

AN INCREMENTAL ODYSSEY: THE STRUCTURAL EUROPEANISATION OF GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY

James Smith

INTRODUCTION

For over a quarter of a century departments of central government in the United Kingdom have faced a number of challenges stemming from UK membership of the European Union (EU), previously the European Community (EC). In effect, UK government bureaucracy, as with that of other member states, has undergone adaptation processes of various sorts as it has sought to accommodate demands springing from an essentially supranational body. Thus, as the UK plays a role in EC/EU policy and decision-making, so various parts of Whitehall have undergone Europeanising processes whereby the structure, working practices and policy-related functions of departments are impacted upon as they seek to accommodate and assimilate the ever-encroaching effects of the European dimension on their activities.

The focus of this article restricts itself to an analysis of the purely structural aspects of EC/EU adaptation. The aim is to investigate the nature and pace of structural accommodation and, by using in-depth empirical research, enhance our understanding in this area. Using evidence relating to the long-term impact of structural adaptation within one department, the Scottish Office, over a twenty-five year period, the paper begins with a discussion of the

Dr James Smith is a lecturer in politics, School of Law and Social Sciences, Glasgow Caledonian University, Cowcaddens Road, Glasgow, G4 0BA, Jim.Smith@gcal.ac.uk. This paper was originally presented at the PSA Annual Conference, University of Aberdeen, April 2002.

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nature and speed of structural change. The analysis then moves on to consider how much flexibility is afforded to individual departments within the UK system in terms of their respective approaches to adaptation.

EUROPEANISATION: ACCRETIVE AND INCREMENTAL CHANGE

In recent years the very term 'Europeanisation' in itself has attracted much academic attention. In particular, the focus of debates has centred around the question of definition as to what Europeanisation actually means and how it can or should be used as an analytical tool or descriptor (eg see Rometsch and Wessels 1996; Cowles, Caporaso and Risse 2001; Bulmer and Burch 2001; Featherstone and Kazamias 2001; Knill 2001). Within the context of bureaucratic and institutional adaptation, for example, the rational choice, historical and sociological variants of institutional theory have all sought to contribute to the debate (see Aspinwall and Schneider 2001).

It is not the purpose here to enter into these weighty theoretical debates. Rather, the intention is to explore one of those many 'domains of Europeanisation' as set forth in Radaelli's (2001) work on conceptualising Europeanisation. Thus, in order to avoid the perils of 'conceptual stretching' which might ultimately render the term meaningless, it should be recognised that Europeanisation as applied to different areas or 'domains' means slightly different things, be it the Europeanisation of institutions, of public administration, of intergovernmental relations, of legal structures, of party politics, of interest representation or cognitive and normative structures (Radaelli 2001, pp.3-4). The present work limits itself to a discussion of the administrative-institutional aspects of Europeanisation and in particular to how the structures of government departments have accommodated and adapted to the European dimension. For this reason the term 'structural Europeanisation' will be referred to throughout the analysis although it should be noted that 'Europeanisation' in this context is used purely as a shorthand for administrative accommodation and adaptation to the EC/EU. In this respect, the article does not seek to provide cast-iron, overarching definitions of Europeanisation in any theoretical sense.

The accretive nature of structural change

According to Pollitt (1984, p.114), the early years of UK membership of the EC did not witness any great explosion of structural change within the

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domestic machinery of government. Instead, the effects of the European dimension in the 1970s manifest themselves through the evolution of co-ordination mechanisms within the Cabinet Office in Whitehall and the delegation of specific EC-related tasks to relevant functional officials within individual departments. Such tendencies continued to mark processes of administrative adaptation in later years. In effect, organisational changes developed along accretive and incremental lines and took place within the context of existing departmental and divisional infrastructure rather than amidst a sea of restructuring and springing forth of EC/EU specialist units (Edwards 1992, pp.64-65; Bulmer and Burch 1998, p.613). In terms of its structural accommodation of the EC/EU, the Scottish Office was no exception to these patterns.

The general approaches to structural adaptation adopted within the Scottish Office were quite clearly laid down during the early years immediately following UK accession. In 1974, for example, Willie Ross, as Secretary of State for Scotland, indicated that there was no pressing need for a dedicated, specialist EC unit to be set up within the Department (House of Commons 5th November 1974). In turn, as Permanent Secretary in the late 1970s and 1980s, Sir William Kerr Fraser never felt under any pressure to institute radical restructuring as a result of the European dimension. In this respect there was a feeling that it was more sensible for established divisions to deal with EC matters when they came to impact upon the respective competencies of the former as opposed to channelling everything through a potentially cumbersome, full-scale European unit (Fraser 1998). Within this context, the stage was therefore set for an accretive approach to structural change, an approach which could be discerned over an extended period of some twenty-five years, stretching from 1973 until the Scottish Office's demise in the late 1990s with the advent of devolution. (For a discussion of the policy-related aspects of Scotland in the EU post-devolution see Sloat (2000) and Wright (2000).)

