

THE STUDY OF SCOTTISH POLITICS:
A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SERMON

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Each issue of this *Yearbook* has carried a lengthy bibliography on the previous twelve months' writing on Scottish government and politics. Yet its length is deceptive, for in all too many fields there is remarkably little work: like its teeth, the study of Scotland's politics is most notable for gaps. The reasons ultimately lie in the nature of the Scottish political system and in its political culture, for most of what is written on Scotland is written from Scotland. This brief article tries to identify those reasons, once the extent of the gaps in the literature has been established.

I. Pathology

Scotland has for many years been accepted as a politically distinct area of the United Kingdom, no less in terms of its political behaviour and consciousness than its institutions. Yet in all of these areas of study there are extensive and surprising gaps, together with a narrowness of conception and vision, that makes a full understanding of the Scottish political system and the tendencies within it very hard to achieve. James Kellas's valiant and pioneering attempt at such an understanding (Kellas 1975) shows both the extent and the intractability of this problem.

We may start by considering the major *formal institutions of government* of Scotland: Parliament, the Scottish Office and its appointed bodies, and local government. The distinctively Scottish elements of Parliament are reasonably broadly covered, with useful accounts of the Scottish Committees (Burns 1960; Edwards 1972) and an impressive thesis by the subsequently prolific Michael Keating, on Scottish MPs (Keating 1975; summary versions Keating 1977, 1978; see also Mishler and Mughan

1978). Where we are still ill-served, despite the efforts of this *Yearbook*, is in assessment of the effect of these elements on the process of law-making. Received ideas are easier to come by than evidence, as Robin Cook points out in one of the few articles on the background to a Bill and its enactment or failure (Cook 1977; see also Cope 1977 and Gibson 1978).

The Scottish Office, though the most influential institution in Scotland, remains among the least analysed. Hanham (in Wolfe 1969), Breckenridge (1969) and Kellas (1975) provide stock brief accounts, but suffer from the pervasive superficiality and blandness of the official descriptions, which substitute detail for any hint of self-criticism (Royal Commission on Scottish Affairs 1954; Milne 1957; Kilbrandon 1973; Select Committee on Scottish Affairs 1968/9, 1969/70; Haddow 1964; McGuinness in MacKay 1979). Much the same can be said for the few pieces on the Secretary of State, which are hardly more informative on the office than are the occasional references in the memoirs of other Ministers (see Ross 1977 and, for a general historical account, Pottinger 1979). Academic commentary has thus remained limited to an inconclusive debate on the significance of the separate administration of Scotland (Mackintosh 1964; Keating 1976), limited comparison of the Scottish Office with other Ministries (Hood 1978), and general surveys which raise more questions than they can hope to answer (Kellas 1975; Keating 1979b). Individual Scottish departments are even more rarely discussed, apart from the evidence to Kilbrandon and the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs; for the SDD and SEPD see Scottish Council (1970).

Attached to the Scottish Office, and responsible for the execution of more of its powers (and the spending of more of its budget) than is the case for any other Ministry, are hundreds of appointed bodies (see Haddow in MacKay 1979, and Hogwood 1979 for general accounts). Few of them publish even annual reports, and those that do are too often discussed only in those reports or in brief newspaper features. There are short accounts of the new Health Service structure (D. Hunter 1976; Levitt 1976), but only one assessment (Hunter, forthcoming) that raises issues of accountability and participation. Similarly, only Williams' thesis on the early years of the HIDB (Williams 1973; see also Thompson 1978) does this for the major economic agencies, though they are prolific and infor-

mative producers of documents and have attracted several critical assessments of their activities (e.g. Carter 1973; Bryden and Houston 1977; Radice 1978; Davies 1978; Lotz 1969). In other important fields — such as education and the New Towns — there are at best the annual reports, and in housing some brief commentaries on housing associations (e.g. Edinburgh Housing Research Group 1977).

Perhaps the most documented of Scotland's formal institutions is local government, with the Wheatley Report (1969) and its volumes of evidence at one end, through the reports and commentaries on the new structure (e.g. Paterson 1973; Peggie 1976; Midwinter 1978), to the massive output in the planning field, much of which is very informative (for general surveys see S. McDonald 1977 and Planning Exchange material such as Howat 1976). Problems begin to arise though when one moves away from the essentially descriptive (or prescriptive) areas of structure, output and finance to that of the assessment of local government. The parties have produced interesting but brief criticisms, especially the Conservatives (see Scottish Conservative Local Government Review Group 1977), but there is very little on the internal workings of local government and its politics (Young 1977; Turpie 1977), on central-local relations (Page 1978), or on such major topics as region-district relations or the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities itself (here one must rely on David Scott's solid pieces in *The Scotsman*). Community councils, the newest and least significant part of local government, have had disproportionate attention, largely because of Scottish Office funding of research and the enthusiasm of Councils of Social Service. For their rationale and structure, see SDD 1974, SCSS 1974, and Rowe 1975; for more critical assessment, see the work of Mike Masterson (in e.g. Scottish Office 1978a, Strathclyde Area Survey 1978), Scottish Office 1978b, Clarke 1977, and the SCSS's *Community Council News*.

