Introduction

"Green" and "environment" had become essential words in the political vocabulary at the dawning of the decade. When the 20th century draws to a close, will political debate and public policy in Scotland be focussed on ecological imperatives, or will the indiscriminate pursuit of economic growth remain the touchstone of progress? Or most optimistically, might a new synthesis of economics and environment be charting the way towards a sustainable future?

In the broadest and most appropriate sense of the word, environment underpins all political discussion, since our total existence as humans is ultimately bound by it. In the words of Barry Commoner:

"The environment makes up a huge, enormously complex living machine that forms a thin dynamic layer on the earth's surface, and every human activity depends on the integrity and proper functioning of this machine."

While a central feature of green thinking is to demonstrate the inter-connection between the environment and all forms of human activity (a "holistic" approach), mainstream political thinking in the late 1980s still tended to allocate the environment into a neat compartment separate from the traditional areas of political concern, such as the economy, foreign affairs, and social policy. For all its limitations, that view is nevertheless a useful starting point in examining scenarios for the year 2000. A generalised view of the environment in the early 1990s falls into three identifiable but overlapping categories, encompassing the growing public perception of pollution problems and exhaustion of finite resources:

Firstly, world-scale problems such as global warming and damage to the ozone layer, where the impact on nature is no respecter of national or continental boundaries.

Secondly, national or continental threats - such as acid rain, marine pollution, nuclear accidents, and excessive energy consumption.

Thirdly, problems which are more concentrated or identifiable at the local or regional scale, eg river and air pollution, noise pollution, loss of local amenity, and waste disposal.

This article seeks first to relate environmental concern to the Scottish political dimension, and examines the respective roles of the Green Party and pressure groups within the political process. The possible scale and nature of threats to the Scottish environment in the year 2000 provide the backcloth for an examination of alternative strategies for environmental care. Contrasting scenarios for Scotland and its environment are then examined, with particular reference to two central areas of ecological concern: energy policy and transport. The article concludes with a brief examination of the possible role of new values in shaping Scottish politics and attitudes to the environment.

The Scottish dimension

While pressures on open space and amenity in Scotland have generally been less than south of the border - since a considerably lower population density is involved - the sensitivity of some specific locations to development pressures has created a distinctive Scottish aspect to environmental awareness. Threats to areas of special ecological value (such as Lurchers Gully or the Inner Moray Firth) or 'beauty spots' have added a national dimension to the growing interest in green issues reflected in, and stimulated by, greatly increased UK-based media coverage for the global ecological crisis.

Scotland has also shared in the spectacular growth of environmental pressure groups, with Friends of the Earth Scotland registering a doubling of membership in the year following Mrs Thatcher's famous 'green' speeches in Autumn 1988.

In the party political sphere, however, the environment has not been an issue of significance until very recently. The grassroots of the Liberal Party had been moving to an increasingly green anti-nuclear stance in the late 1970s, but the ill-fated Alliance with the SDP brought a change of direction towards a more conventional middle-of-the-road stance. Nevertheless, one of the three Liberal Democrat-held District Councils in Scotland – North East Fife – could at least claim in 1990 to have the greatest commitment to recycling of any Scottish local authority.

The old Ecology Party (born in England in the early 1970s surge of environmental awareness) established itself in Scotland in 1979, and saw slow but steady membership growth through the 1980s. The change of name to Scottish Green Party in 1985 allied the party more closely in the public mind to developments in mainland Europe (particularly West Germany), but the Greens nevertheless remained very much on the fringes of the main political scene until the 1989 European Elections.
Scottish Government Yearbook 1991

The SNP established a track record on environmental issues – notably a strong anti-nuclear stance – in the 1980s. However, by the end of the decade, strategic electoral considerations had relegated green policies to the sidelines, with most of their campaigning geared to a mainstream economic message with negative environmental implications, linked to the slogan ‘Independence in Europe’. A notable exception to this was their high-profile opposition to proposed nuclear waste dumping in Caithness, with civil disobedience promised if Government plans were followed through.

