education, the reality is that the budget is slashed and it is all going on conventional defence, according to Angus Robertson and according to Alex Salmond himself, in his October 2012 conference speech. The truth is that the SNP has not got a clue.

Keith Brown: Will the member give way?

Jackie Baillie: In a minute.

It is interesting that Stuart Crawford, a defence consultant to whom the SNP used to pay attention, until he jumped ship to the Liberals, has said that Faslane would sustain only 1,000 jobs in the future. So what precisely are the SNP's plans for the other 10,000? Are they simply to be thrown on the scrapheap? Do they not matter in an independent Scotland?

Keith Brown: So far, we have heard four different figures for the number of jobs at Faslane from the different parts of the better together campaign. Could she explain that? Will she acknowledge the STUC's estimate of 1,536 jobs sustained by Trident? Surely, if she is going to

peddle a scare story, she should get it right with her colleagues.

Jackie Baillie: I am not peddling a scare story; I have been consistent for 15 years about the economic impact at Faslane. The SNP seeks to cloud that because it has no answers on jobs. To give it some credit, we can now examine some of its proposals. I understand why it has not told us about them before now because, on even the most cursory inspection, they fall apart. I asked the minister how many naval jobs would be provided. I was told that it would be the same—6,700, rising to 8,200. However, page 239 of the white paper simply says 2,000. Where are the other 4,500 to 6,000? I am happy to give way to the minister if he can tell me where those jobs are.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can all sides conduct the debate through the chair, please?

Keith Brown: I will respond by saying what I said to Jackie Baillie before, which is that we would guarantee the same number of military jobs at Faslane. However, she must reconcile all the different figures that her colleagues have given. We have heard four different figures. We have heard figures of 8,000, 11,000 and 6,000—which is right?

Jackie Baillie: I asked about naval jobs. There are naval jobs at Faslane. The minister replied about military jobs. He is going to put those people on the scrapheap.

Under the SNP's proposals, we discover that Faslane is not a conventional naval base. I could have told you that. It will take 10 years to reconfigure so, from the outset, five of the 13 or so vessels that make up the Scottish navy will not be able to dock there. There will be no submarines, and experts say that we are unlikely to get any offshore protection vessels. We have two frigates. We hear that we could order another two. That is interesting. What frigates will the SNP build, because the intellectual property rights for the existing ones belong to the rest of the UK—a minor but important detail? Further, an international traffic in arms regulations licence is required from the USA to use any defence equipment—even a bolt or a screw—that originates in that country. Does the SNP even know what an ITAR licence is? Has it even made inquiries about how long that would take?

We are told that the SNP would commission the frigates in the first Parliament after independence. Two years to negotiate separation and a possible further four years before the order is placed means that, potentially, it could be six years before the shipyards get anything to build. What do they do in the meantime? Twiddle their thumbs?

I am told that it takes a year to build a frigate. I am also told that a frigate lasts for 30 to 40 years.

Even if the Scottish Government replaces every single ship in the first few years, a Scottish navy will not sustain Scottish shipbuilding.

The ministers are laughing. They should listen not only to me but to those who work in the industry: Babcock's, BAE Systems, the trade unions and the workers at Rosyth and at Faslane and on the Clyde. They are the experts and, to be frank, they think that the SNP's plans are just plain daft.

Our ambition is to rid the world of nuclear weapons—to achieve global zero. The ultimate objective is shared but the mechanism by which we go about it is certainly not shared. The SNP is simply using Trident to win a vote to separate Scotland from the United Kingdom. It is not serious.

16:50

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): The open debate was remarkably good. There were a great deal of passionate and articulate speeches, even if I did not agree with some.

Annabel Goldie asked why we were debating. As Patrick Harvie and other speakers pointed out, we have always reflected on and sought to commemorate the bombing of Hiroshima. Sometimes it is in a members' business debate and sometimes it is by a parliamentary motion, but it is appropriate that we should recollect it. Joan McAlpine made the appropriate point that, given the Rubicon that we crossed as we moved from the atomic to the nuclear age, it is more important than ever.

Iain Gray touched upon world war one, which it is appropriate to remember as we remember Hiroshima, but Christian Allard, Bill Kidd and others made the point that the possession of nuclear weapons has not stopped wars. Confrontations are going on as we speak. The world is most certainly not a safer place.

We have heard a range of views during the debate. I have marched alongside CND in support of nuclear disarmament and against Trident, so my position on the issue will come as no surprise. However, for the first time, the decision on whether we continue to be home to Trident nuclear weapons can be in Scotland's hands.

On 18 September, the people will decide whether Scotland will, again, be an independent country. There are many reasons why I expect the people of Scotland to support that proposition: for jobs and the economy, for the environment, for fairness in our public services and policies. Those are practical reasons that will improve everyday lives, and there will be practical benefits to

Trident's withdrawal, such as the reduction of Scotland's nuclear footprint and the freeing up of the millions of pounds of Scottish taxpayers' money that are spent on its upkeep.

