

Stone of Scone from Westminster Abbey, and objected to the present monarch's taking the title of Queen Elizabeth II on the grounds that Scotland was a separate country at the time of the first Elizabeth. But, at the same time, a more sober basis was being established. It consisted, for the most part, of small businessmen concerned about the twin evils of big business and organized labour, and academics in Edinburgh and other universities. The significant feature of the last five years is that this group, hardly representative of Scottish society, has nevertheless been able to appeal to voters with many kinds of interest, even, in the case of the Govan by-election of 1973, to the Glasgow working-class. Oil was one factor in this revival. The other was a general background of dissatisfaction about the running of Scotland's affairs. A survey conducted by national opinion polls in 1969 indicated that 80 per cent of Scottish electors felt that too many decisions affecting them were being taken outside Scotland; as many as 67 per cent were in favour of the establishment of a Scottish parliament.

The goal of the SNP is thus quite simple: to establish, or return Scotland to its original status as, an independent, sovereign state. Traditional links are recognized; there has been examination of models like Canada's or Australia's position within the Commonwealth, or the Scandinavian states, as a guide to what a reformed United Kingdom could look like. In evidence to the Kilbrandon Commission on the Constitution in 1969, the SNP stated that it was "a political body having as its purpose the restoration of Scottish sovereignty and the defence and furtherance of all Scottish interests". It was "the only political party in Scotland which is preparing comprehensive policies for the development of an independent Scotland". Even without oil, Scotland was suffering economically because of its links with England: "We are in the situation of being in relative health, but, by reason of living with a chronic invalid, we are compelled to swallow unnecessary medicine, which has, in fact, damaged us. Incidentally, the patient does not appear to be recovering."

#### Impact of oil

There is at least some agreement between the SNP and the British Government about the magnitude of the oil finds at stake. The Ekofisk strikes in the Norwegian sector of the North Sea in 1970 first confirmed the existence of potentially huge reserves of oil on Scotland's continental shelf. It has since been estimated that, by 1980, the fields in the British sector of the

North Sea will be producing 100 million tons a year. At that kind of rate, self-sufficiency would be reached — taking account increases in consumption — around 1984. And, meanwhile, fresh discoveries continue to be made as oil-company consortia move the search further north over to the west of Scotland. Heady comparisons have been made with California and Kuwait. There have been references, mostly, but not entirely, in jest — to independent Scotland joining Venezuela and the Arab states in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Direct air-links have been established ready between Aberdeen and Texas.

The SNP has obviously been able to accommodate this upsurge of activity within its general program. In April 1974 a Scottish National MP argued that independent Scotland's continental-shelf area would be about 62,000 square miles or slightly less than double that of England. Oil revenue from fields in the Scottish sector of the North Sea, he added, would bring in, eventually, up to \$2,000 million *per annum*. Control over refining sites would presumably be an added dimension to the powers of an independent government, both in terms of the price obtained for exported oil and of a Scottish government's bargaining power with the British Government faced with the prospect of English oil-refinery closings. One recent Aberdeen University forecast of 25,000 jobs created by oil by 1980. The SNP itself has argued that, in an independent Scotland, the figure would be nearer 90,000 — a figure which still does not take into account the effect of oil-related activity on the rest of Scottish industry.

The SNP's strength lies in the simple fact that no other Scottish political party can promise voters more — either in terms of Scottish control over the pace of developments or of Scottish benefits from the revenues. But there are weaknesses, too. One is the danger of the SNP's becoming too closely identified with the oil bonanza. A stress on the environmental costs of oil, particularly in the Highlands and islands, could be an important campaign for Scottish Tories to play in any determined effort to win back rural support.

The problem is acute for the west of Scotland, and has been highlighted most recently by the fierce arguments over the future of Drumbuie. Oil-company consortia are increasingly turning their attention to the west. Extraction there, however, would require tools capable of operating to depths of more than 1,000 feet — either very large platforms or one of the seabed production complexes currently under research and

*Independent,  
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seen as goal*