I am a Private Practitioner operating in a Law Practice in a rural area of south west of Scotland. I have been in the profession regulated by the Law Society of Scotland for the last 37 years. It is my understanding that the overwhelming percentage of people in Scotland who deal with solicitors are satisfied with the service which they receive. If that is the case then it must be at least questionable whether the interests of the public and the profession are served by foisting a new regulatory body upon solicitors practising in Scotland.

Leaving that aside, what I consider is indefensible and against the human rights of the practitioners who would be subject to such a body is that this body would be funded by the profession who would also have to pay for the expenses of any complaints whether or not successful and also that there would be no right of independent appeal against its decisions which would be made by members most of whom would have no idea of the stresses and strains practitioners are under nowadays. I imagine that should the funding, costs and appeals aspects of this bill be insisted upon then it is highly likely that these fundamental human rights issues will be invoked by at least some of the profession, who simply tire of doing their best to offer a good and honest service to the community, especially in difficult rural circumstances where it is often impossible to recruit professional staff, while endeavouring to absorb the never ending and, in our view, entirely unnecessary plethora of regulations and red tape which now beset us.

Would the members who intend to vote for this arrangement be prepared to have themselves under the scrutiny of an independent lay body paid for by themselves? If not then they should certainly not in all conscience vote for this Bill.