

SCOTTISH CONSERVATISM – A FAILURE OF ORGANIZATION?

C P Stevens

In a recent article, "Thatcherism in a Cold Climate" which appeared in the June/July 1989 issue of *Radical Scotland*, David McCrone, a former editor of this *Yearbook*, surveyed the relationship between Thatcherism and Scotland. The apparent failure of the former is not, he suggested, merely due to the particular socio-economic structure of the latter. It is that:

[i]n Scotland, the attack on state institutions – the nationalised industries, the education system, local government, the public sector generally – is perceived as an attack on "Scotland" itself, particularly as this attack is dressed up in the rhetoric of Tory England Thatcher's vision of recreating bourgeois England is out of kilter not only with Scottish material interests, but with our own sense of identity. (p11)

In other words, Conservatism lacks a Scottish strategy; one that makes sense of separate development, separate identity and separate ideological and cultural norms. This situation has been exacerbated since the decline of Scottish Conservatism from the early 1970s as a political force able to compete realistically for the Scottish popular vote. Whenever the Party is in a position to wield executive power it does so not as a result of a democratic mandate but as the result of a victory won on English issues south of the border. In other words, Scottish Conservatism is imposed externally on its constituency.⁽¹⁾

Yet, if the result of the 1989 European elections at which the Scottish Conservative Party failed to win a single seat underlined the problem, Mrs Thatcher's main response to date has reinforced the existing situation. In July 1987, Michael Forsyth, a junior minister at the Scottish Office, was appointed to replace Lord Goold as Chairman of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party. Forsyth, still only thirty-four, a one-time Chairman of the Federation of Conservative Students, is known rather more for his radical free market views than as a Scot. And he is strongly Unionist. A clear picture of the views of Scottish Tories in general, and the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association (SCUA) in particular, towards this appointment will need greater historical perspective. But there is some indication. Forsyth is generally seen as being an opponent of moves to develop a distinctive style of Scottish Conservatism, associated with, among others, Professor Ross Harper, then President of SCUA, himself a

possible successor to Goold. Such a style would involve an infusion of political pragmatism to win back the middle ground. Forsyth, on the contrary is likely to see his role as pushing forward exactly those policies which McCrone sees as antithetical to Scottish politics. This seems in line with the press image of Thatcherism as meeting electoral reversal with the assertion that the policies are right; it is merely their implementation and presentation that is inadequate. In other words, don't blame the messenger, it's the medium that's wrong.⁽²⁾

This article looks not at the Conservative Party performance in Scotland – that has been done elsewhere⁽³⁾ – but at the Scottish Conservative Party itself and its structure and organization. The relationship between political organization and electoral performance remains obscure. The inability of political scientists to plot a causal relationship has led to an undervaluing of the role of organizational activity on which most party agents exert considerable energy. In the case of the Conservative Party, where constituency associations raise money and employ agents, an agent who ignores organization may find himself or herself unemployed through financial pressure. And there seems good evidence to suggest that a full-time professionally trained agent will improve party performance. Yet the role of organization is limited. Organization can help win elections and it can help lose them. But it cannot in itself win elections. Organization can help sell a message; but only if someone wants to buy it.

Conservative organization in Scotland is, moreover, worth examining in its own right as a battle ground for the relationship of English and Scottish Conservatism. The latter has traditionally been fiercely independent of administrative union with the English/Welsh Party, and being strongly Unionist in politics. The best known example is the rejection of the name Conservative in favour of Unionist until 1965. The organizational development involved the erosion of Scottish traditional independence, resulting in a united structure in 1977. At the same time, figures moved away from proposals of administrative decentralization which characterized 1940s and 1950s Conservatism, towards acceptance of a limited measure of political devolution.

Organization prior to 1965

Prior to reorganization in 1965, the central organ of Scottish Conservatism was supposedly the Scottish Unionist Association (SUA) formed in 1912 when the Conservative and Liberal Unionist Parties were united. In reality, however, power lay in the hands of the two area councils, the Western Area Council (WDC) and the Eastern Area Council (EAC), with the SUA a biennial talking shop. The former was based in Glasgow and for the most part shared its professional organization with the Glasgow Unionist Association (GUA). Its most famous secretary, John Cranna, was also the secretary of the GUA. The latter was based in Edinburgh.

