

Ged Killen MP: Maiden speech

Thank you Mr Speaker for the opportunity to give my maiden speech in this debate, it is an honour to be standing here representing the good people of Rutherglen and Hamilton West as their new Labour and Co-operative MP and it is a pleasure to follow excellent maiden speeches across the house and, in particular that of my honourable friends, the members for:

I'd like to begin, Mr Speaker, by paying tribute to all of those affected by recent events in London and Manchester, painful and shocking tragedies that were truly felt right across the country. One of my own constituents Piotr Chylewska was seriously injured in the Manchester bombing. Originally from Poland, Piotr now lives in Rutherglen and was among the last of the injured to be discharged from hospital in Manchester. I am pleased to say Piotr is making good progress and I'm sure members across this house would like to join me in wishing him well.

Often in the most of tragic of circumstances, we see the very best in each other and I'd like to thank Father Paul Morton, the St Bride's Parish in Cambuslang and the wider community for the support they have shown Piotr. It is that coming together in times of adversity that I think is a testament to our shared values. Values that I see examples of every day in my wonderful constituency of Rutherglen and Hamilton West.

In my home town in of Rutherglen, we have Coffee Shops like the Black Poppy collecting and distributing toiletries for the homeless; In Blantyre, public houses like the West End Bar supporting generations of families affected by Chernobyl; community councils like Burnside and Halfway working hard to stand up for local interests; Proud Lanarkshire institutions like Equi's Ice Cream in Hamilton; Social enterprises like R:evolve Clothing; residents associations, churches and community development trusts like Healthy 'n' Happy; and too many more to name; a diverse mix of decent people all coming together and helping to make our communities better places to live one small act of kindness at a time. They are the everyday heroes and I want to thank each and every one of them for the job that they do.

Mr Speaker, my predecessor, Margaret Ferrier was a strong advocate in this house for Human Rights across the world. I have no doubt that she cared as deeply for my constituency as I do, and I wish her well for the future. In her maiden speech, she spoke of working together in a spirit of collaboration.

I like to think of myself as a pragmatist who welcomes consensus and, although it won't be surprising that I few fond memories of pervious conservative Governments, as the first Gay Married Man to represent my constituency, I welcomed the equal marriage legislation passed under the 2010 coalition government and I look forward to the continued advancement of LGBTI equality in this place and across the whole of the United Kingdom.

In reading the speeches of my predecessors, Mr Speaker, I was struck that the occasion of a maiden speech is an opportunity to leave a message for future generations. I hope both my successor and I will be able to look back and have at least one fond memory of the current government. Unfortunately, initial impressions suggest I may be disappointed.

Having served as a local councillor, I have seen first-hand the effects of

the government's austerity programme on the communities in my constituency. Real consequences for jobs, services and the local economy. When I hear stories of people using candles to heat and light rooms in their home; of disabled people unable to put on their own socks and shoes being found fit to work; of siblings in their 20s sharing a bedroom because they have nowhere else to go; When I hear these stories not from the pages of history where they belong Mr Speaker, but from real life in my constituency in 2017, I wonder, where is the deal for them? Who from the government benches will negotiate to protect their interests? Support for those that need it most and investment in public services are not luxuries to be rationed or traded off. The lack of ambition of the Scottish Government in these matters will not escape my scrutiny or criticism but if the members opposite are truly to be a government of all of the nations and regions of the United Kingdom it is time to start acting like it. We need a government looking out for people across the country, not for the people sitting on the benches behind them and, as we go forward, it is the individual lives, the every day heroes that I want to focus on in this place. It has been an exciting and somewhat unexpected journey for me from Gorbals boy to Member of Parliament via Rutherglen and Blantyre. And in this era of fixed term parliaments, Mr Speaker, the great irony is that I have no idea how long I will have a seat in this place. But my pledge to the people of Rutherglen and Hamilton West is that no matter how long that is, I fully intend to make every day count.

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