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Contents

Executive Committee Business

Student Loans (Amendment) Bill: Consideration Stage	1
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Committee Business

Armed Forces and Veterans Bill: Extension of Committee Stage	1
--	---

Statutory Committee Membership

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety	2
---	---

Private Members' Business

Seventieth Anniversary of the Death of Lord Craigavon	2
---	---

Domiciliary Care	18
------------------------	----

Oral Answers to Questions

Agriculture and Rural Development	28
---	----

Culture, Arts and Leisure	35
---------------------------------	----

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

Irish Government: Request for Financial Assistance	41
--	----

Private Members' Business

Domiciliary Care (<i>continued</i>)	43
---	----

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They should be sent to:

The Editor of Debates, Room 248, Parliament Buildings, Belfast BT4 3XX.

Tel: 028 9052 1135 · e-mail: simon.burrowes@niassembly.gov.uk

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Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 22 November 2010

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Executive Committee Business

Student Loans (Amendment) Bill: Consideration Stage

Mr Speaker: I call the Minister for Employment and Learning, Mr Danny Kennedy, to move the Consideration Stage of the Student Loans (Amendment) Bill.

Moved. — [The Minister for Employment and Learning (Mr Kennedy).]

Mr Speaker: No amendments have been tabled to the Bill. I propose, therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to group the two clauses of the Bill for the Question on stand part, followed by the long title.

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Long title agreed to.

Mr Speaker: That concludes the Consideration Stage of the Student Loans (Amendment) Bill. The Bill stands referred to the Speaker.

Committee Business

Armed Forces and Veterans Bill: Extension of Committee Stage

The Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (Mr Elliott): I beg to move

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 28 January 2011, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Armed Forces and Veterans Bill [NIA 33/09].

The Armed Forces and Veterans Bill passed Second Stage on 12 October 2010. At its meeting on 20 October 2010, the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister agreed that it would take the lead on the scrutiny of the Bill. That decision followed discussions with the Committee for Finance and Personnel. The Committee is seeking an extension until 28 January 2011 to allow it to scrutinise the Armed Forces and Veterans Bill fully and to consider possible amendments. I ask Members for their support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 28 January 2011, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Armed Forces and Veterans Bill [NIA 33/09].

Statutory Committee Membership

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Speaker: As with similar motions, the motion on Statutory Committee membership will be treated as a business motion. Therefore, there will be no debate.

Resolved:

That Mr Pól Callaghan replace Mrs Mary Bradley as a member of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety. — [Mr P Ramsey.]

Private Members' Business

Seventieth Anniversary of the Death of Lord Craigavon

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Storey: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the seventieth anniversary of the death of Lord Craigavon, the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

It is with a sense of honour and privilege that I stand in the Chamber today to open the debate on the seventieth anniversary of the death of James Craig, who was later to be known as Lord Craigavon. Very few people on this island have been so systematically misquoted and wrongly vilified as he has been.

At the very beginning of the debate, let me expand on that important matter. Nationalists of varying shades have invested much time and energy into demonising and engaging in a character assassination of Lord Craigavon. They have falsely asserted that he once boasted of a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people. That assertion and allegation is untrue. After de Valera had asserted that the South was a Catholic nation, Craigavon responded by saying:

"The hon. Member must remember that in the South they boasted of a Catholic State. They still boast of Southern Ireland being a Catholic State. All I boast of is that we are a Protestant Parliament and a Protestant State."

So much time and energy has been expended on trying to destroy a person's name and character, and they could not even manage to quote him correctly.

James Craig had a distinguished career in the military and served in the Boer war, in which he was injured and captured. He is rightly regarded as the father of Northern Ireland. Although Sir Edward Carson was its public face, Craig was the architect of Ulster unionist resistance to home rule from 1912 to 1914. He arranged for Sir Edward Carson to act as that public face while he masterminded the campaign.

It was Craig who organised the signing of the Ulster Covenant and stage-managed the Ulster Day in September 1912. The covenant document was signed throughout Ulster and by people from Ulster who lived in the rest of Ireland, and on mainland Britain, including 2,000 people in Dublin. One striking feature was the support that it drew from all classes of unionism, including labourers, professionals, gentry, aristocrats and clergy. Another remarkable feature was the number of women who signed the declaration. The wording of the declaration that women signed differed from that of that covenant. It allowed women to:

“associate ourselves with the men of Ulster in their uncompromising opposition to the Home Rule Bill now before Parliament”.

Some 228,990 women signed in Ulster compared with 218,206 men, and some 5,000 women signed elsewhere as against 19,000 men, making a grand total of 471,414 persons.

In many ways, it was down to Craig that the means were created by which Ulster unionism was united. In those stormy days, Craig was also a chief mover in the formation of the old UVF and in the gunrunning in Larne. The cry of “Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right” was not uttered casually. Those were turbulent times across the island of Ireland, and the reverberations of those days are still felt by all sections of our society today. Who would have thought that it would take until now before it could seriously be suggested that Her Majesty The Queen might visit the South? However, the events of that time have cast a long shadow.

I know that some in the Chamber look to the people who were involved in the events of 1916. However, I and many here today and across the Province look to the men and women of the covenant, to the old volunteers and to the 36th (Ulster) Division.

In mentioning the 36th (Ulster) Division, I should point out that the outbreak of the First World War saw unionist resistance to home rule translated into a large-scale recruitment of troops, and it was Craig who encouraged the UVF to enlist. He helped to recruit the 36th (Ulster) Division and served as its quartermaster general. He held a junior office in the wartime coalition Government and held a succession of junior British Government posts with distinction between 1917 and 1921, even though he resigned along with Carson in 1918. Craig also

helped to draft the Government of Ireland Act 1920. In fact, it was partly due to him that a six-county territory for Northern Ireland was chosen over the nine-county model favoured by English Ministers and some unionists.

In 1921, Craig was unanimously elected as the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, something that, in recent times, only Basil McCrea thought that he could emulate. On the foundation of the Northern Ireland state in 1921, Craig became Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister, a position that he was to hold until his death in 1940.

James Craig was an advocate of the Ulster Special Constabulary as an effective means of protecting the new frontier, and, during his premiership, Craig overcame the military and political opposition that the new Northern Ireland faced. That was especially the case when it came to the IRA campaign of 1920-22, and just as the IRA was seen off in future times, so Craig beat them in his day. Craig withstood the British Government's efforts to subordinate Northern Ireland to a Dublin Parliament during the treaty negotiations. On one occasion, at the request of Lloyd George, he travelled to Dublin to meet de Valera. Accompanied by a Sinn Féin guard, he was driven by a secret route to meet his arch-opponent.

He also entered into substantive negotiations with Michael Collins, but, unfortunately, Collins would ultimately use those negotiations to demand the acquisition of northern territory. That led to an outbreak of violence before the Craig/Collins pact of 1922, which, on the southern side, was signed by Michael Collins, Kevin O'Higgins, Eamonn Duggan and Arthur Griffith. The provisions of that pact included a declaration of peace; an insistence that the two Governments co-operate in every way in their power to restore peaceful conditions in unsettled areas; the reorganisation of policing; the establishment of non-jury trials; the establishment of an independent commission made up of equal numbers of Protestants and Catholics to examine allegations of intimidation, and so on; an end to all IRA activities; the right to return home for those who had been displaced; and, somewhat controversially, the release of what were called political prisoners. There is a sense of déjà vu for many of us in the House today. Such was Craig's influence that Sir Edward Carson said:

"It was Craig who did most of the work and I got most of the credit."

After approximately 20 years as Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister, Lord Craigavon passed away. Today, his earthly remains and those of his dear wife lie buried in the Stormont estate. In the coming days, there will be a succession of dates and anniversaries. Each could be regarded as negative by some and be abused by others, yet, whether they are for good or ill, those dates and anniversaries will come. As a society, we have made considerable strides in recent times, and some of the most significant were made in the past three years. We still have a considerable way to go, and there are still those who wish to drag us back, but we must not allow them to do so.

As with James Craig's generation, so I and my generation have lived through days of violence and blood. Those days and those horrors have scarred many of us, and we shall take those scars to our graves. The DUP is determined that the generations to come will have a different story to tell and will pass on a different legacy to their children.

I stand here today to celebrate the life and contribution of Lord Craigavon. I do so determined that, just as the new state of Northern Ireland was born from the flames of those controversies, a new Northern Ireland, for this day and for future days, will be born from the fires of our past.

I trust that, with respect and reverence, the House will remember the late Lord Craigavon.

12.15 pm

Mr O Dowd: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. The motion reads:

"That this Assembly notes the seventieth anniversary of the death of Lord Craigavon".

I have no difficulty with that in itself. My difficulty is that the House is not a historical society, and it is not a society for remembrance. It is a political institution that is charged with the well-being of our community and our society.

The island of Ireland is in economic turmoil. We face rising unemployment. We do not yet know the outcome of the discussions between the Dublin Government, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the EU. Those discussions will have serious repercussions for the economy in

this part of the island. I note that some unionist colleagues are nodding their heads in agreement. I welcome that, because anyone, regardless of their political point of view, who believes that what happened in Dublin over the weekend is to the benefit of this society is sadly mistaken.

Why do I raise those points? I do so because I want to know why we are debating this matter. After last week's motion when the DUP sorted out how we cut grass, do we need to note the seventieth anniversary of Craigavon's death? I suspect not.

Mr Storey: If we are to move forward with respect, as the Member and his colleagues tell us and encourage us to, surely, given the importance that Lord Craigavon had, and has, to many in Northern Ireland — he was the first Prime Minister in this Building, and our longest-serving Prime Minister — it is only right and proper that, despite the difficulties economically, we have the opportunity to mark the occasion in the way that we have done today.

Mr O'Dowd: The Member's point is perfectly valid. I have no difficulty with collective remembrance and debate about our history. The history of Lord Craigavon and his term as the first Prime Minister of this state is something that should be debated.

We have a number of anniversaries coming up, such as the 1912 signing of the covenant. Republicans should not be, nor are we, afraid to debate and to remember such occasions. That debate would be healthy and informative for this community. The anniversary of the 1913 great lockout in Dublin is coming up, and the turmoil that that caused in Irish politics should be remembered. The 1916 uprising should be remembered and debated by unionists, nationalists and republicans. The landing of guns by the UVF should also be remembered. They were the first people to bring guns into twentieth-century Irish politics. That, and the implications that it had for our society, should be discussed. Clearly, the debate has to go both ways. We may not have much reverence for the first Prime Minister of this state, and the reasons for that must be debated.

I note that the Member was quick off the mark to correct the quotation attributed to Craigavon. "A Protestant state for a Protestant people" is not exactly what he said. However, the old saying, "actions speak louder than words", comes to mind, because we ended up with a

Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people. That said, however, the irony is that it was not a Protestant Parliament for all the Protestant people, because the working-class Protestant community suffered intolerably under that regime, in the same way that nationalists did. The difficulty then — we are slipping back into this a wee bit — was that those who led “big house” unionism told working-class Protestant communities that they were better off under their rule. They told them that it did not matter that they were unemployed, that they could not feed their children or that poverty was rife, because there was a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people.

As the months roll on and all those anniversaries approach, it is important to recognise that the northern state failed not only nationalists but the working-class Protestant community. If we repeat the mistakes of the past, we fail all our communities, because, regardless of Craigavon's intentions when the northern state was set up, it failed. That resulted in many years of bloody conflict on all sides, and it involved the weapons brought in by the UVF, as well as weapons brought in by others.

I will end on a positive note, as did the mover of the motion. This society is changing. In Craigavon's day, it would never have been thought that republicans and unionists would share power. Indeed, my father's generation would not have envisaged nationalists and republicans sharing power with unionism. That has brought changes and challenges for both sides of society. Therefore, as we move forward towards our respective important anniversaries, do not doubt for one minute that republicans will honour unionists' rights to commemorate them, nor will we shy away from debating the important subjects that all such events raise. There is an important debate to be had on that.

However, if anything will help, it is that we do not rewrite history. We should learn from our past. It is still my strong view, and the strong view of my party, that the northern state failed. In recent years, we have come to a realisation that we have to work together. I welcome and continue to endorse that. We should not allow those who are trying to drag us back into conflict to do so. Progress will be made on the island of Ireland if we work together. However, the Assembly, at this time in its history, has much more important things to do than debate grass or note the death of Craigavon.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr O'Dowd: We are in economic turmoil, and if we are to serve the future well, we need to sort that out, and then we can commemorate for as long as we wish.

Mr Elliott: I am honoured to stand here as the fourteenth leader of the Ulster Unionist Party and to pay my utmost respect to, and state my appreciation for, the fourth leader of my party. It is interesting to hear Mr O'Dowd talk about republicans. I am pleased that he welcomes the celebration of Mr Craig's life.

He returned to the old republican adage of Northern Ireland's being a failed political identity. However, is he not, at this stage, pleased that we are not part of an all-Ireland state that is going down the tubes financially and politically? I am sure that he is, for once, pleased to be part of a Northern Ireland that is part of the United Kingdom.

Mr O'Dowd: I opened my remarks by saying that I hope that unionists realise that what is happening in Dublin will have a strong economic effect here, especially in your border constituency of Fermanagh. Therefore, I would not relish too much what is going on in Dublin. We will feel it and feel it hard.

Mr Speaker: The Member has a minute added on to his time.

Mr Elliott: Of course I do not relish that. All I am trying to say is that I am sure that Mr O'Dowd and his colleagues are pleased that they are not part of that at the moment. That is all.

I welcome the motion. James Craig was a soldier, statesman, and, most importantly to him and to all of us, an Ulsterman. He found his calling after returning from fighting in the Boer war, in which he was noted for his selfless bravery and dedication to his men. That particular war produced two politicians who would go on to shape British and Irish politics like no others: James Craig and Winston Churchill.

I am pleased to note that James Craig first dipped his toe into elected politics in my home county of Fermanagh. That county's by-election in 1904 gave Craig the opportunity to organise his first political campaign. Although Edward Mitchell had been expected to retain the seat with a large majority, the fact that Craig missed

out by only 152 votes shook the political foundations of the county.

That narrow defeat convinced Craig that his heart and soul lay with Ulster politics. Just two years later, in 1906, his chance came to contest the East Down seat in the general election. To anyone who knew him and his style of campaigning, it came as no surprise that he won that seat. We could all learn a lesson from the way in which he engaged with the electorate during that election.

It was highly appropriate, and typical of Craig, that his maiden speech and the first legislation that he introduced after being elected to Westminster related to the welfare of those serving in the armed forces. I am pleased that my colleague David McNarry is bringing a private Member's Bill on a similar subject through the House.

While Craigavon was quickly getting down to business at Parliament, his reputation was growing. He was quickly becoming one of Ireland's foremost unionist leaders, and he went on to become a founding member of the Ulster Unionist Council, which is a body that I am proud to lead today.

Craigavon's first few years of elected politics were truly a baptism of fire. No sooner was he elected than the home rule crisis developed. It was then that the partnership between Craigavon and another great Ulsterman, Edward Carson, developed. The signing of the Ulster Covenant in 1912 was a testament to Craig's leadership and administrative skills. For months in advance, he vigorously organised the event. The sight of 237,000 men and 234,000 women signing the covenant is an everlasting legacy of the legitimate commitment of the Ulster people to the union. The covenant made reference to our material well-being, and I think that many Members here today are grateful that so many men and women took such a stand. It is an event that the Ulster Unionist Party is incredibly proud of, and we plan to celebrate its hundredth anniversary.

The political structure of Ireland was changing. When Carson and Craig resigned from the British Government in 1918, they dedicated their time to the unionist cause. The 1920 Government of Ireland Act demonstrated Ulster unionism's success in securing the union. Indeed, in 1929, Craig went on to comment that Ulster would only be entirely safe within the union when it received its own Parliament.

James Craig became our Province's first Prime Minister in 1921, and I am thankful for the dedication and commitment that he showed to the Ulster people almost 100 years ago. I recognise and welcome the fact that Northern Ireland is a changing place today, and I hope that Members on the other Benches recognise the role of Craigavon.

Mr A Maginness: In some ways, the motion raises a very important issue, which is how we deal with commemorations that are coming up in the near future in relation to all sorts of things, including 1916, which was mentioned. There are also other commemorations that involve greater political events in Ireland, both North and South. At some stage, we really ought to look at that on an all-party basis to see whether we can commemorate those events in a sensible, sober and enlightening way, instead of indulging in partisan rhetoric.

The motion is interesting. I want to make some observations in relation to Lord Craigavon. First, there is no doubt that he was a great personality, politically and socially. There is also no doubt that he was a very talented man and a great organiser. He was also very kind and very generous, and many nationalist members of the House of Commons of Northern Ireland paid tribute to him on those terms when he died. However, I will also put forward the proposition that he gave a great disservice to unionism as well as to nationalism, because he turned unionism from Irish unionism into Ulster unionism. That was a great disservice to the unionist cause in Ireland, and it was a great disservice to all the people in Ireland, because, effectively, he sectarianised unionism and made it into a regional, provincial, inward-looking, parochial, political ideology. That was a great disservice to the politics of Ireland. Secondly —

Mr Campbell: The Member somewhat unfairly categorised Craigavon when he talked about the move from Irish unionism to Ulster unionism. Given the context of the time, does he accept that Craigavon had little choice when what later became the Irish Republic decided that it no longer wanted to be part of the United Kingdom?

The Speaker: The Member will have an extra minute added to his time.

12.30 pm

Mr A Maginness: The Member raises an interesting point. Of course, Craigavon came to

prominence, along with Carson, between 1912 and 1914 at the time of the third home rule Bill. The Bill had nothing to do with republicanism or Ireland's independence; it was to do with an autonomous Irish Parliament.

Craigavon opposed the Bill. He opposed it by force of arms, not just politically. It was he, Craigavon, and his colleagues who reintroduced the gun into Irish politics in the twentieth century. Since the 1798 rebellion, there had been no organised violence in Ireland for a period of around 100 years. Yes: there was agrarian unrest and violence. However, there was no organised violence on a paramilitary scale. He introduced that by arming the Ulster Volunteer Force.

It was Craigavon who tried to subvert the Government at Westminster. He was, in fact, treacherous to that Government by importing arms from Germany and introducing, once again, paramilitarism into Irish politics. As a result, he did a great disservice not just to Irish nationalism and to the Irish people as a whole, but to unionism, because he turned it into a violent political movement at that time. He used the force of arms to create a situation in which the home rule Bill would not be permitted in Ireland. He, therefore, tried to subvert the authority of the British Parliament.

That was to bring about a colossal calamity for this country. Ultimately, it ended in the country's partition, which Carson, at the end of his life, said was a failure. Carson regarded partition as quite wrong. In other words, the partition of this island did no good service to either the unionist or the nationalist political tradition here, because all that it brought about was greater disunity and violence in this country. We have paid a sorry and heavy price for that ever since.