The records of the Scottish Conservative and Labour parties on the environment were not encouraging in the 1970s and 1980s. The Labour Government authorised the ecologically unsound and economically unjustified Torness nuclear power station, and at the beginning of the 1990s in Strathclyde Region, Labour was still pressing ahead with plans to subject Glasgow to the biggest urban motorway programme in Western Europe.

The Conservative Government, while trying to take the credit for consumer-driven shifts in consumption patterns, eg the switch from CFC-based aerosols, was characterised by inaction on global environmental issues, and attracted regular criticism from the EEC for failure to meet laid-down standards or to lead the way in obliterating industry to cut down energy and resource use. A professed concern about carbon dioxide emissions stood ill at typified by the decision to construct a new motorway linking the M74 and the M6, thereby creating a traffic capacity of 100,000 vehicles, compared to the 1989 traffic level of just 20,000 vehicles.

The big breakthrough for Green politics in Scotland – and indeed the whole of Britain – came in the 1989 European Elections. The UK result for the Green Party was astonishing even to party activists – 15% of the vote represented the highest poll ever for any Green Party worldwide in national elections. In Scotland the Greens took a modest 7.25%, suggesting to some commentators that Scotland was less environmentally-aware than the more congested areas of Southern England – where economic pressures were not so great. Also, the established presence of a ‘protest’ party in the form of the SNP, must have siphoned off votes which would otherwise have gone to the Greens.

Anecdotal evidence – such as the major growth in letters on the environment published in the correspondence columns of The Scotsman, and a significant and ongoing expansion of coverage in the media generally – and subsequent opinion poll results point to a less clear-cut difference between England and Scotland in attitudes to the environment. While at a UK level, opinion poll backing for the Greens has dropped back from the 15% European Election result to generally 5% or 6%, in Scotland 3 to 4% has been typical, confirming the suggestion that a significant proportion of Green votes in Southern England was an otherwise Conservative protest vote.

Opinion polls testing matters of concern to the public confirm that the environment is not yet a general top priority. The poll tax, the economy, the health service, and the campaign for a Scottish parliament all tend to attract a higher priority than green issues, but there is evidence from polls that support for the Greens is disproportionately higher amongst two crucial groups – young people and women. This is reflected in (and is perhaps also a reflection of) the age and gender breakdown of Scottish Green Party membership. The typical Green office-bearer or activist is around 20 years old, and half the membership are women. In mid 1990 half of the party’s National Council and Executive were women, and in the Regional Election the Greens fielded the highest ever proportion of women candidates (36%) by any party in Scottish electoral history.

However, it was clear at the beginning of the 1990s that general awareness and concern about the environment had grown enormously – with around three-quarters of the population said to be aware of global warming, an amazing high figure for a phenomenon that was hardly spoken of outside scientific and green circles only a few years previously. In the party political sphere, hope for the future lay with the earlier environmental credentials of the Liberal Democrats and the SNP, plus the growing pressures within the Labour Party for democratic and constitutional change in Scotland, and of course the Greens themselves. The proviso to all this was, of course, the strong need for a governmental forum for strategic decision-making on environmental matters within Scotland. Not a small replica of Westminster in Edinburgh, but instead an open democratic institution reflecting the national pattern of political support for the various parties, and encouraging the nurturing of new ideas and new solutions for major ecological crises.

Environmental concern – party politics or pressure groups?

With the emergence of environmental concern as a mainstream political issue, attention continues to focus on whether pressure groups as opposed to a political party are the best vehicle for securing the implementation of more environmentally-benign policies. The Regional Election of 1990 provided the first opportunity to assess the ‘protest’ nature of the Green vote in Scotland and a possible drifting of Green politics back to the political margins, leaving the pressure groups such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace to push the parties with a realistic chance of early power in a green direction.

The Election was dominated almost exclusively by one national issue – the poll tax – and a distinctive Green message on alternative means of local government funding was barely heard during the campaign. Despite this, the Green vote showed a significant increase on the 1986 performance (to 5.7% of the vote in seats contested) and for the first time at Regional level Green candidates defeated representatives of the major parties – the Liberal Democrats on 15 occasions, the Conservatives 5 times and the SNP in 3 seats. The most dramatic upsurge of the Green vote was in Highland Region where,
Highland Green Party had been very active in the community, campaigning in particular on water quality issues and Regional Council plans to pump sewage into the Moray Firth, and it was largely these 'single issues' which lay at the core of their electoral success. Ironically, Scottish Green Party spokespersons have often had to defend themselves against media claims that the party is 'single issue' – pointing out that with a distinctive underlying philosophy and a comprehensive range of policies, the Greens offer a wide-ranging analysis of and prescription for the economic, social, political and environmental problems of modern society.