In much the same fashion that analysis of the legislative process is scarcer than description of legislative institutions, so the slim material on policy-making stands in sharp contrast to the plentiful discussion of policy problems.* Kellas bravely

* The extensive literature in this field, from all manner of sources, testifies to the activity of the Scottish political system, if not its self-consciousness.

attempts a description in his text book and in more tentative papers on education and regional policy (Kellas 1975, 1977a, 1978b); there is an unusual and useful paper on the role of economists in government (Coats 1978), and both Hunter (forthcoming) and Williams (1973) touch on this question in their accounts of the NHS in Scotland and of the HIDB. But apart from a number of case studies of local planning decisions (Rodger 1978; Burton and Johnson 1976; Mutch 1977) there is nothing substantial, though a major study of educational policy, administration and policy-making is well under way at Edinburgh University.

Parties, Pressure Groups and Political Action

Of all the parties active in Scotland, only one has anything near a full treatment: the Scottish National Party. The minor parties (with one exception) have at best the odd article or pamphlet devoted to them, or brief mentions in volumes of political reminiscence (most of which are concerned with pre-war politics). For the Communist Party see Reid (1976) and Denver (1972), and for the smaller Left organisations Thompson in MacDougall (1979) and Williamson (1978). There is no general account of Fascist organisations or activity (though Scotland has been relatively free of these), nor of extreme nationalist or sectarian organisations (though the Press has had material on all these).

More surprisingly, considering their historical and contemporary importance, there are no major studies of either the Liberal Party or the Labour Party in Scotland, though both Kellas (1975) and Harvie (1977) have short commentaries, as does Breckenridge (1969). By contrast, the shortlived Scottish Labour Party has a monograph (Drucker 1977a) and a number of articles (e.g. Nairn 1977b), while the Conservatives, thanks largely to their own industry and perhaps the stimulus of a declining vote, have a fairly substantial literature, of which the most useful is Chris Wyke's undergraduate thesis (Wyke 1978; see also Urwin 1966; Kernohan and Wright 1973; Lang and Henderson 1975; Ward 1977).

Nationalist parties, especially the SNP, have been far more generously treated. There are major books on nationalism in the UK (Coupland 1954; Nairn 1977a; Birch 1977) as well as on Scotland alone (Hanham 1969; W. Wolfe 1973; Webb 1976;

Harvie 1977; Brand 1978; Williamson and Kerevan forthcoming). To these we may add a series of theses, mainly by Americans (Haworth 1968; Bain 1973; Drieux 1974; Gallo 1974; Reich 1978; Grasmuck 1978) and a wide range of articles and pamphlets. These latter range from general accounts, often repeating each other (Burrell 1957; Mackintosh 1967; Maclean 1970; Schwartz 1970; Kellas 1971; Begg and Stewart 1971; Esman 1975), through largely sociological description and interpretation (Brand 1968; Brand and McCrone 1975; Mullin 1977; Hanby 1977; Miller 1977b; Dickson 1978), to attempts at a more general interpretation of UK nationalisms (Lazer 1977; Rawkins 1978; Birch 1978; Rose 1976, 1978). It is churlish to complain that this is not enough, but the sociological material remains incomplete and unconvincing (see the discussion in Brand 1978) and there is little beyond Brand and Roger Mullin's undergraduate dissertation (Mullin 1977) on the organisation and interior working of the party, on policy-making, patterns of recruitment and growth at national or local level, and on the SNP in local government (though some of the material on local politics is relevant here).

Pressure groups are almost as important in British politics as the parties; but in Scotland they are as sketchily covered as the equally numerous (and equally unaccountable) appointed bodies. Studies of the Labour movement confine themselves almost entirely to its history to 1926 or 1939, though there are studies of the Scottish TUC (Craigie 1975) and the Glasgow Trades Council (Liddell 1978), together with a dissertation on the EEC referendum and the Scottish Labour movement (Purves 1978). Other organisations fare no better: the Educational Institute of Scotland and the NFU are mentioned — but only in relation to the European Communities — in Kellas (1977b), W. Grant (1978) and Massie (1979), and there are short general surveys in Kellas (1975) and Gibson (1977). Such major economic interest groups as the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) and the Scottish CBI have been discussed only in terms of their position on devolution, in a set of rather repetitive articles on devolution and interest groups (Kellas 1976; Drucker 1977b; Dalyell 1977; Heald and Keating 1979; Drucker and Brown forthcoming). The Churches, despite their far greater influence on and activity in Scottish politics, have not been studied at all (a thesis was begun at Glasgow by L. Benskin), though they

and several other groups are mentioned in the *Yearbook* series on legislation (Cope 1977; Cook 1977; Gibson 1978), and from time to time in Press features. As for more secretive or sinister influences, as with the Orange Order and other sectarian groups, even this last source often fails us (but see R. Mackay 1975).