Divisions between western and eastern Unionists bedevilled Scottish Conservatism throughout the post-war period. Each had different patterns of development. Western Unionism, with its strong populist tradition, based on Orange and Protestant sentiment, had grown out of the Conservative and Liberal Unionist alliance of 1886. Eastern Unionism, more Conservative in nature, with a lawyer tradition, owed its strength to the realignment of right and left in the 1920s and 1930s.⁽⁵⁾

Most analyses of Scottish Conservatism have sought to emphasise a tradition of independence or autonomy.⁽⁶⁾ "Autonomy" is a central feature of Conservatism in England and Wales as well. But the two traditions are significantly different. As most accounts stress, constitutionally the Conservative Party is the Party in Parliament. The Party leader appoints the chairman of the Party in England and Wales, who presides over the professional machinery in Smith Square at Central Office. Similarly, the leader appoints the Chairman of the Scottish Party. In theory, the voluntary side of the Party, the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations at the top of the apex, Conservative Party Constituency Associations at the bottom with area councils in between, are independent of central control. The head of the professional machinery (until recently the Director of Organisation, now the Director of Party Campaigning) acts as Secretary to the National Union. Similarly, the Central Office Area Agents, who are employed by Central Office, act as Secretaries to the Area Executives. But, these have no authority over their respective tier and must serve two masters. Each Constituency Association engages and pays its agent, who remains answerable to the constituency chair and not to the Central Office Area Agent, and each selects its own Parliamentary candidate. This organizational autonomy is a tradition in the English/Welsh Party honoured at least in the breach if no longer in the observance.⁽⁷⁾

The situation in Scotland is quite different. It is true as Urwin says that Scottish Conservatism has traditionally insisted upon its independence and autonomy. However, when he suggests that 'autonomy and independence are treasured values throughout the Scottish Party' he is in reality referring to the high level of autonomy enjoyed by the two area councils.⁽⁸⁾ Constituency autonomy was rather less a reality in Scotland. Associations sent "delegates" rather than representatives to the area Councils and these in turn were willing to legislate for their constituent bodies. Two examples should suffice. In 1949, the EDC intervened to prevent Aberdeen Conservatives fighting local government elections on party lines rather than to support all anti-socialist candidates.⁽⁹⁾ When four associations in West Scotland, East and West Renfrewshire, Greenock and Paisley formed a Federation on 27 February 1952, the WDC ruled that such a Federation was unconstitutional offering instead to convene a committee to enable the four associations to meet locally.⁽¹⁰⁾

A second important difference in Scotland concerned the professional machinery. Unlike England/Wales where this was under the control of the Party Chairman at Central Office, there was no central machinery in Scotland. The Scottish Whip's Office became the Scottish chairman's office in 1950, with James Stuart as the first Chairman. And it employed a political secretary, of which the most famous was Col Patrick Blair, (knighted 1958) the incumbent from 1921 to 1960. But there was no other professional organization. The Scottish professional staff was employed by the two Divisional Councils to whom they were accountable. Moreover, there was no central Scottish fund. Instead both Councils had funds and they financed in part the Scottish Political Secretary.⁽¹¹⁾ It is clear that given this structure the EDC and WDC convenors and other officer bearers played a significantly more important role than the English Area Officers. It is not surprising to find the SUA changing its rules in 1949 to enable ex-convenors of each council to serve on the SUA Executive and Council *ex officio*.⁽¹²⁾

It was this image, of a political party dominated by an unrepresentative few, that the Parliamentary Party sought to remedy in the late 1940s. The mechanism was primarily the introduction, apparently universally accepted, of a rule restricting the annual subscription to a Constituency Association to £25 by a candidate £50 by an MP.⁽¹³⁾ This served the purpose both of removing an image of well-off aspiring politicians buying seats and forcing Associations to acquire a mass membership as a means of finding additional sources of income. Successful fund raising requires a full canvass, a degree of local knowledge, and organizers to operate an effective 'block' system to enable maximum potential subscriptions to be targeted. The whole system was cemented by an appeal to raise a million pounds in 1947⁽¹⁴⁾ and by the introduction of a 'quota system', by which Associations were encouraged to subscribe annual amounts to the centre. Other reforms introduced around this period included insistence that only candidates on the candidates' list should be adopted, encouragement to Associations to form Political Education Committees and to participate in the two-way movement, the setting up of Trade Union Committees, and an increase in the number of paid professional agents and in the conditions under which they worked.

