vision," says the minister at St Nicholas' Buccleuch Parish Church in Dalkeith. He charts the similarities between the decline of the Tories and the Kirk's membership.

The Church, he claims, needs "as radical a rethink as the Conservative Party".

"Unfortunately, unlike the Conservative Party, it is improbable the Church will suffer the same kind of public humiliation which will force it into action.

"Fortunately, however, if the Church is the Church of Christ, He will act – which may be very uncomfortable for us all."

Yesterday, Mr Andrews's view, expressed in the latest issue of the Kirk magazine Life and Work, was described by Mrs Ann McCarter, convener of the board of practice and procedure, as "a very sad one".

"It would appear to be one man's view of the Church and I think the board would not agree with it. It is our experience there is a great deal of new thinking in the Church and a lot of that will be reflected in the reports to the General Assembly later this year."

On the criticism of those in the Kirk's "higher reaches", Mrs McCarter said she believed the nomination committee would disagree with Mr Andrews. "The Church needs experience," she said.

Mr Andrews states: "In the 1950s, 50% of the electorate voted Tory. On May 1, 1997, only 18% chose to do so.

"In the 1950s, the Church of Scotland had about 25% of the adult population of Scotland as members. Today, we claim 13%. Even that is an exaggeration.

"In 1951, almost 50% of children born in Scotland were baptised by the Church of Scotland. In 1995 it was less than 25%.

"The average age of Conservative Party members is more than 60 – mirrored by the age of our members."

The Tory Party, says the Dalkeith minister, was structured with two sections – the professionals and the voluntary workers. "The Church of Scotland has a very highly educated ministry leading a laity, only a small number of whom are theologically aware and articulate.

"As a Church we have lost touch with the people of Scotland.

"In many rural areas, incomers control the Church: these retired people bring with them theological understandings that are foreign to the traditions of the area."

The Church's social proclamations had been "full of law, short on grace", says Mr Andrews.

duty to ask about the impact of the tourist industry on the small communities we choose to visit."

abusers has helped earn an award for her handler, **writes Raymond Duncan**.

The efforts of nine year-old English Springer Spaniel Judy have seen PC Cammy Thomson win the title of Fife Constabulary Dog Handler of the Year.

recovered "everything from cannabis to LSD, amphetamines to speed, and heroin to ecstasy."

PC Thomson said that during last year alone she helped find more than £100,000 of controlled drugs "often thwarting the most determined efforts to hide them".

inside a bedstead and underneath a garden hut.

Even more ingenious places, such as a sealed-off central heating pipe and inside the leg of an ironing board, failed to fool her.

"It's not just large quantities of drugs that Judy will find," he said.

and trodden into a carpet."

Sergeant Duncan Kellock, who is in charge of the Fife Constabulary dog section, said: "Such has been Judy's success that she even gets hate mail from drug abusers whose stashes of dope she has found."

Workers were exposed to radiation

H 26/1/98

THE Ministry of Defence has accepted that nuclear dockyard workers were exposed to high levels of radiation while refitting Royal Navy submarines, which may have caused them to contract cancer.

The Government has conceded after a long campaign by families of men who worked on Britain's nuclear submarine fleet at Chatham Naval Dockyard, Kent, that there could be a link between illnesses suffered by former workers and radiation levels to which they were exposed at work.

Under Secretary of State for Defence John Spellar told a BBC documentary: "We accept some individuals had levels of radiation that were high and have acquired cancers which could possibly be due to radiation."

The Government was keen to help former workers access their medical histories and "get a satisfactory resolution to their claims", he said. A number of dockyard workers who serviced the nuclear submarines are either suffering – or have already died – of illnesses campaigners say resulted from exposure to high radiation levels.

Last May, the MoD said it would provide a medical counselling service for all former employees. However, some workers discovered the MoD did not have adequate records of their dosage levels. Mr Spellar said some records had been destroyed.

Although at least one worker has received a "no fault" compensation payment after developing lymphatic leukemia, the Government has never admitted responsibility when considering claims.

Mr Spellar's admission in a Panorama programme to be broadcast today that safety standards may have been breached in the past, heralds a new era of sympathy to the workers' complaints.

The Government is spending more than £1m on updating the database of medical records for former Chatham workers, Mr Spellar said. "For most of the regular workers we do have well-established records . . . there are some gaps. We are putting all of these on a database so that we are completely aware wherever possible of people's records.

"There were some of those who came in irregularly and frankly those records disappeared or were destroyed over a period of time – there was actually no legal requirement to keep them. But we're not complacent about that."

There is still widespread dissatisfaction among dockyard workers, who believe the Government is not yet doing enough for them.

Former Chatham Dockyard worker Kevin Sansom told Panorama: "I would like to see something like a proper medical being done, tests being done to convince me that I haven't got it. Once I had all that done, then I can have that peace of mind."

Meanwhile, Armed Forces Minister John Reid yesterday urged anyone who had left the services with an illness they believe may have been related to their service to apply for a war pension.

He said he was committed to investigating the claims of veterans who believed they had Gulf War syndrome but were held back by the continued absence of any medically proven link between service in the Gulf and illness.

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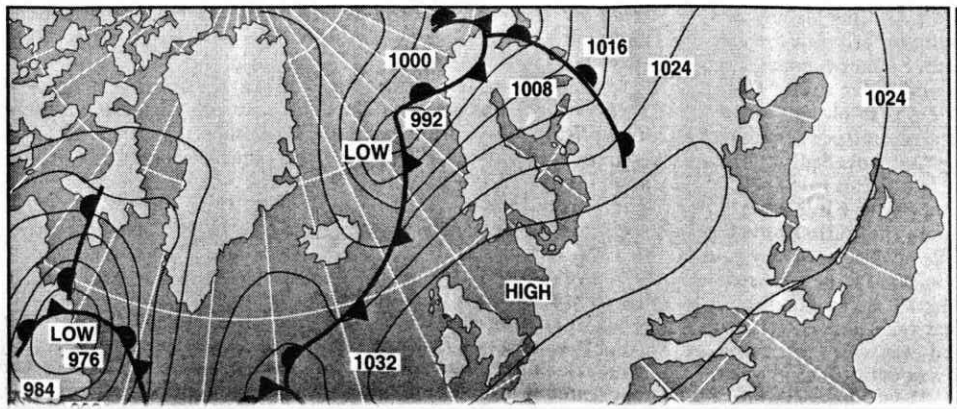

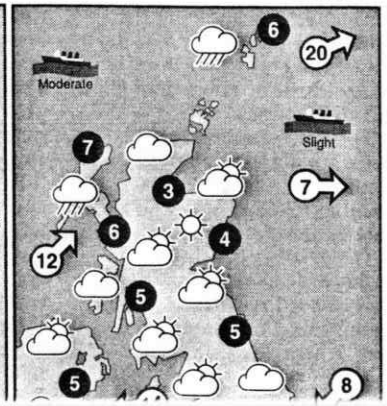

DAILY POEM

John Agard became the BBC's poet in residence last week. The Guyana-born writer has been described as "an outstanding luminary of the exploding galaxy of West Indian-British troubadours, hilarious and moving in turns, with sharply satiric intelligence. This short poem from his collection From the Devil's Pulpit (Bloodaxe, £7.95) gives a glimpse of his style.

GO ON PANDORA

By John Agard

What's a box for
if not to be opened?
What's temptation for
if no one succumbs?
A box becomes news
when someone like you
looks inside for clues
to the universe.