However, the question on nuclear weapons is perhaps most closely tied to our vision of the kind of Scotland that we want to be: a responsible and a peaceful Scotland that can take its rightful place in the world without the threat of nuclear weapons. Everyone around the chamber seeks that.

That is the context in which the Scottish Government will secure the withdrawal of Trident from an independent Scotland. We will also support a constitutional ban on the basing of nuclear weapons in Scotland to secure that withdrawal for future generations, as many speakers—including Christina McKelvie and Stuart McMillan—made clear.

That stands in stark contrast to the position of the three main parties in Westminster. They all support the replacement of Trident nuclear weapons—weapons that the UK Government has no intention of relocating away from the Clyde.

On 20 March 2013, the Parliament voted in opposition to Trident. The STUC, Scotland's churches and others have also supported that call. Most importantly of all, polls regularly show that majority public opinion in Scotland is opposed to nuclear weapons and spending on Trident missiles. Nonetheless, we have heard that the UK Government stands ready to confirm, in 2016, an investment decision that plans for nuclear weapons to remain in Scotland for the next half century—another 50 years.

One thing is clear: independence is the only option to protect current and future generations from the prospect of nuclear weapons continuing to be based in Scotland against the will of the Parliament and the people whom we represent.

There are three arguments. The first is the economic argument. We have heard about the cost, at 2012 prices, of replacing Trident. The lifetime costs would be about £100 billion, which is the equivalent, every year, of spending 9 per cent of the MOD's current budget on nuclear weapons. That is not what the military seeks. The annual costs would peak at about £4 billion a year by the mid-2020s, and Scotland's population share of the equivalent annual outlay would be about £240 million per annum.

Renewing Trident would bring huge uncertainty for future conventional defence procurement, but to renew it when 1 million people in Scotland and many more across the UK are living in poverty is doubly wrong. The Scottish Government believes that it is wrong for the UK Government to commit to spending £100 billion on nuclear weapons at the expense of its conventional defence

capabilities and while it continues to slash the social budgets on which those in greatest need rely day and daily.

There is a strategic and military argument. Some suggest that nuclear weapons are essential to our national security, whatever the cost. I do not accept that. We have heard that the presence of nuclear weapons has not prevented conflicts between nuclear and non-nuclear states. It could be argued that their possession by a select few could encourage others to acquire them, as we have seen.

Ultimately, I can conceive of no scenario that justifies the use of Trident nuclear weapons. As many other members have made clear, the consequences would be catastrophic.

Nuclear weapons present no deterrent to the threats that we face today or to those that we will face tomorrow. It is time for the UK and other nuclear-weapon states to fully embrace the NPT's principles and to work towards the abolition of nuclear weapons.

We make the argument not just for economic and military reasons but on a moral basis. We must not forget that these are weapons of mass destruction—that rang out around the chamber. Their impacts are indiscriminate and devastating and their use brings unspeakable humanitarian suffering and widespread environmental damage. My view is therefore simple—there should be no place in Scotland or any state for nuclear weapons.

Exactly 69 years ago today, on 6 August 1945, a bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. That is one of the reasons why our debate is taking place today. Three days later, Nagasaki experienced the same fate. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed in horrific circumstances and the impacts remain visible to this day, as we heard in Bill Kidd's narration from the representatives of that community.

It is truly disturbing to reflect on the scale of suffering and devastation that nuclear weapons can bring. Above all else, to avoid the use of such weapons in the future—whether by accident or by design—we must commit ourselves to ridding the world of their presence. We must do that through words and through deeds.

Only with independence can we secure Trident's withdrawal from Scotland, and only with independence can we, through our written constitution, prohibit the basing of nuclear weapons on our territory. Only with independence can Scotland take its full place in supporting the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

The decision is in the hands of the people of Scotland. I therefore call on the Scottish

Parliament to support the motion and to send a clear message of our commitment to the withdrawal of Trident nuclear weapons and the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. This involves an economic argument, a strategic argument and—most important of all—a moral argument. I have pleasure in supporting the motion that my colleague Keith Brown moved.

Business Motion

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-10729, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 12 August 2014

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Economic Opportunities of Independence

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 13 August 2014

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth

followed by Ministerial Statement: Working Together, Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Welfare

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 14 August 2014

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scotland's Festivals, Festival 2014 and Culture 2014

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 19 August 2014

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Revenue Scotland
 and Tax Powers Bill
followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Disabled Persons'
 Parking Badges (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 6.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 20 August 2014

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
 Justice and the Law Officers;
 Rural Affairs and the Environment
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 21 August 2014

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are three questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, in relation to today's debate, if the amendment in the name of Willie Rennie is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Patrick Harvie falls.