When Craigavon got into power, he created a situation in which this Parliament became sectarianised. The quotation to which the proposer of the motion referred, in essence, sums up the sectarian attitude that he adopted towards the six-county state.

Mr Speaker: The Member must bring his remarks to a close.

Mr A Maginness: He regarded that state as a Protestant state. Sadly, that brought about tremendous ill-feeling and hurt over many years.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Lunn: I suppose that, in common with most prominent figures in history, Lord Craigavon's legacy would be viewed differently by different sides of the House. My party recognises the major contribution that he made to Irish and Northern Irish politics during a career in elected office that stretched from 1906 to his death in 1940.

Before he entered active politics, he found time to serve his country in the Boer war and, subsequently, in the First World War. Apparently, he also established a stockbroking company, which he achieved at 21 years of age. Therefore, he was a man who lived life to the full as a businessman, soldier and active and significant politician.

As other Members have mentioned, politically, he was involved in the establishment of the Ulster Volunteer Force. He was one of the authors of the 1912 Solemn League and Covenant. Therefore, his solid unionist and Protestant credentials were firmly displayed. However, at the same time, he seems to have enjoyed the respect of his political opponents and individual Catholics of the day.

When one looks at Lord Craigavon's history, three points stand out. I acknowledge that I do not know as much about his history as some Members who have already spoken in the debate. First, his famous and oft-repeated phrase:

"a Protestant Parliament and a Protestant state",

was, evidently, a reply to de Valera's assertion that Ireland was a Catholic nation. I do not believe that either statement was particularly helpful. However, I suppose that, at the time, that was how people spoke.

Secondly, he was instrumental in shaping modern Northern Ireland by convincing the unionists in Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal that, perhaps for the greater good of Ulster unionism, they should agree to remain in the Irish state, lest they upset the arithmetic and Protestant domination —

Mr A Maginness: Was the reason for moving from a nine-county province of Ulster to six counties not that he wanted to ensure a permanent and absolute majority for unionism within the Six Counties? That was the reason why he did it. It underscores my argument that he was sectarian in his approach.

Mr Speaker: The Member has one extra minute onto his time.

Mr Lunn: Mr Maginness did not allow me to finish my sentence. I was going to say that he convinced those unionists to remain in the Irish state, lest they upset the arithmetic and Protestant domination of the Six Counties. So, I take Mr Maginness's point.

Mr A Maginness: I am sorry about that.

Mr Lunn: It is all right.

Thirdly, and most disappointingly — and nobody has mentioned it — he allowed the division of our school system, the imposition of Protestant doctrine in state schools and the breakaway of the Catholic schools. He was on record as being a supporter of shared education, and I do not suppose that he had to give way on that at the time. I think that that was a shame, and it is a decision that has reverberated down the years and affects our politics today.

It is right that we note this type of anniversary. However, whether we note it by way of an hour-and-a-half's debate on parliamentary time is a question that can reasonably be asked. Lord Craigavon was an iconic figure in the history of Ireland. He is one of many from the period of his lifetime, and we will be faced with a lot of commemorations and significant dates in the years to come. I hope that we can deal with those in the reasonably respectful way that we are dealing with this one today.

Mr Moutray: I support this timely motion. In doing so, I declare an interest as the mayor of Craigavon for this year, and I am very proud to be so. The borough was named after Lord Craigavon some 45 years ago on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his passing. The names of Sir Edward Carson and Lord Craigavon are inextricably linked in the collective memories of unionists and in the history not only of Northern Ireland, but of the island as a whole. Both men were of a time and came from a position where there had been no partition in Ireland and the whole of the island was part of the United Kingdom and under the Crown.

As we approach the centenary anniversaries of a number of notable dates, and given the current economic plight of our near neighbours, perhaps it might have been better if the Easter declaration had never been read and the South had never fled the bosom of the United Kingdom. However, we look forward to Her Majesty visiting our near neighbours soon. Who knows? Perhaps Gerry Adams can become

a persuader for harmonisation between the Republic of Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. We shall watch with interest.

The motion is simple. I have my views on our Province's recent past. I also have my views on the era of men like Carson and Craig, the home rule crisis and the Ulster Covenant. The motion does not ask any Member to share anyone else's interpretation or understanding of those days and those events. Rather, it simply notes the date. May I suggest that this motion offers a template for a number of other dates and anniversaries that will soon be upon us?

In many respects, James Craig was Carson's right-hand man. Carson was the public face, whereas Craig was the organiser. However, James Craig, or Lord Craigavon, was more than a second fiddle. He took the lead in organising the covenant and in encouraging the UVF to sign up during the First World War, as my colleague Mervyn Storey said. Some people look at the loss and the slaughter at charnel houses such as the Somme and see only waste and tragedy. Although it is true that a generation was cut down in the mud, it is also true that those young men were among the most gallant of our sons and that their bravery is forever enshrined in the hearts of many and is repeated even now in the theatres of war across the globe in such places as Afghanistan.

When I was preparing for this debate, and thinking of the covenant and Lord Craigavon's central role in it, I checked the relevant records in the Public Records Office. My name is Moutray — it is not a common name, perhaps of Huguenot descent — and my family came from Fermanagh. There were 18 Moutrays who signed the covenant, the majority from places such as Aughnacloy, Ballygawley and Lisbeg. Some 148 Storeys signed the covenant, from Clones, Cootehill, Raphoe, Harryville, Broughshane and Ballymena. Some 93 Paisleys signed it, and there was even a Sydney Anderson from Upper Bann who signed it, as did a John Hume from Londonderry. Some 31 McGuinnesses signed it, including three from Londonderry. Four Maskeys signed it, as did a whopping 83 Molloyes [*Laughter.*] Obviously the Molloyes were far more loyal than the Maskeys.

The lives of those on all sides of the Chamber and right across the Province are impacted on by the events of those days and the men who shaped them. I salute the memory of Lord

Craigavon and Sir Edward Carson. I am glad that, at a time of great crisis, there were men of that calibre. I hope that we shall not see similar crises and turbulence again. I support the motion.

Mr Craig: As the Member who previously spoke declared an interest as Mayor of Craigavon, I almost feel that I should declare an interest as the only Craig left as a Member in the House. I share that common name with that great man, and I count it as a privilege. Unfortunately for me, I cannot say that I am a direct descendant of his. If I was, I might be sitting on red Benches and not the blue Benches here, but that is another matter.

It is clear that James Craig, or Lord Craigavon, was a very talented individual. It was once suggested that he was the only politician who could win an election from his fireplace. That is quite remarkable. Born on 8 January 1871, he rose to great heights by the time of his death in 1940. His father was a successful businessman, and I noted everyone's reluctance to announce what the business was, because he made the money making whiskey. That is where our paths completely differ, because I have never touched the stuff and, with God's grace, never will.

Craig followed his father into business, but as a stockbroker, and set up shop in Belfast. He then became a soldier at the time of the Boer war, rising to the rank of captain and fighting with the Royal Irish Rifles, then the Imperial Yeomanry. I find that one of life's little queries, because they were fighting the Afrikaners, and I can say little about it, because my brother married one of them, so the Craigs and the Afrikaners are now mixed. It is one of life's true quirks.

He was a true Ulsterman, proud of his roots and his country, and determined to fight to defend what he saw as right. I have heard much said about the sectarianism. I do not believe that there was a sectarian bone in the man's body. He just believed in standing up firmly for what he believed in, and that led to the home rule crisis. During that period, Craig became known for his organisational skills. Carson, on the other hand, was the orator who put forward the unionist argument during that difficult period in our history.

James Craig came to enter elected politics when, in February 1903, his brother, Charles Craig, was returned for the constituency of

South Antrim. Despite missing out himself one month later, he was, however, victorious in 1906 for the constituency of East Down. He held that seat until 1918, when he switched to Mid Down, which he held until he became Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister in 1921, upon the establishment of Stormont. Craig's skills became apparent as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. That is something that we all ignore. He walked into a Parliament for which there was literally no organisation or basis at all. Everything had to be done from scratch. He had to deal with the transfer of powers from Dublin Castle and London to the new Government based in Belfast.

Clearly, that was not an easy task, but it was one that Craig was well and truly prepared for, because he was the great organiser in unionism. Many of his organisational skills were put to good use when he established not only Northern Ireland's Government, but the Civil Service that supports it. In addition to the practicalities of assuming control of Northern Ireland, Craig had also to deal with the continued campaign of violence orchestrated by a reinvigorated IRA. It almost feels like *déjà vu* at times, because some things do not change.

12.45 pm

I was long puzzled by an aspect of the family name "Craig". It is seen on very few memorials in Northern Ireland. When it came to the UVF, I will be honest: most members of his family did not sign up or follow that path. When I was in Edinburgh, I discovered why. It is because we are a true Ulster-Scots family, in name and tradition. Hundreds, if not thousands, of our family members went over to Scotland and signed up with Scottish regiments. Many of them, hundreds of them, fell at the Somme and other areas.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Craig: I commend the motion to the House.

Sir Reg Empey: I thank the Member who proposed the motion. I am proud to stand as an Ulster Unionist and pay tribute to one of our party's greatest.

I note the comments that Mr O'Dowd made at the beginning of the debate. The fact that we discuss this motion, or that we discussed grass cutting last week, is not necessarily a problem

created by the Members here. Nevertheless, anyone who thinks that we can ignore the economic crisis less than 100 miles from where we stand is wrong. I have no sense of anyone gloating, but a lot of Members do see irony, in that some Members wish to take us there as a country and as a community.

Born in Sydenham in my own constituency of East Belfast in 1871, Craig was the quintessential Ulsterman. He was quiet and reserved, but he pursued life with dogged persistence. He was always bound by a desire to do what is right. He loved his country, and that was at the forefront of his decision-making process. His successor, John Miller Andrews, remarked:

"His love of country was innate, sincere and strong."

It was the key to his whole career as soldier, statesman, parliamentarian and premier.

As with so many of his generation, as has been mentioned, he was prominent in South Africa during the Boer war. From the beginning, he proved to be a worthy soldier and, despite recognising the horrors of war, continued to serve with distinction. When, in May 1900, one of his superiors, Sir John Power, fell at Lindley, Craig, ignoring the obvious risks, insisted on leading a recovery team to reclaim the body for a proper military burial. On another occasion, when Craig's regiment was captured and forced to march for days to a Boer prison, Craig, alongside Lord Ennismore, turned down the officers' privilege of transport, preferring to remain with the men. Loyalty was to be the hallmark of his career.

When he finally returned home, Craig, like many other politicians of the period, had an improved constitution, a great reputation and considerable experience of leadership. His shock victory in the 1906 general election was secured because he appealed to the minds of the electorate and not just to their emotion. As with his military career, he sought to defend his country with a determination to do what he thought was right.

It would be amiss if, in this debate, we failed to recognise the relationship that Craig had with the other giant of Ulster unionism, Sir Edward Carson. Working together, Craig and Carson redefined the very nature of unionist politics in their desire to protect Ireland's place in the union. Craig's ability and geniality complemented Carson's powerful character and

sense of presence. Each had what the other lacked. Pooling their resources, they became a third and undeniable person. Effective apart, they were irresistible together.

The events that followed and encompassed the home rule period are well known and require no further examination. In everything they did, Carson and Craig sought to do what they thought was in the interests of Ireland. It must be remembered that neither sought partition; neither sought division.

The formation of the state of Northern Ireland in the face of great diversity is the ultimate legacy of Sir James Craig. Working alongside people such as Sir Wilfred Spender, he created and safeguarded Northern Ireland's institutions by 1925. The very House in which we sit is part of that legacy, and that is why I, for one, am always pleased to walk past his statue as I climb the Stairs of this Building. On that point, I would welcome any additional moves by the Assembly Commission to promote the Craigavon tomb that is situated here at Stormont as part of the official tour.

As citizens of Northern Ireland, we have a duty to protect and promote Craigavon House in east Belfast. I suspect that, were it a historical location of a different tradition, it would not be in its current state, despite the work of some loyal people over many years. Given the impact that he had in shaping our community and history, we must remember that what he and others did was done in the name of preserving the union, which is something that we still have to do today.

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance, and, given some of the elements that are still in our community today, we must never forget that. Certain elements are prepared to overthrow the democratic process, and they are still prepared to use force to try to persuade and to force people out of the union. Looking round at what we are faced with today, that would be a stupid thing to do.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Sir Reg Empey: I support the motion.

Mr McDevitt: As we begin what I suspect will not be the final debate on remembrance, it is probably best that we are guided by the words of the great writer who reminds us that people who

do not read their history books are doomed to repeat mistakes.

James Craig appears to have been a man of contradictions, like so many who achieve greatness in politics. He was able to sit down with Collins and reach a deal that would have led to a police service that was more in the image of Patten than the RUC, whose reform so many unionists opposed. He was a man who was willing to contemplate a level of “North/Southerly” that, some might argue, stretches beyond where we are today. Yet, within less than five years of that pact, the same man was able to remove proportional representation from the fledgling Northern Ireland Parliament.

That had a devastating impact, not only on the ability of both communities to be adequately and properly represented in the emerging Northern Ireland state. It also had a devastating — many would argue fatal — impact on labour politics in this region, which served neither Catholic nor unionist but working men and women. We would all agree that, for a long time since, this place has been poorer without that type of politics.

In recognising his contradictions, we must acknowledge what was positive, and we will. However, we must always ask ourselves what a proud Ulsterman aimed to achieve through dividing the Province that he so loved. For an Irish unionist, what was ever to be achieved by governing this region from an introverted perspective? Most historians, as they analyse Lord Craigavon's contribution as Prime Minister, sense a growing and increasing introspection, isolationism and a distancing not just from the Republic, but from Great Britain.

It is a tragedy that a man who undoubtedly had the ability to unite his own, who could motivate and organise, who could have turned his great powers to much better good, failed to make either the emerging Northern Ireland state or relationships on this island half as good as they could have been. In 1932, he asserted his politics firmly and solely in his identity when he said:

“Ours is a Protestant government and I am an Orangeman...I have always said that I am an Orangeman first and a politician and a member of this parliament afterwards.”

That is fine, but it is not where we are today and it is not where we will be in 2011, 2012, 2013 or 2016 as we debate and acknowledge what

happened in past centuries. We should reflect on what has happened. The gun, which, as Alban Maginness said, James Craig played a significant part in reintroducing to Irish politics, has proven to have failed Ireland. There are guns on all sides of our communities that lie dormant today, having failed to achieve in any way what they set out to achieve. This House, which was built to reflect Craig's immortal words, actually stands for pretty much the opposite of what was intended. The question, as I said at the outset, is whether we are to acknowledge the lessons of history and refuse stubbornly to repeat them and to use the weeks ahead not to commemorate people who may deserve it but to do what we should be doing today: debating a Budget and putting bread on tables.

Mr Storey: If that Budget is agreed, and I accept the Member's point about the seriousness of the situation, will his party at least be honourably responsible and be unanimous this time, instead of repeating the situation that we had when we last had a Budget, when the SDLP Minister voted one way in the Executive and the party then voted another way?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute in which to speak.

Mr McDevitt: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am glad that we have been able to debate the Budget. The SDLP will support a Budget that is right for this region: one that is capable of understanding that the levels of social deprivation and exclusion are still unacceptable; that child poverty is too pervasive; that our jobs strategy is failing us —

Mr Speaker: Order. *[Laughter.]* I often say in the House that even interventions should very much relate to the motion. I also remind the Member who has the Floor to stick to the motion, and I remind him not to go into the Budget.

Mr Storey: A simple yes or no would have done.

Mr McDevitt: Maybe.

I will draw my remarks to a close. The key lesson for us all is that we can genuinely use the coming weeks, months and years to acknowledge the great opportunity that exists for a new Ireland that is beyond Craigavon or Pearse —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Members who tabled the motion. Sir James Craig, who was Northern

Ireland's first Prime Minister, spent almost half of his political career opposing home rule and the remainder of his political life as the premier of a home rule Administration here in Ulster. As has been said, Craig was born in Sydenham in east Belfast on 8 January 1871, which was the year after Isaac Butt launched the home rule movement. He was the sixth son of James Craig, a millionaire Presbyterian whiskey distiller, and Eleanor Gilmour Brown. Both parents were of Scottish descent, and he was educated Merchiston Castle School, which is a Church of Scotland foundation in Edinburgh. He was, as my colleague Jonathan Craig said, a true Ulster Scot.

Craig became a stockbroker, but his heart was not in the buying and selling of shares. He jumped at the opportunity to serve in the South African or Boer war, and he returned to Ulster. He proved to be a good and popular officer, and, as deputy assistant director of the Imperial Military Railways, he exhibited the organisational flair that he would place at the disposal of the unionist cause in years to come. The war also gave him a heightened appreciation of the importance of the Empire and Ulster's place in it.

Before the Boer war, Craig had briefly been the honorary secretary of the Belfast Conservative Association, but his interest in politics was renewed when his brother Charles was elected as MP for South Antrim in a by-election. A month later, Craig contested an unexpected vacancy in North Fermanagh, but he was narrowly defeated by a Russellite land candidate. The Russellite candidate won by polling the full nationalist electorate in the constituency and by securing a tiny section of the unionist vote. That experience may have exerted a disproportionate influence on Craig's later political career. As unionist leader, Craig feared division in the unionist community and sought to preserve unity at almost any price. That is a lesson that those on these Benches should learn today.

Craig entered Parliament in the 1906 general election as MP for East Down, defeating the sitting Russellite MP. Craig proved an energetic parliamentarian, taking a keen interest in social and education issues, particularly in respect of teachers and their salaries, and, of course, in Army reform. As the third home rule crisis unfolded in 1910, Craig forged an effective working relationship with Sir Edward Carson to mobilise Ulster unionist resistance. In the words of biographer St John Ervine, each had what the other lacked, and by pooling their resources they

became a third, and undeniable, person: effective apart, they were irresistible together. Carson brought his charisma and great powers of advocacy to the unionist cause, while Sir James Craig brought his formidable organisational skills, which Carson lacked, and provided the constant reassurance that Carson needed.

1.00 pm

Recognising the outstanding skill set that Carson would bring to the unionist cause, Craig suggested at the beginning of 1910 that unionist MPs should invite Carson to become their leader. That point was evidenced by Lord Leitrim's letter to Mrs Craig, in which he observed that it was "certainly a capital idea of your husband's, getting Carson to lead us".

Craig reassured Carson that Ulster unionists meant to resist home rule. To underscore his point, Craig organised the great demonstration on 23 September 1911 at his home, Craigavon, on the outskirts of Belfast, at which Carson was introduced to the people whom he would lead for the next decade. Craig masterminded the unionist campaign. Carson provided the speeches, Craig the organisation.