The two departments to be affected most by the European dimension within the Scottish Office were those dealing with agriculture and fisheries (DAFS/SOAFD/SOAEFD) and industrial policy (SEPD/IDS/SOEID) (Mazey and Mitchell 1993, p.109)¹. In both cases, the accommodation of the EC

¹ *Given its multi-functional policy remit, the Scottish Office functioned as a conglomeration of mini-departments, each holding responsibility for specific areas such as education, home affairs, agriculture and fisheries etc. The two departments*

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came to make itself apparent in the years directly following UK accession. However, it did so within the confines of existing departmental structures. Even within the agriculture and fisheries department, faced with meeting the challenges presented by the Common Agricultural Policy, the EC made less of a difference than might initially have been expected in terms of the need for structural modifications. In this sense, while common European agriculture and later fisheries policies were to have a lot of direct impact, this did not lead to extensive structural change:

Overnight the nature of the administrative and political processes relating to agriculture were transformed – but it happened within the framework of existing bureaucratic infrastructure.
(Hamilton 1998)

The absence of any radical or widespread restructuring can be attributed to a number of factors. In the first instance, the agriculture and fisheries department adopted a flexible, pragmatic approach to EC adaptation instead of implementing any overarching processes of reform and accommodation. This partly stemmed from a feeling that rigid changes would have been inappropriate when, in the early days, 'one did not know how it [EC membership] was going to develop' (Cormack 1998). It also stemmed from the fact that while various divisions within that department had an immediate interest in the EC dimension, others did not. Secondly, an accretive approach became somewhat inevitable in view of the fact that there was no great strengthening of forces or resources in handling EC affairs; it just had to be 'taken on board' within the framework of existing staffing levels and bureaucratic infrastructure. Third, it was also the case that existing administrative structures within agriculture and fisheries and the Scottish Office generally in some ways lent themselves to accommodating the EC dimension without the need for any substantial change. In one sense, for example, the Scottish Office already had experience of dealing with an external dimension before 1973. In this respect, as fisheries had always

most affected by the EC/EU dimension were: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland (DAFS), later renamed (1991) the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department (SOAFD) and then (1995) the Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department (SOAEFD); and the Scottish Economic Planning Department (SEPD), later renamed (1983) the Industry Department for Scotland (IDS) and then (1995) the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID).

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exhibited an international dimension, for instance through the 'Law of the Seas' conferences, the agriculture and fisheries department in Scotland had an established capacity for working with other nation states on policy (Cormack 1998; Findlay 1998), although other UK departments, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Employment also shared this advantage (Mackay 1998). In another sense, before 1973 Scottish Office civil servants were quite used to having to clear matters and focus their attention on a 'distant place', Whitehall. After accession there were not any great difficulties in refocusing such attention towards another 'distant place', namely Brussels (Findlay 1998; Hamilton 1998).

In short, while the above factors accounted for a form of accretive structural change which was largely in keeping with developments in other parts of the UK administrative system, they also highlighted the fact that characteristics inherent to the Scottish Office had some implications for the specifics of structural change within the Department. In particular, its role as territorial administrator meant that 'the Scottish Office found it much less difficult to make adjustments - in focusing upon the distant place that is Brussels - than MAFF did' (Findlay 1998).

With regard to the other key Scottish Office department initially affected by the EC, the same patterns of accretive change were largely in evidence. Thus, while there was some organisational and structural modification within particular sections of the industry department, the general style and shape of administrative operations did not alter as a result of Europeanisation after 1973. Similarly, as with agriculture and fisheries, existing or on-going structural arrangements within the industry department domestically were to have implications for the nature of structural EC adaptation. In this respect, much hinged on the fact that the bulk of the department's EC-related work centred initially around the European Regional Development Fund. In effect, because the creation of the Fund (in 1975) largely coincided with the upgrading of the Scottish Office's former Industry Division to full executive, departmental status (in 1973) an EC dimension was built into the industry department from the very beginning, rather than it being forcibly accommodated at a later stage in the development of the department (McCrone 1998).

Although the above relates to developments in the early years of UK membership of the EC, patterns of accretive change continued to characterise forms of structural Europeanisation during later periods. For example, as a

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junior minister throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, Allan Stewart noted that EC/EU-related tasks across the Scottish Office continued to be assimilated within the confines of established domestic infrastructure:

It wasn't that there were jobs marked 'European' (apart from the European Funds Division) but within existing posts Europe was a higher focus issue.
(Stewart 1998)

Equally, the major review of EC-related work carried out by the Scottish Office in 1991 (Scottish Office 1991a) did not advocate large scale restructuring per se but instead focused on related forms of adaptation. Even its recommendations on organisational change – such as the creation of a central support unit, improving networking between divisions and appointing departmental co-ordinators – were largely concerned with the co-ordination of EC activities across the Scottish Office as a whole rather than with restructuring matters as they might pertain to its specific component departments (Scottish Office 1991a, p.3). From these examples, the general approach to structural change in the 1980s and 1990s would thus appear to share much in common with that which prevailed in the 1970s.

