



S3M-01791

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab):

The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama:

That the Parliament recognises the value and contribution of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD) in Glasgow to the arts in Scotland and further afield; notes that the RSAMD is Scotland's only national conservatoire of music and drama and a recognised world-class institution producing famous alumni, including the current Dr Who, David Tennant, and acclaimed actors Alan Cumming, James McAvoy, Bill Paterson and Daniella Nardini, as well as renowned musicians, singers, composers and conductors; further notes that the academy has ensured that students have benefited from the high standard of one-on-one tuition which conservatoire teaching provides, despite the fact that drama courses have not been funded by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council to conservatoire level; is concerned that this historic underfunding has finally come to a head and is leading to a restructuring exercise among teaching staff which threatens the quality of teaching at the academy, including major changes to staff contracts and a failure to rule out compulsory redundancies, and calls on the Scottish Government to fund the current £600,000 gap and work with the funding council to ensure that drama and music courses are both funded to conservatoire level to ensure that Scotland remains at the centre of international arts provision.

Supported by: Claire Baker, David Whitton, Karen Gillon, Malcolm Chisholm, Jamie Stone, Margaret Curran, Karen Whitefield, Dr Richard Simpson, Bill Butler, Iain Gray, Ken Macintosh, Tavish Scott, Robin Harper, Jackie Baillie, John Park, Dr Elaine Murray, George Foulkes, Jim Hume, Mr Frank McAveety, Mary Mulligan, Hugh O'Donnell, Des McNulty, Mike Pringle, Elaine Smith, Andy Kerr, Patricia Ferguson, Alison McInnes, Cathy Jamieson, Rhona Brankin, Robert Brown

Lodged on Monday, April 28, 2008; Current

Official Report 1 May 2008

Col 8105



Scottish Parliament

Thursday 1 May 2008

[THE DEPUTY PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 09:15*]

Col 8169

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama

5. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what steps the Scottish Government will take to resolve the funding situation at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama to ensure that Scotland's reputation for arts and culture remains of international standing. (S3F-726)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): I recognise the important contribution that the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama makes to Scotland's international reputation for arts and culture. However, as the member knows, any decisions on the funding of individual institutions and the mechanisms used to allocate funding are the responsibilities of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. Direct interference by ministers is prohibited by legislation. Surely even George Foulkes would not encourage us to break the law.

Pauline McNeill: Presiding Officer, I welcome students from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama who are in the public gallery.

The Deputy First Minister will be aware that students from the academy are protesting outside the Scottish Parliament in a way in which only they can. Decisions by the funding council have resulted in cuts, courses being frozen and compulsory redundancies, which will impact on teaching at the academy

and on its world-class reputation. Given that the Government is always keen to ally itself with Scottish cultural success, does it not realise that, unless it is prepared to act, such success will be less likely in the future? Surely the Deputy First Minister will not wash her hands of the issue, given that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning claimed credit for brokering a deal for the Crichton

Col 8180

campus, which set a precedent in this area? What is the difference between the two cases? On behalf of students and staff at the academy and of all those who care about Scotland's future as a nation that is able to produce great actors, performers and musicians, I ask the Government to act in Scotland's cultural interests by intervening today.

Nicola Sturgeon: If Pauline McNeill had listened to my initial answer, she would be aware of the legislative framework within which the Government is operating. Incidentally, that framework was put in place and supported by the Labour Party when it was in government; of course, Pauline McNeill forgot to mention that.

I, too, welcome students from the academy to the public gallery. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning met student representatives earlier this week—on Monday 28 April—to hear their concerns. Officials will meet representatives of the Scottish funding council today to ensure that it is aware of those concerns. As members will be aware, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning made clear in her strategic guidance to the funding council the importance that she places on ensuring growth in graduate and postgraduate numbers in the performing arts. I hope that all members will see that as a signal of how seriously we take the sector.

I say as gently as I can to Pauline McNeill that the Government will continue to deal with the issue in a constructive and meaningful way. That will probably reap more benefits than the hectoring that we have just heard from the member. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, Mr McAveety. That concludes question time. I apologise to Mr Purvis, whose question we did not reach.

12:32

Meeting suspended until 14:15.

Official Report 24 April 2008

Col 7863



Scottish Parliament

Thursday 24 April 2008

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 09:15*]

12:30

Meeting suspended until 14:15.

Col 7937

14:15

On resuming—

Question Time

Scottish Executive

Europe, External Affairs and Culture

Music and Drama

3. Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to make Scotland a world leader in music and drama. (S30-3047)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): Scotland's diverse and vibrant cultural life is a defining feature of our successful and confident nation. In music and drama, and across all art forms, our artists are recognised across the world, and we are committed to providing support to help develop our international reputation for cultural excellence.

Hugh O'Donnell: Given the minister's answer, will she pay particular attention to the situation of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, which has expressed concern about its financial situation? What steps is the Government taking to ease the situation for the academy?

