

## **The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 - Implementation 17<sup>th</sup> November 1969**

On the Friday night there were 305 Child Care Officers, 281 Probation Officers, 276 Welfare Officers and 97 Mental Health Officers.

On Monday morning there 959 social workers with stuffed case loads of up to 100 and naive assumptions that they were transmuted into generic workers.

Confusion was rampant with specialists trying to work across the board, yet there was a brave, almost evangelical, revolutionary spirit. Nowhere was life more difficult than in the Courts. One unkind Sheriff, pining for his probation officers, referred to the unsophisticated young workers as "Mini-skirted Rosemarys and Gwendolines".

Additionally, demand had been stoked from Schools, Health and all manner of Voluntary Organisations for the magic of this new Wunder Kind – The Social Work Department.

The Directors were a curious mixed bunch. Some were the old Welfare Officers, because councillors could empathise with what they did with elderly and handicapped. A few were Probation Officers. A substantial contingent was "Carpet Baggers" from England and Wales, attracted by the new ideas, or the substantial new salary scales.

Some of them went back after gaining Scottish experience, some stayed longer – but many made a great contribution in setting higher standards and obtaining substantially greater resources from canny committees, who by and large were not enthusiastic about the changes.

Four brave men came from the comfortable posts of Advisers/Inspectors in the responsible Scottish or English Central Departments, into the local authority jungle as Directors. Not the least of these was J. O. Johnston, who had been the leading Civil Servant of reform from Kilbrandon to the Act of '68.

Out of the fifty two authorities only two appointed Women Directors – Aberdeen and Clackmannan Counties – both femmes formidable. Time, fortunately, has remedied this, as may be seen from the present composition of A.D.S.W.

The chaos and confusion had only just begun to settle when the next storm hit the boat – The Children's Hearings of 1971 with all its fresh demands. It took bad experiences, calmer days and time before the inevitable importance of Specialisation was fully recognised.

*For further details of this seminal period see Chapter 9 of "British Social Services" – The Scottish Dimension by JOHN MURPHY and GILLIAN McMILLAN.*