It should not be thought that these reforms were introduced immediately and universally in England and Wales. On the contrary they took careful negotiation by Central Office, and by the Area Agents, who had only informal influence over constituency association officers and Agents. It is worth, however, looking at the passage of the reforms in Scotland as an indication of the way it responded to these proposals.

The major reform, the restriction on subscriptions by MPs and candidates, was written into the SUA rules and accepted in Scotland. Otherwise results were mixed. A candidates' list was kept in the Edinburgh

Whips'/Chairman's Office. But, as in England/Wales, where, into the 1970s, constituency associations were effectively by-passing the procedure by offering as a *fait accompli* a candidate already selected for inclusion on the list, this was often seen as an obstacle through which to get one's chosen candidate rather than a resource from which to draw a highly professionalized MP. The result was an outbreak of frustration at the 1957 Conference among Lowland professionals at their inability to secure selection for safe seats.⁽¹⁵⁾ More importantly, this did nothing for the Party's image, merely reinforcing that it was still run by local Lairds. With James Stuart reporting to the WDC in January 1958 that he could do nothing centrally to help without infringing constituency autonomy⁽¹⁶⁾ the problem had to wait until the electoral downturn of 1959. Even then the changes were minor. The candidates' list was to be kept as before in the Chairman's Office and he was to interview all aspiring candidates with the Scottish Chief Whip. Subsequently candidates were to be interviewed by the convenor in the district in which they were to stand.⁽¹⁷⁾ The SUA may have wished that constituency autonomy should be overcome in the question of candidate selection. But they did not wish to lose that control to the Chairman's Office. A memorandum on procedure followed the "reforms" stating that all approaches about candidates should be made to the relevant Council Office and that the Chairman's Office should merely be kept informed.⁽¹⁸⁾

A quota system was accepted in principal; but never properly implemented. A report in November 1960 noted that, although, a quota scheme had been in operation in the Eastern Area for some time, the amount asked for was only half that Central Office would have asked of English Associations; while the Western Area had no quota scheme at all.⁽¹⁹⁾ The SUA recommended that a full quota scheme should be introduced. But none was forthcoming. Following the 1966 election once again the SUA office bearers met to discuss a quota system only to call for one's introduction as soon as possible.⁽²⁰⁾

The quota system was one means of persuading associations to build up mass memberships. That membership made the payment of agents possible. In England/Wales the Conservative Party made real efforts to persuade associations to employ certificated agents and to provide car allowances, clerical back-up and membership of superannuation schemes. In Scotland, however, there was often resistance to professional agents; local gentlemen and part-timers were used instead. Despite a decision by the WDC that it was in the interest of the Party to employ professional agents and the diversion of resources into employing six trainee agents for six months,⁽²¹⁾ at the time of the 1955 election only twenty-eight of the sixty-four associations had certified agents and of the thirty-one associations in the Eastern Area only twelve had agents in the superannuation scheme.⁽²²⁾ Some improvement subsequently took place. By 1957 there were fifty-four full-time agents. But Col Blair's report on the subject failed to reveal how

many were certificated. At any rate only seventeen were in the Agent's pension scheme, a lower percentage than in England, while thirty-eight constituencies had clerical help. Moreover, salaries were low; only ten received £800 or more and only eight received £100 or more out-of-pocket expenses, a level of remuneration and support usual in England.⁽²³⁾ Whereas every so often the Chairman of the English/Welsh Party would send out a circular letter to each association pointing out what it thought to be a new reasonable minimum wage and urging its implementation, the SUA objected to such a letter as infringing constituency association autonomy. It not only declined to have one sent to Scottish constituency association convenors but refused to have a specimen read at its 1954 Council meeting.⁽²⁴⁾ Once again, reform was felt necessary following the 1959 election performance. A joint report by the EDC and WDC called for an improvement in the status, salary and condition of service for agents.⁽²⁵⁾ Once again nothing was achieved. When the Roxburgh Committee, named after Willis Roxburgh, vice-chairman of Scottish Party, reported on the role of agents in 1971, it found that nothing had changed.⁽²⁶⁾