Craig organised the Balmoral demonstration on Easter Tuesday 1912 and the pre-covenant demonstrations in September 1912. Originally, Craig was deputed to draft the text of the covenant, but, ultimately, that duty fell to Thomas Sinclair, then Ulster's leading liberal unionist and a Presbyterian layman, who was a superb wordsmith. However, Craig choreographed the signing of the Ulster Covenant.

In January 1913, he was disproportionately responsible for the creation of the Ulster Volunteer Force. Craig was also to the forefront in establishing the provisional Government in July 1914, after which Carson candidly admitted that it was James Craig who did most of the work, while Carson got most of the credit.

At the outbreak of the Great War, Craig recruited and organised the 36 (Ulster) Division. He became a lieutenant colonel and the new division's assistant adjutant and quartermaster general. In the years after the war, he sacrificed a promising political career in London.

Mr Speaker: The Member should bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Humphrey: — to become Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister, a position that he held until

his death. Although Craig, Mr Speaker, was an important opponent —

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Humphrey: — of home rule —

Mr Speaker: I must insist that your time is up.

Mr Humphrey: — and spent almost half of his political career opposing it, he went on to represent Ulster in this Parliament, as its Prime Minister, and, subsequently, in the House of Lords.

Mr Bresland: I am honoured to speak in support of the motion and to pay tribute to that great Ulsterman, Lord Craigavon. I agree with what has been said so far by all of my colleagues. As Northern Ireland moves forward, it is always important to look back and to remember the past. We can learn from it, and it is good to honour the memory of those who played their part in their day and generation. So much has changed in the 70 years since the passing of Lord Craigavon that I wonder what he would think if he was with us today. In some ways, he would hardly recognise the place, because so much has changed in the past few years, never mind the last 70.

Yet, perhaps, he might have recognised some things, and I think that he would be happy with much of what he would see. We are meeting in the Building that he knew so well and in which he served. The Union that he loved and wanted to maintain is still intact. The Union flag still flies over Stormont. The Northern Ireland that he helped to create is at peace. It is more stable than ever and has a bright future based on sharing and partnership. Craigavon would have been happy with that. It was his desire that all people — Protestant and Roman Catholic, unionist and nationalist — could live together in peace, harmony and prosperity.

James Craig was born not far from here, in Sydenham, in 1871. It is said that leaders are made not born, but I think that great leaders are born leaders, and James Craig was one of those. He showed those leadership skills in business and in the British Army, in which he served with distinction during the Boer war. However, he really came into his own as the leader of unionism in the days of the home rule crisis. Along with Edward Carson and others, he set an example by showing courage and dedication to the cause, and, when the rest of Ireland broke away, he played his part in setting

up the new state of Northern Ireland, becoming our first Prime Minister. In so many ways, those were violent and very difficult days, but, yet again, Craigavon led by example.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

I know that Craigavon is not held in very high esteem by some inside and outside the House. Everyone is entitled to their view. However, I think that Craigavon has been treated unfairly by those who regard him as an example of bigotry and hatred. He was without doubt a staunch and determined Protestant in the tradition that goes back to the Apprentice Boys of Derry. He was prepared to stand firm for what he believed in and to do what he could to make sure that the unionist cause was defended and preserved. However, he was no bigot; he was a true Protestant, because he believed in civil and religious liberty for all.

He had a very generous spirit, which friends and enemies referred to at the time of his sudden death. It was said that his rugged sincerity compelled admiration even from those who disagreed with him. Lord Craigavon was a big man in every sense of the word, and in these days when truth and honesty are regarded as cheap, we would do well to learn from him. We must do all that we can to make sure that Craigavon House in east Belfast is preserved in honour of his memory. The building is a vital piece of Irish history, so it must not be lost. I support the motion.

Mr S Anderson: This autumn marks two very important anniversaries in Ulster's history. We remember the passing of two great men: Edward Carson and James Craig, the key founding fathers of Northern Ireland. Those two men came from very different backgrounds and parts of Ireland, but they were bonded by a determination to preserve the union.

Edward Carson died 75 years ago, on 22 October 1935. I was glad to see that that anniversary was marked by a panel discussion in Queen's University last month as part of the Belfast Festival. James Craig, or Lord Craigavon, was Carson's right-hand man and a chief mourner at his state funeral through the streets of Belfast. Lord Craigavon was to survive his good friend by five years. He died 70 years ago this Wednesday, on 24 November 1940, at the age of 69, while still serving as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

As that important anniversary approaches, I am glad to have the opportunity to pay tribute to one of Ulster's greatest sons. I congratulate my party colleagues for securing the debate, and I needed no encouragement to rise to my feet this afternoon. Craigavon is one of my heroes, and, like some of my colleagues, I also have the privilege of serving on the borough council named after him.

It would take a lot longer than my allocated five minutes to pay proper tribute to Lord Craigavon. He personified the Ulster spirit in so many ways. He was a man of principle who was straight, honest and open in all his dealings; a true Ulster Presbyterian, and I say that as an Anglican. He called a spade a spade. He was a man of grit and determination, and he was an inspiration to Ulster in her days of crisis over home rule and in the early days of partition. When the Second World War broke out, just a year or so before he died, he was an inspiration to the nation. He knew when to stand his ground, but he also knew when to make the all-important move for the greater good. I am convinced that, although he would have had some concerns, just as many of us had, Craigavon would have supported the current devolved arrangements that we have at Stormont.

He was also an entrepreneur. He was one of those unionist businessmen who helped to develop our manufacturing base, thus ensuring that the new state of Northern Ireland was placed on a sound economic footing. On those grounds alone, we could do with him today.

It is both fitting and hugely symbolic that we meet here in Parliament Buildings at Stormont. Craigavon once walked its corridors and did business in its rooms. He was Ulster's first Prime Minister, a post he held for 19 years. He and his wife are buried near the East Door of Parliament Buildings and his illustrious presence is still felt in this place.

In the words of John Andrews, who became Prime Minister immediately after him, Craigavon was a great Ulsterman and a great Irishman, and we salute his memory. Of course, there are those in this House who are not unionists and take a different view, and we have heard from them today. They have their own perspective on Craigavon and on the formation of Northern Ireland.

Mrs D Kelly: I thank the Member for giving way on that particular point and for acknowledging that fact. History records a different view of

some of Lord Craigavon's decisions and actions, not least the formation of the B-Specials, which were disbanded in disgrace when Stormont fell in the early 1970s.

Mr S Anderson: That may be the Member's personal view, but it is not the view of the Ulster people. Those men stood when they needed to be counted to defend this country when it was coming under severe attack by republican sources. We cannot discredit their name in any way with comments like that. We heard some comments today from Members who only want to discredit the memory of Lord Craigavon.

Those who were among his most bitter opponents also respected him for his fairness, integrity, honesty, dignity and courtesy. In the Stormont Parliament a day or so after Craigavon's death, the nationalist MP for Belfast Central, T J Campbell, told how, six years previously, Craigavon had paid tribute to Joe Devlin MP. Mr Campbell said:

"An Ulster Unionist paid tribute to an Ulster Nationalist; to-day, may an Ulster Nationalist salute the memory of the man who just passed on to the shadowy land?"

As has already been said, the motion merely asks the House to note the anniversary of Craigavon's death. I trust that Members will have no difficulty in doing just that. I hope that we will all agree. I support the motion.

Mr Bell: It is a privilege for those of us who would not be fit to lace the shoes of men of the stature of Viscount Craigavon to speak, as this Wednesday we look towards the anniversary of his death and celebrate all that he achieved. Sydney Anderson, the MLA for Upper Bann, told us of the accolades that Craigavon received from nationalists of his day. If only nationalists of today would spend their time listening to the way in which their predecessors — of substantially greater stature than some here today — paid tribute to Craigavon, they would realise the true greatness of the man.

There are a lot of similarities. As a proud former Mayor of Craigavon, I congratulate the current mayor for securing the debate. Craigavon was born in Sydenham in Belfast, where I grew up. He shares the same birthday as my wife, born on 8 January 1871. *[Laughter.]* It is important to listen to the whole sentence; only the year, 1871, is different. Therefore, I have double reasons to celebrate every 8 January.

When anyone looks at the economy as it is today, particularly south of the border, they would be delighted to have a man of the financial intelligence and capacity of Viscount Craigavon, Sir James Craig. Not only did he develop his business as a stockbroker, he managed to run that business.

However, business was not his first calling. He had his knowledge of duty, and, in 1900, he went off, as a captain, to the Boer war and spent time as a prisoner there. He came into his own, as it were, between 1912 and 1914, when, cometh the hour, cometh the man. He led a resistance that has, over decades, been seen to be hugely successful, because here we have our Northern Ireland firmly enshrined in our United Kingdom, with all the democracies flowing down from the Mother of Parliaments.

1.15 pm

Many people refer, rightly, to his distinguished history of leadership in the 19 years between 1921 and 1940, and, although some will try to introduce a discordant note into those years, they should look to the numbers of people who came from South of the border into Northern Ireland during the years of Viscount Craigavon's leadership. Those people came here because of the prosperity, stability and employment that he was instrumental in leading. Many nationalists came North from South of the border because of the brilliance of the man's leadership.

Many people do not realise that, between 1906 and 1921, he had a distinguished career in the House of Commons. He was a junior Minister in the Ministry that dealt with pensions, and he served in the Admiralty. If he wanted, for purely selfish ends, he could have had a hugely distinguished career in the House of Commons, but he saw where leadership was required, and he sacrificed that career in the House of Commons to come here to show leadership. We pay tribute to that leadership and that sacrifice on the seventieth anniversary of his death.

He was a hugely intelligent man. He was awarded honorary degrees not only from Queen's University in 1922 but from the University of Oxford in 1926. He made some significant contributions. In those days, to appear on the front page of 'Time' magazine was a matter of considerable significance, and, on 26 May 1924, Sir James Craig appeared on the front page of 'Time' magazine, three weeks after Pope Pius XI also appeared on the front

page. He showed leadership in the House of Commons, as a junior pensions Minister, in the Admiralty and in his leadership of the resistance here between 1912 and 1914, and he was prepared to sacrifice business interest to serve his country. Taking all that in the round, there is no doubt that he was a person of greatness, and it is significant of the House's maturity that we can celebrate one of our finest sons.

Mr Frew: I have great pleasure in speaking to this motion on a great man, and I welcome the chance to speak. Whenever I drive past Carson's statue or walk past Lord Craigavon's statue, which was made by Merrifield, in the stairs in the Great Hall, not a day goes by without my realising the privilege of representing North Antrim in the Assembly and realising the history of this Building, our country and what it has been through. How fitting is it that Lord Craigavon's statue overlooks proceedings in this Building, which is a Building and a Parliament that he built and established?

It is quite right and proper that we should mark the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of his death by remembering the man he was and by raising awareness of the great man. More could be done to enhance the man's memory through the official tour of Stormont. It would be in the population's interest to learn much more about the man and the history of this place and the times in which it was built. It is fitting that, on his death, Lord Carson was buried in St Anne's Cathedral. How much more fitting is it that Stormont is the site of the burial ground of our first Prime Minister, Lord Craigavon? He was a colossus of Stormont, a giant of a man in a time of giants.

If Lord Carson's leadership was indispensable in giving unionists a powerful voice in Great Britain, Lord Craigavon's organisational skills, discipline, military experience and personality were vital in enabling him to maintain the unity and the mobilisation of the Ulster people at a time of crisis. That crisis came about, of course, because of the home rule Bill and the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914. The Ulster Volunteer Force then became the 36th (Ulster) Division and led the way for Ulster's proudest yet most dire moments in the pages of history when it won undying glory in France.

Lord Craigavon was not only leader and Prime Minister of our country: he constructed it. He faced a task of great difficulty. James Craig

was an experienced politician but the men around him were not, so his Government had little experience. A new police force had to be brought into being and order established. He sought to establish a non-sectarian, integrated education system, but the Roman Catholic hierarchy rose up against that attempt. It is funny how history repeats itself, and I am sure that that point will not be lost on my colleague from North Antrim, the Chairperson of the Education Committee.

Slowly but surely, Lord Craigavon brought the tiny state of Northern Ireland into a state of strength and resolve, reflecting the character of its people. He was a man of undaunted courage, high character and sound judgement, and his powers of leadership and organisation were second to none. He served in South Africa with the 3rd battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles, in which the modern day Royal Irish Regiment has its roots. However, it is the funny and quirky stories about this great man that stick in my head.

James Craig was colour-blind. He discovered that he could not distinguish between red and green, which also meant that he could hardly distinguish between orange and green. Also during the Boer war, he proved a good and popular officer and a true soldier to his men, as has already been mentioned by the Member for East Belfast. Taken prisoner by the Boers, he elected to march with his men instead of riding with the other officers to the prison camp, which was 200 miles away. Our people, especially our children, should learn those stories and many more in history class at school. When I was at school, we learned about world and UK history, such as the Spanish Armada, Guy Fawkes, the Battle of Hastings and the great fire of London. However, I learned about Craigavon, Carson and the formation of Northern Ireland at home, not at school.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Bring your remarks to a close.

Mr Frew: I believe that that should be taught in schools, to give everybody the opportunity to judge that great man.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Mr George Robinson. Mr Robinson, I am sorry but, because of time constraints, you have two minutes.

Mr G Robinson: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

There are few people in any country's history who have earned the respect of their contemporaries and successors as Lord Craigavon has done in Northern Ireland. I am sure that he still watches over deliberations from a tomb not far from here. As Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister, he worked so hard in that role that he pushed himself into poor health and, undoubtedly, an early grave.

The Northern Ireland Prime Minister at the time of Lord Craigavon's death, Mr Andrews, stated:

"James Craig was a man whose life was devoted, with singleness of purpose, to the service of the state."

The warmth towards Lord Craigavon was from all sides of the political spectrum. Indeed, one Member, Mr Beattie, stated that Lord Craigavon would engage:

"...in a homely way in a friendly conversation."

The leader of the Senate at the time, Mr Robb, said that Craigavon had staunchness in his danger and calmness in days of excitement, which made him a tower of strength that resulted in his opponents giving him respect and admiration.

That respect and admiration from across the Parliament of that time was marked in the most prestigious way, with Lord Craigavon having his final resting place in the confines of this estate. That alone shows the hugely significant and lasting part that Lord Craigavon played in Northern Ireland's history. The purpose of this debate is to pay our respects to a man who was a giant physically and historically and to remember with gratitude the role that Lord Craigavon played.

I have, within two minutes, explained why I support the motion. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, Mr Robinson.

Mr Campbell: Mr Robinson is to be commended for finishing his remarks so expeditiously.

The debate was very wide-ranging. Its significance should not be underestimated, and it is testimony to every Member who took part that, despite the variety and range of opinions offered, there was at least recognition across the Chamber that this is an event of no little significance and that Lord Craigavon was a man of comprehensive stature throughout not just Northern Ireland and Ireland but the western

world. As Mr Jonathan Bell said, Lord Craigavon featured on the front page of 'Time' magazine.

Quite a number of Members contributed to the debate. Unfortunately, instead of trying to remember history, a small number of Members seemed determined to rewrite it. However, such is the nature of the events that we are in that it was almost inevitable that that would be the case.

Mr Mervyn Storey moved the motion, and I apologise for not being present for all his comments. In doing so, he comprehensively dealt with the famous quote that is probably used to caricature Lord Craigavon more so than any other contribution or speech that he made or any of his endeavours. Mr Storey put that quote in its proper context in that it was a response to earlier comments made. If this debate does nothing but illuminate that fact in the minds of everyone in Northern Ireland, it will have been time well spent.

Mr O'Dowd referred to the importance of the issue but said that there were other matters and subjects that we should be discussing, and he outlined a number of those. We could have taken that more seriously if his party, only last month, had not tabled a debate on an Irish language strategy, which is, many people would say, in the grand scheme of things, pretty small beer compared with what people are faced with at the moment. Nonetheless, he made that comment.

Tom Elliott was, as fourteenth leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, glad to support the motion and the thoughts behind it. Mr Elliott was one of a number of Members — including Mr Trevor Lunn, Mr Jonathan Craig and Sir Reg Empey — who outlined, in a variety of fashions, a potted history of James Craig, later Lord Craigavon. Mr Craig also indicated that he was the only Craig remaining in the Chamber. I will leave Members to judge whether that is a good or a bad thing. Sir Reg Empey made the relevant point that the Craigavon tomb should be included in tours of the Building.

In his inimitable fashion, William Humphrey made a significant job of giving a potted history of Lord Craigavon. Sydney Anderson and Stephen Moutray did likewise, both of whom come, of course, from the area that is named after Craigavon himself. They were, therefore, able to take a very localised and personalised approach to the debate.

I have already mentioned Jonathan Bell. He gave a further potted history and mentioned the birthdate of Lord Craigavon. I am sure that Mr Bell's wife will forgive him and accept that no reference whatsoever was made to her vintage. It is purely the day and month of her birthdate that she shares with Lord Craigavon.

Paul Frew outlined a very comprehensive potted history, including information that I was not aware of about the colour blindness of Lord Craigavon. He added to the colour of the debate, if I can say that.

Alban Maginness is not here at present. He made reference to the possibility of an all-party basis on which to commemorate this type of event.

1.30 pm

That is an interesting proposition, and I am sure that it will be considered if he puts it forward. I do not caution against it, but I hope that any all-party basis that might be considered would not dilute or diminish the importance of the individual subject matter to be commemorated.

Alban Maginness, a Member for North Belfast, also indicated that the nineteenth century was a period of relative peace in Ireland, and that it was James Craig who was responsible for reintroducing armed force into the politics of Ireland. I do not know where he got that from, but we must all remember the context in which Craig came into politics: it was the result of the home rule Bill. During Mr Lunn's contribution, Mr Maginness made an intervention in which he alluded to the sectarian debate about whether there should be a nine-county Ulster or a six-county Ulster. However, does anyone look at the other side of the coin and ask whether there would be a distinct difference in the demographic religious make-up of a 23-county Republic or a 26-county Republic? It would still have been overwhelmingly Catholic, and no one seriously suggests that whatever option was chosen would have made any difference whatsoever to the religious composition of that nation state and how it might affect its political future.

Mr McDevitt: Will the member give way?

Mr Campbell: Will I get an extra minute?

Mr Deputy Speaker: No.

Mr Campbell: Then I am not giving way.
[Laughter.]

I have dealt comprehensively with Alban Maginness's attempt to rewrite history. The honourable Member for South Belfast Conall McDevitt indicated that he was glad and content to acknowledge the history in the matter before us today. However, after an intervention or two from his SDLP colleagues, he appeared reticent to concede the greatness of the man. Craig was a man of his time, and when we talk about the historical importance of any figure or group of figures, we must always remember that they were people of their time. To try to apply the context and rationale of the twenty-first century to events that happened over 100 years ago, as Craig was unfolding his vision for the future, simply does not work. We have to try to work in the context of what happened at the time and of why those events occurred.

