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INTRODUCTION
Lindsay Paterson

The coming year will be a watershed, both for Scotland and for The Yearbook. For Scotland, the general election, depending on its outcome, could be the most important since 1945, determining fundamental features of the country's development for the next half century. For The Yearbook, too, changes will mark a radical departure after 16 years of publication. The current edition is the last in the present form: from July 1992, it will be superseded by a new quarterly, Scottish Affairs (of which more shortly). Such occasions seem to call for some retrospective appraisal.

The Yearbook was founded by Henry Drucker and Michael Clarke in 1976, along with the Unit for the Study of Government in Scotland which has remained its home ever since. The occasion for the launch was the prospect of an imminent Scottish Assembly: "Scotland is alive and exciting", they wrote, having noted that, so far as the Scottish constitution was concerned, "there are many possibilities: the status quo is not one of them."

The striking thing about Scotland 1992 is that there is a real sense of an uncompleted agenda. We all got it wrong in 1979; intervening social and political change has forced us to look for a second chance. As a newcomer to the editor's chair, and therefore as a relatively objective outsider, I think I can reasonably say that, without The Yearbook, our understanding of these changes, and of the new Scotland that has been emerging, would have been much impoverished.

The Yearbook has, first of all, traced Scotland's experience during that time, an experience shaped overwhelmingly by 12 continuous years of a Conservative government which throughout that time has struggled to gain political legitimacy here. The basic but crucial task of simply recording what has been happening has been guided by a small and reliable group of editors. Henry Drucker was joined by Nancy Drucker between 1979 and 1982, they were succeeded by David McCrone from 1983 to 1987, he was joined by Alice Brown in 1988, 1989 and 1991 and Alice Brown and Richard Parry produced the 1990 edition. Some key features of the record-keeping have remained constant during that time – notably Chris Allen's bibliography of writing about Scotland, Hamish McN Henderson's unique (and witty) account of Scottish...