A little more information on pressure-group membership and its political importance can be gleaned from the material on parties already mentioned, and that on local politics, which is full of neglected and often fascinating studies. One block of material covers elections with exhaustive accounts of the recent local elections by Bochel and Denver (1975, 1977a, 1977b, 1978) and a number of constituency-based studies of local and national elections, notably Chrimes (1950, Glasgow), Wood, (1971, Edinburgh), Goulstone (1974) and Chalmers (1978, Dundee), and Dyer (1975) and Lang (1973, Aberdeenshire). Discussions of the recruitment, institutional ties and behaviour of councillors form a second block (though there is very little in the way of reminiscence; see McKensie 1976 on Dundee). Apart from the material just cited there are a pair of studies apiece on councillors in Edinburgh (McGregor 1973; Elliott et al. 1977) and Glasgow (Brand 1973; Fowe 1970), and on New Town or nationalist councillors (Grant 1970; Morris 1968). Studies of local political behaviour again focus on the major cities: Mackintosh (1966) and Brand (1976) on Edinburgh, Budge et al. (1972) and Rollo (1971) on Glasgow (the latter focusing on Irish politics), and Brand (1976) on Aberdeen. Rural politics is dealt with only in Dyer (1975) and Howatson (1976), and somewhat indirectly in two interesting accounts of local campaigns: the "Save the Argylls" campaign in Argyll (Allan 1974) and that to make Fife a Region (Ballantine 1975). Research on Highland politics is in train, but the Borders remain untouched, as do the Western Isles and Orkney and Shetland, despite the considerable interest in other aspects of these areas; for discussion of these areas we must rely on the weekly newspapers and the *New Shetlander*.

Political Behaviour and its Bases

The main contrast in this field is between the relatively large number of studies of electoral behaviour and the dearth of material on any other aspect since the pioneering Glasgow-based work of Budge and Urwin (1966). Electoral sociology is covered by Miller (1977a) (see also Cornford and Brand in N.

Wolfe 1969, and of course Kellas 1975), and there are more specialised articles on the influence of religion (Bochel and Denver 1970) and age (Mercer 1974), and on the 1974 elections (Jaensch 1974; R. J. Johnson 1977). The basis of support of particular parties is less surely covered, and there is nothing for Scotland alone which is comparable to the general UK study of Crewe et al. (1977), though some conclusions can be drawn from the careful and detailed analyses of nationalist support in Miller (1977b) and Kellas (1971). Kellas and Fotheringham (1976) offer some sociological interpretation of Labour support and there are a few brief accounts of the sociology of nationalism (see above), none entirely convincing. Several of the studies of the SNP try to explain the growth of nationalist attitudes, as opposed to SNP votes, notably Brand (1978); for particular factors see Brooks (1973) (relative deprivation), Grasmuck (1978) (underdevelopment and oil) and Reich (1978) (ethnicity). Other forms and areas of political consciousness remain the province of more literary or journalistic attention, though there is data in one of the Kilbrandon research papers, and the opinion polls (especially those in *The Scotsman*).

Scottish political culture resembles that in England in its covert racism and its devaluing and subordination of women (E. Hunter 1979; Maxwell 1977a; for material on the political participation of women see Mullin 1977; Lewenhak 1973; Masterman 1978). In other ways it is said to differ, being on the one hand more romantic, intellectual, internationalist, democratic (or even radical), and egalitarian (see e.g. Kellas 1968; Kennedy 1976; Nairn 1976b), but on the other hand parochial, authoritarian and didactic (Nairn 1968, 1977a, 1977c; Smout 1977; and for commentary Maxwell 1976 and 1977b). Unfortunately, given the intrinsic importance and interest of the field, the material cited is longer on polemic than evidence. Often the argument is based on reasonable but unexamined assumptions that Scottish political culture is formed by a combination of its social institutions (essentially the educational and legal system and the Kirk) and the history of political (and cultural) subordination to England. Attractive though this model is it remains essentially untested, despite the existence of a large amount of material casting doubt on the egalitarian and other credentials of the Scottish educational and legal systems, and on their differences from the English ones.

Constitutional Reform

This background of, at best, uncertainty about the general nature of the Scottish political system, and, at worst, of ignorance about many of its specific features, has tended to distort the vigorous and extensive discussion of alternatives. The literature on devolution and on independence has shifted steadily away from justification of proposed change (as e.g. in Mackintosh 1968; Kilbrandon 1973; Cornford 1975; Paton 1968) towards an increasingly pragmatic and technical discussion of constitutional detail and policy issues. As the recent referendum campaign showed, there is still little presentation or debate of the arguments for devolution in terms of the structure and behaviour of the Scottish political system. There is a certain irony in that, since Kilbrandon, the best general accounts of the justification for devolution have been produced for Wales (Osmond 1977; also useful on the history of government proposals) and for the UK (Bogdanor 1979, also useful for the arguments against devolution, and for comparative material on Northern Ireland*).

The specifically Scottish literature, though closely bound to the Scotland Act and its predecessor, has considerable value. Part of it describes the political background to and histories of the various proposals, reports, White Papers and Bills, with Keating and Bleiman (1979) and Drucker and Brown (forthcoming) the most comprehensive. Also useful are Bogdanor (1979), Dalyell (1977), Kellas and Owen (1977), Jordan (1979), Kerr (1977), Naughtie (1978), and Heald and Keating (1979).