The first question is, that amendment S4M-10724.1, in the name of Willie Rennie, which seeks to amend motion S4M-10724, in the name of Keith Brown, on Trident, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)

Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)

Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 17, Against 68, Abstentions 29.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-10724.2, in the name of Patrick Harvie, which seeks to amend motion S4M-10724, in the name of Keith Brown, on Trident, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)

McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the vote is:
 For 68, Against 47, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-10724, in the name of Keith Brown, on Trident, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 68, Against 47, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament supports the speediest safe withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Scotland; opposes the renewal of Trident nuclear weapons; believes that the predicted cost of around £4 billion a year in the mid-2020s for Trident renewal is totally unjustifiable; calls on the UK Government to set out which major defence procurement

projects, or other areas of public spending, will have to be cut to pay for Trident renewal; notes that only a Yes vote in the independence referendum will guarantee the withdrawal of Trident nuclear weapons from Scotland; supports the aim of removing Trident within the first term of the Scottish Parliament following independence, and a constitutional ban on nuclear weapons in Scotland; confirms its commitment to working with nuclear and non-nuclear states to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons; supports a global ban on nuclear weapons, and considers that the removal of Trident from Scotland would strengthen the case against renewal of the UK Government's nuclear arsenal.

Persecuted Christians

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S4M-10093, in the name of Dave Thompson, on highlighting the plight of persecuted Christians. The debate will be concluded without any questions being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament condemns the escalating persecution of Christians in certain countries; further condemns any form of religious persecution against all faiths and none; recognises that there is very little such persecution in Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch; supports those people and organisations that work toward removing religious intolerance from society; notes calls for the matter to be highlighted across Scotland and for concerns to be raised about the discrimination of minorities across the world, and understands that the Scottish Government will raise these issues wherever it can and that, as a good global citizen, Scotland will support the right to religious freedom and assist where possible in ending any oppression of religious minorities.

17:05

Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): As a Christian, it pleases me greatly that the motion has achieved cross-party support and that it can be debated today. It also reassures me as a person that, regardless of religious persuasion or party affiliation, the Parliament has a common bond that unites us all. That bond is a desire that Scotland be seen as the fair-minded country that we are—free from religious, racial and other intolerances. I want our country to be recognised as one that will stand up to prejudice wherever it rears its head, whether at home or abroad.

I recognise that, as a Parliament, we are all pulling together in the same direction, which fills me with an enormous sense of satisfaction. However, it is all too easy to indulge ourselves with words of fairness; it is harder to do something about prejudice in the world. The Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office made a telling point in its briefing ahead of the debate. It said:

"The churches in Scotland are aware that Christianity has been a source of persecution in times gone by and it is in acknowledgement of this that we are committed to acting and praying for peace around the world."

The SCPO went on to say that

"Although many high profile examples in the news today speak of Christians facing discrimination in predominantly Muslim societies, we do not see Islam as a threat or a problem ... and last year's Assembly of the Conference of European Churches expressed solidarity with Christians and Muslims facing violence in North Africa and the Middle East—calling them 'sisters and brothers'."

On 15 May in Sudan, Meriam Yehya Ibrahim, 26 years old and eight months pregnant, was

sentenced to death by hanging for apostasy, and to 100 lashes for adultery. Her crime was that she was unwilling to renounce her Christian faith. It is great news that, after a period of intense pressure on the Sudan minister of justice by Amnesty International, and general denunciation of Ibrahim's detention by countries around the world, she has been released. That was a very serious case in which persecution on religious grounds was all too clear, and it should never have happened.

It is not just in Sudan that there are examples of Christians being persecuted. North Korea has become one of the most difficult places on earth for Christians to live. Christians are classified as "hostile", and face arrest, detention and torture, or even public execution. There is a system of labour camps, including the renowned prison number 15, which is thought to house at least 6,000 Christians. The oppression of Christians there is continuing to grow.

In Iraq, there are terrifying reports that Christians are being targeted in Mosul by Isis militants and that many Christians are fleeing the region. The fundamentalists are giving Christians the grim choice of converting to Islam, paying a non-Muslim tax or facing death. In parts of the middle east including Saudi Arabia and Iran, Christian churches are outlawed, with Christians being persecuted and even condemned to death.

However, that type of scenario is not reserved solely for the middle east. In China, the Government has been ordering the demolition of Christian churches and there are reports that Christians who resist demolitions have been beaten, which has resulted in many people being hospitalised. As if that were not bad enough, in May this year a campaign was started to outlaw Christian church gatherings in homes and private dwellings.

This year alone in Nigeria, according to the advocacy group Jubilee Campaign, Islamist extremists Boko Haram and others have killed thousands of Christians for their faith.

There are numerous examples of Christians around the globe being persecuted and killed for their beliefs. What can we do? Well, Christians live out what they believe about God. We see in Proverbs that a Christian should be active in standing up for what is right, in rescuing those who are perishing, and in defending those who are poor and in need. Proverbs, chapter 31, verses 8 to 9 says:

"Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy".

For the Christian, apathy and abdication are to be replaced by the active pursuit of justice.

According to recent census results, more than half of Scotland's population identifies as Christian. A significant number of people in my constituency—Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch—hold their religion dear. We are fortunate in being able to practise our faith without fear of retribution, and for that we should thank God.

As convener of the Christians for independence group, I want a Scotland that condemns the persecution of people who express their religion, whether it happens at home or abroad. I want a Scotland that values people of faith and which unites, rather than divides, along religious lines; a Scotland that is welcoming to all; a Scotland that is international in outlook; and—this is important—a Scotland that enshrines in its constitution the right to have and express faith and the right to have no faith.