While most of the above evidence indicates how patterns of structural Europeanisation within the Scottish Office largely mirrored similar processes of adaptation in other departments, it may be appropriate here to offer a few words of clarification regarding the precise nature of accretive change. In this respect, by emphasising the fact that the European dimension did not lead to large scale restructuring, an impression might be created of such tasks simply being 'tagged on' to existing civil service remits in a half-hearted manner. One account of developments within the industry department in the late 1970s and early 1980s would certainly seem to offer credence to such an impression:

In the sense that changes were made they were not big, wholehearted changes. Instead things were merely added on; they put into place 'tag-on' functions - limited, reactive stuff.
(Scott 1998)

On balance, however, the vast majority of available evidence tends to offer a more positive interpretation of what is meant by 'accretive'. In both the agriculture and industry departments, for example, the European dimension was taken very seriously by officials and was not regarded merely as some

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form of additional burden. In this sense, while European responsibilities were assigned to existing staff and divisions, such tasks were treated with the same level of commitment as would be applied to those of a more domestic nature (Brown 1998; Stewart 1998). Furthermore, emphasis has been placed on the fact that the Scottish Office as a whole adapted very quickly to the EC dimension precisely because those engaged in related tasks did not go about their business half-heartedly. Instead, the dedication and enthusiasm of the relatively small numbers of individuals who were assigned EC duties and responsibilities perhaps allowed for a more speedy and effective form of adaptation at the Scottish Office than would otherwise have resulted through any programme of large scale restructuring or organisational change (McCrone 1998). Sufficient to say, therefore, that the emphasis upon accretive change, within the Scottish Office at least, should not be correlated with any assumptions regarding weaker or less effective structural Europeanisation.

The incremental impact of Europeanisation

By way of establishing the precedence of small-scale, accretive restructuring over more substantial forms of divisional or departmental re-organisation, it would seem fair to assume that structural Europeanisation at the Scottish Office was a largely incremental affair. However, it would of course be entirely misleading to attribute such incrementalism solely to the general approaches adopted by the Scottish Office and other UK government departments in adapting to the EC/EU dimension. In this respect, the nature of developments at the European level itself partly determine the scale and frequency of structural changes at the departmental level. In particular, the pace of such changes tends to vary over time as particular EC/EU policy competencies are agreed between member states and then slowly grow in intensity and maturity over a number of years (Bender 1991, p.14; Edwards 1992, p.65). It is of no surprise, therefore, that during his period as Secretary of State for Scotland from 1979 to 1986, George Younger was aware of a 'steady process' of administrative change and accommodation; in his words, 'things were not done in a rush' because, as he fully recognised, EC competencies only tended to encroach very slowly upon Scottish Office business (Younger 1998). As mentioned earlier, it was this very nature of EC development which also led Sir William Kerr Fraser to adopt a flexible approach in allowing individual departments and divisions to implement changes as and when they were required, namely when specific policy areas came to be increasingly affected by an EC dimension.

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Within individual Scottish Office departments, the incremental nature of structural adaptation can be illustrated quite clearly. For example, during the initial stages of EC membership, only a limited number of divisions within agriculture and fisheries were directly affected by the European dimension, these being principally the price policy and marketing divisions, agricultural support, fisheries and crop production (Cormack 1998). However, as the years progressed the impact began to be felt in other sectors too as the EC strengthened its profile in new areas. Agricultural research activities, for instance, came to be increasingly Europeanised over time. Indeed, through the late 1970s and 1980s all divisions within agriculture and fisheries came to be affected although some, admittedly, in a more minor way than others. Within the industry department, albeit in more limited ways, the slow and gradual impact of the EC dimension could also be discerned through the 1970s and 1980s (McCrone 1998; Stewart 1998)

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, a number of developments indicated that processes of structural Europeanisation at the Scottish Office did not always assume wholly incremental forms. In this respect, such developments centred around what Bulmer and Burch (1998, pp.613-614) describe as 'quantum jumps in integration' whereby processes of adaptation increase in scale, speed and complexity as government departments respond to major constitutional reforms at the EC/EU level (such as the 1986 Single European Act and the 1992 Maastricht Treaty). Thus, when Allan Stewart returned to the Scottish Office industry portfolio in 1990 after an absence of four years, he noticed 'sizeable changes' within the industry department as it sought to come to terms with the demands of the European single market programme (Stewart 1998). By 1989, for example, it was estimated that some sixty-three officials were involved in single market activities (House of Commons 16th March 1989). Similarly, the European Regional Development Fund reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Michie and Fitzgerald 1997, pp.18-21) led to rapid, large scale changes in the role played by the industry department in processing EC funding applications and implementing Structural Fund programmes:

In the industry department, an enormous expansion in the bureaucracy was required in order to deal with these matters. We went from twelve to sixty or so people in the European Funds Division, desperately trying to cope with the EC. This happened virtually overnight.
(Mackay 1998)

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Clearly, the scale and rapidity of such developments depart from the limited, incremental forms of structural change highlighted earlier. However, while each represent events of key significance within Scottish Office adaptation processes, their saliency within the present context should not be exaggerated. In short, as they centre around those 'quantum jumps' which Bulmer and Burch (1998, pp.613-614) stress are not continuous features of the integration process, such developments do not negate previous conclusions to the effect that longer-term processes of structural adaptation at the Scottish Office were clearly marked by incrementalism. As such, the Scottish Office experience would seem to tally with historical institutionalist interpretations of Europeanisation *per se* (Bulmer and Burch 2001). In this respect Europeanisation is seen to entail very gradual, incremental forms of adaptation over extended periods of time. In effect, institutions and bureaucracies accommodate external forces for change by assimilating such forces within the limits of those bureaucracies' own infrastructure, traditions, value and culture.