One feature of post-war organization south of the border was the establishment of Trade Union sections. This took the form of a National Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) paralleled by the Industrial Department at Central office; with the establishment of TUACs in constituencies. By the early 1950s the SUA had rejected the notion that there should be a Scottish Conservative Trade Union Movement. A letter from the SUA President to Constituency Associations on the subject in 1950 discovered an overwhelming volume of opinion against it;⁽²⁷⁾ but nevertheless sanctioned an experiment in which the WDC "allowed" the Falkirk and West Stirling Associations to run a trial scheme.⁽²⁸⁾ By 1953, the SUA had decided that the scheme was not appropriate to Scotland, where industry and workmen were different. At a SUA Council meeting held especially to discuss TUACs, the convenor of the EDC argued that separate organization would create what she called a "colour bar" suggesting instead the need to recruit trade unionists into the existing organization in the way that doctors, lawyers and business men were recruited. Col Blair also opposed any scheme.⁽²⁹⁾ Other advisory committees went the same way. With the SUA largely opposing the politicization of local elections, preferring instead to support anti-socialists, Local Government Advisory Committees were not a feature of Scottish organization as they were in England; instead rather unsatisfactory *ad hoc* committees were used. Women's Advisory Committees a central feature of English organization were also less common in Scotland. In the case of Political Education Committees there was no formal opposition to the idea. But although there were seventeen groups in the "two way movement" in 1947, thereafter they disappear from view.⁽³⁰⁾

The Process of Reform

The import of the failure of the Scottish Unionist Party to introduce the kind of structure at use south of the border is clear. Constituency associations did not develop as mass units, raising the sort of sums of money needed to employ professional agents, to run comprehensive canvasses and to participate in political education. Too much power was in the hands of the Area Councils preventing effective decentralization. The split between the West and the East caused problems, while the Highlands, absorbed into the two regions felt disenfranchised. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the 1959 election, the recommendations of the joint EDC/WDC committee addressed the issue of constituency structure. In addition to the recommendations as to the status of agents noted above, the committee recommended the introduction of political education groups, the increased use of advisory committees and an increase in subscriptions. It also recommended a reorganization of the Chairman's Office.⁽³¹⁾

Blair's retirement as Political Secretary occasioned such a reorganization. Sir Alick Buchanan-Smith (later Lord Balerno) was created Deputy Chairman and MacDonald Watson became Political Secretary. The reform was fairly minor. But it occasioned much controversy, affecting as it did the relationship between the Scottish Chairman's Office and the SUA on the one hand and the relationship between the English and Scottish Parties on the other; and subsumed into the argument were divisions between the West and East. The creation of a Deputy chairman was first suggested in 1953 when James Stuart, began to find the duality of jobs as Secretary of State for Scotland and Scottish Chairman too much. The SUA unanimously opposed this and the suggestion came to nothing. The WDC argued that Col Blair already acted in the proposed role and that the creation of such a post would effect the executive position of the President of the SUA and increase the power and influence of the centre untowardly. Any shift of power away from the SUA towards the Scottish Chairman's Office also involved a shift from Glasgow where the SUA met to Edinburgh where the EDC and Scottish Chairman shared offices.

Similar problems arose after 1960. The whole rationale of the appointment of a deputy-chairman was the wielding of additional executive power. As this would be used to encourage constituency associations to improve their organisation it would benefit London and the Scottish Chairman's Office at the expense of the SUA; and Edinburgh at the expense of Glasgow. The project got off to a bad start when the *Scotsman* described MacDonald Watson as the Scottish Chief Agent, an application of the English system that the SUA found unacceptable.⁽³²⁾ But, conflict over authority emerged in 1961 when a circular from Sir William Urton, the General Director in London announced that Scottish constituencies should be circulated through the Chairman's Office. This ended in hostile

condemnation of both Buchanan-Smith and Watson by the SUA and its insistence that as the only executive body in Scotland, the Chairman's Office being an advisory body, it had to be the recipient of any circulars.⁽³³⁾ The problem still had not blown over when in June 1962 the SUA reported that members of the Chairman's Office had visited constituencies on three occasions and recorded that this was an infringement of autonomy.⁽³⁴⁾