Mr McDevitt: Will the Member give way?

Mr Campbell: No, I will not give way. If I do not get an extra minute, I will not give way.

Mr Bresland talked about the political reality of today and how much of it was due to the early work of Lord Craigavon. Mr Lunn gave a potted history of Lord Craigavon and accurately outlined the fact that although some people may have different opinions of him, there is no doubting the extent and importance of his contribution.

We have spent a little time today remembering and outlining the significance of this giant figure. In our political future, we would do well to learn the lessons of the past to ensure that the failures are not repeated and the successes are recalled.

Lord Bannside: There is one thing that has been missed, which is the fact that the remains of the great man whom we have been talking about still carry the same message. I do not take people around the Building without showing them the marks on the floor where his monument stands. Certain evil people came into the House before I was a Member and tried to throw him down the stairs, but he still said "not an inch."

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Campbell: That was a point of order. *[Laughter.]*

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the seventieth anniversary of the death of Lord Craigavon, the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

Domiciliary Care

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Ms M Anderson: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the challenges posed by the changing demographics; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to ensure that there is adequate investment in domiciliary care to meet the current and future needs of an ageing population.

Go raibh míle maith agat. Éirím le tacaíocht a thabhairt don rún.

Last week, we discussed the Commissioner for Older People Bill, which passed its Consideration Stage. That Bill was shaped by the sector and was welcomed by all, because it tackled the issues that older people face. Those issues are multidimensional and cover, as was discussed last week, discrimination, breaches of rights, poor practice, lack of attention and, of course, inadequate domiciliary care packages or home care packages, which impact on all the other areas.

Over recent months, my office has been inundated with constituents whose domiciliary care packages are being reduced or, in some cases, taken away altogether. That is not the fault of care workers, who, I know from personal experience, do a wonderful job. I rely on carers for my mother, so I know only too well that the packages are an absolute lifeline for many families, and they must be protected. The half an hour in the morning or afternoon or whatever one may receive or need makes all the difference to the quality of life of the individual concerned and his or her entire family.

The intended shift was towards a domiciliary care setting, as stated in the 'People First' policy document, which was produced over 20 years ago. However, when the Public Accounts Committee investigated the matter 18 years later, in 2008, it found that older people with care needs continued to be treated in an institutional setting rather than at home. Those who want to remain independent in their own homes and stay in control of their own lives for as long as possible often have to fight

the system every step of the way to get the provision that they need, the services that they require and their rights guaranteed.

We have been told today that, for those who require institutional care or nursing home facilities, the Western Trust will be allocating only two places a month. That is an absolute scandal. The 'People First' document committed the Health Department to transforming the health system for older people from one dominated by residential provision to one that would offer the kind of flexibility and sufficiency to support older people so that they can remain in their homes as long as possible.

However, we have learned today about the nursing home places, and that is of grave concern to every Member. As MLAs, all of us can cite cases in which we have had to fight to get a package in place to allow someone to remain independent or to get someone discharged from hospital. As I said, two years ago, the Public Accounts Committee stated that the discharge of older people from general hospital often causes problems for the domiciliary or home care packages process, principally due to differences of opinion between the individual and professionals and between the relatives and carers on the appropriateness of the package needed for the older person in order for him or her to return home. However, it stressed the importance of more careful planning of discharges to ensure that the appropriate package is available as and when it is needed.

As we debate the matter as MLAs here in the Chamber, a meeting at Altnagelvin Hospital later this afternoon will discuss the case of an 87-year-old Derry woman with leg ulcers and poor mobility. The carer who was attending to the woman before she was hospitalised four weeks ago was not able to shower or toilet her properly because an additional carer was required to assist her in those tasks. Despite the health and safety risk, occupational therapy stated that the lady did not require two carers. That 87-year-old's discharge from hospital has been delayed for weeks because the issue remains unresolved. On Friday, that elderly lady was moved from Altnagelvin to the Waterside Hospital. As yet, the family wait and have to fight for her much-needed care package.

That human story is what today's debate is about. Elizabeth is 87 years of age and has two elderly sisters, who are 89 and 90 years old. All

three live in the same home. Both her sisters have dementia, and all three are able to live at home only with the assistance of their ageing nieces and family members, some of whom are older people.

The Health Department's policy is that older people should remain in their homes. Therefore, the contribution of informal carers, such as family members, and the views of those who provide the vast bulk of the caring — in this case, the three elderly ladies' extended families — and of the home carers should be taken into account when establishing Elizabeth's discharge needs.

A few weeks ago, I raised that point with the Minister in the Chamber. He confirmed that 11 people from across the North were not discharged from hospital or institutional care on that day. Perhaps that was the position on that day, but many have found themselves experiencing the same difficulty when trying to get a care package in place. To get an adequate care package in place, many people have had to rely on tired, emotionally stressed and often elderly relatives to confront and challenge the system.

Anyone can tell us that that is a false economy. It costs significantly more to keep someone in hospital, never mind the issue of bed blocking, than to pay for one hour of home care throughout the day, which amounts to less than £20. We are told that, depending on the ward, it can cost between £300 and £600 a day to keep a person in hospital.

In recent years, however, there has been a tightening of the eligibility criteria for domiciliary care, which has restricted access to care and support. Low-level services, such as home helps and meals on wheels, have been withdrawn. Evidence suggests that a reduction in the provision of social care can have the knock-on effect of increasing demand for other health services, especially emergency care.

Earlier this year, I met the commissioner to raise the problem of domiciliary care in the city of Derry. The commissioner accepted that the Western Trust faced a major shortfall in the domiciliary care budget, which is leading to severe difficulties in the service. There was a suggestion then that steps would be taken to secure additional funds. Perhaps the Minister will be able to tell Members whether such steps have been taken, because the evidence on the ground suggests that that is not the case.

The Minister indicated that he would take on board my concerns about domiciliary care when I raised them a few weeks ago. I greatly welcomed his comments at that time, and I wrote to him formally afterwards. Again, perhaps the Minister will update us.

A few weeks ago, I met representatives of the Western Trust for the third time in a number of months to discuss the issue. It was clear from our discussion that we face an ageing population boom that will require significant investment, now and in the future, to meet its needs.

1.45 pm

According to the census, in the past decade, there has been an increase of almost 30% in the number of people who are aged over 65 in the Western Trust area. By 2017, that number is expected to rise by 50%, while the number of people who are aged over 85 is expected to increase by more than 80%. That is a massive challenge for our health providers.

Given that the Western Trust already spends £20 million of its £400 million budget on domiciliary home care packages, it is clear that more resources will be needed to provide the standard of care that an ageing population will require and is entitled to. However, the Public Accounts Committee said that, despite that, allocated funding was significantly out of line with population trends across the North. However, the Department does not seem to have taken account of that aspect of the Public Accounts Committee report. Perhaps the Minister can tell us more about that.

Making the shift towards social care and prevention requires long-term political commitment and a fundamental shift in how the Health Service works. Although that may be a task, or even an opportunity, for a future Health Minister, current domiciliary care provision must support older people with dignity and enable them to live their lives independently and as they choose. Go raibh míle maith agat.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Before I call Alex Easton, I remind Members not to use BlackBerrys in the Chamber, as they interfere with the equipment.

Mr Easton: I support the motion and thank Members for bringing it forward. I start by paying tribute to the staff responsible for domiciliary care across Northern Ireland. They have helped many families to keep their loved ones at

home. Had it not been for domiciliary care, my grandparents would not have been able to spend their last days and weeks at home in the comfort of their loved ones. I also thank the Minister because I know that domiciliary care is dear to his heart and that he has been putting increased resources into it.

Projections suggest that Northern Ireland's population is increasing and that the older population is notably on the rise. It is estimated that by 2014, the number of people who are aged 64 and under will increase by about 20,827 or 1.4%, and, by 2020, that figure will have increased by 44,846 or 2.9%. Population projections predict a much sharper rise in people who are aged 65 and over. It is estimated that by 2014, the number of people who are aged 65 and over will increase by 27,800 or 10.7%, and, by 2020, that figure will have increased by 69,000 or 26%. It is predicted that by 2030, one in five old people will be of pension age, and one in 10 people will be aged 75 and over.

Those statistics are worrying, and it is clear that more demand for domiciliary care will be placed on our Health Service. As we get older, our health needs become more demanding. With the advancement of preventative medicines and of our standard of living, we are living longer. That will have a major effect on our Health Service.

At present, health and social care trusts carry out care management assessments, and when domiciliary care is identified as the best form of target, trusts organise its delivery either by a statutory provider or by contracting an independent provider.

Statistics show that more than 80% of people in receipt of our home-help service in Northern Ireland are in the elderly care programme. In 1990, the Government published a document entitled 'People First', which laid out the Department's vision for community care. That essentially piggybacked on the Thatcherite idea of closing down institutions and providing care in the community, which was primarily about money and resources but seemed to be better for the patient.

Demand on domiciliary care has risen, as has the funding, which increased by 40% in the four years from 2003 to 2006. Before community care was rolled out across the United Kingdom, I would be interested in seeing how much it cost to provide care in residential and nursing

homes in comparison to community care packages. Was it more costly, and how much more money was invested in the care of our elderly population during that period compared to now? I understand that, in many ways, community care packages are better for people, as they allow them to live in their own home or a family member's home with a certain degree of independence. However, I am interested to know the difference in the level of investment between then and now and to know whether people who needed care were better treated. I am happy to support the motion.

Mr McCallister: In common with other Members, I support the motion. It took Ms Anderson some time in proposing the motion to get to the issue of demographics.

There are several aspects to the motion. Mr Easton outlined, as I am sure that other Members will, that, when we look at the demographics, there is no doubt that the need for domiciliary care is rising. It could rise by as much as 22% in the next 20 to 30 years. That is a huge and challenging rise in figures. As medicine improves and investment is made to address health inequalities that blight some communities, that will, of course, put more strain on budgets for domiciliary care.

I pay tribute to those who provide care and who, at times, do a difficult job. I also want to pay tribute to carers, whose inclusion in the motion may have been overlooked. They look after loved ones and family members out of a sense of duty, with no reward. It is important that they are always remembered. It is important that we remember the old saying, "Who cares for the carers?"

The changing demographics are startling. It is often understated in health debates and others in the Assembly and must, therefore, be pointed out that the Health Department is the only Department that has completed its obligations under the review of public administration. That might not sound terribly glamorous. Some people might ask what that has to do with domiciliary care. It is vital in the delivery of domiciliary care that the number of trusts has been reduced to five.

More importantly, in facing those demographic changes, Northern Ireland is the only region to have a dedicated Public Health Agency. That makes a huge difference. As we go forward, it will make a huge difference to people's lives. It will help to keep them healthier, fitter and out of

long-term care for longer periods. Looking after people's health for longer will help to fend off the stresses that changing demographics put on the budget.

As the Minister has said previously, a person uses the Health Service most during the early years and the last 10 years of his or her life. That is when there are big challenges. The Public Health Agency has a key role to address the pressures that arise from the demographics that are mentioned in the motion.

If one looks at current need, there are differences in waiting lists for domiciliary care in some trust areas. Pressures have arisen due to changing demographics in the two trusts that cover my constituency, the Southern Health and Social Care Trust and the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. Certainly, demographics in the South Eastern Trust area are changing at an alarming rate. Budget pressures will arise from that.

There have been reports that Sinn Féin is, perhaps, delaying or refusing to come to a Budget agreement. I am pleased that it now seems to be moving towards signing up to protecting health and ring-fencing health funds. However, there is concern that although we may have seen movement to protect health recently, there must also be movement to protect social care, in which domiciliary care fits firmly. We must see protection of services. We cannot come to the Chamber and call constantly for investment in various services in different parts of Northern Ireland unless we actually vote for that when we get the opportunity in Budget debates or support, campaign and lobby for it in the Budget process.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Please bring your remarks to a close.

Mr McCallister: That is something that we need to support.

I am happy to support the motion. I am pleased to welcome others to the cause of protecting health and social care in the Budget process.

Mr Gallagher: I support the motion, and I thank the Members who have brought it to the Floor. The proposer has outlined the problem very well. She explained the difficulties faced in situations in which care is required for elderly people with complex needs and the non-availability of funding for that care.

The proposer shares the same trust area as me, which is the Western Trust. Approximately 45 beds in the three hospitals in that trust are occupied by elderly patients with complex needs. Most of them have been there for months. They should be in a more appropriate setting, such as a nursing home, but they cannot move because the funding is not available. I will look at the part of that arrangement that is very odd, particularly to the families of the people who are detained in those beds. It is costing at least £2,000 a week to keep them in hospital. As most Members know, it would cost less than £1,000 a week to accommodate them in a nursing home. There is an underutilisation of beds in nursing homes in the Western Trust. That is a real problem, and it does not fit well in the delivery of healthcare for the individuals concerned. Fourteen beds are blocked in that way in the local hospital in Enniskillen at a cost to the Health Service of £14,000 a week.

People come into our constituency offices and tell us that their home-help hours are being whittled away. There is a serious problem, and I hope that the Minister will take on board the extent of the problem in our area. I will quote from correspondence that I received recently. It states:

"I am writing to you following the way that you have profiled this issue in the local papers. I write to you out of desperation. My uncle is currently residing at the Erne Hospital. He is a bed-blocker, and he has been awaiting funding for a nursing home placement for several months. Due to the unsuitability of the acute care setting for his needs, his general health status has deteriorated exponentially, and his disease process has accelerated rapidly. It is my fear that he will be exposed to further infections and the risk of further deterioration and death in acute care, if he continues to be denied a nursing home place."

That is one of many examples.

I want to move on to some other problems around domiciliary care. I pay tribute to all the staff who work in that sector for their dedication and commitment. However, there is an inconsistency. It is a mix of statutory care and voluntary community providers, but there is a difference in the money that is paid to those healthcare workers. Generally, those in statutory care are on a higher rate, but, most importantly, travel expenses are available to them but not to the workers who do the same job but who work

for a local charity. We have several of those in the Fermanagh area. That is a problem that needs to be tackled.

In addition, there is the issue of tendering. The community and charitable organisations are being approached by large organisations who want to take them over.

As the Health Service moves towards tendering and value for money, those very good organisations that serve in local areas and which send out carers who know the patients and the area are likely to be taken over in the coming years by the larger organisations —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close, please?

Mr Gallagher: — and the Health service will lose out unless room is made for big and small care providers together.

2.00 pm

Mr McCarthy: I support the motion and acknowledge the progress made to date by the Health Department in providing domiciliary care to those who need it. However, I was very disappointed listening to Radio Ulster this morning to hear the stories from "west of the Bann" — I think that that is what they call it. I fully support the comments of Anne O'Reilly of Age NI, who said that need is greatest there.

Community care came about as a result of the 'People First' document published by the Department in the early 1990s. That document stressed the importance of keeping sick and elderly or disabled people in their own home for as long as possible. That policy would surely be supported by the vast majority of people, including those who need care. There will, of course, be some people who, for various reasons, prefer to be looked after in some sort of residential home but certainly not in a hospital for a long time.

'People First' identified methods of care in the community that would satisfy the many and varied needs of people requiring additional help and care outside homes or hospitals. Health boards would assess individual needs and provide care packages to meet the requirements and, at the same time, boards would make full use of any independent community care sector. I pay tribute to the good work carried out by those independent providers, such as Crossroads,

Praxis Care and others, which are all doing fantastic work in the community.

The term “bed blocking” was commonly used some time ago, although I have not heard it used much recently, which is a good sign. It came about as a result of new patients requiring hospital treatment, only to find that vital beds in the hospital were occupied by people, mainly elderly, who had had their treatment and who were ready for home but, because there were no suitable care packages available or in place, they had to remain in hospital; hence the term “bed blocking”. Fortunately, because of domiciliary provision, that situation has been reduced, certainly in my locality as far as I am aware, but it has not been entirely eradicated. It is because of that worry that we asked our Health Minister, who, I am glad to see, is here today, to listen and, hopefully, act on what Members are saying to ensure that the resources are in place so that there is no return to the bad old days.

Once again, I thank the Assembly Research and Library Service staff for their information pack. The volume of information, concerns and questions on this subject from other Members shows that every constituency has been affected and that each wishes to see investment provided for care in the community.

In conclusion, my constituents in Strangford will welcome the initiative, taken earlier this year, by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust along with Unison. They both said that they were committed to providing a high-quality, statutory domiciliary service that not only meets the needs of older people but ensures their independence in the trust area and that they recognised the crucial role of a highly trained, motivated, respected and satisfied workforce. I pay tribute to all those staff, whether private or public, for their dedication to duty and the satisfaction of clients because of their skills. Long may that continue.

Mr Girvan: I speak in favour of the motion as presented. Like many Members who spoke previously, I put on record my thanks to those domiciliary workers who go beyond the requirements of their jobs. On many occasions, they exceed the time allocated for doing that job for the elderly and work outside the time frame. That goes unrewarded financially. Those workers do not see the people who they look after as an opportunity for employment, they do more.

Many Members who spoke previously mentioned the increase in the number of elderly people. By 2020, it is said that there will be a 26% increase in the number of people aged over 65. It is necessary that we consider positively how we look after that vulnerable section of our community.

An aspect that creates concern was mentioned this morning on the radio. It involves, not those who are released from hospital and brought back into the community, but those who are not necessarily fit to go back into their own homes and who are not getting the funding package that allows them to live in residential homes. However, I appreciate that we are dealing with the domiciliary care aspect.

I come from a family that is getting no younger. It is important that we give consideration to the need for care and respect and the need to deal with people with some dignity. A number of people feel that their voices are not listened to. I, for one, want to be sure that that is not the case and that the funding does follow.

I want to see best use of the resource we have. In the period 2002-06, there was a marked increase in the funding of domiciliary care. Unfortunately, that funding did not always follow the patient. As was said this morning, costs exceed £2,000 per week — £2,100 is the minimum needed to keep someone in a hospital bed. “Bed blocking” and “delayed discharge” are two of the various terms used to describe this, but they all amount to the same thing. Unless the package is in place for the patient, he or she has to remain in hospital until that is dealt with.

It has been mentioned to me that a number of the workers involved in this service find travel between patients difficult. There are issues in relation to the time allowed for them to get from one home to another. Adequate time is not always allowed for or taken into account. That issue must be looked at.

We must look at ring-fencing some of the budget. We discussed ring-fencing health budgets and so on. There is a problem in that managers are very precious about their own budgets. They allow their budgets to be used for some areas but not to be transferred to others. In some cases, we need to make such assessments daily, as opposed to concluding that the year's supply of money has been spent and that the people in need of care will have

to stay in the hospital system, costing the Department a lot more money. That needs to be looked at.

