The SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT YEARBOOK 1989

edited by ALICE BROWN & DAVID McCrone
Scottish Government Yearbook 1989

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An Annual Review of Economic and Social Research

Editors:
Graham Day, University of Wales, Aberystwyth and Gareth Rees, University of Wales College of Cardiff.

An authoritative analysis of economic and social development in Wales, drawing upon the most up-to-date research. It will be of interest not only to academic researchers, but also professionals in local and central government, the private sector and the labour and trade union movement, as well as a general wider readership. Contemporary Wales fills a major gap in providing a forum for debate and an essential information resource for all those who are concerned about Wales' current problems and prospects for future progress.


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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Alice Brown

In nineteen eighty-eight we witnessed further new developments in the governance of Scotland. The implementation of the Local Government Act 1988, the completion of registration for the community charge (poll tax), major education reforms, the development of the inner city programme, the introduction of new housing legislation, and the establishment of Enterprise Scotland are some examples of policies which have been enforced from Whitehall. These changes have progressed against the wishes and without the support of the majority of the Scottish people.

Following the outcome of the 1987 general election, Mrs Thatcher's stated view was that the apparent divergence between central government policy and Scottish public opinion could be overcome by improving communication of her government's objectives to the Scottish electorate. As one method of ‘getting the message across’, Mrs Thatcher herself visited Scotland on no less than six occasions in 1988. Her speech to the Scottish Conservative Party Conference in Perth where she claimed that the Scots had invented Thatcherism, her ‘Sermon on the Mound’ address to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the high profile given to Scotland at the party's annual conference in Brighton, gained much media coverage. However, as the District Elections of 1988 and Opinion Polls in Scotland show, either the message has still not been conveyed to the Scottish people, or there are other more complex factors involved than the government is prepared to acknowledge.

One area where the government has claimed success is in relation to the so-called economic miracle in Scotland. In an interview given to Scotland's new Sunday newspaper ‘Scotland on Sunday’ Mrs Thatcher pronounced that Scotland was flourishing. While it can be acknowledged that in certain sectors of the Scottish economy there have been signs of economic revival, it would be premature to say the least to state that Scotland is experiencing an economic miracle. The Scottish experience has been more in the nature of economic recovery than an economic boom. Related to the general economic picture in Scotland, the government has also taken the credit for the decrease in the official level of unemployment and the increase in the rate of growth in the economy over the last year. Leaving aside the rather obvious contradiction that the government previously claimed that it could not influence the level of employment/unemployment and the disputes about the changes in the measurement of