Another substantial body of work has been concerned with assessment and criticism of the recent government proposals and Bills**. For general assessments see Drucker and McAllister (1976), Gunn and Lindley (1977), Mbadinuju (1976), Christie (1976), Thomson (1977) and again Dalyell (1977). Particular problems raised included the financing of a devolved legislature (Heald 1976 and 1977; Wilson 1976; Nevin 1978), the electoral system (Chapman 1976; Proctor 1977), and various constitutional problems, including the future of Scottish MPs and that of

* on which see also Brett (1970), Arthur (1977), Birrell (1978).

**Apart from those mentioned, there were a great many papers produced by the parties, professions and other bodies, most of which can be consulted in the Depository of the Unit for the Study of Government in Scotland.

Shetland (Bogdanor 1978; N. Johnson 1977; Calvert 1975; Sharpe 1978; Judge and Finlayson 1975; Mishler and Mughan 1978; Nevis Institute 1978; and Grönneberg 1978).

Lastly, and in some ways marking a return to the earlier justificatory literature, there has been discussion of the politics of an Assembly and a devolved Scotland, with the most comprehensive being MacKay (1979) and the Fabian "Radical Agenda for Scotland" series (see e.g. Keating 1979a; Craig and Gilmore 1979; Booth 1979); briefer contributions include Kellas (1979) and Bonney (1978).

Though less prolific than the devolution literature, that on independence is no less substantial in range and quality. While there is little on the rationale of independence there are major contributions on several important issues. The most discussed have been economic questions, with the early debate on economic viability (McCrone 1969; Simpson 1969; Economist Intelligence Unit 1969; McCormick 1970) now modified by the existence of North Sea oil revenues (E. D. Brown 1978; Smallwood and Mackay 1976; Labour Party Scottish Council 1976). The shape of economic policy and management in an independent Scotland has been the subject of several SNP policy documents, not all consistent with each other, plus various pamphlets produced by the Fletcher Society (Slesser 1976; Shirley 1977; Stevenson 1977) and a rather circumspect volume of papers (MacKay 1977). Less optimistic than these is the recent collection on the economic and political constraints on an independent Scotland, a relatively neglected topic (Carty and McCall Smith 1978).

A similar pattern occurs with literature on the politics of independence. There are again SNP policy documents, including a draft constitution and an outline of the structure of an independent government, some discussion of possible routes to independence (McCormick 1976; Madeley 1977) and of legal or constitutional issues (J. P. Grant 1976), and a modest but far from uncritical collection of the nature of an independent Scotland (Kennedy 1976; MacRae 1977; Nairn 1976a; Maxwell in Carty and McCall Smith 1978; Maxwell 1979).

In addition to the pattern of patchy coverage, the great bulk of writing on Scottish politics tends to be descriptive rather than analytical, and concerned far more with the activity and problems of governing Scotland than with the rest of the political system. This narrowness of conception also leads to

a fundamentally uncritical literature, manifest for example in studies of government, concerned as they principally are with identifying defects of detail and possible minor reforms (as with material on the structure of local government, endlessly chewing over the issues of how many tiers there should be, or of the proper structure of management, but rarely with the questions of popular participation or accountability). It is also manifest in the discussion of constitutional reform, even when this amounts to the radical step of independence. Little of the devolution literature (with the notable exception of Osmond 1978 and Bogdanor 1979) discusses at length either its systemic justification or implications, or takes seriously the objections not only to the Scotland Act but to the very notion of devolved legislatures as a means of solving contemporary defects of unitary states. Similarly, independence is all too often presented in wholly uncritical terms (except by Nairn, and by Maxwell), producing an image of an independent Scotland as a Caledonian Erewhon (or, in some cases, a social democratic paradise) somehow freed of all the major problems afflicting the United Kingdom by the simple device, in the late Neil Williamson's phrase, of "rearranging the furniture".*

Writing on Scotland's politics, unlike studies of its literature and history, also tends to be parochial, in the sense that it does not treat Scotland comparatively, either in terms of related systems, institutions, processes and issues occurring elsewhere (e.g. Quebec, Catalonia, etc.), or in terms of other parts of the United Kingdom. For all the likening of an independent Scotland to a small Scandinavian state, it is hard to find more than the most superficial and uncritical comparison with, for example, Norway. Where Scottish Nationalism has been discussed in a comparative context, it has been by a Scot long resident outside Scotland (Nairn), a Canadian specialising in Welsh Nationalism (Rawkins), or a variety of English and American analysts of contemporary nationalisms or UK politics (e.g. Rose, Birch). At a more mundane level, with the exception of Edward Page (and indirectly the Wheatley Commission Report) there are no substantial studies comparing English and Scottish local government, the operations of the Scottish and Welsh Offices, or the various regional sections of the major

* In his review of Mackay 1977, in *West Highland Free Press* 17/6/77.

UK parties. Devolution in the rest of Britain or elsewhere in the world, well established though it is, has only given rise to a very modest comparative literature bearing on Scotland's problems, concerned entirely with Northern Ireland and with the financing of devolved legislatures and services.

II. *Diagnosis*

The several causes for this condition can be considered under three main heads: the nature and difficulties of the producers of material, the nature of the Scottish political system, and that of its main antagonists: the SNP and the revolutionary parties.