More than that, I want an outward-looking Scotland that will provide a safe haven for people who flee religious and other forms of persecution. I hope that that will be the mark of Scotland as a good global citizen.

I look forward to hearing the minister's response.

17:12

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I thank Dave Thompson for raising this important subject.

We cannot concentrate on all the problems of the world all the time. One day there is a natural disaster, but that gets pushed out of the media by fighting in Iraq, which in turn gets pushed out by the crisis in Israel and Palestine. The media, the public and members of the Parliament tend to get caught up in the latest new story.

This afternoon, we consider the plight of persecuted Christians—not in one specific place, or at one specific time, but in a range of places around the world. An organisation with which I have contact and which focuses on the subject is Open Doors. It produces annually a list of the 50 worst countries in the world, under the categories "Absolute persecution", "Extreme persecution", "Severe persecution" and "Moderate persecution". Aid to the Church in Need does a similar exercise.

Although in several cases the persecution comes from Islamic extremists, the worst country for the past several years has been North Korea, as Dave Thompson said. It is number 1 on the Open Doors list and it is the only country in the category, "Absolute persecution". Open Doors tells us that in North Korea some 50,000 to 70,000 Christians—close to a quarter of the Christian population in the country—live in concentration camps. Being caught with a Bible is grounds for

execution or lifelong imprisonment, and parents normally cannot tell their children that they are believers, for fear that the children will innocently say something outside the family home.

The Barnabas Fund said in its briefing that Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world, with the second-largest persecuted group being Muslims. It could be argued that Christians are the most persecuted group of any kind in the world.

Today is an appropriate day for us to be discussing all this because Aid to the Church in Need tells us in one of its press releases that 6 August is the feast of Transfiguration for the Eastern Orthodox Church, which has been linked to a call for prayer today for peace in Iraq. In 2003, there were some 60,000 Christians in Mosul, but that figure is now down to almost none. For the first time in 1,600 years, no mass or Christian service is being held in that city. In Iraq as a whole, the 1987 census showed that there were 1.4 million Christians in the country, equating to 8 per cent of the population, but the figure is now down to 300,000.

I want to make clear a couple of things that I am not asking for. First, I do not want to return to western imperialism, with the richer, white liberal countries telling the others what to do. We need to respect each country that we work with, and I fully support the tone of the motion, which uses words such as "supports", "work toward", "concerns to be raised" and "assist". Apart from anything else, Christianity is not a western religion—it comes from the middle east and has probably suffered from being linked to the west.

Secondly, I am not asking for aid to be linked to improving the lot of Christians. Part of Jesus's teaching was that we should love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us. However, we should raise the issue with governments that we work with and, as far as possible, we should ensure that our aid is targeted at those who are in the greatest need, which may well mean working with third sector organisations rather than with the governments themselves.

A lot of what I have said relates to long-standing Christian communities such as those in Iraq, where even people just from a Christian background are being persecuted. However, in many countries, the strongest attacks are often against those who have chosen to change their religion to the Christian faith, which can follow from the concept that one state has one faith. That used to be the thinking here in Europe as well, but a fundamental belief of Christians is that each individual has the ability and responsibility to follow the way of their choosing. Many people of a more liberal or secular persuasion would agree with that fundamental concept of individual choice.

Therefore, if I have an absolute bottom line to ask for today it is that each individual in this country and in every other country have the right to follow the religion of their choosing—or none—and that that be set out in a written constitution, whether for Scotland or for the UK.

17:17

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): At the beginning of July, Pope Francis celebrated mass in Rome to commemorate the early martyrs of the church who were persecuted in the first century AD during Emperor Nero's reign. During his homily, the holy father reflected on the fact that there are more Christian martyrs today than there were in the first centuries of Christianity. We, too, should reflect on that. In a way, that is what we doing in the debate tonight, so I congratulate Dave Thompson on securing the debate and allowing us to do exactly that.

If Pope Francis is right—and the evidence suggests that he is—the persecution of Christians must be one of the least remarked upon cases of human rights abuse in our world. It is one that is seldom discussed. On our televisions, we see thousands of Christians flee Syria, and in Egypt the plight of Coptic Christians is increasingly worrying. The irony is that the Ottoman empire, which covered most of the middle east in times gone by, was a multicultural area that saw Christians, Shias, Sunnis, Jews, Alawites and Druse people all living cheek by jowl, mostly peacefully.

It is estimated that some 3,000 evangelical and Pentecostal Ethiopians are imprisoned in their homeland because of their religion. As we have heard, in North Korea, the Government executes and tortures Christians, and in Burma Rohingya Muslims as well as Christians are abused on a regular basis. The blasphemy laws that have been introduced in Pakistan leave Christians open to charges that are unjustified, and we must not forget the bombing of the church in Peshawar that killed 80 people and injured many more.

The reasons why the persecution occurs will vary from country to country, from region to region and from situation to situation. It may happen because of religious intolerance or for any one of a number of other reasons, but whatever the reason it can never be right to persecute someone for their faith, no matter what that faith happens to be.