The need for change was once again emphasised by the electoral results in 1964. This time the Party underwent substantial changes without any real dissent. The reforms, led by Sir John George, Scottish Chairman, 1963-65, have been described in some detail by Derek Urwin.⁽³⁵⁾ The change of name was finally agreed, with 'Conservative' at last adopted, the SUA becoming the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association (SCUA). The SCUA and the Chairman's Office were both reorganized, the latter becoming in effect a Scottish Central Office (SCO) by which name it was increasingly known. Both the WDC and the EDC were abandoned and were replaced by five regions, City of Glasgow, Highland, North Eastern, Central and Southern, and South West. These had Councils. But they were now voluntary bodies.⁽³⁶⁾ The professional organization was created around the SCO, with a General Director of Scottish Organization and a staff which included a Political Officer. The Party's finance was to be held by the SCO and there was to be a National Treasurer.⁽³⁷⁾ The Party's national advisory structure was also modified. A Trade Union Committee had been set up in 1962 with the historian John Ward as its first President. Following the reforms, this became a Trade Union Advisory Committee, whose convenor sat on the SCUA Finance and General Purposes Committee. A similar role was played by the convenors of the newly formed Young Conservative Advisory Committee and Women's Advisory Committee,⁽³⁸⁾ which consisted in the first instance of all women on the SCUA Council.⁽³⁹⁾ Effort was also made to secure a policy of support for explicitly Conservative candidates in local elections. So, for example, in contrast to the events of 1949, considerable effort was made to secure an effective dissolution of the Progressive Movement in Aberdeen and to produce an active Conservative Group for the whole city, which the SCUA hoped might be used as a model for Conservative groups elsewhere.⁽⁴⁰⁾

These changes aimed to do more than reinvigorate the Scottish Party at the centre. Derek Urwin made the point that while the Party Vice-Chairman emphasised that 'the basic unit is still the constituency ... it was obvious that the purpose of the reorganization was greater central control.'⁽⁴¹⁾ This is only partly right. The purpose of the reorganization was to move power away from the component parts of the SUA towards an effective machine based on Central Office and the constituencies. It was left to Sir Gilmour Menzies Anderson, Chairman, 1967-1971, to, in the words of the late Professor John Ward, 'hammer the constituencies into taking over.'⁽⁴²⁾

The changes also sought to end the effective division between the East and West. This did not go without opposition. Western Unionism had grown up around Glasgow, independent of Edinburgh. For Western Conservatives the changes meant colonisation by both Edinburgh and London. The WDC felt that bad organization was being given the blame for the Party's shortcomings whereas it was policy where problems lay. It also worried over where its funds would go, as they had been collected for electioneering in the West of Scotland and should only be used for that purpose.⁽⁴³⁾ For a time, the SUA continued to meet in Glasgow. The process took a further step when in 1971, a special meeting of the SCUA voted by seventy-two votes to forty to move the SCUA headquarters to the same offices as the SCO in Edinburgh.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Yet, to some extent the organization has yet again taken on a bifurcated structure. In 1967, the Highland and North East Regions merged⁽⁴⁵⁾ and in 1972 Glasgow and SW combined into the Western Region,⁽⁴⁶⁾ leaving just three regions, Central and Southern, Western, and Highlands.

The 1965 reform produced real improvement in Conservative Party organization. But it did nothing to reverse the Party's electoral performance. Two defeats in 1974 brought a new Party leader; and the new Party leader brought two substantial changes in the make-up of Scottish Conservatism. These were announced at the 1977 conference. The Party abandoned its commitment to a devolved assembly, initially rejected by the 1973 Conference but accepted by Alick Buchanan-Smith (Lord Balerno's son) after the October 1974 election. And the recommendation of the Fairgrieve Committee for the union of the Scottish and English/Welsh Conservative Parties was announced. The Committee was set up by Margaret Thatcher in May 1976. Chaired by Russell Fairgrieve, Chairman of the Scottish Conservative Party, 1975-1980, its remit was to examine the case for organizational integration. Accordingly, it reported to the SCUA Executive Committee on 2 April 1977 and then to the 1977 Conference. The Fairgrieve Report acknowledged that reform was needed for three reasons. Firstly, it accepted that Finance was available to continue to fund Scottish Central Office activities but felt that 'the scope, the professionalism, [and] the organisation' needed to be expanded. Secondly, it noted that given that 80% of Scottish industry was now owned outside Scotland, prospects for raising the additional funding 'were remote'. Thirdly, it recognized that 'the average range, the strength and virility' of Conservative Associations was lower than in England and that the relationship between the SCUA and the Chairman's Office were not as close as it should be. In meeting these problems, the Committee considered various options, dismissing for example the possibility of merging the SCUA into the National Union as an Area. Instead it proposed four major changes. Firstly, that administrative, financial and organizational control of the Scottish Central Office should be transferred to the Scottish Director of Organization. He was to work with his English/Welsh counterpart. Secondly, the Chairman of the Scottish Party would continue but he and his