I support the motion, and it is worthwhile to bring it to the Floor of the House. The Minister and his Department have taken domiciliary care into account and added some additional moneys for it in the past. I want to see that continue, but throwing money at the problem does not necessarily make a difference.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I, too, support the motion. However, when I speak in debates on issues that particularly affect older people, I sometimes notice that it seems as though we are only paying lip service to their needs.

The document 'People First', when published in 1990, was hailed as a vision for community care. Twenty years later, most of the aims of that document have not been achieved. The debates on health and social care for older people do not appear to focus on the right of those people to live their lives with a proper degree of dignity. Our duty should be to enhance and improve the quality of the lives of our older population.

The debate on health and social care always seems to focus on the economic implications of an ageing population, rather than on notions of entitlements, rights and fairness. No one is denying that meeting the health needs of an ageing population has major financial implications for all Departments, not just the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. However, if affirmative action and support for older people in the community is not put in place, surely the costs will continue to increase and become far greater.

Demographic shifts bring economic and social challenges for health and social care policy. Here in the North, there are over 300,000 people of retirement age, making up 17% of the population. It is expected that, by 2030, that figure will have increased to 24%, and, by that stage, it is also expected that over 130,000 people over the age of 80 will be living here. With a growing number of older people perhaps living longer, some will have conditions such as arthritis or the effects of stroke or dementia that can seriously reduce their quality of life. To maintain their independence, they will become more reliant on appropriate social care and domiciliary services.

The area of social care is a very complex one, and it can often be a source of distress for many older people and their families. Reductions in the provision of social care can have the knock-on effect of increasing demand for other health services. In many instances, prevention is the key to the promotion of good health and to a reduction in health inequalities. However, that currently appears to be undermined by the tightening of eligibility criteria for domiciliary care, by restricting access to care and support and by the withdrawal of services such as home help, meals on wheels and so on. There have been reductions of nearly 20% in the provision of home-help services since 2005 and reductions of nearly 18% for meals on wheels since that time. We should be concentrating on the idea that the prevention of ill health is a way of controlling costs in health and social care. We need to put in place a shift in resources to give a higher priority to prevention. However, there is no real evidence that that is happening.

Whenever services are limited or restricted, it is older people who are disproportionately affected, as they are greater users of health and social care services. A lot of older people remain fit and healthy, but the risks of ill health and disability increase with age, and people have to access these services. Those who face ill health must be treated equitably. Older people who need domiciliary care should be treated with respect and should get the care that meets their particular needs.

I have come across two cases recently where stroke victims coming out of hospital needed an enhanced care package for a short period to ensure that they were able to settle back into the domestic environment. Unfortunately, that care package was not forthcoming and had to be negotiated and fought for. That increased the trauma and stress on patients and families, who simply asked for the help to which they were entitled.

Dignity, independence and choice must be put at the heart of the social care system here in the North. People need to be absolutely sure that they will be treated fairly and equally, that the care that they receive will be of the highest quality and that they will get information and advice that is absolutely clear. We also need to ensure that those who care for relatives and friends receive the help and support that they require. At this point, I pay tribute to those carers and the people who work for social

services, as they do a tremendous job that is often not fully recognised.

There is no doubt that resources can and should be used more effectively to promote the health and well-being of older people. Long-term political commitment is required in making the shift from treating illness to preventing it. A fundamental shift in how the Health Service works is also required. We need a fundamental and urgent review of social care here in the North.

2.15 pm

Mr Bell: I welcome the motion. It is a very prescient motion and it allows us to forearm ourselves, because we have been forewarned about the need in the future. Given that the elderly are the fastest growing population sector in the United Kingdom, making proper preparation now will help us to deal with future challenges. As has been said, if we fail to plan, we plan to fail. The motion allows us to take a serious look at what has happened.

I have a psychology background, and I sometimes get concerned about the language that is used in reference to our elderly population. They are referred to as bed-blockers. There may be technical reasons for that, but it is almost as if they, who have contributed a lifetime of service in tax and National Insurance contributions, are in some way a burden. It is pointed out, rightly, that the elderly population is the single biggest user of community social services, but the corollary of that is never pointed out: that the elderly people have paid the most for those services through a lifetime of, in many cases, industry and very hard work.

Sometimes we need to change the phraseology from a negative to a positive. It is a success of our Health Service that more people are living longer. That should be something that we celebrate. It is a particular success in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust area that I represent. I pay tribute to the Minister and the staff, whether administrative or on the care side, who have more people in domiciliary care in 2010 than they had in 2009. The last figures that I could see, which were raised by Martina Anderson, were for August 2009. Of the 11 people who were in beds in hospitals, with the exception of one who had to remain confidential, 10 were in trust areas other than mine. That, in many cases, is tribute to the staff, who do not have infinite resources. Nobody does. I add my voice to those that say that every Department

should fight for its budget, but, at the end of the day, let us make sure that we have a Budget so that people can make adequate plans for the future.

In my trust area in Strangford, I see the careful work that is put in to administering what are finite resources. I see the care and dignity that is given to keeping people in their own homes, and I see the decorum and respect that professional Health Service staff give to our elderly population. They treat them in their elder years with the type of dignity and respect that they are due for a lifetime of service to this country and community.

We have to look towards the medium term and the increases that we will see by 2014 and 2020. The Northern Ireland Audit Office report noted the gradual improvement. In many ways, that is an encouragement to the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to see whether we can act as a catalyst in some way to make that gradual improvement a better one. A report produced by Age Concern and Help the Aged, which are now Age Northern Ireland, raised the concern that domiciliary care was not proceeding as fast as it should. It said that 59% of the elder care population was still in residential and nursing home services. We are looking for an improvement.

There are plenty of nursing homes that provide an absolutely fantastic service. I was in Orchard Court, which is a residential facility in my constituency. I saw the care and dignity of people who have their own homes but live collectively and have a resource. It is not always the absolute perfect answer to say that there are people who should be cared for in residential homes, in nursing homes and at home. It is the proportions that we are talking about. There should be no sort of distinction of success.

I conclude by saying that this is not singly a problem —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Bring your remarks to a close, please.

Mr Bell: — for the Health Service. It is also an issue for housing and for community-based services.

Mr Gardiner: First, I pay tribute to all those workers who dedicate themselves to looking after our senior citizens, whom we so often refer to as “old-age pensioners”. That, at least, has

been the trend in the debate, and we should, of course, refer to them as “older people”. All those Health Service workers in that line of duty do a tremendous amount of work with tender loving care, for which I record my appreciation.

Older people are set to make up an increasing proportion of the population. Those aged 60 and above will account for 27% of the population in 20 years' time, compared with the present 19%. In 2007, the Audit Office noted that there were more than 266,000 older people living in Northern Ireland. In 2009, health and social care trusts delivered 6% more hours of domiciliary care than they did in 2008. In 2009, each client received an average of 10·1 hours of such care, compared with 9·4 hours in 2008. Make no mistake: none of that care is inexpensive. I am afraid that we are, once more, back into the territory in which political parties that are supposed to be part of the government of Northern Ireland have, on the one hand, demanded cuts in the Minister's budget and, on the other, have demanded that he spend more on some aspects of health and social services delivery — in this case, domiciliary services.

The rise in demand for different aspects of health service delivery is nothing new. In fact, the Minister is consistently asked to deliver budget savings despite a 12% rise in demand for hospital services this year, on top of last year's 9%. During the same period, the Minister received a real increase in funding of only 0·001%. In addition, he was told to save £113 million, even before the comprehensive spending review cuts came through.

Having put the debate in its context, I turn now to the real issues that having an ageing population places on the agenda. The average cost of domiciliary care for a patient from a health and social care trust is £13·09 an hour. The average daily cost of maintaining a patient in hospital is approximately £261 a day. This year, across Northern Ireland, only 17 patients could not have been discharged from hospital because of a lack of domiciliary care. The Department already spends £630 million on supporting older people in the community. That figure will be topped up by an additional £600 million in this comprehensive spending review period, during which we will cater for an additional 1,500 older people.

In conclusion, the false demarcation line that some people try to draw between what they

describe as “front line health services” and “social services” causes me concern. That is not how the system works on the ground. Care in the home for an elderly patient is a perfect example of how impossible it is to separate front line healthcare from aftercare. I support the motion, but I hope that the Members who tabled it get their thinking right.

Mrs M Bradley: I thank the proposer for bringing the motion, which I support, to the House.

We live in a society in which some of our older people face daily challenges, be that for reasons of ill health, poverty, abuse in any form or lack of social contact. However, we cannot and should not tolerate such things, but to change them requires a change of mindset in society in general.

That is a difficult task for which, unfortunately, the House does not have sole responsibility. However, we have the power to enact the changes required by the motion, which should be laid not only at the door of the Health Minister but at that of the Finance Minister.

In Northern Ireland, 300,000 people, or 17% of the population, are of retirement age. Over the next 10 years, the figure is expected to rise by 26·8%, and, by 2030, that age group will account for 24% of the population. The greatest increase will be in the older old. The projected figure of 130,000 people in the 80-and-above bracket is astonishing but, nonetheless, reasonable, given the general trend over the past 10 years of people living longer. We should have been preparing for that scenario, because there is no correlation between living longer and staying active for longer. Indeed, the possibility of having a disability in older years is, unfortunately, an odds-on bet. Some older people are lucky to lead active lives; however, due to failing health, many cannot. The idea of domiciliary care has been around for a long time, although under many titles. The provision of social care has not advanced at the same rate as life expectancy. Hence, the familiar story that I and, I am sure, many other Members hear daily in our constituency offices, which is that demand well and truly outweighs supply.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Molloy] in the Chair)

In the hope that the House will do something about that, we will all reiterate the same facts and figures with which lobby groups and charities supply us. However, I shall give just

two examples, which I believe will make the case in point. Both are recent cases. The first involves a gentleman of 90 years of age, whose wife — who, incidentally, had looked after him — died some weeks ago. He was supported well by family and friends, but he needed someone for 30 minutes every morning and 30 minutes in the evening. To my horror, I was told that that could not happen. I thought that an hour a day was a very reasonable request for anyone to make, but I was told that he had to wait for a package to be handed in from someone else. When I asked what that really meant, they would not say it, but I did. I asked: “Are you telling me that someone has to die before this man can get one hour of care a day?” I then got a “Yes”, which really and truly horrified me. I had the shivers about it. Our social care system is like a conveyor belt, and it is not responsive in any shape or form.

I have quoted my second example in the Chamber before, and it involves a man suffering from Parkinson's disease, who was retained in hospital for 16 weeks because they could not get an outside carer package for him. His wife wanted him home desperately, and he wanted to go home, but he had to remain there for 16 weeks. Fancy the cost of that, when he could have been at home with a care package, which would have been much cheaper. To be exact, his release from hospital took 16 and a half weeks. Those are not the only cases of which I have experience, but I will quote only them.

No money, no staff, no help: full stop. That is my experience over the past 26 years. In my capacity as a public representative, over the years, I have found that no one wants to be away from home. People want to be at home with their loved ones, and, no matter how small their capacity for independence might be, they do not want to lose it. It costs less to allow people to go home with the appropriate assistance than to keep them in an acute setting or a care home over the long term, and it has proven to be better for patients emotionally and mentally.

Although I appreciate that we are in challenging financial times, it is our responsibility to ensure that the best is delivered for our people. Older people are one of the most vulnerable groups, so I urge the Minister to do all in his power to impress on the trusts the fact that social care must be prioritised, so that there are levels and benchmarks below which the standard of care

offered cannot fall. The care system should at least be human and should allow for dignity and respect, which need to be our watchwords when deploying social care, no matter how minor its application.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member should draw her remarks to a close.

Mrs M Bradley: I congratulate those who provide care in the community in every way, because they willingly carry out work beyond that which they are expected to do, and they do it excellently. I support the motion.

2.30 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Deputy Speaker: Questions 1, 6 and 8 have been withdrawn.

Ships: Banríon Uladh

2. **Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she has had any discussions with Ofcom or the coastguard prior to her decision to name the new fisheries protection vessel “Banríon Uladh”. (AQO 547/11)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ms Gildernew): Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I did not have discussions with either Ofcom or the Maritime and Coastguard Agency prior to naming the new fisheries protection vessel “Banríon Uladh”. However, I am aware that Ofcom does not have guidance on the naming of vessels. It regards the vessel name as cosmetic, because it does not serve as the unique identifier of vessels when making radio transmissions. The unique identifier is the call sign, which is allocated with the radio licence. That is what Ofcom advises is normally given when sending distress signals, along with other such information as may be relevant.

Mr Moutray: The Ofcom guidance for naming vessels is that the name should be clearly understood when operating over the radio. It is clear that the naming of the vessel fails that test. What steps has the Minister taken to ensure that the naming of the vessel meets the requirement that employees have the right to a neutral environment free from intimidation?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I have looked at the variety of names of the vessels that are registered in the local fishing fleet. I do not believe that “Banríon Uladh” would create any more difficulties than some of the names that are already registered. I do not believe that the simple fact of naming the vessel in Irish is any kind of breach. Promoting good community relations and equality of treatment does not

mean that the name of the vessel should be in English. Indeed, the fishing industry is made up of people from all sectors of the community. I have also looked at the Equality Commission guidelines on promoting a good and harmonious working environment. Those guidelines state specifically:

“The use of languages other than English ... will not, in general, constitute an infringement of a good and harmonious working environment.”

Mr Beggs: Does the Minister realise that when they force the Irish language on a community, she and Sinn Féin are in danger of creating division and hostility to that language, as well as, in this case, risking health and safety because people would have difficulty in pronouncing the name of the vessel?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: I do not accept that. I believe that the name is very poetic. “Banríon Uladh” translates as “Queen of Ulster”, and I felt that that was a very good name for a vessel that is under the aegis of my Department. I am more than happy to promote the Irish language and to enable other people to use it. There are other examples of Irish used in everyday scenarios that are helping to promote the use of the Irish language among people who do not necessarily speak it.

Mr P J Bradley: Can the Minister tell me whether Ofcom and the coastguard contributed to the purchase of the vessel? If so, will they also be expected to contribute to its maintenance, upkeep and general running?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: No. Part of the cost of the vessel is being recouped from the EU. A business case was put to the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) through an EU-regulated procurement competition that Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) oversaw. Ofcom did not contribute to the purchase of the vessel. It was bought by my Department together with an amount of money from the EU.

A5 Western Transport Corridor

3. **Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment, from an agricultural perspective, of the proposed A5 western transport corridor. (AQO 548/11)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: The proposed A5 scheme will clearly have an impact on farms in its path, and on some more than others. It is the responsibility of the Department for Regional Development (DRD) to ensure that the impact of any road scheme be properly assessed. The Minister for Regional Development has advised that Roads Service is assessing the impact of the proposed A5 dual carriageway on farms along the proposed scheme on a case-by-case basis. An agronomist has been employed to assist in that process.

Where practicable, the impact will be mitigated as part of the scheme development. DFP's Land and Property Services will take account of the final impact as part of an overall compensation package. My main concern in the process is that the impact on individual farm businesses be minimised where possible and that they be properly compensated when the impact cannot be mitigated. The Member will be aware of the strategic nature of that and other schemes and that the Executive have considered and approved the progress of the A5 scheme in particular. Their consideration, therefore, concluded that the wider economic and social benefits that would result outweighed any potential negative impact.

Mrs D Kelly: I welcome the Minister's commitment to having an individual farm assessed by need as regards farm activities. Given the difficulties with negative equity, what assurances can the Minister give that farmers will get a fair deal for the land that they may be required to give up?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: The Department for Regional Development is looking at that on a case-by-case basis. Indeed, it did a piece of work in conjunction with the Ulster Farmers' Union and my Department to develop guidelines for the acquisition of land or property for major road schemes. That document provides landowners with a useful background to the process and the parties and timescales that are involved. The document is published on the DRD website, and it is available to anyone who wishes to access it.

Dr Deeny: From the Minister's agricultural point of view, will she take on board the point of view of health and safety and saving lives? As I have, she has probably used the new A4, and she will know the reputation of what is known locally as

the Ballygawley line, which runs from Omagh through Ballygawley to Dungannon. The A4, on which I have travelled twice in the past week, is a magnificent improvement. I have no doubt that it will save lives, which should take precedence. I have no doubt that the A5, which is being progressed west of Ballygawley towards Omagh, will do the same.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Question.

Dr Deeny: Will the Minister agree that saving lives should take precedence?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: I agree fully with the Member, and I welcome his supplementary question. I have known many people who have been killed over the past decades on the Ballygawley line. It has been a notorious stretch of road. There is so much potential for saving lives through road schemes so that people do not take a chance by overtaking on bad corners because they are being held up by traffic and, ultimately, end up in a collision. I absolutely agree that the scheme should be progressed not only for the benefit of saving lives but for the economic impact that it will have on the region.

Mr Buchanan: If those lands are vested and not utilised for a few years, perhaps because of future funding constraints, will farmers still be able to use the land for single farm payment claims (SFP), or will they have to bear the brunt of financial loss because the land has been vested?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: Loss of land that carries single farm payment entitlements may result in their loss unless they can be transferred onto a similar area of land. Alternatively, they can be sold, but if a landowner cannot mitigate the loss of SFP through the transfer of sale of entitlements, I understand that the loss may be considered in the overall valuation by the district valuer. However, where mitigation proves successful, the costs of sale, including the agent's fee and other incidental costs, are payable as compensation instead.

Farm Produce: 2012 Olympics

4. **Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action her Department is taking to ensure that Northern Ireland farm produce is being promoted to the London 2012 Olympic committee. (AQO 549/11)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: Locally, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) is the lead Department for the 2012 Olympics, and I understand that, as part of an Olympic task force, DCAL is working with Invest NI to promote the business opportunities that the Olympics present. My Department works closely with Invest NI to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to supporting our food industry. Invest NI is working with the London organising committee of the Olympic Games to ensure that companies are given the opportunity to bid for contracts for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. My Department continues to provide technical support and advice to producers and processors to help them to engage in public sector contracts. I understand that the Olympic caterers are required to include regional and speciality foods, and that offers a great opportunity for local producers.

Mr G Robinson: What is the Minister doing to prevent a protectionist policy being developed in the Republic of Ireland against food that is produced in Northern Ireland?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: That issue has been raised by a number of Departments. Indeed, the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment raised it. I have made my position very clear: we could work together to promote food from the island of Ireland and compete with the world as opposed to competing with each other. There is much benefit in working with food companies across the island to get that message across. Our food companies, producers and processors will not be slow to avail themselves of any opportunities that are available to them, and they will be keen to work to compete in a global market for export opportunities.

Mr McCarthy: Portavogie prawns, Comber spuds, Mash Direct and Rich Sauces are all excellent products and facilities from the Strangford constituency. Is it not advisable for the Minister to produce a list of those exquisite foods from my constituency and others to give to the 2012 Olympics organising committee?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: Since Jim Shannon has left, I did not think that I would hear that type of list being read out in the Chamber, because he was normally the one to come up with such lists.