From the analysis of structural accommodation thus far, a number of key points can be made. First, by favouring an essentially accretive approach to adaptation and assimilating EC/EU-related functions within the limits of existing administrative infrastructure, it is clear that developments within the Scottish Office closely mirrored general trends evident in this area across UK departments. Thus, while certain EC/EU policy areas, such as the Common Agricultural Policy, had significant implications for the work of various sections of the Department, this did not lead to any general, large-scale processes of restructuring. The research of Jordan (2001, p.3) on the Department of the Environment in Whitehall (deep policy integration yet limited structural change) paints a very similar picture in this particular respect. Second, while following broad UK patterns, it was nevertheless the case that some of the Scottish Office's distinctive characteristics influenced the specific approaches utilised within the Department in assessing the need for structural change. In this respect, the Department's traditional position as a territorial manager at one step's remove from Whitehall would seem to have placed it in good stead when it came to dealing with another far off locus of control in Brussels and consequently lessened the need for bureaucratic realignment after 1973. Third, it would appear that the wholehearted way in which accretive changes were made over the years could perhaps have held greater potential significance (see Smith 2001a) for the overall nature of Europeanisation processes within the Scottish Office than the relative limitations or otherwise of structural change *per se*. Fourth and finally, while

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a number of events stimulated fairly rapid, large-scale structural reforms, it was nonetheless true that processes of bureaucratic Euro-adaptation in the Scottish Office assumed a largely incremental air.

THE EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE: THE CREATION OF EFD/ECSU, THE LANG REFORMS AND BEYOND

The preceding analysis has established that, as with most other departments, processes of structural adaptation at the Scottish Office assumed largely accretive and incremental forms and that, consequently, large scale restructuring was notably absent. However, there were one or two exceptions to this general rule. Specifically, the creation of a European Funds Division (EFD) and later a European Central Support Unit (ECSU) did represent examples of more strident forms of EC/EU adaptation in that new, self-standing divisions were created for the sole purpose of dealing with the European dimension.

In the above respects, particular reference can be made to those processes of reform which were initiated during Ian Lang's tenureship as Secretary of State for Scotland in the early 1990s. This is partly because these developments represented an overarching, strategic approach to the accommodation of the European dimension which had been largely absent in previous years but also because much of the stimulus and motivation behind this change has been attributed to Lang himself (Bulmer and Burch 1998, p.616), thus suggesting the possibility of some form of territorial or more general departmental autonomy at work. In overall terms, the aim once again is to establish how structural forms of Europeanisation came to impact upon the Scottish Office but in so doing also note how characteristics inherent to the Department influenced the specifics of change evident therein.

The evolution of EC/EU co-ordination mechanisms

A common trend across UK departments in terms of their structural accommodation of the European dimension has manifest itself through the creation of new co-ordination units (Bender 1991, p.19). However, the role of such units has been limited in the sense that they tend to exercise a general co-ordinating role across a department whilst specific EC/EU-related responsibilities remain the prerogative of individual functional divisions. In both these respects, the Scottish Office experience can be used to provide further elaboration.

1. The European Funds Division

The Scottish Office's EC/EU co-ordination unit came into being with the creation of a central support unit in 1991. This development took place within the boundaries of an older established division, the European Funds Division. While primarily concerned with European funding matters, the Division had also exercised a looser, less well-defined EC co-ordination role prior to 1991 (Mazey and Mitchell 1993, p.110). During the formative years of EC membership in the 1970s it was decided that the accommodation of the European dimension within the Scottish Office should proceed in an accretive fashion with specific tasks and responsibilities being assigned to existing departments and divisions. Within this context, there was therefore no perceived need for an all-embracing, free-standing EC co-ordination unit. However, in the mid-1970s the industry department did set up a unit which was to act in many ways as a forerunner of the European Funds Division. This unit executed two main tasks (Scott 1998). The first and most important related to finance in that it was charged with 'keeping a look-out for whatever EC funds were currently available'. Secondly, it also carried out a broad 'interpreter' function which involved processing information coming out of Brussels and ensuring that the appropriate departments and divisions within the Scottish Office were made aware of relevant details. In overall terms, however, the unit tended to play a reactive rather than pro-active role (Scott 1998) and certainly did not assume the range, profile or importance of a self-standing 'European unit'.

The situation in this respect remained much the same throughout the 1980s until, that is, 1988 witnessed the first of two key changes. In that year the old industry department unit was renamed the European Funds Division as, with the onset of the European single market programme and imminent reforms to the Structural Funds, increasing numbers of officials began to be drawn into EC related activities (Mackay 1998). Still, however, the emphasis of the European Funds Division's role rested with the functional demands of specific EC funding programmes, although it did retain that 'interpreter' function of its predecessor body, a function which became increasingly important in the 1990s as the work of all branches of the Scottish Office came to be increasingly affected by deepening levels of European integration. However, this very deepening of integration (as exemplified through the Maastricht negotiations), coupled with the arrival of Ian Lang as Secretary of State in late 1990, was to lead to an increasing reappraisal of European co-ordination arrangements at the Scottish Office (Stewart 1998). In particular, it was

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within such a context that the European Central Support Unit came to be born.

