

FROM THE EDITOR

As we approach the end of 1999, the Scottish Parliament is now a reality and responsibility for national education policy, previously resting in the hands of the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, has passed to the Scottish Executive and been divided between two new departments, each scrutinised by its own parliamentary committee. We now have the Scottish Executive Education Department guided by the Minister for Children and Education, Sam Galbraith, and the Scottish Executive Enterprise and Life-long Learning Department with Henry McLeish as Minister. This issue of *Scottish Educational Review* includes a new feature to coincide with the opening sessions of the new Parliament in Edinburgh. Gari Donn has provided the first of our Parliamentary Reports insightfully covering the main political debates on educational matters taking place in the first few weeks of parliamentary business. The Editorial Team are very keen to establish this as a regular feature and would welcome any comments or suggestions about its style or content.

The New Labour government in 1997 adopted as a key principle the notion of “joined-up” policy making. Traditional demarcation lines between government departments are to be challenged in the interests of finding the best ways to tackle the problems facing society. In particular, the overlap between education and social policy is likely to be increasingly important in the light of the political importance being attached to the problems of social exclusion. In the Scottish context, the scale of the task was confirmed by the report published by the Scottish Council Foundation in 1998 entitled, *Three Nations: Social Exclusion in Scotland*. The three nations of Scotland are “Settled Scotland”, where we would all like to be; “Insecure Scotland”, where the majority of the population of Scotland are finding themselves; and “Excluded Scotland” where a significant proportion of Scots continue to find themselves trapped. In its latest report on poverty in Scotland published in 1999, the Scottish Poverty Information Unit provide an alarming picture of the increasing gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots” in Scottish society. In 1979 around 10% of Scottish children lived in homes with less than half average earnings. By 1996 this figure had increased more than three-fold to 34%. During the same period there was a 170% increase in the number of families who found themselves homeless.

As this issue of SER was going to print, the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child passed with relatively little comment in the media. The rights of children enshrined in the Convention to provision of services like education and proper care, to protection from all forms of ill-treatment and abuse, and to active participation including the right to express views on all matters affecting them must, according to Article 2, apply equally to all children without discrimination of any kind. The persistent and extreme manifestations of social inequality in Scotland and the operation of the “Inverse Care Law” by which those with greatest need actually receive inferior services seriously call into question the extent we can claim to have implemented the UN Convention in this country.

The statistical evidence is not yet available to evaluate whether, half-way through its first term of office in Westminster, the commitment of the New Labour Government to social justice is having any significant impact on these social inequalities in the United Kingdom as a whole. The new Scottish Executive has set itself a 20-year target to eradicate child poverty and homelessness. In Scotland, therefore, this project has barely begun, though high expectations have already been set for initiatives like the new Community Schools and the Sure Start programme for education and care in the early years. Moves to create a more inclusive ethos in

schools and to find alternatives to the exclusion of pupils who present behavioural problems are to be applauded. The article by Donald Gray and Rae Stark in this issue of SER explores the strategies being developed within one local authority to deal with these kinds of concerns.

The past decade has seen structural change in Scottish higher education of seismic proportions with massive expansion and widespread institutional mergers. Teacher education in particular has been transformed. The long-standing tradition of monotechnic colleges of education has been virtually swept away in the space of a few years in a wave of wholesale mergers with the universities. The detailed history of this phenomenal change is explored in Professor Gordon Kirk's insightful article which opens this issue of the journal. Another important aspect of the changing face of higher education in Scotland has been the funding arrangements with the creation of a separate Scottish Funding Council. Professor Arthur Midwinter and Murray McVicar analyse the trends and developments in their article. Further analysis of the Scottish educational system is provided by Caroline Bamford and Professor Tom Schuller who present results of research carried out as part of the Economic and Social Research Council's Learning Society Programme comparing educational provision in Scotland with that of England and Wales. The present issue of the SER continues to demonstrate the editorial commitment to publishing articles covering a wide range of topics from differing perspectives and using contrasting scholarly approaches. In the present issue we have a stimulating philosophical analysis of nursery education from a Foucauldian perspective by Chris Holligan. In addition we have from Helen Fraser and Warwick Taylor a comparison of the perceived qualities of entrants into primary teaching who have followed to the two main alternative courses of initial teacher education, the 4-year B. Ed. Degree and the one-year PGCE Course. As we enter the anticipated period of severe shortage in the supply of qualified teachers, these considerations are likely to become increasingly significant. Completing this issue, the article by Colin Finnie, Ian Finlay and Catherine Ridler focuses on the interface between secondary and further education which itself has been under increasing scrutiny with the introduction of the Higher Still framework of qualifications.

The effects of devolution on life in Scotland have already been far-reaching. Indeed even the composition of the Editorial Team of *Scottish Educational Review* has not been untouched. Dr Sylvia Jackson has resigned as Book Reviews Editor, having been elected as Member of the Scottish Parliament for Stirling. I would like to take this opportunity, while offering my congratulations to Dr Jackson, to thank her for all her work for SER and to wish her every success in her new role. I am delighted to announce that the new Assistant Editor with responsibility for Book Reviews is to be Dr Anne Pirrie of the University of Edinburgh.

DONALD CHRISTIE