Whatever the rationale, that is never acceptable and it must be challenged wherever it occurs by people of faith and people of no faith. In doing so, we do not support one faith over another; rather, we stand up for all people and their right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion and

their right to worship, to teach and to observe their religion in the way of their choosing. That principle is laid out for us in article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Those of us in the chamber may not all be Christians or share the same faith, and we will come from different denominations. However, we all share respect for our fellow human beings and we try to uphold the human rights of our fellow citizens in the UK and those in other countries. Therefore, perhaps it behoves us, as politicians of all parties, to speak out more because where Christians are persecuted the right to religious freedom for everyone is in jeopardy.

17:20

Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP): It can be quite easy for the ordinary man or woman in the ordinary Scottish street to find the idea of the persecution of Christians surprising if they are not familiar with the arguments that we have heard because, sadly, those arguments are not high profile.

We live in a nation where Christianity has long been the pre-eminent faith. There are places where even today—I find this sad, too—a person's denomination may lead to intimidation or bigotry. However, the idea that Christians could be driven from churches or forbidden from gathering or that the Bible could be banned seems alien to us.

We live in a society that takes its holidays at Christmas and easter, which are Christian festivals, and our streets, towns and other places bear names of religious origin and significance—as do many people. Even our blasphemies are religious: it is said that every atheist is a Christian when they stub their toe.

Scotland's 15 centuries of Christian heritage are as much a part of our national story as our political history, our varied languages, our geography and our climate, which have all done so much to shape the modern Scot. All that occurs in other lands, too.

I am one of the people who have been mentioned who do not profess the Christian faith. However, I find much in the story of Jesus that is recounted in the Bible fascinating, compelling and inspiring: the description and significance of humble beginnings; the teachings on poverty, injustice and compassion; the willingness to accept and sit down with the outcasts and the excluded; and the inner turmoil of the choices faced in the wilderness and the garden of Gethsemane.

I find the stories and teachings of many other great figures from other faiths and histories inspirational, too. Therefore, it troubles me—this

should trouble us all—that there have been societies, whether contemporary or historical, where holding any faith has been the subject of intimidation and ostracism and seen as heretical and criminal, leading all the way even to outright state persecution.

There is an elephant in the room, to which Patricia Ferguson referred. Some small “I” liberals find it genuinely difficult to rally to the cause of those around the world who are persecuted on the grounds of their religious beliefs as opposed their secular political views. That particularly applies to Christians.

Some Christians, such as the occupants of the white house, rank among the most powerful people in the world, but many do not. Meriam Yehya Ibrahim, the pregnant woman who has been referred to, was not powerful, nor was Sawan Masih, a Christian road sweeper from Lahore, and neither were the Coptic Christians who have been targeted in widespread attacks.

Each of those cases has been highlighted by Amnesty International and other organisations. I congratulate Amnesty on its willingness to highlight human rights abuses and the persecution of people on the grounds of religion, whatever that religion may be.

We all have a right to hold our beliefs, and we also have a right to express them. Those who feel the passion of their convictions will want to evangelise and spread their message—they always have—but they have an obligation to do so by persuasion and inspiration, not by coercion.

In too many countries around the world, those who disagree with Christianity have moved from the tools of preaching to the weapons of persecution. I have a great fear of what Governments can do when they are motivated by the dislike of those who hold other views, and of states that say that one must fear and hate that which is different and which use their powers and laws to turn neighbours against one another.

Mark chapter 12, verse 31 gives a very good message on that:

“we should love our neighbour, and desire for them all those good things both for the body and for the soul that we desire for ourselves.”

We do not have to be Christian to believe in that sentiment or to support it.

I whole-heartedly endorse the motion and look forward to a day when, all around the world, people have the right to believe as they wish and to observe the responsibility to respect the right of others to believe differently or not at all.

17:25

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I commend Dave Thompson for his motion, which I was happy to sign, and I congratulate him on securing this debate on a very important subject. I could not help smiling at the reference in his motion to the fact that

“there is very little ... persecution in Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch”,

which probably says more about the nonsensical parliamentary rules on submitting motions than it does about the reality of the situation.

It is true to say that, as a religion, Christianity is growing faster today than at any time in its 2,000-year history. It is also true to say, as Patricia Ferguson pointed out, that Christianity has never been more persecuted at any time in its 2,000-year history. I think that those two facts are probably linked as cause and effect, because Christianity is never stronger than when it is persecuted. The Christian faith never grows faster than when it is subject to persecution.

Just last month, the Vatican suggested that, in the current year, across the world 100,000 Christians will die for their faith. That is a staggering statistic and one that we hear too little about in this country. I am particularly grateful that Dave Thompson has given the Parliament the opportunity to highlight that important issue.

About 31 per cent of the world’s population are Christians, and 80 per cent of all acts of religious discrimination are directed against Christians. Statistically, that makes Christianity the most persecuted religion in the world. Given that the Commonwealth games closed earlier this week, I highlight the fact that 10 of the top 50 countries in which Christians are most persecuted are Commonwealth countries: the Maldives, Pakistan, Nigeria, Brunei, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Kenya, Bangladesh and Tanzania.