2. The European Central Support Unit

The creation of the European Central Support Unit stemmed from a wider review of EC-related business carried out by the Scottish Office in 1991 (Lang 1991, p.13; Scottish Office 1991a, p.3). By that time the idea of a European support unit was not new and could certainly not be regarded as a development pioneered by the Scottish Office. Rather, the advent of the European Central Support Unit came from Scottish Office civil servants noting the usefulness of those 'central focal points for EC work' which had already been established in other departments (Scottish Office 1995, p.11). In this respect the impetus for the Unit came from circumstances which had much changed since the 1970s and 1980s when there was little perceived need for such a body. In specific terms, the increasing saliency of the EC dimension by the early 1990s had led officials to push for greater departmental co-ordination within their own ranks and for the Secretary of State to seek a 'systematic development of ... co-ordination arrangements' across his department (Lang 1991, p.13).

Although small in stature, being staffed by no more than two full-time officials at grades Higher Executive Officer (HEO) and Administrative Assistant (AA) and one part-time at Grade 7 (Scottish Office 1991b, p.3), the European Central Support Unit nevertheless came to represent a development of some significance within longer term processes of Europeanisation at the Scottish Office. At one level a number of its specific roles were, admittedly, rather mundane and functional; examples included responsibility for the distribution of EC/EU-related documentation across the Department and co-ordinating responses to related parliamentary questions at Westminster. At another level, however, its broader roles pointed to the overall significance of the unit within the Europeanisation context:

[the European Central Support Unit will] support Scottish Office divisions in carrying out their EC responsibilities efficiently and effectively and deal with EC issues which require action across the Office.

(Scottish Office 1991b, p.3)

The importance of the Unit therefore lay principally with the fact that it symbolised the first example of European restructuring within the Department

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which was not tied in with some specific EC/EU policy competence. In this sense, while its creation could be considered accretive in that it took place within the confines of an existing division (ie. the European Funds Division), the fact that its primary role centred around the strategic co-ordination of European matters, as they affected the Scottish Office in its entirety, set it apart from all previous developments.

By the early 1990s, the increasing intensity of European integration, and consequent saliency of issues which tended to cut across departmental boundaries within the Scottish Office, meant that the largely accretive approaches to structural change which had traditionally prevailed could no longer be regarded as entirely adequate. Indeed, as the decade progressed this state of affairs became more protracted as the Scottish Office adopted further strategic and Departmental-wide approaches to EU matters. Thus, in 1993 the administrative co-ordination functions of the Support Unit were replicated at the ministerial level. In this respect, the Minister of State (whose portfolio already encompassed health and home affairs) was given responsibility for 'general European issues'. This did not involve other ministers losing their respective EU functions but saw the Minister of State exercise an overseer role with regard to those EU-related matters (such as subsidiarity and the Committee of the Regions) which cut across departmental boundaries and functional remits within the Scottish Office as a whole (Scottish Office 1993). Additionally, during the 1990s the Support Unit itself increasingly developed that broader, strategic European role which had been absent in the 1970s and 1980s. By the end of 1995, for example, the Unit was involved in a number of activities which could not have been readily delegated to any specific policy division in the Department. Such activities included (Scottish Office 1995, pp.7-8):

- Providing advice to ministers on developing links with other EU member states.
- Advising ministers on policy issues which cut across Scottish Office departments (eg. the 1996/97 Intergovernmental Conference, Trans-European Networks) but liaising with a number of relevant divisions in doing so.
- Co-ordinating a number of ministerial visits to Brussels and other member states and compiling relevant briefings.

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- Co-ordinating briefings for Scottish MEPs, members of the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC).

Of perhaps even greater significance, the Unit itself did not regard its remit as being restricted solely to matters of co-ordination. In fact, it saw itself assuming an increasingly pro-active role, particularly with regard to 'matters for which there is no lead Scottish Office policy division and where ministers would be unsupported without a general "Europe" division' (Scottish Office 1995, p.7).

Strategic and accretive approaches to structural accommodation

In each of these respects it is clear that the 1990s witnessed more pronounced and strategic forms of Departmental-wide restructuring which differed somewhat from the largely accretive, low-key changes which had prevailed in previous decades. In terms of accounting for this shift in approach, one could refer once again to Bulmer and Burch's (1998, pp.613-614) 'quantum jumps in integration' and suggest that the increasing scale and rapidity of developments in the field of European integration in the late 1980s and early 1990s was largely, though not wholly, responsible for the emergence of more co-ordinated accommodation measures in the Scottish Office. However, by placing emphasis on the creation of the European Central Support Unit and highlighting its rather unique status as a manifestation of fully-fledged European restructuring within the Scottish Office, it should be stressed once again that attention is merely being drawn to an exception amongst general rules. In this sense, while the Unit did indeed herald a new approach to the question of structural Europeanisation within the Department, it did not replace the older forms of accretive adaptation.

The parallel existence of strategic and accretive approaches can be readily verified. For example, while the Support Unit represented a new form of strategic EC/EU co-ordination as it applied to the Scottish Office as a whole, there was no onus placed upon the individual component departments to create their own respective co-ordination units (Scottish Office 1995, p.11) although the 1991 review had encouraged such a development (Scottish Office 1991a, p.3). In the event, small co-ordination units were set up in some departments, covering groupings of sub-divisions. Thus, within agriculture and fisheries the 'EC and Sustainable Development Unit' took up responsibility for the strategic co-ordination of EC matters within that department's Environmental Affairs Group (Cabinet Office 1995, Chp.5, cols

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849-855). The broader point to be made is that while the 1991 review and the creation of the European Central Support Unit marked a turning point in how structural accommodation matters were dealt with at the greater Scottish Office level, it was nevertheless the case that individual departments retained that flexibility and opportunity for accretive change which had persisted since 1973.