Producers

Virtually all the literature on Scottish politics is produced by journalists, scholars and officials in government or voluntary organisations. Freelance writers, playwrights and others have produced very little, with the obvious exception of MacDiarmid and John McGrath (Maxwell 1977b). So also have politicians: indeed the only major participant contributions are the memoirs by Tom Johnston (Secretary of State for Scotland 1941-45), Willie Wolfe of the SNP, and Wendy Wood of the Scottish Patriots, none of which are all that helpful. There is nothing to compare with the series of memoirs and biographies of pre-war figures, especially those in the Labour movement. Part of the reason lies in the paradox that the more successful a Scottish Minister or MP is in representing Scotland, the less likely he is to achieve prominence elsewhere (as with Willie Ross) and thus the smaller the market for an account of his life. Another part lies in the nature of the post-war decades: the period 1945-60 represents the nadir of modern Scottish politics, unlikely to inspire anyone to reminiscence, let alone autobiography (though Chris Harvie is working on the 1945-51 period).

The voluntary sector (mainly the parties and pressure groups) has shown a remarkable expansion in the last ten years, both in overall numbers and in the size of their staffs, especially research staffs (erratic though the number of the latter can be). Nonetheless they are still understaffed, and their overworked officers have multiple responsibilities. Spread thinly over several

areas, they rarely have time to treat questions lying outside their immediate concerns. As a result, though there are articles concerning pressure-group activities, devolution and the legislative process by party and group officers, they are rare and brief (see e.g. Peter Gibson's articles mentioned above).

Government, both central and local, is of course a prolific employer and producer, and sponsors a considerable amount of research, not all of it concerned with technical matters or policy options. Scottish Office departments have, for example, commissioned research on both community and schools councils, while (more indirectly) the Royal Commission on Legal Services in Scotland has encouraged some research into that influential but virtually unstudied institution, the Scottish legal profession. The bulk of research originating in or sponsored by central government is, though informative and often invaluable, necessarily parochial and narrowly conceived. Local government sponsorship tends to be for research of more immediately practical application (see, for example, the long list of publications of the Planning Exchange), and the various authorities collect a considerable amount of data: the regional reports and their supporting volumes begin to represent a fourth Statistical Account of Scotland.

The media in Scotland are to a large extent specific to the area (see Kellas 1975; Hutchison 1978), especially the newspapers. The broadcasting services, while borrowing extensively from the "national" network, all produce specifically Scottish news and current affairs programmes, of varying quality. The two commercial television companies generally offer hackneyed, dreary and mediocre current affairs programmes, shallow in their approach, thin on information and analysis, and utterly stereotyped in format. Even with its limited resources, STV's "Ways and Means" ought to be at least as informative, investigative and argumentative as — say — Tyne-Tees' modest farming programme "Farming Outlook". The BBC offerings are considerably better but suffer from problems common to the entire Scottish media: limited staff, lack of comparative examination of Scotland, and repetition and superficiality both in choice of subjects and their treatment, frequently dictated by current preoccupations and prejudices.

About 80% of all newspapers read in Scotland are edited there, so that the bulk of political information presented to

Scots is domestically produced. Unfortunately it is often trivial, biased, governed by fashion, didactic and uncritical. Very few Scottish papers concern themselves with political analysis and even these vary in quality and scope. In the North there are three weeklies with excellent local coverage and commentary, and which remain the best sources in their areas: *The Shetland Times*, *The Orcadian* and the *West Highland Free Press*. Central Scotland, like the Borders, is less well served: only the *Glasgow Herald* and *The Scotsman* offer serious coverage, both the *Daily Record* and *Scottish Daily Express* having become more and more limited to occasional coverage of issues or events like elections, the referendum, or the improprieties of West of Scotland local government. The *Herald*, while it still carries occasional substantial series (on, for example, land ownership, the Scottish Office, or politics after devolution), has recently carried fewer and fewer feature articles on Scotland as a matter of course. By contrast, *The Scotsman* has not only generously covered Scottish political issues in its news pages, but has managed to combine a broad series of features on foreign affairs with domestic features qualitatively superior to all other Scottish papers in scope and depth. The only papers to begin to rival it are the *Guardian* and *The Financial Times*, largely thanks to their past and current reporting staffs.

Part of *The Scotsman's* strength lies in its relatively large staff of reporters and feature writers, and its willingness to take outside contributions. Despite this its news material tends to be uncritical and descriptive, often consisting of marginally edited press releases, and its features tend to contain more opinion than analysis. There is very little investigative journalism on political issues, and rather more of discursive essays, interesting in themselves but with little new information or analysis and often dictated either by the loyalties of the authors or by what appears — or what the Press have made to appear — to be of current importance*. This absence of investigative political journalism and the substitution for it of Press releases and informed opinion is a general characteristic of the Scottish media. The result is a substantial degree of ignorance and even self-deception especially in the areas of devolution and nationalism, where fluctuations in the fortunes of the SNP, the rise

* See also Drucker (1977a), and Kerr in Hutchison (1978).

and significance of the Scottish Labour Party, and the prospects of devolution have all been misjudged.