The EU protected food names scheme provides an opportunity to protect regional produce on a geographical basis and for that produce to be promoted with a recognised European quality mark. The new season Comber potato, for example, is one of the protected geographical indication (PGI) names going through. We certainly do what work we can to promote local produce. Although state aid rules apply constraints on the Government, we do all that we can. Indeed, a number of years ago, I went to the Anuga exhibition in Cologne to promote local produce in a global setting. Therefore, like other European member states, we do what we can within EU state aid constraints.

Mr Cree: The Minister is obviously aware that this is an important issue. After the commercial for Strangford, I wish to point out that a company in north Down is now, for the first time, selling sausages directly to Canada. A great marketing opportunity, therefore, exists. However, I am not hearing about any particular strategy or plan from the Minister to promote the Northern Ireland agrifood business.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: The Member is not hearing that because it deviates slightly from the bulk of the question. I was trying to answer the supplementary questions by basing them in and around the substance of the main question. I assure the Member that bodies such as the Industry Advisory Panel, which my Department set up in conjunction with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI), support the agrifood business. There is a raft of opportunities for the food sector and a range of support from the processing and marketing grant (PMG) scheme right through. However, I do not have that information in front of me today. There is a wide range of not only financial assistance but mentoring, benchmarking, and training opportunities available through the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE). A lot is going on in the food sector, and that is helping the sector to compete.

The main question asked was specifically about the Olympics, and I was trying to answer that question and the supplementary questions around that. However, if the Member wants to put down a specific question on the issue that he raised, I would be more than happy to answer it.

Mr Burns: Given that the US giant McDonald's is the only branded restaurant at the British

Olympic Games and that it sources quite a bit of its food from all of Ireland, has the Minister any plans to establish how much food will be purchased from Northern Ireland for the 2012 Olympics?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: The Member is quite right. McDonald's is one of the sponsors of the Olympic Games and will be providing thousands of meals during the Olympics to athletes, spectators and officials. The beef industry in the North supplies about 12% of the beef that McDonald's uses across Ireland and Britain. The Olympics will, therefore, represent a significant market for the 2,400 beef farmers who already supply to McDonald's, as well as for the egg and cheese producers who supply to it. It is a good win for us. McDonald's applies rigorous standards to the beef that it uses from the North, and the farmers who provide beef and other products to McDonald's have to meet very high standards.

Woodland

5. **Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department is meeting its woodland creation targets. (AQO 550/11)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: The Programme for Government (PFG) target is to increase woodland cover by 1,650 hectares by March 2011, primarily through the conversion of agricultural land to land under the woodland grant scheme. That was always going to be a challenging target, not least because of the pressures faced by farmers and landowners. Up to the end of this year, 653 hectares of new woodland will have been created. That is less than I had planned at this stage of the target period, and it is now unlikely that the target will be achieved by March 2011. However, I remain committed to the forestry strategy's long-term aim of doubling the area of woodland in the North of Ireland.

In November 2009, for example, I announced increases in grant rates of up to 30%. Since then, there has been a steep rise in the area of woodland creation applied for. In fact, when compared with the amount applied for during the same period last year, it was 70% higher. I expect that increased interest in applications to result in more woodland creation. However, it will not all be within the PFG target period.

My Department will continue to do all that it can to promote woodland creation, because it recognises the numerous benefits that that offers for all the people of the North of Ireland.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Minister for her response. I recognise that she is a supporter of the natural environment through programmes such as the countryside management scheme. However, does the Minister agree that the unenviable position of being bottom of the European league for woodland cover is a concern? Will the Minister consider introducing a programme similar to the Plant! programme in Wales, where a tree is planted for each child who is born or adopted?

2.45 pm

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: I will certainly look at any scheme that will result in more woodland creation, which, as the Member pointed out, I support. It is not good to be bottom of the league for woodland cover. We do what we can within our financial constraints. However, issues have come up around definitions, and we are trying to work out the detail of that at European level. I would love to see many more people taking up grants and creating new woodland, particularly broadleaf woodland, which is a type that people need to be encouraged to step up to create.

Mr I McCrea: The previous questioner referred to the Plant! scheme, and I welcome the Minister's commitment to consider that. If we all took a lead on that, I would have to plant three trees this evening when I get home. Well, perhaps not this evening, because the trees will not grow that quickly.

The Minister will know that I have raised the issue of the recreational use of our forests previously. Will she tell the House how that has been moving forward, especially with respect to mountain biking?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: We have been working through difficulties with the mountain biking programme in the Mourne. I am very keen that that programme is followed through and that the track is built as soon as possible. Already, it is getting quite a lot of use, even though it has not been formally opened or completed. The recreational and social use strategy has worked very well. I have a list of the different areas of recreational use

in our forests, which I am happy to share with the Member. We could do more.

For a period, forests were seen as something to raise revenue for the Department and as something to be replanted. I see them as a jewel that we are not fully utilising. If we can encourage everybody to use forests recreationally, the impact on well-being and physical health would be very obvious. Therefore, I will do what I can. In developing plans, I am very grateful for the support of the Environment Minister and, for example, the Tourist Board and local councils.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a freagra.

I listened very attentively to the Minister's answer. She said that targets have not been reached but that the aim is to double the area of woodland. Will the Minister inform us when her Department will conduct a review of its woodland creation targets so that we can get some handle on where the Department may be going with that?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: There is an ongoing review, because I feel that it is very important to have a handle on the levels of woodland that are being created. I have figures for the area of new woodland that has been created under the woodland grant scheme in the past five years. It amounts to 2,209 hectares and figures are given for each year. If the Member wishes me to pass that information on in writing, I am happy to do so. I am keeping a very close eye on those levels, because I recognise that it would be remiss of me to allow the targets not to be met and to find out, too late, that we can do nothing about that. For various reasons, we will not meet the PFG target, but I am keen to do all that I can to ensure that people have the opportunity to take up our grant schemes and create new woodlands.

Chinese Lanterns

7. **Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she has any plans to address the potential damage from fires on farms or danger to livestock as a result of the use of Chinese lanterns. (AQO 552/11)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: I am aware of anecdotal evidence

of damage to crops and livestock in Britain caused by the use of Chinese lanterns. However, there have been no similar reports here.

Therefore, I have no specific plan at present, other than to ask the farming community to be aware of the potential for fire damage and injury to livestock and to be particularly vigilant at those times when the devices are commonly used and during spells of dry weather.

I understand that in England, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is working with trading standards officers to encourage importers to improve the safety of Chinese lanterns and to make them fully biodegradable. From press reports, it seems that some manufacturers are already moving towards the use of materials such as digestible bamboo rather than wire, and I endorse that. My officials will liaise as necessary with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and other Departments, agencies and representative bodies on the island of Ireland and in Britain to promote greater awareness among the public and the farming community of the dangers of Chinese lanterns.

Mr Weir: I thank the Minister for her response. As part of that liaison, does the Minister feel that, so that farm safety is top of the priority list, there are lessons to be learned from Great Britain to ensure that that problem is not imported into Northern Ireland?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: I agree. We want to keep a close eye on what is happening in other places. As I said, I have not heard any evidence of Chinese lanterns creating problems here, but I ask people to be vigilant. If they know that there are Chinese lanterns about and a farmer is not aware of it, that information should be passed on. I have heard stories of wires sticking in the throats of cattle and getting into silage and feeds, so we need to be vigilant. When manufacturers move to the use of fully biodegradable materials, there will be less of a problem.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Question 8 has been withdrawn.

Bovine Tuberculosis: Pre-movement Testing

9. **Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether pre-movement

tests on female animals are necessary, given that the tests taken have shown a detection rate of only 0.01%. (AQO 554/11)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: Pre-movement testing is an EU requirement at our current incidence level. Five brucellosis reactors were found in 2010 through that form of testing, and those animals represented a significant risk of spread to other herds had they been allowed to move. Additional reactors are regularly found during routine herd tests, which farmers use as a free pre-movement test. That form of testing provides indirect additional benefits by discouraging casual and unnecessary cattle movements.

Mr Irwin: Would the Minister consider extending the movement period from four weeks to eight weeks, in line with the Irish Republic?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: As a member of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development, the Member will be aware that the South has achieved brucellosis-free status. Farmers there are working through their time period and can use different rates of testing. I have told the industry here that that will be one of the benefits that we will have when we have zero incidence of brucellosis.

The Member will also be aware that we have two brucellosis spikes in Keady and Lislea. There has been much discussion about those in the media, and a great deal of work has been done by my Department and me to eradicate brucellosis across the North. We want to eradicate brucellosis for good. We are nearly there, but we must ensure that we do not throw the baby out with the bathwater by changing the test rates until we are brucellosis free. The EU would not allow us to do that anyway, as we must be below a detection rate threshold of 0.2% before we can change our testing regime.

**Flood Protection:
Connswater Community Greenway**

10. **Lord Browne** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her Department's current position on the flood alleviation scheme as part of the Connswater community greenway in east Belfast. (AQO 555/11)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: Rivers Agency has brought forward proposals for flood alleviation works to facilitate the greenway environmental improvement project. That scheme is due for completion by 2014 and some £2 million of funding is in place for this financial year. However, given current Budget considerations, future funding remains uncertain. To accommodate that uncertainty, Rivers Agency has worked closely with the other partners in the project to ensure that we gain maximum benefit from the available funding.

Lord Browne: I thank the Minister for her answer. Will the Minister assure me that she will continue to work actively with all the other relevant agencies and commit to the programme led by the Connswater community greenway, which will help the people in east Belfast and alleviate their fears of flooding? If the Minister commits money to the scheme and it goes ahead, it will save money in the long run.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: I have been careful not to raise expectations on that matter. We have bid for the funding and hope to get it, but it may not be there. We recognise the benefits of the greenway scheme, but I have been careful not to raise false hope that the work can go ahead and that Rivers Agency has the money to do its part. I recognise the point that the Member made; other representatives from east Belfast made it in the past. We will do what we can, but we are limited by the funding that is available to us.

Mr Lyttle: As one who has cycled on the greenway and seen the proposals, I agree that the scheme has great potential to alleviate flooding in the area. In recent weeks, the Connswater river threatened to burst its banks and flood the Sydenham area of east Belfast. It is my understanding that the £2 million that has been allocated is under threat if future funding is not confirmed soon. Will the Minister speak to that concern?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: The other funders of the greenway, which include the Big Lottery Fund, Belfast City Council and the Department for Social Development (DSD), have indicated their continuing commitment to the project, but we have to work with what we have. That is why I have been very careful not to raise expectations. As I said, we would love to be able

to participate fully in the project and to see it through to fruition, but, at this point, our funding prospects are not known.

Woodburn Forest: Disease

11. **Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the impact of tree killing disease on the Woodburn Forest, Carrickfergus. (AQO 556/11)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) has taken the necessary action to minimise the risk of spread of the *P. ramorum* disease of larch. Based on scientific evidence, infected Japanese larch in Woodburn Forest and on other public and private land must be felled, as that is the best method for controlling the disease and preventing further damage.

To date, 34.9 hectares of immature woodland and 25.1 hectares of mature woodland have been felled in Woodburn Forest, against a planned felling area of 216 hectares. Forest Service is on track to complete felling by the spring of 2011.

Biosecurity precautions are in place in Woodburn Forest and at other affected woodlands to prevent further spread. Those apply to forest operators who are harvesting infected areas, which minimises the risk of spreading disease at Woodburn Forest on footwear, clothing, vehicles, tools and equipment. Biosecurity precautions are also now in place to allow infected logs to be transported under a movement licence to authorise wood-processing facilities with the appropriate plant-health controls.

In addition, in public forests, signs have been erected to explain to visitors what action they can take to minimise the risk of spreading the disease. That is very important, and I know that the Member's constituents will be interested in that. We are keen that people do not inadvertently bring the disease back to their own gardens, because it can be found in woody shrubs such as rhododendrons and azaleas. We want people to respect the biosecurity signs and not to bring the disease back to their own land.

Mr Hilditch: I thank the Minister for her answer and the Department for the action that it has taken. Woodburn Forest has many uses. Are

there any guidelines for the reinstatement of the affected lands?

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: There are guidelines. It is roughly two years before we can replant an affected area. We do not want to create a further explosion of the disease by replanting too soon, so although I do not have a specific figure, I am happy to get back to the Member in writing with more detail.

Rural Development Programme: Axis 3

12. **Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the uptake of the axis 3 EU fund of the rural development programme. (AQO 557/11)

13. **Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what percentage of the money spent to date under the axis 3 EU fund has been allocated in grant awards. (AQO 558/11)

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development: With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will answer questions 12 and 13 together.

Momentum is building well, with some £24 million of commitment already made and some £39 million worth of applications being processed. To clarify, commitment relates to applications that have been scored as "successful" by local action groups, those that have been ratified by joint council committees and those that are in the process of being issued with letters of offer or have been issued with letters of offer for grant aid but have not yet completed them. The £39 million worth of applications being processed refers to those applications that have been received but which have not yet been assessed.

Although both of those amounts are substantial, as I have already said in the Assembly and, more recently, in the media, I am very concerned about the slow progress of expenditure in this axis compared with that in the rest of the rural development programme.

At present, almost £2.5 million has been paid to axis 3 promoters in grant aid for projects, which equates to 41% of total spend under the axis. Although that progress is welcome, I am

conscious that axis 3 project spend needs to be increased significantly.

It is worth noting that actual spend on projects is not within the gift of officials. It is up to project promoters to ensure that their projects are delivered to allow grant aid to be drawn down against the costs incurred.

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr Deputy Speaker: Questions 3, 6 and 12 have been transferred.

3.00 pm

Ulster Orchestra: Christmas Concert

1. **Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what financial assistance his Department has given to the Ulster Orchestra to support its free 'Christmas Cheer' concert at the Waterfront Hall on 3 December 2010 and whether he will be attending this event. (AQO 561/11)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr McCausland): The Arts Council of Northern Ireland did not provide financial assistance for that specific event. However, it provided the Ulster Orchestra with £2,196,720 through its annual support for organisations programme (ASOP) for 2010-11. The Ulster Orchestra also received Lottery funding for projects such as a Christmas tour, an outreach tour and a choral concert. I understand that I have received an invitation, and will consider attending if my diary permits.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Minister — or, Mrs Kelly.

Mrs D Kelly: I like the first title, Deputy Speaker. I am pleased that the Minister is not about to cancel Christmas this year anyway. However, what assurances will he give on his commitment to funding for the Ulster Orchestra in his budgetary negotiations with other Executive Ministers?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I will give due consideration to the allocations of funding to all spending areas within my Department's remit. In doing so, I will take full account of the impacts that such allocations will have across the range of my Department's responsibilities, including the arts sector.

All decisions on spending cuts will require detailed consideration through the ASOP

decision-making process. I can assure the Member that the Ulster Orchestra is funded by the Arts Council under ASOP, and it will be for the Arts Council to determine funding allocations in line with its business plan.

Lord Browne: The Ulster Orchestra performs the majority of its concerts in Belfast. Does the Minister agree that it is important that it should have a wide range of outreach projects? Will he provide details of performances given by the orchestra outside Belfast in the past year?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I agree with the Member's point that it is important that we recognise that it is the Ulster Orchestra and, therefore, it has a responsibility right across the country. Regional concerts were given in Armagh, Ballymena, Bangor, Coleraine, Londonderry, Enniskillen, Hillsborough, Newtownabbey, Strabane, Omagh, and it went as far as going down to the Republic, to Dublin.

Mr Beggs: What is the level of demand for the free Christmas concert, and how are tickets allocated to ensure that there is wide community representation, so that those who could not otherwise afford to listen to such excellent music attend and enjoy it?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Christmas Cheer concert is for community groups, and 15 free tickets are available for each community group on a first come, first served basis. The orchestra, therefore, seeks in that way to reach out to individuals and communities who may not otherwise be reached. One benefit of that is the potential to increase its audience for future concerts.

Sport: North Down

2. **Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action his Department has taken in relation to sports in the North Down area. (AQO 562/11)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Responsibility for taking action on sports in north Down rests with sports organisations in the area and North Down Borough Council. Assistance in developing sport in north Down, and in other regions of Northern Ireland, is available from the Department via Sport Northern Ireland.

Over the past three financial years, Sport Northern Ireland has awarded over £16

million to projects in the north Down area that are designed to help sports bodies and the council to develop sport in the locality. Of that, £15.3 million was awarded to North Down Borough Council for the development of active communities programmes in the area and to provide a 50-metre swimming pool at Valentine Playing Fields in Bangor. Remaining awards worth over £880,000 were made to a range of sports clubs, sports partnerships and centres to help them to take forward various sports and fitness programmes.

In addition, in May 2010 I published a 10-year sports strategy for Northern Ireland, entitled "Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009-2019". The strategy offers a new 10-year vision for sport in Northern Ireland, of:

"... a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport".

It also contains 26 high-level targets based on the pillars of participation, performance and places, to be achieved over the next 10 years. That vision and those targets are relevant to all regions and sports in Northern Ireland, including those in the north Down area.

Mr Easton: I thank the Minister for his answer. What will the development of the 50-metre swimming pool do for North Down, and for Northern Ireland in general?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I welcome the Member's supplementary question. He raised one of the significant developments in sporting provision in Northern Ireland. The pool is one part of a new state-of-the-art leisure complex planned for North Down. It will be Northern Ireland's first Olympic-size swimming pool, and, as a regional centre of excellence, it will be enjoyed not only by the people of North Down but by everyone in Northern Ireland.

The 50-metre pool will meet the needs of the community in the North Down area and across Northern Ireland, as well as the needs of competitive and elite swimmers. It will also act as a catalyst for increasing general participation in aquatic activities across all age groups and abilities. It will have the ability to host international swimming competitions, which will have the potential to bring economic benefit to Northern Ireland, and to the North Down area in particular.

The complex will include three separate pools: a 50-metre pool; a 25-metre diving pool; and a leisure pool. The activities that those pools will provide for include competitive swimming contests and galas; competitive/elite swim athlete training; swimming club swim time; club swim training; water polo training and competition; and open public swim sessions. In addition, the diving pool will have adjustable floors to allow some of the aforementioned activities to be included. The leisure pool will include a wave machine and other attractions.

Mr Cree: Does the Department have any plans to develop sailing further, perhaps even to provide a centre of excellence for the sport in North Down?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The Member has strayed somewhat from swimming, although I acknowledge that the original question was about sports in the area.

There was a proposal for a sailing centre in Ballyholme as part of the elite facilities programme. I cannot comment further at this stage, because the process is still ongoing.

Mr McCarthy: When will we see the swimming facility officially opened?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Work is under way. Some time ago, I had the pleasure of going to Bangor, and I met with a number of councillors on that day. Not all councillors were there, and some people commented on the occasion without even bothering to go along. Nevertheless, those who were there recognised that it was a good start. The sod cutting has taken place, and work is under way. The intention is that the facility should be completed early in 2012. Therefore, it will be ready in good time for the major event that is coming to Northern Ireland; that is, the 2013 World Police and Fire Games.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Question 3 has been transferred.