What should also be stressed is that the Support Unit shared a feature common to European units across UK departments. In this respect, specific EC/EU policy related matters continued to be dealt with by the relevant individual functional divisions in departments with the European units playing more general co-ordinative roles (Bender 1991, p.19; Bulmer and Burch 1998, p.616). Thus, from the very outset it was made clear that the Support Unit 'would not be responsible for the EC dimension of particular policy areas, which remain an integral part of the work of divisions' although it was also added that the unit would be 'glad to be kept in touch with substantive policy developments' (Scottish Office 1991b, p.3). Similarly, the Unit was not to be used 'as a dumping ground for divisions wishing to escape their EC responsibilities' (Scottish Office 1995, p.11). Within this context, while the role of Unit was to expand and develop during the 1990s it was still clear that control over specific forms of EU accommodation remained with individual Scottish Office departments and that traditional, accretive approaches to adaptation were merely complemented rather than replaced by the new strategic developments witnessed during the decade. Again, this would appear to tally with historical institutionalist approaches in this area. Thus, Bulmer and Burch (2001, p.81) discuss how more protracted change can pepper broadly incremental processes and how as a consequence, deep-seated cumulative changes or 'incremental-transformative change' can develop over the longer-term.

The reform initiatives of the 1990s: a distinctive model of structural accommodation?

Elsewhere it has been suggested that processes of structural adaptation at the Scottish Office from the early 1990s exhibited a degree of focus and determination which was not as evident in other departments and particularly so regarding the other territorial departments. Thus, in addition to the 'quantum jumps in integration' which stemmed largely from the Maastricht negotiations, Bulmer and Burch (1998, p. 616) argued that the intensity of structural reform within the Scottish Office was heightened by specific initiatives set in motion by Ian Lang as Secretary of State.

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While acknowledging the broader impact of deepening integration in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Bulmer and Burch argue that there was not actually any single, external trigger event which precipitated more intense forms of structural co-ordination within the Scottish Office. Instead, the Department went beyond implementing the bare minimum of change purely due to its own initiative or rather that of a Secretary of State. In this respect, the Scottish Office was not unique. From 1973 individual departments had been largely left to their own devices with regard to the details of how structural change was introduced (Edwards 1992, p.77; Dowding 1995, p.131; Armstrong and Bulmer 1996, p.269). Thus, Bulmer and Burch (1998, p.625) use the example of the Home Office to illustrate how another department used its own adaptation approaches. However, by arguing that developments within the Scottish Office assumed a more determined and purposeful air than those taking place in its sister territorial departments, Bulmer and Burch's analysis requires further examination. In particular, questions arise as to how far an apparently heightened sense of initiative could be explained through, variously, the personal involvement of the Secretary of State, broader factors characteristic to the department in question or UK-wide patterns of departmental autonomy relating to EC/EU structural accommodation.

The Lang factor

At one level there would appear to be *prima facie* evidence which suggests that Ian Lang was personally responsible for the strategic approaches to adaptation within the Scottish Office which came increasingly to the fore in the early 1990s. It could certainly be argued that Lang's personal interest in the European dimension was encapsulated by his devoting an entire key-note speech to the subject in 1991 (Lang 1991). In the speech, Lang outlined the ways in which the Scottish Office had participated in EC affairs up until that point and, more significantly, expounded how he sought to develop future processes of administrative adaptation. In overall terms, high priority was attached to the 'systematic development of...co-ordination arrangements' and achieving his key objective which was that 'the Scottish Office ... should think European' (Lang 1991, pp.13 and 18). Thus, within this context Lang's speech seems to tie in with broader Whitehall trends rather than stand on its own.

From an initial reading the above evidence would indeed seem to support the theory that Lang himself played a key role in proceedings. However, by focusing more attention on those broader developments taking place in Whitehall at the same time, the validity of such an assessment demands closer scrutiny. In particular, the emphasis on 'thinking European' was not confined

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purely to the Scottish Office. As mentioned earlier, by the early 1990s many departments were becoming increasingly affected by the European dimension and had to consider their responses to expanding EC/EU competencies (Bender 1991, p.14). More specifically, in the period leading up to the consolidation of the single market programme in 1992, a number of inter-departmental meetings took place in Whitehall. Usually chaired by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in London, these sought to press home upon departments the importance of accommodating the European dimension effectively within their respective domains; in short, the aim was to encourage all parts of the administrative system to 'think European' (Stewart 1998). Thus, within this context Lang's speech seems to tie in with broader Whitehall trends rather than stand on its own.