In a sense the environment, defined as the framework for our total human existence, is a single issue, but the holistic Green approach – recognising the interconnectedness of everything – should not be confused with the campaigning strategies of pressure groups which operate within the political sphere, but have no interest in taking power themselves.

All political parties recognise that they must have policies covering all areas of social concern since ultimately they all wish to have a measure of power which enables and indeed requires them to take action over a broad range of policy areas. Also, working within a political system which for all its flaws is still seen as being 'democratic', political parties have a sense – albeit varying – of needing democratic internal procedures to enable its members to have the final say on policy-making, constitutional rules and election of office-bearers. While the Greens – after just 11 years existence in Scotland – are still in their political youth compared to the established parties, wide policy concerns and internal democracy are key characteristics of the party.

In contrast, pressure groups such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace consciously do not campaign on social and economic issues. While Friends of the Earth Scotland have taken significant steps to increase their members’ scope to influence campaigning strategy, democracy is spectacularly absent from Greenpeace, where strict central control reduces members to the limited role of ‘subscribers’ and local fund-raisers. It may be argued that the high-visibility stunts which characterise Greenpeace campaigning demand great secrecy and short lines of communication, but clearly this is not an organisation which in any way replicates party political activity. These pressure groups also show no interest in standing for election to government at any level, although experience with open systems of proportional representation in countries such as Finland suggest this may be partly a function of our flawed electoral system(1).

Despite the breadth of the Green Party’s philosophy and programme, the lack of a Parliamentary platform for publicity, and relatively limited resources for national campaigning, have meant that the success of Greens in local elections throughout Britain has had to be largely dependent on grassroots community campaigning on issues of local concern. In Green parlance, the slogan “Think globally, act locally” comes to mind.

It is as yet unclear whether the Greens can develop into a nationwide mass-membership party winning elections at all levels of government in Scotland. Paralleling the experience of Friends of the Earth Scotland, Scottish Green Party membership doubled from 1988 to 1989, but in mid-1990 – despite continued steady growth – the latter’s membership totalled just 1,200, compared to FOE’s 4,500 in Scotland. Prior to the European Elections, uncertainty over party strategy and objectives, and widely varying levels of local campaigning activities across Scotland had contributed to a continuing problem of membership turnover, and there was evidence that a proportion of new entrants tended to have a ‘pressure group’ rather than ‘political’ interest. More recently however the Scottish Green Party has come to be recognised by the established parties and by most sections of the media as a full-blown political party rather than just an environmental pressure group – notably through participation in the Constitutional Convention and the anti-poll tax campaign. In recognition of this, the Party in 1990 adopted a new constitution designed to sharpen up its internal mechanisms and political campaigning profile.

It is hard to see a major breakthrough until such time as PR is introduced for elections in Scotland, and in this context the creation of a properly representative Scottish Parliament (with scrapping of election deposits and state funding of political parties) must be central to Green aspirations. In the meantime electoral success is likely to depend on identifying and tapping new sources of financial support to facilitate major campaigning initiatives, and on strict targeting of resources. The best prospects lie in concentrating on areas where groups of highly-motivated activists can form durable campaigning teams, highlighting specific environmental threats where the Greens can offer popular and distinctive alternatives to conventional solutions. Replicating the West German pattern of Green growth, this may often be in university towns and cities. In some parts of Scotland the local political dimension will also offer greater scope for Green incursions – for example, in the Highlands where the relative lack of a party political dimension has paved the way for new ideas to establish a strong presence. Paradoxically, the shear domination of the Labour Party in the ‘one party state’ of Strathclyde may breed a growing complacency which creates openings for energetic Green campaigning with the dispossessed and disadvantaged who have little stake in society and are a significant proportion of the non-voting electorate. Whether enough Greens have the commitment to sustain such a project remains to be seen – at present membership in the peripheral estates and run-down inner-city areas is low.

