likely to lead to differential patterns of voting between regional and national elections.

- the need for the second stage of Lords reform to address the role and functions of the second chamber, before deciding on its composition; and to think about the Lords against the background of the other constitutional changes now set in train. This is directly reflected in the terms of reference of the Royal Commission (see p4).
- the need for Westminster to address the consequences of devolution, and the future of the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Committees. This is now being investigated

Already a number of predictions in the book are coming into effect:

- the tensions created by devolution for the national political parties, played out in the leadership contest in Wales between Alun Michael and Rhodri Morgan.
- the boost given by devolution to nationalist and regional parties. The SNP in Scotland and Plaid Cymru in Wales are both scoring poll ratings twice as high as their share of the vote in the 1997 general election. Devolution is also

Constitutional Update

Legislation

In the second year the pace of constitutional legislation has hardly slackened, with six constitutional bills coming before Parliament

- The European Parliamentary Elections Bill received the Royal Assent on January 14th 1999 after the Lords rejected it for an unprecedented sixth time, and the Government invoked the Parliament Acts for the first time since 1991.
- The **Greater London Authority Bill** and the **House of Lords Bill** have both gone through the Commons and are now before the Lords.

In addition three draft bills have been promised before the summer:

- Draft Bill on Cabinet System/Elected Mayors for Local Government
- Draft Bill on Freedom of Information
- Draft Bill on Controls on Party Funding.

Devolution

- In **Scotland** the four main parties and the Greens agreed voluntarily to implement **Lord Neill's** recommendations and limit their campaign spending for the Scottish Parliament elections to £1.5m. They will submit their accounts to independent inspection.
- The Consultative Steering Group (CSG) on the Scottish Parliament published its report in January 1999. The CSG included a range of politicians from all parties, academics, and representatives of civil society. Its remit was to:

Freedom of Information

- The Home Office has established an Advisory Group on Implementation of Freedom of Information, chaired by Minister of State Lord Williams of Mostyn. The terms of reference are:
 - ♦ to advise the Home Secretary on proposals for promoting cultural change in the public sector to foster a culture of openness
 - ♦ to assist in the development of training and education programmes for public servants to promote the introduction of the Act and cultural change.
- The Whitehall members of the Group are Carolyn Sinclair, Lee Hughes and Rowena Collins-Rice

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