

## A COMMENTARY

The Editor

The publication of the 1983 Yearbook sees two changes. It has a new editor, and a new publisher. After living for six years with the Yearbook, Nancy and Henry Drucker have stepped down to take a well-earned rest. As readers and colleagues, we are indebted to them for making the Yearbook an indispensable guide to the political year in Scotland. They have set high standards for their successor to keep. Edinburgh University's Research Centre for the Social Sciences has taken over the production of the Yearbook, under the continued auspices of the Unit for the Study of Government in Scotland. We hope that the partnership will be a fruitful one. The Yearbook owes a special debt to Helen Ramm who has provided an indispensable link between the old and new regimes; to John Bennett for acting as business Manager; and to John Nimmo of the Research Centre. Our advertisers continue to show confidence in the Yearbook, and we are truly grateful.

The 1983 Yearbook has the familiar format of articles, reports and a reference section. Chris Allen continues to provide his comprehensive bibliography, and this year has written a review article of major books on Scottish politics and government. We are also indebted to Hamish Henderson and Allan Macartney for their annual reviews of Scottish legislation, and of the opinion polls. Richard Parry has been responsible for compiling the reference section. The work of these contributors continues to be the mainstay of the Yearbook. The short reports section, introduced last year, contains a summary of issues discussed at a seminar on central-local government relations; and Bill Saunders reviews the impact of the Clayson reforms.

It has been a strange year in Scotland. It was not that nothing much happened in or to Scotland, for plenty did, most of it unwelcome. Following the spectacular job losses at Fort William and Linwood, the

year continued in the same vein with Bathgate (Tractors), Plessey, Invergordon making the unwelcome headlines. Somehow it was fitting in a macabre way that in August, Scotland's oldest manufacturing company, Carron (founded in 1759) should fall into the receiver's hands. These spectacular failures mask the continued attrition of manufacturing jobs in Scotland. As David Bell points out, there are around 30% fewer manufacturing jobs in Scotland than there were in 1974, a fall dramatic enough to be described as 'de-industrialisation'. John Scott charts the continuing process of declining autonomy among Scotland's firms. Oil, if anything, has speeded up that process. The banking system remains, seemingly, the last brick in the wall. January 1982 saw the uncertain rescue of the Royal Bank from the embraces of Standard Chartered and the Hong Kong banks by the Monopolies Commission. Tony Mackay's account of the fishing industry has wider significance, for it is remarkable that the virtual demise of an industry, and its associated way of life, should be taking place with so little fuss and attention.

That is the paradox of Scotland in 1982, for it might seem remarkable that when the industrial and employment structure is changing so radically, that it does so with little fuss and attention. Certainly politics does not seem to connect too closely with these changes. If we recall the political events of the past year, they do not place issues of economic development and regional planning at the centre as they did in the 1960s and 1970s. 1981-2 has been the year in which a revolution has occurred in regional policy. It is not simply that the failures of the prestige projects of the 1960s - Linwood, Fort William, Bathgate, Invergordon, Hunterston - showed how naive such planning could be. The old system of regional aid is being dismantled, an occurrence quite unthinkable in the days when the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) had such political clout. The new system of Enterprise Zones, of 'Hong Kong economics' to its critics, speaks volumes for the change which has occurred in Conservative thinking above all. The 'New Right' government has little taste for the interventionist and paternalist measures of its predecessors.

The paradox that, as Henry Drucker puts it, 'the dog does not bark' at these changes is the central theme of the Yearbook. Henry Drucker and James Naughtie show how at the party political level in

Scotland and in Westminster, the opposition parties made no real dent in the self-esteem of the Tories. John Bochel and David Denver highlight the muted, if not feeble, response to government policies at the Regional Elections. All are agreed that somehow Scottish politics have been 'nationalised', that somehow politics in Scotland are a side-show of the Westminster stage. The reasons for this are many. The impact of the 'recession' (if that's all it is) is U.K. and world-wide. Anyway, hint Scottish Office Ministers, we're not doing too badly. Look at the West Midlands....They've overtaken us in league table of unemployed regions.... Further, the Conservative Party doesn't have to play the 'Tartan Card'; 'Home Rule' is weaker, and the election will not be won up here. Two events mark the 'nationalising' of Scottish politics. The rise of the Social Democrats, the mould-breakers with an English centre of gravity doesn't add much yet to Scottish politics. Hillhead wasn't really a 'Scottish' event. Above all, the Falklands saga shows just how much we've underestimated the potency of Anglo/British nationalism. As John Bochel and David Denver show, the now famous 'effect' is less strong north of the Border, but it does remind us of the perceptive comment by the late John Mackintosh that Scots have 'dual' nationality, Scottish and British, which they adeptly switch when it suits them. The motifs and symbols to hand at present are those of Britain, not Scotland, as the SNP have found to their bewilderment.

It would, however, be a mistake to focus too much on the set-piece battles of Westminster. For it has been a year in which strivings and struggles at the grassroots of politics and society have been significant. Mobilisation and resistance to economic decline in general and government policies in particular have broken out at local levels - in Lothian and Dundee most prominently. This resurgence of local politics is documented by Paul Crompton, Brian Elliott and David McCrone, and by Allan Macartney who analyses the growing autonomist movements in Orkney and Shetland. Much of this discontent focuses around cuts in public expenditure, the continuing importance of which in Scotland is discussed by Richard Parry. The success of the 'what we have, we hold' strategy of the Scottish Office, helps explain the assurance of Ministers fighting the 'new puritans' in Whitehall. Nevertheless, as Grant Jordan shows, the resignation of Nicholas

Fairbairn (and the ill-fated Falklands trio) serves to remind Ministers that, under the present regime, they can quickly become expendable.

The vexed question of relations between central and local government will remain on agenda in the coming year, although as Michael Keating and Arthur Midwinter point out, conflicts between levels of government are guaranteed to simmer on.

It will be an interesting year in Scotland. The political battlefield will begin to host pre-election skirmishes, although the ultimate outcome of such a struggle, framed by the antiquated rules of electoral warfare, is very uncertain. What is certain is that it will be a battle of much ideological ferocity, but one which will occur largely outwith Scotland. The Scottish dimension will simply be a side-show. Nevertheless, we would do well not to be too fascinated by the formal political battle. In the sub-soil of Scottish (and British) politics, changes are afoot. Continuing cuts in public expenditure have politicised and radicalised sections of the population previously untouched. Public service workers have taken to forms of action undreamt of, and among Scotland's middle classes new perspectives and fresh alignments are being formed. The search for a suitable political vehicle for their aspirations will continue. It remains to be seen whether this will be a still-divided Labour party, or a Conservative Party which historically has offered few attractions for them in Scotland. The SNP and SDP perhaps provide more attractive vehicles for the 'amateurs' to politics, with their promises to break respective moulds.

Whatever happens, we will need to look beneath the orthodox political structures, at the stirrings at extra-parliamentary and overly non-political levels - among pressure groups, resistance movements, and new organisations - groups as yet unincorporated into the formal political processes. We must wait and see what the next year brings. It promises to be an intriguing one.

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