John Mason and others mentioned the horrendous situation that exists in Iraq and Syria with the formation of the new Islamic State. Human Rights Watch has said that the IS

“seems intent on wiping out all traces of minority groups from areas it now controls in Iraq. No matter how hard its leaders and fighters try to justify these heinous acts as religious devotion, they amount to nothing less than a reign of terror.”

If anyone wants an indication of what that reign of terror feels like on the ground, I commend to them the regular dispatches from the chaplain of St George’s, Baghdad, Canon Andrew White. In the *Church Times* the other day, he was reported as saying:

“things are desperate; our people are disappearing ... Are we seeing the end of Christianity? We are committed,

come what may. We will keep going to the end, but it looks as though the end could be very near.”

He added that Iraqi Christians were

“in grave danger. There are literally Christians living in the desert and on the street. They have nowhere to go.”

Even more chillingly, just the other day he reported that a family of eight had been found in their home. Lying in a pool of blood with an open Bible beside them, they had been shot through their faces because they would not renounce their Christian faith. Those are horrific pictures, which are almost reminiscent of what happened in Roman times.

What can be done? We have an opportunity to use the avenues that are open to us to actively promote human rights. We have the opportunity to use the moneys that the Scottish Government has for foreign aid. The UK has a substantial foreign aid budget—we are the second-largest donor of foreign aid—and we can use that to promote our message about spreading freedom and human rights around the world. The UK has already given £5 million in humanitarian aid to Iraq and more can be done.

It is also a case of simply showing solidarity. Christians in other countries need our prayers, and they need to know that we are thinking of them and praying for them. I think that the most important thing that we can do is highlight their plight, which is why I am particularly grateful that Dave Thompson’s motion allows us to do that.

17:29

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I, too, congratulate my colleague Dave Thompson on securing valuable time to debate this important issue.

Some years ago, I lodged a motion that criticised the western-backed Karzai regime in Afghanistan for imprisoning and allegedly torturing and threatening to hang disabled Red Cross aid worker and physiotherapist Said Musa for converting from Islam to Christianity, the increasing intolerance toward and ill treatment of Christians in Afghanistan and the regime’s lethal approach to apostasy. That would be shameful at any time, but it is even more so given that the Afghan regime has for years now relied on troops from western nations to preserve its security.

More recently, we had in Sudan the case of Dr Meriam Yehya Ibrahim Ishag, which Dave Thompson has already outlined for the chamber and which made headlines across the world. It highlights the individual plight of many Christians in many countries. According to Open Doors International, the world’s largest organisation

reaching out to persecuted Christians in the most high-risk places,

“Christian Persecution is any hostility, experienced from the world, as a result of one’s identification with Christ. From verbal harassment to hostile ... attitudes and actions,”

Christians in some countries can

“pay a heavy price for their faith.”

Brutal

“physical torture, confinement, isolation, rape, ... slavery, discrimination in education and in employment, and even death.”

In the middle east, 3 million Armenians, Assyrians and Pontic Greeks were murdered in a series of massacres from the 1890s to the mid-1920s in the Ottoman Empire and its successor states. Indeed, up to half of the world’s Armenian and Assyrian populations were exterminated in genocides that have still not been recognised by some of those successor states. The Assyrians had converted to Christianity in the first century AD and, like many nations, survived the vicissitudes of history in an area that was frequently fought over by differing empires and faiths. They usually lived in harmony with neighbouring nations, faiths and cultures, but now they face an existential threat.

Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq by what were perceived as Christian powers, the peaceful Assyrian population has suffered such persecution that more than 90 per cent have fled their homeland. John Mason has already pointed out that, in Iraq, a community of 1.5 million Christians has withered to perhaps a third of a million or fewer.

Only last month, the leadership of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq in Mosul issued a decree that all Christians in the area of its control must leave, pay a special tax of \$470 per family, convert to Islam or die. Many took refuge in nearby Kurdish-controlled regions of Iraq, and Christian homes have been painted with the Arabic letter N for “Nassarah”—an Arabic word for Nazarene or Christian—and a declaration that they are the property of the Islamic State. On 18 July, the jihadists seemed to change their minds and announced that all Christians would need to leave or be killed, and most of those who left had their valuable possessions stolen. According to Patriarch Louis Sako, there are no Christians in Mosul for the first time in two millennia. Moreover, in Syria, where the civil war continues to rage, the ancient Aramaic community of Maaloula has seen its Christian community attacked.

As other members have pointed out, the rate of Christian persecution is continuing to rise, and Christians in almost every country in the middle east and in north-west Africa and 23 countries in north-east Africa and south-east Asia are suffering

from everything from discrimination to severe persecution. In some countries, Government policy or practice even prevents Christians from obtaining Bibles or other Christian literature. This sort of thing is happening from Belarus to Burma, Algeria to Azerbaijan and from Syria to Saudi Arabia and Sudan, and the fact that some nations that persecute Christians—Commonwealth countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh or countries such as Saudi Arabia that are called “friends of the west”—are ostensibly allies makes things worse and adds to the sense of helplessness for Christians in those countries.