Academics are freer from the constraints of numbers and deadlines, but equally governed by fashion and personal preference. Although Departments of Politics are generally smaller in Scottish universities than is the case in England, there are several dozen lecturers and graduate students working on Scottish politics, enough to make it possible to consider the formation of a Scottish Political Studies Association. Since there are relatively few such academics outside Scotland (perhaps ten at any one time) it is the work of domestic academics that displays the gaps, overconcentration on certain topics, and narrowness illustrated above. Fashion, as much as their inherent interest or significance, has dictated the preponderance of attention to elections, nationalism, devolution and independence, while the tendency to focus on problems of government rather than on the analysis and comparison of systems is common to the profession in general. Thus a recent survey of work on central-local relationships in British government concludes that it has been marked by a lack of concern with the "dynamic process of central-local relationships", a lack of comparative work, and an emphasis on descriptive case studies rather than theoretical work (Barker 1979).

Equally important may be questions of finance and career considerations (though no research is available on these matters). The main source of research funds for the study of Scottish politics is the Social Science Research Council. There is no evidence of discrimination against Scottish academics in the making of grants (the reverse, if anything, in recent years) but the SSRC's methods of allocating grants, and its rules, have a major influence on research on politics in Scotland as they do on research generally. The SSRC has over the years shown a marked preference for large, methodologically orthodox projects, in areas considered important by its subject committees, and run by academics who have successfully administered previous SSRC grants. Not only has this led to the neglect of certain areas of research (see e.g. Moore 1978), but it does not correspond to the needs of most academics, as a recent SSRC report (Jones 1979) points out:

"Too often it appears as if SSRC arrangements are appropriate only for huge projects, indeed team enterprises with supporting

research staff and secretaries, involving great sums of money. The nature of the grant application form, the same for both large and small grants, and the checklist of points for applicants and referees to consider seem predisposed to projects that contain already worked out specific hypotheses to be tested, employ sophisticated methodological techniques and involve exercises of quantification. What the junior academics often require is assistance tailored to help them explore around a topic, for example, small grants for travel, subsistence, a research assistant, and especially time off for a short period."

This is particularly important given the difficulty of obtaining sabbatical leave, and the rising teaching loads of many academics.

It is however difficult to prove that this has contributed directly to the patchiness of research on Scotland, since career considerations may also be significant. Until relatively recently social science academics in most Scottish universities have not seen themselves as permanently resident in Scotland, but rather as geographically downwardly mobile. For that reason, as well as the poor quality and lack of theoretical interest of earlier work on Scottish politics (and sociology), they have tended to concentrate on UK or European politics, political theory and international relations, all in demand furth of Scotland. The effects of lessened mobility and the increasing general realisation in other universities of the importance of "regional" politics have only recently been felt (and then mainly in the study of nationalism and devolution).

Intimately connected to production of material is the question of how it is published: perhaps a lack of suitable outlets helps account for the imbalance, clusters and gaps I have noted? This argument would hold for the 1950s and 1960s, when the scope for having any material on Scottish politics published, whether by academics, participants or journalists, was extremely limited. In the last decade, however, academics have found increasing access to existing journals and presses, and a large variety of new outlets have come into existence.

Scottish publishers, hitherto largely visible through a bizarre combination of maps, medical and legal textbooks, thrillers and children's comics, have flourished recently (see Kinnimont

in Hutchinson 1978). Several have published material on Scottish politics (Edinburgh Student Publications Board, Paul Harris, Q Press, Molendinar, Thuleprint, etc.), and appear willing to continue. Apart from the *Yearbook* and two new biannual journals (the *Scottish Journal of Sociology* and the *Nevis Quarterly*), several academic institutions publish a series of occasional papers*, as do the Planning Exchange in Glasgow and the Fletcher Society in Edinburgh. At the graduate student level, access to studentships for research on Scottish politics and society has become easier and there are a large number of dissertations and projects in progress, though mainly concerned with nationalism and planning. Even allowing for the relative recency of this flowering of opportunity, then, the pattern of production by academics would seem to reflect more choice than constraint.

For others it is a different story. Journalists and those active in politics or government are relatively restricted, for apart from *The Scotsman* which has its own large and productive staff, there are only occasional opportunities to contribute to weeklies and monthlies, which tend in any case to rely on the same contributors and offer limited space. Journals of political commentary, so common elsewhere, are rare in Britain and non-existent in Scotland. There is nothing comparable to the Welsh *Planet***, and the experience of *Seven Days* and of *Question*, which published a great many valuable pieces among a quantity of rubbish, suggests it is currently impossible to achieve an

* They are: Paisley College of Technology: Local Government Unit
Strathclyde University: Centre for the Study of Social Policy
Strathclyde University: Fraser of Allander Institute
Edinburgh University: Unit for the Study of Government in Scotland

Heriot-Watt University: Scottish Centre of Political Economy

There are also series covering economic and planning topics from Glasgow University and Dundee, while Aberdeen University produced a series on oil and the Scottish economy, and now houses the Institute for the Study of Sparsely Populated Areas, which produces regular material on "marginal regions".

** Though there once was briefly, in the shapes of *Calgacus* and *Scottish International*.

adequate readership for such periodicals in Scotland*. As a result there are very few extended commentaries by Scottish political journalists, politicians and others (though the *New Edinburgh Review* and the *Yearbook* regularly carry such material), and little opportunity for freelance investigative journalism.