Commemorations: 1912-1922

4. **Ms J McCann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether his Department is working with its counterpart in Dublin on commemorating important events from 1912-1922. (AQO 564/11)

7. **Mr F McCann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the timescale for the development of the commemoration strategy for 1912-1922. (AQO 567/11)

8. **Mr Leonard** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether he can provide an assurance that the list of important events marking the decade 1912-1922 being compiled by his Department will include the 1916 Easter Rising. (AQO 568/11)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will take questions 4, 7 and 8 together. In considering the issue of commemorations, it was not my intention to create a commemoration strategy per se but to establish a framework under which significant historic events could be addressed. With that aim in mind, I convened a meeting with senior representatives from my Department's relevant arm's-length bodies on 21 January 2010 to discuss a strategic approach to commemorating upcoming events.

The group's key aims and objectives were to commemorate four-hundredth and one-hundredth anniversaries that occur in the period 2010 to 2021 in a way that delivers value for money, builds knowledge and understanding, and contributes positively to a shared and better future. The group recommended that the Department and its arm's-length bodies focus on a limited number of key themes; namely, the Plantation, the Titanic and 1912 to 1922.

In developing a strategic approach to the commemoration of events in Northern Ireland, I have not had any discussions with the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, as I consider the issue to be solely a matter for DCAL and the Northern Ireland Executive.

On 21 September, I wrote to the Department's arm's-length bodies and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland to ask them to facilitate communities wishing to arrange events linked to the key themes through the provision of accommodation, records, artefacts, staff and information technology. The current list of events that the Department's arm's-length bodies identified is an early iteration of their plans.

That will develop and grow as the anniversaries of particular events draw near and as the community becomes more aware of facilities and assets at their disposal in the DCAL estate.

Ms J McCann: I thank the Minister for his answer. I appreciate that he mentioned A Shared Future. With regard to that framework and those important events, does the Minister agree that he should be seen as representing all traditions in the community? Therefore, will events that are important to people, such as the 1916 Rising, also be commemorated?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: First, I want to say that I am strongly committed to a shared and better future; I have stated that clearly. It was one of the priorities that I set for my Department.

The Member asked about the 1916 Rising. Of course, an important issue is that such an event would have to focus primarily on Northern Ireland because it would be decided upon by the Northern Ireland Executive. Although the matter needs to be looked at, I would have thought that one difficulty with it might be that during the 1916 Easter Rising, nothing much happened in Northern Ireland or even in the Province of Ulster.

Earlier, the Assembly had a bit of a history lesson during the debate on Lord Craigavon. I will provide the Member with a brief explanation. The president of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, Dinny McCullough, who lived in Belfast, set off at the time of the Easter Rising on the train to Dungannon with some of his friends. They decided that they could not have a rising in Belfast, so they would meet up with people in Dungannon and, then, possibly, head off together to Connaught. When they got as far as Dungannon, the people in Tyrone, who were led by Patrick McCartan, decided that they did not want to leave their home areas; nor would they take part unless they had been assured that the Pope had received word that a rising was due to take place and that the German guns had landed in County Kerry. Having failed to get satisfactory assurances, they all went home.

Mr Leonard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. With vision like that, it is hardly worth asking questions. *[Interruption.]*

May I be allowed to ask my question, or am I just going to be heckled by the right-winger to the Minister's right?

Will the Minister accept that a much more inclusive and comprehensive view of that decade is nothing to be afraid of, even for unionism, seeing that his tradition came from Irish unionism to become that of two thirds of Ulster?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I repeat what I have already made clear: I believe strongly in the vision for a shared and better future. Of course, there are lessons to be learned from past commemorations, particularly those of 1966. Hopefully, when the hundredth anniversary of certain events occurs in 2016, there will be a much more shared approach that leads to that shared and better future rather than the divisive approach that, perhaps, was taken in the past.

On 20 May 2010, I spoke at an event in Dublin. The other speaker was Brian Cowen, who was, and still is, the Taoiseach. He made the point that lessons were to be learned from how they had celebrated 1916 50 years ago and that, in 2016, it might be done very differently.

Mr Campbell: Earlier, the Minister referred to the debate on Lord Craigavon. Can he confirm that when the Department looks at the commemoration of events that occurred during that period, most people who are involved will consider an accurate transcription of events to be vital? Therefore, if something is about terror, it is commemorated as terror; if it is about violence, it is commemorated as violence rather than as a rewriting of history.

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I welcome the Member's question because he got right to the heart of the issue. I am keen that honesty, accuracy and authenticity are needed when looking at events of the past. Too often, extremely unsavoury events have been dressed up in a different way. It is important to establish facts. Indeed, that was why, with regard to 1916, I thought that it would be useful to remind Members on the opposite Benches that nothing happened in Northern Ireland. If one seeks a relic of that event, the best that one could do is, probably, to get a train ticket to Dungannon.

Lord Morrow: There are no trains to Dungannon. *[Laughter.]*

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I had hoped that someone had preserved a ticket from 1916.

3.15 pm

Minority Languages

5. **Mr O'Loan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the minority languages strategy. (AQO 565/11)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Before the summer, I was seeking clarification on a number of issues so that the draft strategy for regional and minority languages could be finalised. I am particularly concerned about the cultural rights of children in the classroom, and I want that to be addressed as part of the strategy. I have engaged in correspondence and have held several meetings with the Minister of Education to discuss that issue, but I still need firm assurances from the Minister of Education to enable the strategy to proceed.

I am also engaging with the BBC on some broadcasting issues that will impact on the strategy. As I have stated on previous occasions, education and broadcasting are central to any strategy for cultural or linguistic development.

I take this opportunity to reiterate that the guiding principles of the strategy will be that it is overarching, non-prescriptive, needs based and deliverable within existing resources.

Mr O'Loan: I thank the Minister, but I have to say that the delay in producing the strategy is no longer acceptable. The Minister sends out rather contradictory messages. At times, he seems to recognise that there is some distinction to be made between the proper treatment of both the Irish language and Ulster Scots, but his dominant message, particularly by attempting to create a single strategy, is that there has to be parity of treatment for Irish and Ulster Scots. Does he agree that the interests of the Irish language and those of Ulster-Scots culture would be better served by distinct and appropriate treatments for each?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The development of a single strategy for both languages is designed to highlight both our shared heritage and the desire to strive towards parity between the languages. The concept of parity is one that a number of political parties have put forward on a wide range of issues over many years, and it would seem strange that, in this area, they would suddenly want to withdraw from and renege on that past commitment. I believe that it will be underpinned by our commitments in the charter, which already takes into account the position of each language.

I recognise that the languages are at different states of development, and the structure of the strategy will accommodate that. We have a single cross-border language body with two agencies that work in a way that is complementary to

each other, and they sometimes carry out joint projects. In the same way, if we have an overarching strategy with two complementary strategies inside that, there will be opportunities to have cross-cultural and cross-linguistic events, programmes and projects that will help to create that shared and better future and to create the respect for both languages that is so desirable. Having heard some of the Members' comments about Ulster Scots in recent weeks, the Member who asked the question and others perhaps need to learn a little bit.

Mr McNarry: Will the Minister review the aspect of the funding for the minority languages strategy in the context of the comprehensive spending review (CSR) cuts?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Everything that the Department does has to be looked at in the context of the coming CSR. That goes without saying.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for the answers to the questions so far. The Minister mentioned cross-border bodies. What sort of records do the Department's arm's-length bodies hold?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I am not entirely clear about those records. If we are looking at arm's-length bodies, it is important that we ensure that they provide value for money and that they are efficient and effective. If we do that, we will make sure that they are delivering what we expect them to deliver.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Question 6 has been transferred, and questions 7 and 8 have been grouped.

Sports Facilities

9. **Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the council-owned sports facilities which currently deliver programmes from grass-roots level to excellence and elite levels. (AQO 569/11)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My general assessment of the council-owned sports facilities, which currently deliver programmes from grass-roots level to excellence and elite levels, is in the public domain. That general assessment is set out in my sports strategy, 'Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019', which was published in May 2010. Sport

Matters recognises that district councils are Northern Ireland's major sports facility providers at community level and that they offer some excellent facilities.

However, 'Sport Matters' suggests that Northern Ireland is underprovided for at community and elite levels. It also notes that providers are facing major challenges in relation to public expectation, technical standards, costs and legislative change.

A more detailed evaluation, which helped underpin the 'Sport Matters' assessment, was carried out in 2009 by Sport Northern Ireland. That evaluation, entitled 'Bridging the Gap' recognises that there are a number of excellent multi-sports facilities and services provided by a range of organisations, including district councils. However, it also identifies unmet demand and shortfalls for a number of key facilities at local level. The report recommends the opening up, refurbishment and development of additional facilities to address those issues. Part of the purpose of 'Sport Matters' is to encourage all stakeholders to tackle those challenges on a strategic basis.

Mr I McCrea: I welcome the Minister's answer to my question. He referred to examples of excellent facilities. Will he give us some examples of what he regards as excellent district council-owned sports facilities, and will he accept an invitation to come and view the excellent sports facilities in my constituency, in both Magherafelt and Cookstown?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I would be very disappointed if the Member did not raise a matter that concerns his own constituency, and I am happy to say that the Mid Ulster Sports Arena just outside Cookstown is an excellent example of a council-owned sports facility that serves the needs of the local community and elite performers and yet is still able to meet the requirements of a range of different sports. In 2000 and 2001 my Department, through Sport Northern Ireland, provided £370,000 towards the development of a synthetic pitch, floodlighting, an eight-room changing pavilion and an indoor training facility at the arena. That, in my view, sets a very good standard for sporting facilities in Northern Ireland, and I look forward to receiving the invitation from the Member to visit his constituency.

Mr Burns: Will the Minister take the opportunity to reassure those individuals who have

raised concerns about the effectiveness, the efficiency and the timetabling of the elite facility programme?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: The elite facility programme encountered some difficulties because of a legal case relating to a specific application that was submitted around the deadline for applications. That particular case, and challenges that might have followed from it, caused a significant delay. A large part of the delay — indeed, almost all of the delay so far — was due to that. However, we are now looking at the comprehensive spending review, and I am sure that the Member will join with me in seeking as much funding as possible for sports facilities, so that we can get the best outcome for the people of Northern Ireland.

Fish Netting: South Down

10. **Mr McCallister** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for his assessment of the level of illegal fish netting in the South Down area in the last year. (AQO 570/11)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Since May 2010, DCAL fisheries protection officers have undertaken 28 patrols along the south Down coast in the recently commissioned fisheries protection vessel. Patrols were carried out from Kilkeel to Dundrum Bay and in Strangford Lough and Belfast Lough. Although no evidence of any illegal netting has been detected, patrols will continue along those coastal waters. The Department has also carried out 60 shore patrols since 1 April 2010. Protection officers responded to a number of reports of nets washed up on the coast near Annalong and Killough. However, the two nets did not contain fish. A net was seized from the shore at Derryoge Point near Kilkeel following 36 hours of observation. Again, it did not contain any fish.

The Department is also working with private water bailiffs associated with local angling clubs to make them more aware of their responsibilities and roles. That was launched by means of a seminar that was held in Newcastle on 5 May 2010. The new DCAL fisheries protection vessel has provided a highly visible deterrent along the south Down coast. Together with DCAL fisheries protection officer shore patrols and more effective private water bailiffs, those actions are providing an effective deterrent to those who would engage in illegal netting.

Mr McCallister: I am grateful to the Minister for his reply and for that work. I particularly welcome the investment in the new fisheries vessel. What additional steps will the Minister take to prevent further illegal activities? Is he content that enough is done to prevent the illegal netting of fish, particularly salmon at this time of year?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: My Department assumed direct responsibility for the enforcement of fisheries protection legislation in the DCAL jurisdiction on 1 June 2009. Since then, DCAL fisheries protection officers have been organised into teams covering four operational areas: the northern, south-eastern and south-western areas, and a unit that was established to focus on the enforcement of fisheries legislation on Lough Neagh.

In their management of the area, senior fisheries protection officers (FPOs) carry out regular patrols on land and water. Intelligence-led operations are carried out to detect breaches of fisheries legislation, and all illegal fishing gear and catches are seized. Any persons found to be acting illegally are reported with a view to prosecution. DCAL fisheries protection officers also carry out regular inspections at commercial dealers, fish retail outlets, hotels and restaurants to ensure that all fish sold have been legally caught.

Mr Bell: Many of us in Strangford appreciate the patrols that take place in Strangford Lough. Does the Minister agree that there is an adverse impact on the legitimate fishing industry and the angling clubs? They have to operate bureaucracy and so on to make the circumstances right, and they should not have to pay an unfair penalty on account of those who seek to fish illegally.

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: It is unfortunate that we have to have in place all those procedures to prevent illegal fishing. It obviously has an impact on others. I am sure the Member will agree that it is a necessary task, and we need to address in a robust way the problem of illegal fishing.

Open-air Cinema

11. **Mrs M Bradley** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps his Department is taking to promote open-air cinema events. (AQO 571/11)

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Our partners in the exhibition sector continually seek innovative ways of screening product and bringing the cinematic experience in fresh, new, exciting ways to the widest possible audience across Northern Ireland. Belfast Film Festival has three open-air events planned between now and April 2011. My Department plans to secure large interactive screens for Belfast to enable people all over the United Kingdom to join in key celebrations and events connected to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. I also support Londonderry's aspiration to secure a live site for 2012, and discussions on that are currently ongoing.

Mrs M Bradley: Will the Minister give us any idea at all when people will be told that it is going to happen for tourism?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: I assume that the Member refers to the live site in Londonderry. In that matter, we are supporting others. Plans to secure that site are under way. A business case is being prepared by the 2013 City of Culture team in Londonderry and the 2012-13 games legacy unit has made a bid for £650,000 capital in the December monitoring round to support the city council of Londonderry in procuring that live site.

Mr Bresland: Has the Minister any plans for an open-air screen in Northern Ireland for the 2012 Olympic Games?

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure: Plans are progressing to secure a live site for Belfast, and it is anticipated that it will be located in the grounds of Belfast City Hall, subject to planning permission. The live site is for use in the build-up to and during the 2012 games, and it will also be used for the 2013 World Police and Fire Games.

As I have said, the Department is facilitating discussions between the city council in Londonderry and the London organising committee for the Olympic Games with regard to a live site in the Maiden City.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Question 12 has been withdrawn. For Question 13, the Member is not in his place.

3.30 pm

Question for Urgent Oral Answer

Irish Government: Request for Financial Assistance

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Speaker has received notice of a question for urgent oral answer under Standing Order 20 to the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Mr McLaughlin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the implications for the Programme for Government (PFG) priority of growing the economy resulting from the Irish Government's request for financial assistance from the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF); and whether she plans to discuss the issue with the Irish Government.

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Mrs Foster): It is hoped that the €90 billion, which is £77 billion, of financial assistance from the United Kingdom, the IMF and the European Union, which was announced today, will place the Republic of Ireland's finances on a sounder footing. However, there will be further difficult choices ahead. On 7 December, details of the fiscal consolidation for 2011 will be announced in the Republic of Ireland's Budget, which is expected to have a significant impact on economic growth.

The Republic of Ireland's economy has already faced one of the deepest recessions in the euro zone, with output falling by 10.9% between 2007 and 2009. That has implications for the Northern Ireland economy, as the Republic of Ireland accounts for more than 10% of sales by local manufacturing companies and 28.5% of exports. That highlights the importance of Northern Ireland firms diversifying their export base and seeking out new markets, which is one of the reasons why I will shortly lead a trade mission to China.

I intend to have discussions with the Irish Government on the matter only if the measures to reduce the Republic of Ireland's Budget deficit have direct implications for the Northern Ireland economy.

Mr McLaughlin: I thank the Minister for setting out those initial options. I recognise that it is a

developing situation, but I sought to provide her with the opportunity to indicate that she is alive to our direct economic interests.

I reflect on the initiative that was taken by the Finance Minister, Sammy Wilson. On the setting up of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA), he immediately arranged to meet his counterparts to discuss the implications of the significant property portfolio that they would be administering in this region. I welcome the fact that the Minister has said that she is prepared to meet her counterparts.

Most parties recognise that the economic travails that have emerged have already had a significant impact, particularly on our construction industry. I welcome the fact that the Minister has said that she is alive to all those downstream implications and is taking the necessary steps. Go raibh míle maith agat.

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and

Investment: I thank the Member for making those points. Some concerns have been raised about the UK's contributing to a bail-out for a country in the euro zone, but we need to recognise that the global economy is becoming ever more integrated and that what happens in the Republic of Ireland has an impact on us here in Northern Ireland.

Today, I spoke to the Secretary of State and to the Finance Minister about our seeking assurances from the UK Treasury and the Government that the conditions of any loan between the UK and the Republic of Ireland will reflect the particular needs of Northern Ireland. I make that point in light of the recent job losses from the Bank of Ireland. We need to speak to the UK Government about the availability of finance for bank customers in Northern Ireland and about any further restructuring of the banks so that jobs in the Northern Ireland banking system are protected. Those discussions continue, and I hope to meet the Secretary of State again later in the week.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

(Mr A Maginness): I thank the Minister for her reply. The difficulties that are being experienced by the Republic could have profound effects on all of us locally. Out of solidarity, it is important for us to keep contact, at the very least, with the Southern Government. I am slightly taken aback that the Minister indicated that she would meet the South's Finance Minister if the occasion

arose. I urge her to meet him so that she can be fully briefed on the implications, particularly for the banking sector. We are very dependent on the Bank of Ireland and First Trust. I urge the Minister to do that as soon as possible.

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and

Investment: It will probably be my colleague the Finance Minister who will speak to the Finance Minister in the Republic of Ireland. However, the Member is right about our concerns surrounding jobs in the banking sector and access to finance, which has been a continuing debate in the House. He knows that, in my last Question Time, I raised the whole issue of access to finance. We need very quickly to speak to Treasury and the Secretary of State and say very firmly that if a loan is to go from Treasury to the Republic of Ireland, any conditions that are set should ensure that this part of the United Kingdom is protected from any adverse impact from the Republic of Ireland.

Private Members' Business

Domiciliary Care

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly notes the challenges posed by the changing demographics; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to ensure that there is adequate investment in domiciliary care to meet the current and future needs of an ageing population. —
[Ms M Anderson.]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Someone has a mobile phone on. Please switch it off.

Dr Deeny: I thank the proposers of the motion for allowing this very important debate to take place. Domiciliary care, just like the protection of children, is part of social care. To me, as a health professional, health and social care are totally interdependent. They both must be protected. I say that as somebody who has worked in primary care for over 25 years and can see the interdependency.