The future of the Greens in Scotland will not however rest simply on pro-active campaigning strategies. Crucially, there will need to be a distinctive and
convincing reaction to the changes which other parties make in their policies to address green issues, or, at worst, to attract the green vote at elections. Already there is evidence of change in the established parties at various levels – for example, Labour and Liberal Democrat local councils endorsing the Friends of the Earth ‘environmental charter’, and the SNP taking a firm line on nuclear waste dumping. On a more general level, the Conservative Government is introducing a Green Bill which will address problems of pollution control, waste management and noise nuisance.

Few Greens are convinced that these measures represent a significant step towards the major policy changes thought necessary to tackle the various global ecological threats. The conflict between a wish to confront the environmental crises and a parallel reluctance to give up the conventional priority for ‘growth’, as measured by GNP, has still to be resolved. Regrettably, the decade may be well advanced before the emerging gravity of the situation forces a massive rethink on the established political parties. This does not however guarantee an electoral ‘bonanza’ for the Greens, since public attitudes take time to change, and the relative youth and inexperience of the Greens as a political party may act as a continuing deterrent to big voting shifts. It must also be recognised that the well-funded promotion of the established parties’ “environmental protection” and “resource management” strategies may create sufficient impression of action on the environment to ensure retention of political control at all levels of government(2).

In such a scenario, the emphasis of Green campaigning might have to switch to areas of democratic concern. Another of the Greens’ well-known slogans – “small is beautiful” – could be a rallying call for an expanded grassroots campaign for decentralisation of power, the extension of constitutional rights, protection of civil liberties, and a vision of Europe as a loose confederal grouping of regions – working together on issues of common concern such as environmental protection, peace and constructive aid for the Third World. Linked to the Greens’ objective of a new style of politics based on co-operation, consensus-seeking and wider participation, campaigning for democracy is a logical outcome of social and economic policies designed to encourage the involvement of the whole community in the decision-making process.

Unlike the almost predetermined environmental niche which the Greens have enjoyed in terms of public awareness, tackling the less tangible question of democratic rights implies a considerable sophistication in campaign planning, targeting and publicity, not to say significant financial resources to sustain a distinctive message through the media over a period of years rather than the short sharp burst of an election campaign.

As the Scottish Greens have found through their participation in the Constitutional Convention (and in particular with well-researched and thoughtful contributions on women in politics and on proportional representation), hard work, original thinking and good ideas can be invisible to the wider audience without a sustained and high-profile media back-up. Private recognition of an effective contribution within political circles is no substitute for public awareness of a distinctive and popular stance.

Scotland’s environment in the year 2000

The state of Scotland’s natural and built environment in the year 2000 will reflect the quantity and quality of economic activities both worldwide and within Scotland’s boundaries. Detailed predictions of climatic change from global warming vary from scientist to scientist, but most imply significant changes in sea levels and considerable climatic fluctuation. Coping with global warming is likely to be the biggest political challenge in the foreseeable future, but concern over quality of life in general is already growing rapidly in the face of a whole range of local, regional and national problems of environmental degradation.

The draft report of the United Nations inter-governmental panel on climate change has raised serious doubts over the future of the forestry, fishing and skiing industries in Scotland(3). Pollution, disease and ill-health could be spread by global warming, and the rise in sea levels would displace populations, destroy low-lying urban infrastructure, inundate arable lands and contaminate fresh water supplies. A subsequent Scottish-based study pointed to major disruption by flooding along the Clyde Estuary, with good quality agricultural land along the Tay another candidate for dislocation or destruction(4).

The impact of global warming and depletion of the ozone layer on the Scottish environment are by their nature not problems which can be resolved within Scotland, but Scottish opinion has a role in influencing the British contribution to international negotiations on the environment. Hopefully, by the year 2000 Scotland will have sufficient independence to exert its own small but constructive contribution to world pressure for ecological sustainability and economic justice.