In turn, however, by considering further evidence the wheel would seem to turn once again in favour of Bulmer and Burch's argument that Lang himself did play a crucial role in developments. Thus, while Lang's rhetoric may have been influenced by wider Whitehall developments it was nevertheless the case that it was followed up in practice by a wide-ranging review which examined all aspects of EC-related work across the Scottish Office in its entirety (Scottish Office 1991a). According to Bulmer and Burch's analysis, few departments would seem to have initiated such a far-reaching and strategic approach to the question of EC structural accommodation – an approach which was sustained through subsequent reviews in 1995 and 1997 (Scottish Office 1995; 1997) and through the realignment of ministerial responsibilities in 1993 (Scottish Office 1993). Contrast this with the example of the Department of the Environment in London which only set up overarching EU co-ordination mechanisms after the vast bulk of its policy remit had already been Europeanised (Jordan 2001, p.22). Furthermore, within the details of the 1991 review itself, there is no mention of outside influence being exerted by other Whitehall departments or the Cabinet Office. Reference is made though to the fact that the impetus for reform came from the Secretary of State himself (Scottish Office 1991b, p.1). Finally, at the level of ministerial co-ordination, Allan Stewart noted that Lang adopted a 'markedly different approach' to European matters in the sense that unlike his immediate predecessors as Secretary of State (George Younger and Malcolm Rifkind), he held general discussions with his ministers on EC/EU matters. Stewart attributed this state of affairs to the increasing saliency of the EC dimension by the beginning of the 1990s but also to Lang's own personal interest in the area (Stewart 1998).

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Historical and cultural factors

From the above there would therefore appear to be some grounds for stating that Ian Lang did exert a notable influence over the development of strategic accommodation approaches although, given the wider context of increasing European integration and broader developments in Whitehall, the case should not perhaps be overstated. What may also have influenced approaches to adaptation during this period, however, are broader factors which may be deemed characteristic to the Scottish Office. Earlier, for example, it was noted how processes of structural adaptation at the Scottish Office assumed those largely accretive and incremental forms which were to be found in other departments. Additionally, however, it became clear that the levels of input and commitment in dealing with EC/EU accommodation on the part of officials also had an arguable impact on developments.

While the broader question of the Europeanisation of civil servants is dealt with in more detail elsewhere (eg Willis 1982; Buller and Smith 1998; Smith 2001a; Smith 2001b), it is useful here to consider how that very commitment described earlier may have influenced the new, strategic approaches to structural accommodation which arose in the early 1990s. In this respect, the differences which Bulmer and Burch identify between the Scottish Office and other departments may be rooted as much in long-term historical factors as they are in the personal role played by Ian Lang. The Department for the Environment, for example, presents another case where the role and influence of an individual minister – John Gummer – clearly had an impact on the overall approaches to Europeanisation within that department (Jordan 2001, p. 30). By the same token, however, Gummer (and his pro-active stance on Europeanisation) had to contend with longer-term approaches to Europeanisation within that department which had traditionally been marked by reactive and parochial if not negative attitudes (Jordan 2001, p.9). Thus, distinctions made by Bulmer and Burch in the context of structural changes in the 1990s may have their origins in the observation that from the early 1970s onwards, 'the Scottish Office was probably one of the most Euro-orientated departments' in terms of its approaches to administrative adaptation (McCrone 1998).

Certainly, by the early 1990s one former minister, Allan Stewart (1998), felt that 'the Scottish Office was regarded as a more Euro-conscious department than most within government circles generally'. In more specific terms, he holds the view that 'the Scottish Office was much more focused on Europe

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than other Whitehall departments and had a clearer idea of what they were doing'. For example, without faulting the Department of Trade and Industry, he nevertheless felt that the Scottish Office was more focused, better organised and gave Europe a generally higher priority than the former department. There was also an impression that, with hindsight, EC-related matters may have been dealt with in a rather ad hoc fashion in Whitehall (Stewart 1998). Such comments certainly build upon the testimony offered by other ministers and officials earlier in the analysis when much was made of the thoroughness of approach evident in dealing with accretive change. Perhaps more significantly, however, a number of public figures from outside the Scottish Office, who liaised extensively with the Department on European matters, have also testified to the wholehearted enthusiasm and determination exhibited by Scottish Office officials in seeking to accommodate the European dimension. In administrative terms, they stressed that there was clearly a high level of EC/EU-orientation in evidence throughout the entire 1973-97 period (Allan 1998; Grant 1998; Gray 1998). Although it is impossible to make a precise correlation between the two, one can only assume that the sustained levels of commitment to structural Europeanisation recounted above must have had some influence on the scale and intensity of more strategic approaches to structural change once they materialised within the Scottish Office by the 1990s. In this respect, the more intense approach to change identified by Bulmer and Burch perhaps stems as much from historical precedent as it does from the approaches of an individual Secretary of State.

The nature of autonomy: territorial or departmental?

The very fact that variations exist between departments in the way that they approach the co-ordination of EC/EU matters suggests that departments have exercised some form of autonomy in this respect. The above evidence would certainly suggest the absence of stringent direction and control emanating from Whitehall, given that the Scottish Office was seemingly able to make its own choices as to the levels of strategic co-ordination applied in accommodating forms of structural Europeanisation. In this sense, the Scottish Office experience illustrates and encapsulates general features of structural change across the UK system as a whole. Thus, while tight central control was to be maintained over the co-ordination of EC/EU policy matters through the European Secretariat (Clarke 1990, p.27; Bender 1991, pp.16-18), it was nevertheless the case that individual departments were left largely to their own devices as regarded the specifics of structural and administrative accommodation within their own fiefdoms (Edwards 1992, p.77; Armstrong

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and Bulmer 1996, p.269). As a result, commentators could point to a form of departmental autonomy leading to those very variations between departments referred to above (Edwards 1992, p.77; Dowding 1995, p.131).

