As a senior lecturer and director of student experience at a modern University in Scotland, I wish to strongly support this bill. It will in one simple, affordable action recapture Scottish higher education for its primary and historic function of serving the common good. The principle of higher education (like the NHS) freed from pecuniary considerations is one worth fighting for. Of course, Universities have to be paid for, but I believe that this cost should be borne by general taxation, principally taxation of the income of those in employment, not by the artifice of a Graduate Endowment.

One must praise the present administration for bringing this bill forward, and to be fair some credit must also go to the previous Labour-Lib Dem administration for saving Scotland from tuition fees proper—which have in England already brought about the highest-priced universities in Europe. My hope is therefore that this bill will be supported not only by SNP politicians, by all those in the Scottish Parliament broadly sympathetic to the philosophy of social democracy.

I have taught for fourteen years, currently in a department with over a thousand students. In my capacity as director of student experience, I get to meet a vast number of these individuals. A majority have to work in paid employment, many to an extent that threatens their studies. For example, tomorrow (Friday 26 October 2007), I have called in 65 students for small-group personal tutorials. About 30 have not responded to this request, while 10 have had the courtesy to inform me that they have to work every Friday so they will not be able to come into University. This is unfortunate, but I cannot be too critical of them because I and other staff have to accept that grave financial hardship is the lot of all too many students. I do not expect the Scottish government to succeed in writing-off all student debt, but by abolishing the Graduate Endowment at least one major worry will be lifted from all students' minds.

There is widespread support in every quarter of Scottish higher education for the principle that this bill seeks to express. I urge all colleagues in the Parliament to support it.