The Scottish Political System

A second set of reasons for the sad state of the study of Scottish politics lies, I suggest, in the nature of the Scottish political system itself. While its main features are to be found in the British system in general, and of course in Northern Ireland and Wales, Scotland is unique in the degree of their overall importance and in the pervasiveness of their influence. The Scottish system is marked by six main features: centralisation, administrative primacy, exclusiveness, secrecy, corporatism, and authoritarianism. These features influence commentary on the system and its components in several ways. Thus the highly centralised nature of the administration itself and the overwhelming importance in Scottish government of administrative action produce what one may call a "bureaucratic illusion": that politics in Scotland is, and hence its study should be, all about administration, and in particular, the Scottish Office and the regional authorities (but not, of course, the councillors). Political issues come to be treated as problems in government and from the standpoint of government.

The exclusiveness of the system lies in the restriction of influence over decision-making to a small body of fairly senior Civil Servants and MPs, and a large but still modest group of

*Which is not to deny that both periodicals also suffered from problems of organisation and editorial idiosyncrasy. *Question*, edited from Edinburgh by Peter Chiene and with many nationalist contributors, was published some thirty-four times between October 1975 and August 1977, when its sales fell below 1,000 and the Scottish Arts Council refused support (see Ascherson in *The Scotsman*, 28/12/77, p.7). *Seven Days*, edited by Brian Wilson from Glasgow and with mainly Labour movement contributors, lasted even less time: seventeen issues from October 1977 to March 1978, and an odd one in May 1978. *Seven Days* was more journalistic and investigative than *Question*, drawing perhaps on the experience of *Glasgow News*, a splendidly indiscreet weekly edited by Brian Barr and others, and surviving some seventy-four issues, during 1971-74.

persons regularly consulted or involved in the various boards, committees and commissions established by the Scottish departments and their appointed bodies. While the latter group include a small proportion who owe their selection to having been elected to these or other bodies, or who regard themselves as representing a general interest, the bulk of the membership consists of persons with a professional or sectional interest, accountable only to those who appointed them.

Exclusiveness helps to maintain the fourth general characteristic of the system (and in particular of the Scottish Office and the appointed bodies): its secretiveness. Ironically, while there has been growing complaint against and debate over the lack of open government in Britain as a whole, such criticism is less frequent in Scotland, though Neal Ascherson has railed against "the Scottish tradition of rule by sanctified oligarchy, the Elect owing respect to Heaven but little to the reprobate mass stumbling and sinning outside the locked doors" (*The Scotsman*, 3/5/77). Information is denied as a matter of course, especially when it concerns the reasons for Ministerial decisions or administrative action, while the Scottish Information Office is merely the purveyor of Ministerial speeches and circulars and of factual material on matters lying within its remit. The combination of exclusiveness and secrecy reduces the available primary material for commentary and inhibits investigative journalism in particular. As far as academic research is concerned, the Scottish Office naturally encourages work on policy options, but also discourages research into the functioning of departments and into decision-making in general. Where access is granted to material bearing on these questions, then the Official Secrets Act, if nothing else, inhibits discussion of its contents and implications. This situation also affects individual Civil Servants, drawing the following saddened comment from the editors of the first *Yearbook*:

"There is too great a reluctance — stemming from the legal inhibitions of the Official Secrets Acts and the informal conventions which surround them — for insiders in central government to write about what they see around them. Of course, no practising politician or official can be expected to write in a detailed way about either his day-to-day existence or his colleagues, but there is a happy medium between this and a description of the organisation chart."

"Corporatism" I use in its more recent sense (see e.g. Osmond 1978) to cover two increasingly important institutional aspects of the Scottish system. The first is the large and growing importance of appointed bodies, especially in the areas of economic management and of high public spending: the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the Scottish Special Housing Association, New Town Development Corporations, the NHS in Scotland, are all examples. Appointed bodies show the general features of the Scottish system to an enhanced degree, and are particularly hard to bring to account which is perhaps why they are popular with governments. Where they are studied at all it is almost always entirely in terms of the bureaucratic concerns of structure, efficiency and output, and not in terms of accountability and democratic control, or their general role in the Scottish system (see Hogwood 1979, *The Scotsman* 5-6/12/78).

The second aspect is the tendency to incorporate private bodies (mainly voluntary associations) into not merely the process of consultation over policy or action, but into both policy-formulation and implementation. While this has been most apparent at the United Kingdom level with, say, the TUC or CBI, it occurs in Scotland with the professions in general, especially the teaching professions, and with bodies like the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) (especially over attraction of industry) and a wide range of single-issue pressure groups and welfare-orientated bodies. Two consequences of importance flow from this involvement. Firstly, the body concerned — or more properly its officers, who increasingly tend to be appointed and not elected — come to value this involvement for personal and institutional reasons, and to wish to retain it. In the process they may become less critical of government and more oriented towards administrative viewpoints and questions. Secondly, the body may become less internally democratic and research-orientated, and less self-critical. In both cases, the nature of commentary originating from such bodies also changes in the general directions I have indicated. This process can equally well occur with academics, singly or in groups, since the "implementation" element here occurs in taking part in drafting consultative or even policy documents; the effect is the same.