Economic activity within Scotland’s borders does of course produce greenhouse gases which are part of the global warming phenomenon – road traffic and coal-fired power stations are the main areas for concern. Action within Scotland is required, and can also have a significant impact on the transcontinental problems such as acid rain, marine pollution, and nuclear radiation. Economic and environmental priorities within Scotland – in terms of industrial technology, energy policy and attitudes towards waste disposal, for example – should by the end of the decade be areas where decisions are taken in Scotland for Scotland.

The way we treat our own backyard would of course be the most open to influence by the activities of a Scottish Parliament, but the nature of the
economy, who owns it, what is produced, and what the side-effects are, will not automatically be susceptible to democratic control. Political decentralisation not matched by economic decentralisation could be a recipe for frustration and failure to tackle fundamental environmental problems.

Different concepts of environmental care

Attitudes to the environment range at one extreme from the “frontier economies” of the “cornucopians” - with their belief that man (sic) can always find a way out of any difficulties, either political, scientific or technological - to the opposite view of the “deep ecologists” with their belief in the intrinsic importance of nature for the humanity of men, and a view that ecological and other natural laws dictate human morality.

When one considers different scenarios for Scotland and its environment in the year 2000, James Robertson in “Future Work” provides a useful classificatory framework of three possible futures for what he terms “post-industrial society” - not in the sense of industry ceasing to exist, but rather reflecting a comparable scale of transformation to the Industrial Revolution, yet based on profoundly different values, lifestyles and institutions.

Robertson suggests that the option of “Business as Usual” is voiced with diminishing conviction by politicians and economists of all mainstream persuasions and by most business and trade union leaders. Business as Usual implies that full employment can be restored and that employment will remain the dominant form of work. In this scenario it is claimed that by making the economy internationally competitive the resultant creation of wealth will automatically generate enough jobs for all.

The two visions which Robertson sees as the more likely alternatives for post-industrial society he categorises as “HE” (hyper-expansionist) and “SHE” (sane, humane, ecological). HE would be a future based on big science, big technology and expert know-how - with the emphasis on quantitative and money values, specialisation and centralisation. It implies the continuation of the existing polarisation between skilled and unskilled workers, employed and unemployed, to the point where all the important work is done by a minority of highly-skilled and highly-responsible people, with the rest living a life of leisure or menial work - a post-industrial equivalent of the Romans’ “bread and circuses” perhaps.

Under such a scenario Scotland will be pushed into an increasingly unhealthy dependence on multinational business, its steel industry will have gone, and the economy will be geared to the branch-plant economies of Silicon Glen, a burgeoning low wage and low security leisure industry threatening much of Scotland’s ecological wealth, and the powerful (and capital-intensive) nuclear industry. After an initial burst of business activity post-1992, the Scottish economy will increasingly serve only as a peripheral cog in an integrated European machine, with the various ‘city-regions’ competing ruthlessly for specialised business.

The domination of minority interests over the majority would be reflected in a further diminution of democracy - with a Scottish Parliament once more rejected, the Regional Councils abolished, and a strong central state underpinning business domination of Scottish life. Education would be further geared to the needs of big business, and a growing aimlessness and disenchantment with society would spawn anti-social behaviour, alienation and a further breakdown of ‘community’ values.

By contrast, the SHE vision of the future does not foresee an acceleration along the same path of development we have followed during the industrial age, but instead a change of direction. The post-industrial breakthrough will be primarily psychological and social, not technical and economic, emphasising qualitative values and real needs, all-round competence, decentralisation and a planetary outlook. In contrast to the ‘mad scientist’ tendency of the HE future, the SHE view sees the historical progression from master-and-slave to lord-and-serf and then to employer-and-employee as an unfinished progression towards greater equality.

As the prospect of conventional full employment recedes, the dominant form of work will no longer be seen as employment but rather as self-organised activity. The informal economy will become one of the main areas for economic development and social progress. A fulfilling well-balanced life will be regarded as one that offers a flexible choice of work patterns; and part-time work in the formal and informal economies will come to be seen as the norm.

In this optimistic scenario Scotland would take more control of its economic, social, political and environmental destiny. Both conventional and less formal political channels would pave the way towards a more self-reliant and less specialised Scottish economy.

