

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Alice Brown

Many of the legislative developments discussed in last year's editorial have now become political realities in Scotland – the creation of School Boards, the establishment of Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Homes; and the setting and collecting of the Community Charge (Poll Tax). This, the fourteenth edition of the Scottish Government Yearbook, includes articles covering these and other issues and debates within Scotland.

Concern over the longer-term trends in the Scottish economy did not subside in 1989 especially after the controversial decision by Britoil to cut 1,000 jobs and the announcement by Ferranti of 400 job losses even before the financial crisis which hit the company in September. Further the full impact of continued high interest rates on the Scottish economy, particularly on investment and exports and ultimately jobs, has yet to be assessed.

With the loss of their two seats in the European elections and their poor showing in the Opinion Polls, 1989 was another bad year for the Conservative government in Scotland. Attempts were made to reverse this situation with a new focus on party organisation and strategy, and the appointment of Michael Forsyth as Chairman of the Scottish Party. There is, as yet no evidence to suggest that the party is likely to experience any improvement in its standing, especially after the forced resignation of their President, Professor Ross Harper, because of press allegations over his personal life.

The position of the Conservative, Labour and Scottish National Parties is discussed in the first section of the Yearbook – 'Parties and Politics in Scotland'. Also featured in this section are articles on the Constitutional Convention; the issue of Independence in Europe; and the results of the 1989 European Elections in Scotland. Contributors to this section include academics, political activists and a political correspondent. As might be anticipated, their interpretations of events do not necessarily coincide.

'Conservative Policy in Scotland' is the theme of the second section which carries pieces on implementation of the Community Charge; Scottish Homes; competitive tendering in the National Health Service; Scottish Education and School Boards; and an extended chapter on Scottish Enterprise.

The 'General Section' includes chapters on Scottish University Admissions; the Women's Movement in Scotland; Prison Reforms; Nuclear Policy and Electricity in Scotland; and the Merchant City of Glasgow.

We continue to produce our 'Reference Section' which provides a valuable source for students and commentators on Scottish politics. Included in this section is an analysis of Opinion Polls in Scotland; Scottish Legislation 1988; Recent Publications in Scottish Government and Politics; and the Scottish Reference.

Finally I am pleased to welcome Peter MacMahon from 'Scotland on Sunday' who has contributed the 'Year at Westminster' feature which follows this Introduction.

Richard Parry has shared the editorial duties with me this year and I am grateful to him for his input. I wish to convey our thanks and gratitude to all those involved. To the authors, both old and new, for their contributions to the Yearbook, in particular to David McCrone for his continued support; to our advertisers for their invaluable financial assistance; to all our readers and subscribers; and once again to Helen Ramm for fulfilling all the many demands made on her time with patience, energy and good humour.