There are two issues. One is to do with ring-fencing the budget for health and social care, for which there is a very strong argument. The other issue is efficiency. If you do not mind, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will give an example of how we can increase efficiency. I am well aware that the debate is about domiciliary care. This morning, as has been mentioned, we heard about problems due to inefficiency in the Western Trust, in which now only two nursing home places a month are being allocated due to a lack of funding. That causes unnecessary bed blocking, with all of its consequences. As somebody who has worked in the community, I believe that many elderly patients, on discharge from hospital, can, with full and appropriate support, be looked after at home. That is what they want. There are, without doubt, some who, as Mr Gallagher said, have complex needs and need that extra bit of care, whether that be residential or nursing care. However, we are talking about domiciliary care here. The elderly want to be at home, if at all possible. The bed blocking is causing delayed admissions to hospital for patients who need to be hospitalised and treated. As has been mentioned, it costs £300 a day for a hospital stay, as opposed to the same for a week of home care.

The Minister is probably aware that, last Monday, I spent the day at Greenmount College

in Antrim on an all-day conference on the topic of looking after elderly patients in their homes. It was convened by the Regional Health and Social Care Board, and I advise our Minister and his Department to look closely at what was discussed and to take on board the recommendations of that very useful day.

What is common practice in England, Scotland, and particularly in Edinburgh, is a new concept to me, as a healthcare professional, and is one for the future. We had presentations from each of those areas about the process or concept of “re-abling” elderly patients after a significant health event.

“Re-ablement” means early intervention — with the emphasis on early — to help our elderly patients sustain or regain independence for the maximum time. The period involved is up to six weeks and it involves various carers and expert advice from occupational therapists. Regaining independence is what those patients want. They do not want what we have done so far, which is to create their dependence on others. Carers help the process of learning or relearning life's daily skills by doing “with” rather than “for” or “to” the elderly. That boosts their confidence, helps them regain their independence and leads to better health outcomes. People feel much better. My mother is just out after a week in the Downe Hospital and she already wants back to the way she was. At 86, she wants her independence back.

The presentations from Edinburgh and England were impressive. It has already been accepted by the public in both countries as a positive development in domiciliary care for the elderly. Long term, it is much cheaper. Therefore, it is a more efficient way to care for our elderly and it leads to better health outcomes. It is a win-win, situation all around. Patients are discharged from hospital and are looked after at home, where there is early intervention, and they quickly regain their independence. It is also much more cost-effective in the long term. We need to change the dependency mindset of families who believe that it is much better to get their loved-ones back on their feet and independent —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member must bring his remarks to a close.

Dr Deeny: I think that we also need to bring the public on board, which is where the media are involved. The motion needs the full political

support of the Minister and the support of his Department.

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Mr McGimpsey): I will begin by reiterating some of the points made. Every year, Northern Ireland trusts provide around 23,000 domiciliary care packages, and that totals around 235,000 hours of care every week. There are more than a dozen different types of domiciliary care, all of which make a real difference to the lives of a range of vulnerable people, including older people.

Domiciliary care can comprise day care, help with personal care, district-nursing visits, podiatry, physiotherapy, and participation in voluntary activity or respite care at home or in a residential home. For older people, such care is a lifeline that enables them to live in their own homes independently or be cared for in a residential nursing home. The fact is that Northern Ireland has the UK's fastest growing elderly population. More than 250,000 men and women in the population — nearly one in seven — are over 65. By 2030, that figure will increase to one in four, and nearly 83,000 will be aged over 85.

Demographic changes have a specific impact on demand for services. At the start of life, health costs are highest. They level out in adulthood and increase again with age. On average, people aged 85 or older cost the Health Service around nine times more to treat than people of working age. Life expectancy in Northern Ireland is on the rise, and the number of people affected by diseases associated with old age, therefore, also increases. The fact is that, as I have said many times, the Health Service works and life expectancy, thank God, is rising all the time.

However, many people also take arthritis, cancer, diabetes, chronic pulmonary disease, stroke, and so on, into old age. Therefore, the need for domiciliary care also increases. In the present Budget period, I have committed an extra £58 million from April 2008 to March 2011 to help support an additional 1,500 older people to maintain their independence. I have managed to continue to develop and expand the range of domiciliary care services available and increase the number of people who manage their own care packages through direct payments.

In 2008, I introduced the regional access criteria for domiciliary care in order to provide greater transparency and harmonisation in the

process of identifying and prioritising need. I managed to do that despite the fact that my budget was cut. Members will know that, because Members voted to do it.

3.45 pm

Most recently, the emergency Budget earlier this year took £113 million out of this year's money, which I had to find in addition to finding money for swine flu. I was supposed to be able to bid for swine flu money; I asked for £42 million, but got £5 million. In addition, following on from swine flu last year, a further £16 million was taken from my budget this year. Those are big cuts for my budget to absorb. In fact, we cannot absorb them, because of the demand that we are facing.

Against a background of limited resources, trusts are finding it extremely difficult to meet rising demand for domiciliary care services. Indeed, the whole health and care system is under considerable financial pressure as a result of cuts and increased demand, and not simply in domiciliary care. Each trust must manage demand for services within the funding envelope available. Given the severe financial constraints on the Health Service this year, and with the public sector facing severe financial challenges over the next four years, the requirement to prioritise the most vulnerable is likely only to increase. However, even more is needed, because we cannot allow the quality of services to deteriorate at a time in people's lives when they are needed most.

Many of the MLAs present, particularly those from the west, will have heard from constituents, so I point out that the budget for domiciliary care in the west has also increased each year, and more people are being looked after. Nevertheless, Members will have heard from constituents, carers, families and voluntary and community organisations about the increasing need for services. This need undoubtedly outstrips the moneys that are allocated, which should not be news to anyone sitting in the Assembly.

I have warned time and again that the health and social care budget is under significant strain. Already this year, cuts have caused huge problems and damage to services. Further cuts will cause pain and distress to large numbers of patients and vulnerable people. Indeed, the Finance Minister recently publicised his opinion that it would be proper to ring-fence moneys

for health but not for social care. Northern Ireland has an integrated health and social care service. Therefore, protecting health but not social care simply will not work. If we try to save money on social care, we will end up spending far more elsewhere, meaning that limited resources are spread ever more thinly across a system that is already struggling to cope.

Helping people at home is far cheaper than hospital treatment. Moreover, patients do better at home. They live longer and are happier. A delayed hospital discharge can cost up to £2,000 a week, when a domiciliary care package costing a fraction of that may be the solution. If we are to ensure that older people do not end up in hospital unnecessarily or stay there longer than they should because there is no money for a care package, the entire budget has to be protected. If we are to ensure that people with a learning disability or a mental health problem receive care and treatment quickly and are resettled in the community, instead of having to live in institutions, my entire budget must be protected. If we are to ensure that at-risk children do not end up in care because we cannot provide the right care and support quickly, my entire budget must be protected. Members will be aware that it is not simply looking after older people through domiciliary care that is supported by the budget for social care —

Ms M Anderson: Will the Member give way?

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: It also includes support for mental health and learning disability, as well as for at-risk children. Every year, 16,000 at-risk children are referred to the health and social care system. All of this must be dealt with.

The Member wanted to intervene.

Ms M Anderson: On three occasions, the Minister said that his entire budget must be protected. Is he advocating that we protect the £57 million that has gone out in bonuses over the past five years? Members have only to look at today's edition of 'The Irish News'. Is the Minister suggesting that the money that is given to senior management to go on what have been described as "junkets" is the sort of thing that he wants to protect, or is he looking to protect front line services?

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: I will refer to the two points that

Mrs Anderson made. For a start, as I have told the House — Mrs Anderson will have seen what I said in the Hansard report — the Health Service does not pay bonuses. No bonuses are paid to consultants. The allegation is that consultants get bonuses totalling £57 million. The Member is, in fact, confusing her figures. *[Interruption.]* I am happy for the Member to come back on that.

The suggestion was that we pay bonuses to consultants, but we do not. A national clinical excellence award scheme is part of the wages scheme.

Ms M Anderson: Will the Minister give way?

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: Excuse me just a minute. The clinical excellence award scheme costs £12 million, not £57 million. I heard the Member on the radio this morning, and I think that she was getting confused with the RPA figures. My Department saved £53 million a year under RPA. There seemed to be confusion there, but, at any rate, we do not pay bonuses. The Member referred to an article in 'The Irish News' this morning, but I suggest that the Member read the Hansard report of last Thursday's meeting of the Health Committee. It would help her to understand where that story is going, because it is a non-story. That money was spent on training, which is money well spent as far as savings to the Health Service are concerned. It is unfortunate that factually incorrect stories that distort the facts are being used as an excuse not to face up to the need properly to fund the health and social care system in Northern Ireland.

Ours is the worst-funded Health Service in the UK. We are behind England, Scotland and Wales, and we slip further behind all the time. We cannot afford to slip behind any further, because our need is greater. We have the highest birth rate, and, therefore, our population of the cohort age groups that need the Health Service most — the vulnerable, young people and children — is growing faster than those in the rest of the UK. Our elderly population is the fastest-growing section of society anywhere in the UK, and that is why our need is greater. In fact, Appleby said that our social care need was 35% greater than that in England, yet we spend around 34% less on our children. *[Interruption.]*

The Member has already been up once.

The funding gap is such that people try to find excuses not to face up to it. If Members are factually correct when trying to do so, that is fine. However, what I listened to just now was factually incorrect. What I read in 'The Irish News' is a clear distortion of the situation. Those sorts of articles are damaging to the Health Service, not simply because of their content. I suggest that Mrs Anderson read the Hansard report of last week's Health Committee, because it has already examined that issue.

The Member has a problem with domiciliary care services but, as things stand, that situation will only get worse. All I can do is warn Members. I cannot make Members vote to support the Health Service, our elderly population and our vulnerable children, but I can warn them, as I have done over and over again. Members are starting to see, in their constituency offices, the consequences of those cuts. The Ulster Hospital, for example, has a main ward block with concrete cancer, unsafe wiring and a main sewer running underneath it. It is more than 60 years old and routinely gives problems. It is a building that cannot be repaired, but if we lose that ward block, what will happen to the Ulster Hospital? Those are the sorts of issues that the Assembly must face up to. All that I can do is point them out.

I hear Ms Anderson and others talking about finding additional funds and resources, but where do they think that those funds will come from? Do I go into the social care budget to take money from learning disability funding? Do I go into the children's fund to take money out of child protection funding? Is that what I am supposed to do, or should I take money out of the funding for acute hospitals, cardiac surgery or paediatric services? Those are the sorts of questions facing us. We do not have the money.

We push for efficiencies and, indeed, have made huge advances in efficiencies over the past three and a half years. I am the only Minister to have delivered on the review of public administration. No Sinn Féin or DUP Minister has achieved it, but I have achieved it. I have completely reorganised the Health Service to save £53 million a year and reduce administrative jobs by 1,700. All the time, the same numbers of staff do more and more work. That is what is called efficiency and doing better. However, those staff need and deserve support. Inaccuracies do not support them whatsoever.

It is a very important subject, because the Health Service is doing so well for the population. Our life expectancy is rising, and thank God that more people are living longer. However, those people need help. They need support to allow them to have extra years and quality extra years. That is where domiciliary care comes in, and it is just part of how we address the issue. I have put in extra money and will continue to do so, but demand outstrips the supply of resource.

As I have said to the House before: this is just the beginning. People need to be prepared to put their hands up to protect services, not just in health. Sammy Wilson has said that he will protect health. His figures do not quite add up — he is several million pounds short — but he is getting there. He is starting to get it. When I listened to some of what Ms Anderson said today and Caitríona Ruane said last week, I hoped that maybe Sinn Féin is starting to get it, too. Social care is so important to health. We have to look after the elderly population. We do not have a choice. If we do not look after elderly people in hospital, we have to look after them in their homes. It is one or the other. If we are not prepared to look after them at home, we will end up looking after them in hospital, with all that that entails.

I am not talking about bursting the budget or breaking the bank. I am talking about an easily affordable amount of money from the overall sum. Those are the questions that we will ask ourselves very soon. I am told that social care will not be ring-fenced. However, we now have a handle —

Mr Deputy Speaker: I ask the Minister to draw his remarks to a close.

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety: — on some of the social care issues, which is a major advance.

Mrs O'Neill: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Many contributors recognised clearly the role that carers play in our society. In winding on the debate, I, too, wish to put on record my support for the carers and social services staff who contribute to society, day and daily. Many contributors also gave real examples of how individuals are affected daily by a lack of packages, changes in packages or long waiting lists for initial assessments. I will add another example, which my office dealt with recently.

It is the case of an elderly lady who was the main carer for her son who had motor neurone disease. She was his only carer since he first became ill. The lady was in her 70s, but she never asked for support from social services and took it all upon herself. When she broke her arm in a fall, she was no longer able to assist her son in moving or lifting him. She applied to social services for support. However, the process of getting any support was so long that, in the meantime, she had to ask for support from her friends, who were also in their 70s or 80s. The lady and her friends were so frustrated that they contacted me, and I got involved.

A package was being drawn up, but it took some time. In the six weeks between the lady breaking her arm and her receipt of support, she had to rely on whatever support she could gather up from the community around her. That is simply not good enough, and it is the sort of real example that we need to look at. The package of support and care that the lady eventually got took the form of direct payments. Therefore, she had to go out to find a carer herself. She was really concerned and frustrated. She did not know where to start, so she had to turn to me for support. That lady cared compassionately for her son all his life. However, she spent the last six weeks of his life fighting with social services. This was a lady who had never asked for one button of support in the past. We do not want such a situation to be repeated or to become the norm. We need to be serious and forward plan. As the motion outlines, we must recognise the changing demographics.

4.00pm

Many Members referred to the statistics, and it is important to reiterate them. There are 300,000 people of retirement age in society today, and they make up 17% of the population. It is projected that there will be more than 130,000 people over the age of 80 by 2030. That will be a 103% increase from the 2010 estimates. I welcome the Minister's comments, and Jonathan Bell made the point that life expectancy has increased. We should be glad about that and celebrate it, but it is not clear whether life without disability and ill health has increased to the same extent. Therefore, naturally, a growing number of older people may be living longer with conditions that can seriously reduce their quality of life. Mickey Brady referred to that earlier when he talked about the effects of arthritis, stroke and

dementia. The reliance of people with those conditions on health and social care to maintain their independence will become paramount.

A number of Members referred to the briefing paper that all Members received from Age NI. I thank the organisation for that paper, and one clear point in it is the need to review the current system of social care. Age NI feels that the debate on social care is long overdue. Therefore, I hope that the House sends a clear message to Age NI today to the effect that we support the need for a longer-term approach to tackling the challenges being posed, because, until we do so, we will only be firefighting.

The Age NI paper also suggests that we look at the three emerging themes that are fundamental to the protection of older people: social care provision, ageism and discrimination. Clearly, we have to look at social care, because evidence suggests that reductions in social care provision have the knock-on effect of increasing demand on the Health Service and on acute services. Secondly, the paper talks about the need to focus on prevention. As we all know, prevention is, in many instances, the key to the promotion of good health and a reduction in health inequalities. However, that is being undermined by the tightening of eligibility criteria for domiciliary care. Thirdly, the paper makes a point about ageism and discrimination. When services are limited or restricted, older people are disproportionately affected because they are the greatest users of the health and social care services.

Many Members made excellent contributions to the debate and, without rehearsing them all, I will pick up on a few common threads, the first of which was the recording of support and acknowledging the great work of social services and carers. Secondly, many Members recognised the change in the demographics. We all recognise that, and there is an absolute need to forward plan to meet those needs. Thirdly, a number of Members picked up on the issue of individuals not being able to be discharged from hospital. Sam Gardiner said that only 70 people could not be discharged this year because no package was in place. Quite frankly, it is not right to claim that it is "only" 70 people. That has a real impact on those 70 people, their families and their carers. We cannot think about people as numbers. We need to think of the human aspect.

Mickey Brady talked about entitlements, right and fairness. Those need to be central to all

decisions that are taken on the way forward. The other issue was that carers' voices are not being heard. Carers' voices must be heard and taken into consideration at all stages. We need to challenge that position and create avenues that will allow voices to be heard and people to be involved in decision-making processes. Jonathan Bell made another good comment when he said that if we fail to plan, we plan to fail. I agree wholeheartedly with that comment, and we must forward plan.

The Minister delivered the speech that I expected him to deliver. He talked about the rising demand on the Health Service and said that he does not have the budget to deliver, and so on. We hear it during every debate. We understand the pressures on the Health Service, and nobody is taking away from that for one moment. However, I suggest that there is a need to use the resources that are available to his Department more effectively.

The health and well-being of older people needs to be promoted. Also, this is the time to move away from focusing entirely on acute care to focusing more on social care. Prevention requires political commitment and a fundamental shift in the way in which the Health Service works. Therefore, continuing situations of delayed discharge from hospital because of the lack of support packages is not efficient or responsive, and it is not an effective way to manage the resources that are available to the Department. It puts pressure on hospitals and on social services staff, and, as the Minister said, it is cheaper to provide care at home than it is to do so in hospital.

I welcome the fact that he recognises that, but he needs to put weight behind amending the processes that will allow change to happen. Fundamentally, forward planning is at the core of all this, and the Minister needs to forward plan, to change systems and practices, and to stop worrying about the political ramifications for his term in office.

The Minister referred to protecting the health budget. He needs to talk to his party colleagues on the Health Committee, who voted to protect health services and to leave out in the cold social services and public safety. The Minister needs to have a party discussion, because there is a lot of disjointedness there. I will leave it at that. The points have been well made.

Mrs M Anderson: Does the Member agree that the Minister abdicated his responsibility in his response? He tried to dismiss as an inaccuracy a freedom of information request that disclosed that, in the previous financial year, 657 consultants received a bonus. Excuse me: the Minister said that it was a not a bonus but a clinical excellence award. If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it is a duck, but the Minister calls it a clinical excellence award. The people who received it received in the region of £75,000, £60,000 or £48,000 over and above their salaries. The Minister might want to describe that as a clinical excellence award, but the carers who come into my mother and to all the people who need them across the North are the people who should be getting awards. They are the people who work over and above the call of duty, and the Minister should not try to differentiate between one set of workers and another. The Minister's comments in the Chamber today were dismissive and disgraceful.

Mrs O'Neill: I thank the Member for her intervention. The point has been well made. Sinn Féin has been clear on the record that we will not ring-fence inefficiency and inequality in the Department. I will leave it at that, and I thank everyone who contributed to the debate. It has been a worthwhile and significant debate, and I ask all Members to support the motion. Let us bring forward the best possible way of ensuring that we provide for people in the community.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the challenges posed by the changing demographics; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to ensure that there is adequate investment in domiciliary care to meet the current and future needs of an ageing population.

Adjourned at 4.07 pm.



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