In an address to the United Nations Human Rights Council, Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations in Geneva, stated:

“Credible research has reached the shocking conclusion that ... more than 100,000 Christians are violently killed ... every year.”

That figure has already been mentioned this afternoon, but I want to repeat it.

It was only 20 years ago that Muslims in Europe and Bosnia were being persecuted, and we also know about interdenominational strife in Christian nations, but in terms of scale the persecution of Christianity is the biggest problem faced by any religious group in the world. I agree with colleagues that we need to raise the issue of human rights and freedom, have dialogue and ensure that there is tolerance in our own communities. We must fight against everything from church burnings to discrimination and, as has been said, we need to show solidarity with Christians around the world who are suffering from persecution.

17:35

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I, too, extend my congratulations to Dave Thompson on securing the debate.

The European convention on human rights says:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.”

We are used to people having a pop at the European convention on human rights, particularly in the media, but in this instance, it is a great pity that that article does not apply beyond Europe to other societies in the world.

Other members have highlighted the plight of Meriam Ibrahim, the Sudanese mother who was jailed while she was pregnant and had to live with the expectation of being hanged once her baby

was born. The focus on her eight-month ordeal personalised a global issue that affects millions of people. As we know, her crime was that she had married a Christian and she was accused by the authorities in Sudan of apostasy or renouncing her faith even though she had never been Muslim in the first place. Although we can rejoice that Meriam and her children are now safe, that is not the case for people in millions of less well-known cases around the world. Members have highlighted a number of cases, including the 3,000 Christians who fled Mosul after the fatwa, and other societies such as North Korea.

It has been asked on a number of occasions why more attention is not paid to those atrocities, and it has been suggested that those of us from a Christian background might want to reflect on the fact that, despite non-violence being at the heart of true Christianity, for much of the past two millennia Christianity has been the dominant religion of some of the world’s most powerful empires, and the leaders of those empires have misused it in order to persecute other people. We have only to think about the crusades, the Spanish inquisition or, indeed, the inter-Christian sectarian violence and wars that have resulted in many deaths over the centuries in Europe and which we are, sadly, familiar with in these islands. Perhaps that is the reason why we have not paid more attention to what is happening to Christians now. However, in a sense, because we have come on that journey, that should make us more sensitive to the persecution of people for their religious beliefs.

According to the International Society for Human Rights, which is a secular group with members in 38 states worldwide, 80 per cent of all acts of religious discrimination in the world are directed against Christians. The Pew Research Center has said that hostility to religion was at its highest in 2012, when Christians in 139 countries faced some sort of discrimination. That accounts for three quarters of the world’s nations, which is quite a staggering thought.

In anticipation of this debate, I received letters from constituents who were particularly concerned about the plight of persecuted Christians in Pakistan. I would like to take the opportunity to speak about that in more detail.

Although the Christian population in Pakistan is barely 3 million—compared with 180 million Muslims—Christians have had a considerable impact on Pakistani society, particularly in the field of education. Many of Pakistan’s most prominent leaders, including the current Prime Minister and the assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, went to Christian schools. Under Pakistan’s constitution, Christians were guaranteed equal rights, but the recent increased targeting of Christians in Pakistan should be an

issue of great concern to the international community.

While I was researching for this speech, I encountered some horror stories about the scale of the violence that has been directed towards those people. Militant groups are frequently the culprits in attacks on Christians, and it seems that a general anger against the United States' foreign policy has caused a large number of people to wrongly target Christians, whom they associate with that foreign policy.

Blasphemy laws are often used as a tool of oppression. For example, in 2012, an 11-year-old Christian girl was arrested after being accused of burning pages of the Qur'an. In Peshawar, 78 people were killed and 130 were wounded in a fatal attack on a church.

I could list many other instances, with which we will be familiar or unfamiliar. However, I repeat my colleagues' appeal for tolerance throughout the world for people whatever their religious background. I look forward to hearing the minister make clear the Scottish Government's abhorrence of all persecution on religious grounds, as it has done on previous occasions.

17:40

The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Roseanna Cunningham): I add my congratulations to Dave Thompson on securing this members' business debate. It comes at a time when I have personally been experiencing increasing frustration with the apparent complete lack of interest anywhere within the media in what is going on, particularly in the middle east just now. It is important that Dave Thompson has taken the opportunity to highlight the escalation of the persecution of Christians, together with that of members of other faiths—and, indeed, members of none—in certain countries.

I welcome the opportunity to draw this debate to a close. I thank members in the chamber for their thoughtful contributions to the debate, whether they be Christians or, like Marco Biagi, non-Christians. It is important that the debate is seen in that wider context.

The motion clearly expresses this Parliament's condemnation of any form of persecution of or discrimination against minority communities throughout the world, wherever it occurs. I note that yesterday, in her resignation letter, Baroness Warsi highlighted the

“ever growing crisis of the persecution of Christians.”

We are all aware of recently reported cases of persecution of or discrimination against Christian and other minority communities in the middle east.