deputies should concentrate on political activities. Thirdly, that finance should be centralized; although the Scottish Treasurer was to continue to collect local monies, the Conservative Board of Finance activities, collecting money from corporate donors, would be run from Scotland. Lastly, association members would still be members of the SCUA and attend Scottish Conference. But they would also be members of the National Union, able to attend the National Union Conference. In other words the Scottish Party was to be absorbed into the London Party, with a small degree of decentralization rather than the devolution which had characterized Scottish Unionism.⁽⁴⁷⁾ But in return it would acquire access to the various departments of Central Office in London and greater influence in the counsels of the Party. It achieved the last of these when Russell (now Lord) Sanderson became Vice-Chairman of the National Union in 1979 and then, before he could succeed as Chairman, became Chairman of the National Union Executive Committee in 1980.

Conclusion

The problems facing Scottish Conservatism were acute in 1965. Scottish Conservatism was seen as too aristocratic and too Anglicised. Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the first Scottish Prime Minister since J Ramsay MacDonald, epitomised the problem.

By 1965, he was seen nationally as the image of grouse-moor Conservatism; the man whose personality single-handedly lost the 1964 election. It was all but inevitable that reform would follow the defeat. If a substantial measure of change was secured in 1965, it was at a cost. Scottish Conservatism had been reluctant to reform itself, intent instead to cling to its Unionist label, its grandee leadership, and its bifurcated and largely non-participatory structure, centred on two district councils. In the process of breaking this down and creating a constituency structure comparable to that built up in England in the 1940s and 1950s, the Conservative Party eroded the distinctiveness of the Scottish Party. There was little to replace it. Sir John George, who piloted through the 1965 changes, was himself a self-made man, the son of a miner. But by the 1960s there was no longer a tier of businessmen ready to finance and run the Scottish Party. The nationalization of the British economy has removed a distinctly Scottish source of income. Socio-economic changes removed its traditional lowland base and in the 1970s rural constituencies came under threat from the SNP. An alternative image has been hard to find. One possible outcome was a Party committed to devolution. But this was abandoned in 1977, Buchanan-Smith resigning and Teddy Taylor, an anti-devolutionist, replacing him. The problem is circular. The loss of Teddy Taylor's seat in 1979 removed a potential populist Secretary of State who might redefine the Thatcherite creed in Scottish terms. Without MPs and distinctly Scottish leadership there is nothing on which to build the image; without the image there is nothing with which to win elections.

Given this decline, the case for the complete integration of the Scottish and English Parties is powerful. Russell Fairgrieve, himself a devolutionist, announcing the 1977 reforms, noted that it made better sense plugging into a 240 volt mains than running from a 12 volt battery. The Scottish Conservative Party has not produced a leader of stature, identifiable by his or her Scottishness. It makes little sense to maintain a distinctly Scottish Party leadership, when Scots themselves identify first and foremost not only with Margaret Thatcher but also with her Party Chairman in London. Margaret Thatcher's personal style of leadership exacerbates this problem in a way that is too familiar to need repeating. This seemed to be the case when Mrs Thatcher's response to the serious deterioration of the Conservative position at the 1987 General Election was to make a much publicised three day visit to Scotland, 3-5 September 1987.