With specific reference to the Scottish Office, however, the situation becomes more complex for two main reasons. First, on the basis of the evidence provided above there would seem to be some confirmatory justification behind Bulmer and Burch's observation that the Scottish Office adopted a more sustained, determined and eventually strategic approach to structural adaptation than that in evidence elsewhere. Second, the existence of UK-wide departmental autonomy as it relates to structural Europeanisation could be seen to overlap with one of those key characteristic features of the Scottish Office domestically, namely the ability of the Department to exercise limited degrees of territorial autonomy. When taken together, however, these two points can offer a clearer explanation of the forces determining the nature of structural adaptation and co-ordination within the Scottish Office.

At one level it would obviously be inaccurate to attribute the Scottish Office's ability to apply a heightened approach to structural change to its traditional territorial autonomy over administrative matters when clearly all departments were offered similar opportunities to do so by way of the departmental autonomy referred to above. In this respect, specific Scottish Office characteristics would not appear to have exerted a key determining influence over the new, strategic approaches to change which emerged within the Department from the early 1990s. Like the longer-term tendencies towards accretive adaptation and incrementalism discussed earlier, the Scottish Office merely followed and operated within the confines of UK-wide trends. However, for those trends to have manifest themselves in such a way that distinctions could be drawn between the Scottish Office experience and those of other departments, there must clearly have been additional factors at play which were specific to the Scottish context. Thus, while the Lang reforms could be attributed more to UK-wide departmental autonomy than to the impact of traditional territorial autonomy on processes of structural adaptation, that is not to say that other Scottish Office characteristics had no influence over developments.

In one sense, the influence of territorial factors could be readily identified if it is accepted that the reform initiatives of the early 1990s were partly driven by wider political circumstances. In particular, from the late 1980s the SNP placed a spotlight more firmly on the EC issue by way of their conversion to a

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philosophy which argued for 'Independence in Europe' (Mitchell 1996, p.275). To some extent, the higher profile, strategic approaches to European issues within the Conservative-led Scottish Office could be seen as a reaction to this development. In short, therefore, a mix of departmental and territorial autonomy allowed the Scottish Office to adapt to the European dimension in ways which differed subtly from broader Whitehall patterns.

CONCLUSION

In broad terms the above has highlighted and offered elaboration on the accretive and incremental nature of structural change which has characterised developments across Whitehall departments. In this respect, large scale processes of restructuring were absent within the Scottish Office, even within functional areas such as agriculture and fisheries which came to be affected quite significantly by the EC/EU dimension. Instead, over a twenty-five year period increasing numbers of established divisions slowly took up responsibility for Euro-related business. By the same token, however, the specifics of such change were coloured to some extent by Scottish Office characteristics. Thus, some former civil servants argued that the need for bureaucratic re-alignment was perhaps less of a pressing issue for the Scottish Office than was the case with other departments. This stemmed from the fact that as the Scottish Office already had a capacity for dealing with a remote centre of power and control in Whitehall, it was not too difficult to refocus attention on an additional such centre, namely Brussels. Furthermore, the thoroughness of accretive reform within the Scottish Office was seen to lessen the need for any grand restructuring gestures.

Regarding those exceptions to the general rule of accretive and incremental change, namely the creation of the European Funds Division and the European Central Support Unit, developments within the Scottish Office once again mirrored general patterns in evidence at the UK level. Thus, the more strident and self-evidently EC/EU-related forms of restructuring which did take place centred around the creation of European co-ordination units (with the emphasis resting firmly on co-ordination, there being no reversal of previous patterns of accretive accommodation by established functional units). Again, however, differences could be perceived in the Scottish case. In broad terms, the work of co-ordination units in each of the three territorial departments (in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) was coloured to some extent by their multi-functional remits and due to the fact that they were faced

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with issues, such as subsidiarity and the Committee of the Regions, which had specific resonances at the territorial level. In terms of Scottish Office characteristics themselves influencing developments, the key to the analysis lay with Bulmer and Burch's argument that it was the initiative of a Secretary of State which led to a more determined, strategic approach to structural change within the Department from the early 1990s. On closer examination there was clearly some truth in this line of reasoning but it was also the case that developments within the Scottish Office had been facilitated by a feature common to structural Europeanisation across the entire UK departmental system. This centred on the fact that since 1973 departments had exercised some autonomy in the ways they responded to the European dimension and initiated structural changes. In this respect it was therefore not territorial autonomy in itself which led to a heightened approach to structural accommodation and co-ordination within the Scottish Office. Instead, the influence of such autonomy could only be seen to have an effect within the context of a wider departmental autonomy afforded to all departments in respect of structural change. Nevertheless, what was once again evidently clear was that while the Scottish Office was party to broader, UK-wide trends in this field, its own characteristics still played a key role in fashioning the specifics of structural adaptation within the Department. To conclude, the article has served to provide new empirical detail on the impact of purely structural forms of EC/EU adaptation over an extended period of time. It has also illustrated, moreover, how a degree of diversity could exist between departments whilst at the same time conforming to broader patterns in evidence across the Whitehall system.

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