Linda Fabiani: Decisions on staffing issues at Scottish higher education institutions are the responsibility of their management teams, and the RSAMD is no different. As a fully autonomous body that is independent of Government, the academy alone must judge the best decisions to take if it is to achieve its strategic objectives. That said, I expect it to discuss its restructuring plans in full consultation with staff and the unions that represent staff. My colleague, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, is assured that it is doing that.

Col 7940

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Will the minister tell us what steps she is taking to allow Scottish music and drama to be exported around the world in order to attract visitors to Scotland in 2009, which is the year of homecoming?

Linda Fabiani: One of the steps that we have taken is the establishment of the new expo fund, from which £2 million a year will be used during the next three years to promote the Scottish excellence that we all care so much about. That funding will enable Scotland-based productions to flourish through the Edinburgh festivals and then to tour overseas. I hope that that injection of new funding will bring Scotland many benefits.

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): Returning to the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, do the minister and her colleague, the cabinet secretary—who is sitting beside her—recognise that the RSAMD is a world-class institution that depends to a large extent on one-to-one tuition? Are they therefore concerned about the new contracts that are being offered to teachers? The RSAMD appears to be at risk of losing staff because of the greatly reduced salaries that are being offered for fewer hours of work.

Does the minister accept that the Scottish Government has a responsibility because the drama courses in particular are not funded at conservatoire level and have to cross-subsidise the music courses? Will she intervene with the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council to try to rectify the underlying problem?

Linda Fabiani: We respect and value the work of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and its contribution to the arts in Scotland. However, I can only reiterate that decisions on the strategic direction of individual institutions are the responsibility of the management of those institutions. Of

course, as I said earlier, we expect management to consult both staff and unions.

I must put on the record the fact that there was a 4.8 per cent uplift in the funding of the RSAMD this year.

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): I appreciate the support that the Scottish Government gives to traditional Scottish music, but will the minister confirm that the Government also supports international classical music and our world-class national orchestras? Will she further confirm that our national orchestras will be maintained and enhanced?

Linda Fabiani: We have two national orchestras: the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, whose work is indeed world class. That is proved over and over again by the touring that they do and the

Col 7941

reception that they get worldwide. The national orchestras are funded directly by the Government, and this year they have had a settlement that will enable them to carry on their very good work.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): Is the minister not at all concerned that the RSAMD, a leading institution in the area of drama and music, is facing such a crisis that the quality of its teaching will definitely suffer?

Given that the Government has stepped in on other situations, such as that involving the Crichton campus in Dumfries, does the minister agree that she should discuss with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning the fact that they should do the right thing and step in and save the quality of teaching and reputation of the RSAMD?

The products of the academy—such as James McAvoy and Robert Carlyle—show the work that the institution has done. I urge the minister to think again about what interventions she should make.

Linda Fabiani: As has already been stated, the issue is one for the funding council.

My colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning wrote to the funding council to lay out her priorities for the university sector, one of which was:

“growth in undergraduate and taught post-graduate numbers (for excellence in the performing arts, including dance)”.

This Government cares about the culture of this country.

Education and Lifelong Learning

The Presiding Officer: Question 9 has been withdrawn, for understandable reasons. That gives me the rare opportunity to invite a member to ask the 10th question.

Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (Reorganisation)

10. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it supports the use of compulsory redundancy as part of the proposed reorganisation of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. (S30-3002)

I am shocked that I have had the opportunity to ask the 10th question.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): I congratulate the member, as she is probably the first member to ask the 10th question at question time. Her question is important.

Col 7953

Decisions on staffing issues at Scottish higher education institutions are the responsibility of the management teams of those institutions. RSAMD is no different. As a fully autonomous body that is independent of the Government, it alone must judge what decisions it must take to achieve its strategic objectives. That said, I expect it to discuss its restructuring plans in full consultation with staff and the unions. I have been assured that it is doing so.

Pauline McNeill: Does the cabinet secretary acknowledge that RSAMD is a leading institution not only in Scotland and the United Kingdom but in the world? Given that the Government previously stepped in with respect to the Crichton campus, for example, will the cabinet secretary save Scotland's future in drama, dance and music by taking action to ensure that in Scotland we continue to have a world-class institution for our drama and music students?

Fiona Hyslop: The member will be aware that Parliament passed legislation, which she supported, to establish the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. That legislation makes it clear that as a minister, I cannot direct independent institutions. However, in a letter that I sent to the chair of the funding council, John McClelland, on 25 January 2008, setting out strategic guidance—I am allowed to do that under the legislation—I stated:

"My priorities for the university sector are:

- growth in undergraduate and taught post-graduate numbers (for excellence in the performing arts, including dance; Crichton; and rural healthcare)".

I also provided for a 4.8 per cent increase in funding for the academy in 2008-09, which is greater than both the inflation rate and the 3.4 per cent increase

in funding for the university sector as a whole. That shows that we are supporting the academy. I recognise the tributes that the member has paid to it, but we must respect the right of individual institutions to carry out restructuring. That is a matter for institutions to explore, but they must do so in consultation with staff and unions.

Col 7954