However, both Dave Thompson and John Mason ranged across a number of geographical areas in highlighting the attacks worldwide, as indeed did Joan McAlpine in focusing on the situation in Pakistan.

I make no apology for focusing my remarks on what is happening right now in the middle east. In Isis-controlled areas of Syria and Iraq, as many as 30,000 people have fled the area around Mosul following the recently published ultimatum to northern Iraq's dwindling Christian population effectively to either convert to Islam or die. It is estimated that only a few hundred Christian families now remain in Mosul but, as Kenny Gibson said, that may now in fact be none. Of course, it is not only Christians who are under threat in Iraq. Reports yesterday highlighted the plight of the Yazidi community—a community of believers who combine Zoroastrianism with some early aspects of Islam and Christian belief—who are being forced into the mountains surrounding Sinjar following an Islamic State offensive on the city last Sunday. Reports today suggest that those people are now dying of thirst. If they go back down the mountain, they die; if they stay, they die. They, too, are under the most appalling persecution and we should not forget them when we are talking about the persecution of Christians.

This has been a catastrophe long in the making. Last year, the Catholic organisation Aid to the Church in Need published a detailed report called “Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians oppressed for their Faith 2011-2013”. The “Forgotten” part of that is also important. Canon Andrew White, who has already been mentioned by a number of speakers, is the vicar of Baghdad. He has witnessed the extreme suffering of Christians in recent weeks and has accused the British Government of doing nothing to help fleeing Christians. Church of England bishops, along with other church leaders, have called upon the Government to offer asylum to Iraqi Christians. The Bishop of Manchester pointed out the sobering truth that

“What's happening now in Iraq is the direct consequence of what happened in 2003 ... this is, in part, our mess.”

I am not sure that anybody could really disagree with that.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has joined a worldwide social media campaign by adopting the image of the Arabic letter N—the first letter of the Arabic word “Nasrani”, which of course means Nazarene or Christian—in solidarity with persecuted Christians suffering in Iraq. People may begin to see that particular image appearing more frequently.

I call on the global media not to ignore what is happening to those minority communities. Patricia

Ferguson is right when she says that much of this persecution has gone largely unreported. Had it not been for social media, much of what we know would have gone unknown. The sheer numbers of those likely to die over the next year—Murdo Fraser quoted the figure of 100,000—should surely mean that the subject goes to the top of the news agenda instead of being at best buried and at worst totally ignored. That is a media failure and is simply not good enough. I fear that maybe Christians are simply not fashionable enough.

It is, however, important to acknowledge that many Muslims are just as concerned about attacks on Christians as we might be. Last month, more than 200 people, including Muslims, gathered in front of a Catholic church in Baghdad to show solidarity with their Christian neighbours by carrying “I am Iraqi, I am Christian” slogans. Given that a prominent Muslim academic has already been assassinated for speaking out in solidarity with Christians, acts of solidarity are also acts of incredible bravery, and we need to recognise that when we see it.

Members have raised the issue of the Scottish Government’s broad and general approach, and I take the opportunity to restate that. Of course, we in Scotland believe in equality for all people whatever they believe, and as good global citizens we have a strong and enduring commitment to securing democracy, the rule of law and fundamental human rights around the world.

Everyone knows that foreign affairs are reserved, but that does not let us off the hook when it comes to expressing our views and bringing to bear what pressure we can as individuals, in our communities or indeed as a Government. During the Commonwealth games, we took every opportunity to engage with Commonwealth countries in a diplomatically and culturally sensitive fashion to make clear Scotland’s view on equality and human rights.

Patricia Ferguson: I appreciate everything that the minister has said. Both I and Joan McAlpine quoted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it is interesting that the UK has now assumed its place on the UN Human Rights Council. Is the Scottish Government prepared to write to the UK Government asking it to raise the issue of religious persecution in that forum to try to raise the profile and, hopefully, influence other countries?

Roseanna Cunningham: Yes. That is probably an extremely good idea and I will take that forward as the member has suggested.

I was going on to say that it is not just during the Commonwealth games that we have been making appropriate representations. The Minister for External Affairs and International Development

has regularly spoken out against the persecution of religious minorities wherever it takes place. Only last month he wrote to the Home Secretary about Gaza, urging the UK Government to play a full role in any international efforts to provide homes for refugees from that region and stating that Scotland is ready to play its part. We have also donated £200,000 to the Disasters Emergency Committee in Scotland’s Syria crisis appeal in response to the suffering in Syria and we are providing £500,000 of funding to help the United Nations to provide water, food, shelter and medical assistance to the people of Gaza.

We recognise the influence for good that religious belief can have on the lives of individuals, families and the wider community, which is why we actively promote and support interfaith relations as a means of developing trust, respect and social harmony between communities at local and national levels.

In closing, I congratulate all the churches and other faith communities and organisations, such as Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Aid to the Church in Need, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, Remembering Srebrenica, Open Doors UK and Islamic Relief UK as well as all their supporters, who work tirelessly towards supporting the victims of intolerance and hatred and removing religious intolerance wherever it is found. I take this opportunity to say to them, “Your work is known by us and is recognised.”

Meeting closed at 17:49.

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