In “After the crash; the emergence of the rainbow economy”, Guy Dauncey argues that the new economics are an essential safeguard for local survival in an increasingly fragile world economy. He sees local economic initiatives such as community money systems, credit unions and community businesses as paving the way to a new economic order less vulnerable to crises of international trade, finance and debt - and in the process rebuilding the resourcefulness of local communities in an environmentally benign, globally-conscious and, above all, sustainable framework.

However, unless a growing realisation of the environmental crisis coupled with a grassroots democratic revival leads to a sea-change in Scottish politics and consequent strategies for planning and caring for the environment, Scotland in the year 2000 is perhaps more likely to display characteristics of all three possible futures within its boundaries. Even in an increasingly autonomous Scottish political framework, one can envisage a long lead-time
before alternatives to the conventional competitive economic framework become widely accepted, not least through the resistance of the powerful military-industrial axis. Whether the trades unions can extend their breadth of vision to encompass such a radical challenge to the status quo remains a central unanswered question.

The power of the multinationals to over-ride national and even Europe-wide interests is self-evident, and their ability to influence the debate through increasing control of major media outlets is another enormous barrier to change. While some socialists may still dream of a world government to bring international capital to heel, this seems an implausible scenario, and whether such a body could ever claim real democratic legitimacy must be doubtful. Rather than the ‘top down’ approach which leaves real power in the hands of an elite, the new economics points towards ‘bottom up’ solutions, with decentralisation of economic power paralleling the downward spread of political power. The increasing empowerment of local communities through consumer movements (on food quality and health issues, for example), single issue campaigns and access to information technology would be central to the creation of a multitude of small-scale power bases with the diversity and strength to survive in a turbulent world.

In any scenario however, electoral and ecological imperatives will ensure that certain key policy areas will be at the centre of the political agenda. Amongst the most pertinent in the emerging era of global warming will be energy and transport.

**Energy:** A crucial area, since burning of fossil fuel is central to the threat from global warming. With Torness coming on stream, dependence on polluting coal-fired power stations will be reduced, but nevertheless the mix of electricity generation sources in Scotland moves even further away from ecological balance – with a 60% dependency on nuclear power storing up major problems for future generations. Ironically, Scotland has probably the greatest potential of any European country for the development of renewable energy sources. Located as we are on the north western seaboard of the continent, there is potential for up to 50% of our energy requirements being met from renewables within the next 30 years – provided that research and development funding are put on a sensible footing, and linked to a massive programme of energy efficiency and conservation.

The green argument for development of non-nuclear renewables rests on three crucial criteria:

1. The need to reduce fossil fuel consumption in the interests of resource conservation and minimising the effects of global warming.
2. The wish not to force a legacy of known and unknown radiation dangers on countless future generations.

3. the importance of developing energy sources using smaller-scale 'appropriate' technology which can be controlled by the community rather than being reserved to a centralised technocratic elite.

Moves towards a ‘soft’ energy policy will necessitate major changes in political direction – ‘green accounting’ to reflect the true external cost of different energy sources, public control of the bigger electricity generating stations, and local community control of smaller-scale developments. Also, crucially, the electricity generation boards will need to have energy conservation objectives built into their statutes.

With the present considerable surplus capacity of the Scottish generating companies – well in excess of forecast growth of demand – the transition to a softer energy programme could begin quickly, with the most obvious steps relating to a comprehensive domestic and industrial energy conservation programme. Control of energy policy would be central to the role of an effective Scottish parliament, with democratic input to key aspects such as:

- A long-term strategy for energy use.
- Public spending - capital investment, research and development, grants and loans.
- Differential taxation on energy consumption.
- New ‘green’ remits for the power generating companies.
- Revised planning guidelines for local authorities, including Energy Impact Assessments to complement Environmental Impact Assessment.
- ‘Green’ accounting and control of pricing.
- Public control of oil and gas extraction rates.

**Transport:** will demand increasing attention as one of the major consumers of energy, a key element of social and economic infrastructure, and the cause of much environmental degradation both locally and globally.