However, that visit was accompanied by a reorganization at SCO. The plan was very much in line with Mrs Thatcher's commitment to put her message over better. The Director was replaced by a Chief Executive, Mr John MacKay, the former Scottish Office Minister, who was to play a 'high profile political role, actively campaigning for the Conservative Party.'⁽⁴⁸⁾ Five directors, finance, organization, research, communication and campaigning, were to run the Party's machinery and there was to be an increase in staff from 17 to 25. The reforms were also, according to the *Scotsman*, aimed at 'more autonomy for the Scottish Tories,'⁽⁴⁹⁾ not just through the creation of a more substantial Scottish establishment but through the ending of the 1977 arrangement whereby London held the purse strings. The *Scotsman* announced that Scottish Conservatives were to keep all the money raised in Scotland.

It is still too early to determine what success, if any, the reorganization will have. Improvement in constituency organisation is still on the agenda. The press coverage following the unfortunate resignation of Professor Harper as President of the SCUA has underlined this point. The *Scotsman*, *Glasgow Herald* and *Scotland on Sunday* all emphasised that Professor Harper's main priority had been the reinvigoration of Constituency organization.⁽⁵⁰⁾

In May 1987 the Party had only fourteen agents and Lord Gould promised to 'beef-up constituency associations into winning political units.'⁽⁵¹⁾ Two years later, the *Scotsman* reckoned that the Party had reasonable organization in twenty-five constituencies and also noted that an activist had been appointed to take on the North-east Region.⁽⁵²⁾ But improved organization itself is unlikely to produce an electoral turnaround. For that the issues will have to move in the Party's favour. Moreover, unless they do so, the organization is likely to wither from lack of success. And the Conservative Party has one further problem to face; that is the uncanny knack of Scotland's electoral geography of producing an effective anti-Thatcher candidate in each constituency.

If David McCrone's analysis is accurate, the issues are not going to go the way of the Scottish Conservative Party unless there is a radical change in policy direction. In the light of this, there are two ways to see Michael Forsyth's role as Party Chairman. One is as a dynamic force, acting with the authority of the Party leader, to break down the hold of the Scottish Tory establishment over the Edinburgh machinery, the logical conclusion of the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. The other is as the embodiment of Thatcherism in Scotland, whose emphasis on 'bourgeois England', will fall on deaf ears in Scotland. Forsyth has certainly acquired the kind of high political profile that John MacKay sought as Chief Executive. The *Scotsman*, not normally friendly to the Conservative Party, painted a favourable picture of Forsyth as a new broom, invigorating Party workers and organization; which shows at the very least that the changes of 1987-1989 have had a beneficial effect on the Party's media image. Whether or not an improved organization combined with media successes can reverse the Party's fortunes without a substantial policy rethink, only time can tell.

Chris Stevens, Department of Administrative and Social Studies, Teeside Polytechnic, Middlesbrough.

References

1. This point was made in relation to the period 1970 to 1974 by William Miller in *The End of British Politics?* (October, 1981).
2. The acceptance/encouragement of this press image may itself be strategy for dealing with the cost of unpopularity. In this view, Thatcherism does not really expect its policies to do very much for Scotland. But they must be allowed to run for the UK as a whole. Scotland joins long-term unemployment and inner-city crime as a policy area to be managed rather than cured. The image allows the Government to project that it feels confident of a cure and to encourage the Party faithful; while it waits for the dominant electoral geography of the UK to take hold again.
3. Most recently by Michael Dyer of Aberdeen University in an unpublished paper, 'The Electoral Decline of Scottish Conservatism with particular reference to the Elections, 1979-1987,' delivered to the Political Studies Association Annual Conference, Warwick University, April 1989.
4. The term "administrative devolution" is often used. But this is open to the criticism that "devolution" goes beyond the creation of a body with delegated power towards a body capable of substantive policy choice.
5. There is much to be found on the development of Scottish Conservatism in I G C Hutchinson, *A Political History of Scotland, 1832-1924: Parties, Elections and Issues* (Edinburgh, 1986).
6. See, for example, D W Urwin, 'Scottish Conservatism: A Party Organization in Transition,' *Political Studies*, XIV (1966), pp.145-162, M Keating and A Midwinter, *The Government of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1983), pp.63-66.
7. Michael Pinto-Duschinsky has argued that autonomy is still very much a feature of Conservatism: 'Central Office and "Power" in the Conservative Party,' *Political Studies*, XX (1972), pp.1-16.
8. *op cit*, p.145.