The whole set of features and the generally authoritarian

cast of Scottish government have wider implications, through their effect on the intellectual climate, on the operations of local government (which closely resembles those of central government), and even on the parties. There is space only to discuss the last of these, in the shape of the SNP and the revolutionary parties.

The Left, and the Nationalists

The parties most critical of the current Scottish political system are those with Marxist or nationalist ideologies. Yet their contribution to the understanding of the system they wish to eradicate is sadly small. The Communist Party, despite its relative strength in Scotland and its attention to Scottish history and economics, produced nothing on Scottish politics between John Gollan's *Scottish Prospect* (1947) and a few chapters in Gordon Brown's remarkable *Red Paper on Scotland* (G. Brown 1975). Since then their main contribution has been a few shallow pieces in *Scottish Marxist* and a handful of articles in the party monthly on devolution and the national question. Part of the reason lies in the ambivalent attitude of the Communist Party as a whole towards intellectuals and its long practice of favouring historical rather than contemporary political analysis, but even allowing for this their work on Scotland is notably thin. The smaller revolutionary groups have tended to concentrate on mutual exposés and on brief analyses of nationalism (see Drucker 1977a; Williamson 1978), though a book-length study of nationalism and socialism is in press (Williamson and Kerevan).

All this is in marked contrast to the Left aligned with non-revolutionary parties, most obviously in the work of Tom Nairn which, however rhetorical and repetitive it may be at times become, is of fundamental importance. Lack of numbers and sectarian concerns may excuse the smaller groups, but the Communist Party's neglect of the study of contemporary Scotland is harder to explain, though its internal difficulties, declining social base and support, and its preoccupation with electoral and trade union matters are contributing factors.

One of the more obvious features of classical European nationalism, or of contemporary nationalism in Quebec or even Wales, is the tremendous impetus it gave or gives to intellectual life. Not only did the movements themselves produce a wide

range of material, but supporters and opponents have engaged in a much higher level of intellectual activity and production than before. Yet in Scotland this is not so; or more accurately it has ceased to be so compared to the pre-war period, or even the 1940s. There is very little production by the SNP itself: a thin handful of policy documents lacking in intellectual justification or even at times coherence, no general attempts to justify independence, and a determinedly non-intellectual monthly magazine. Intellectuals attached or sympathetic to the SNP have fared little better, producing two short volumes touching on the ideology and principles of nationalism, and two on Scotland after independence — but no analysis of Scotland as it is now. Plaid Cymru, with far less support and fewer resources, does much better.

The reasons for this lie in the SNP being a very British party, resembling its rivals in many ways. One aspect is its concentration since 1960 on organisation and on electoral mobilisation together with the success of that activity; another is the relative conservatism of the party leadership and the absence within the SNP until very recently of an organised radical and intellectual wing. Both are reflected in two features of SNP policy: its acceptance of the nature of the Scottish political system, and its neglect of culture. The implication in many SNP policies, and especially those dealing with economic and social policy, is an independent Scotland characterised by a high degree of centralisation, little internal democracy, and the development of corporatism. The concept of participation by workers, tenants etc. is present in many policy documents as well, but more as an eclectic addition than as an integral part of the rationale of the policy. The relative lack of interest of the SNP in literary, cultural and intellectual matters shows not only in policy documents, but in the general materialist tenor of party propaganda and in party activity itself: the *Sunday Post* as well as the *Queen* would be jealously guarded in an independent Scotland.

III. Prognosis

I have argued, or at least asserted, that examination of the Scottish political system is biased towards descriptive accounts of government and its structure, activity and problems, towards reform, and towards the institutional study of nationalism. The

reasons I attribute partly to general characteristics of the study of politics in Britain, partly to characteristics of the staff of of politics departments and of the media in Scotland, and finally to the overall influence of the Scottish political system. In the absence of any marked change in that system and in the other factors, the prospects for any change in the overall pattern are poor.

Some of the gaps listed will be filled in the coming years, not least because of the increased interest in Scottish politics and opportunities to publish mentioned above. Thus in the local government field, projects on local-central relations, COSLA and the Scottish Office, and on the contribution of parties to local government activity, are all likely to begin in 1979-80. The most important influence, however, might have been the existence of a devolved legislature. The politics of an Assembly, the new institutions involved, and the possibilities for comparative research, would have attracted a great deal of academic interest. Less surely, an Assembly would have had some potential for changing the Scottish political system, the character of Scottish politics and the level and character of information available, all of which would have encouraged more wide-ranging and critical work on politics. The defeat of the referendum campaign, like the decline of the SNP, closes off this path (or right of way?) for the moment, but need not have entirely negative effects.

It was among those who analyse, discuss and try to influence the Scottish political system that many of the most convinced devolutionaries were to be found. If they respond not with demoralisation but by a reconsideration of their arguments and an attempt at a fuller understanding of Scottish politics, then the constricted patterns of existing study will be partly eased. Similarly, if the SNP respond to their defeats not by reiterating existing strategy and policies but by a move to a more radical nationalism, then the effect on its intellectual life could be dramatic. None of this would, of course, alter the underlying bias in work in Scotland; but it would help to redress its effects.

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