As the 1990s unfold there will be increasing pressure to move towards transport policies which balance the wider social and environmental impact against the undoubted personal convenience of private road transport. At the time of writing all the main parties in Scotland (with the exception of the Greens) remained to varying degrees attached to the ‘more of everything’ approach to transport, with little concept of the need to reduce the overall demand for energy-intensive transport by moving towards more self-reliant and diversified regional and national economies.
Such a visionary outlook would of course represent a radical departure from the presently accelerating trend towards regional and national specialisation – based largely on the narrowly-defined ‘cheapness’ of transport – which will receive a further boost from the European Single Market in 1992. The removal of frontier barriers will reduce the cost of lorry transport by up to 25%, and with manufacturers concentrated in fewer large sites this will increase lorry kilometres by up to 100%. Clearly this implies a huge burden on society in terms of air pollution, accidents, noise and land take – and has been recognised as such by the EEC’s Task Force on the Environment and the Internal Market. While the long-established centre-left consensus for integrated transport systems has re-emerged as a significant political issue in recent years, this has largely been couched in terms of providing high-speed trunk links from Scotland to the south, in particular rail links to the Channel Tunnel. The potential outcome of these pressures is a growing gap between numerous competing high-speed modes of transport on the main trunk routes and a steady decline of rural public transport, peripheral urban transport, and evening and Sunday services, ie those areas where profits are difficult or impossible to secure.

The challenge of the 1990s will be to face up to the enormous environmental price that Scotland and the wider world is paying for relatively unrestrained growth of personally convenient but resource-profligate forms of transport. While it may be predicted that finite resource exhaustion and tightening international agreements on greenhouse gases will inevitably force drastic changes of public policy, it would clearly be better for an emerging democratic consensus to be the vehicle for changes in the direction of our economy and society.

A Scottish parliament should have a key role to play in transport – setting out the financial framework, ensuring that different modes fairly pay their wider costs and that comparable investment criteria operate for public road and rail developments, using taxation to influence patterns of use, and creating powers for co-ordination and integration of public transport.

Transport policy cannot be treated in isolation from land-use planning. Throughout most of the post-war period in Scotland, new industrial, housing, and service developments have tended to be sited with road transport exclusively in mind – with more low-density suburban and greenfield sites, less easily served by public transport, becoming the norm.

‘Brownfield’ development received a significant boost in Glasgow under the inner-city modernisation and regeneration schemes of the 1970s and 1980s. However, more recently the development of the inter-urban motorway network has fostered enormous competitive pressures for out-of-town business parks and shopping complexes. Even the Green Belts – long accepted as an essential buffer around our major conurbations – are now under threat from the massive development pressures of an economy increasingly geared to high-technology industry owned and controlled from the USA. In Central Scotland the Regional Councils are of an inadequate size to control such developments – the ‘golden triangle’ bounded by Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling encompasses three different strategic planning authorities which can be played off against each other by developers. Strategic land-use planning should therefore involve a strong national element under the control of a Scottish Parliament, balancing commercial demands against the broader needs of the community.

New values and new politics?

The first green party to have an impact on national politics was in New Zealand in the early 1970s under the name of the Values Party. A recurring theme in modern writing on green politics and the new economics is the emergence of new values as the guiding principles for survival and progress into the next century.

Guy Dauncey talks of seven core values in the developing rainbow economy – ecological, economic, planetary, personal, community, social and spiritual. James Robertson reflects on how the Industrial Revolution caused people to distance themselves from the natural universe, from other people and even from themselves, and contrasts this with the emerging concerns of the post-industrial worldview – protection of the environment, the spread of local participatory politics and community economic initiatives, and the growth of holistic approaches to health and welfare.

How far is this change in attitudes relevant to Scottish society, and in particular to the brand of traditional macho politics which still dominates much of our country? The new values are certainly identifiable in Scottish society – amongst a wide range of individuals, organisations and communities trying to come to terms with the economic and ecological imperatives of the 1990s. There is a growing sense of the need for the people of Scotland to take much greater control over their destiny. There is the emerging consensus that a Scottish Parliament must adopt new ways of working to encourage greater participation and more effective representation. There is the hope that a new national forum for debate and decision-making will encourage fresh ideas and new values to flourish, helping Scotland to meet the massive environmental challenges which the 21st century will bring.

That is the exciting prospect, but the perennial question remains. In the face of external threats – political, economic and environmental – has Scotland the capability and the will to unite in common cause?

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