9. EDC Finance Committee, 14 January 1949, EDC Minute Book, 1946-1956. All minute books cited are in the possession of the SCUA, Edinburgh. And I must thank the SCUA and Miss Ann Hay in particular for making access to these records possible.
10. WDC Executive Committee, 19 March 1952, WDC Minute Book, 1949-1953.
11. Urwin, *op cit*, p.146.
12. SUA Council, 9 April 1946, SUA Minute Book, 1929-1946.
13. See David Butler and Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, 'The Conservative Elite 1918-1978: Does unrepresentativeness Matter?' in Zig Layton-Henry (ed) *Conservative Party Politics* (1980), pp.186-209.
14. In Scotland's case, 30% of this fighting fund collected there stayed in London, 70% was returned to Scotland, EDC Executive Committee, 18 November 1947, EDC Minute Book, 1945-1949.
15. Urwin, *op cit*, p.153.
16. WDC Education and Propaganda Sub-Committee, 28 January 1958, WDC Minute Book, 1951-1957.
17. SUA, 22 June 1962, SUA Minute Book, 1947-1964.
18. SUA, 18 September 1962, SUA Minute Book, 1947-1964.
19. SUA, 17 November 1960, SUA Minute Book, 1947-1964.
20. SCUA Executive Committee, 27 June 1967, SUA Minute Book, 1965-1973.
21. WDC Sub-Committee on Training of Agents, 6 May 1954, WDC Minute Book, 1953-1956. It is of interest that despite constituency association autonomy these were to be selected, trained, part-financed and put into constituencies by the WDC.
22. EDC, 14 January 1955, EDC Minute Book, 1952-1964.
23. SUA, 17 June 1960, SUA Minute Book, 1947-1964.
24. *ibid*, 12 October 1954.
25. Urwin, *op cit*, p.158.
26. SCUA Executive Committee, 10 December 1971, SCUA Minute Book, 1965-1973.
27. SUA, 18 December 1950, SUA Minute Book, 1947-1964.
28. WDC 1 December 1950, WDC Minute Book, 1949-1953. The way the debate was phrased made it clear that in this matter the WDC saw itself as having authority rather than the apparently autonomous constituency association.
29. SUA, 30 January 1953, SUA Minute Book, 1947-1954.
30. The two-way movement, later the three-way movement, was a system devised by Central Office to secure constituency membership opinion and to further political education.
31. Urwin, *op cit*, p.158.
32. SUA, 1 July 1960, SUA Minute Book, 1947-1964.
33. SUA, 7 March 1961, SUA Minute Book, 1947-1964.
34. SUA, 22 June 1962, SUA Minute Book, 1947-1964.
35. Urwin, *op cit*.
36. The post 1965 situation not strictly speaking analogous to the English system. The Roxburgh Committee recommendation that the Chief Scottish Agent should act as secretary to the SCUA, a situation that had existed in the English Counterpart since the 1880s, as this would negate the right of the SCUA to choose its own secretary.
37. Urwin, *op cit*, pp159-160.
38. SCUA Council, 23 April 1965, SCUA Minute Book, 1965-1973.
39. *ibid*, Executive Committee, 23 April.
40. SCUA Executive Committee, 12 March, 16 April, 4 June, 5 November 1971, SCUA Minute Book, 1965-1973.

41. Urwin, *op cit*, p.159.
42. Interview, 1983.
43. WDC, Executive Committee, 15 December 1965, WDC Minute Book, 1962-1965.
44. SCUA Special Council, 23 January 1971, SCUA Minute Book, 1965-1973.
45. SCUA Executive Committee, 6 October 1967, SCUA Minute Book, 1965-1973.
46. SCUA Executive Committee, 7 April 1972, SCUA Minute Book, 1965-1973.
47. Fairgrieve Report, Appendix A 1977 Scottish Conference handbook.
48. *Scotsman*, 28 August 1987.
49. *ibid*.
50. *Scotsman*, *Glasgow Herald*, 9 September 1989, *Scotland on Sunday*, 10 September 1989. The press coverage also reaffirmed its view of Harper as somewhat less of a Thatcherite than Michael Forsyth and rather more "mainstream" in Scottish Conservative terms.
51. *Scotsman*, 28 August 1987.
52. *ibid*, 28 August 1989.