

and creative entrepreneurs as one could wish to find in fact or fiction. The history of land speculation, property development and real estate fortunes is at the heart of urban America; as is the growth of the railways and the exploitation of natural resources, such as oil and mining. Land values were the attraction.

This history is not without its drama and humour, as well as much ingenious skulduggery. Some of its characters have become legendary. Whatever their misdeemeanours, it seems hard to blame them. They took enormous risks, and if crooked politicians were susceptible to bribes in smoothing the way, the guilty party was the political set-up which allowed it.

If the Astors, Jay Cooke, Rockefeller, Marshall Field, etc. made great fortunes from land speculation, the system allowed it. Politicians who should have been concerned to protect the public interest, too often were more concerned in collecting a share of the boodle. As long as the revenue from land flows into private pockets, so long will land speculation continue to attract fortune hunters and hangers on.

One latter-day land speculator and property developer, William Zeckendorf, explained his basic philosophy succinctly, saying: "I make grapefruit out of lemons." We can be grateful that such people exist, as long as we recog-

nise to whom the lemons belong. Too often the grapefruit turn out to be pithy, the juice having been squeezed out by the rent collector and the speculator's profit.

The land question in America got off to an unsatisfactory start when the founding fathers adopted an ambivalent attitude as to what the land tenure policy of the new State should be. Thomas describes it as being "from the very beginning a gargantuan land speculation." "The Government," he says, "was split in its attitude towards property ownership, especially as it pertained to the public lands. . . . One faction of Congress wanted it sold to the wealthy, who could afford to pay the fancy prices and thereby work off the national debt generated by the recent war. A second faction argued that the land should be distributed on the most liberal terms to anyone who wished to settle on it." Subsequent history shows that the choicest acres went to those with the knowledge and energy to cajole and bribe those politicians placed to hand out the favours.

Compared to South America, land ownership in the United States is widely dispersed. For that blessing many Americans may feel grateful. For many landless Americans the existing arrangement leaves a lot to be desired. Welfare systems are a poor remedy for a landless proletariat dependent upon relief and charity.

land, and is demonstrably different in many objective and measurable characteristics. One finds it exceedingly difficult to fault this work as a Sassenach's guide to the Northern Kingdom.

Yet diversity does not imply political and economic separation. People of disparate cultures and even languages have existed together happily for centuries in (for example) Switzerland. The reader who still fails to perceive why the difference between England and Scotland should require the disruption of the Union may seize a crucial passage from James Scotland's essay on the educational system:-

"The political situation is likely to be determined for some time yet by the universal and imperative call by the ordinary people for a louder voice in decisions affecting their lives. This is the demand that calls for referenda, provides support for the Scottish National Party . . . and inspires general mistrust of authority. . . ."

The root of Scottish separatism surely lies here, in the growing centralisation of control throughout the United Kingdom. If we allow something like 50 or 60 per cent of the G.N.P. to pass into control of public officials, then nothing is more certain than that people at the geographical periphery will resent it even earlier and more keenly than people living near the centre. Scottish separatism is the product of a controlled economy in which more and more power passes to the centre.

A sovereign Parliament at Edinburgh will not solve this problem. At the next phase, people in the Highlands and Islands will appeal to their even more disparate traditions to break free from Edinburgh. No doubt Wales and the remoter parts of England will in time make similar demands of the English Government. Whether Scottish nationalism, in some form or other, is now imperative, is a matter in which Scots must decide. What is surely clear is that the long-term solution to nationalist questions throughout the world is not political but economic. The organs of government must steadily withdraw their control from the life of the citizen, and the abrasive effect of their interference will gradually disappear.

Stands Scotland Where it Did?

ROY DOUGLAS

NO political commentator would be very surprised to see the Scottish National Party after the next election with twenty or thirty seats in Scotland, and perhaps holding the balance of power at Westminster. Be that as it may, there is a very substantial chance that at some time in the next ten years the affairs of Scotland will acquire the sort of primacy in United Kingdom politics which in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was afforded to the business of Ireland. It therefore behoves us to learn something about Scotland.

The Nevis Institute has pro-

duced a book of essays, under the editorship of its Director, Robert Underwood.* The essayists survey, in brief compass but at considerable depth, a large number of different aspects of Scotland's past, present and future: political, artistic, economic, educational, social, and on a considerable range of other matters. The conclusions are too diverse to summarise briefly. Suffice to say that in every aspect studied, it is absolutely clear that Scotland is not just a northern projection of England, but a country which undeniably sees itself as different from Eng-

**The future of Scotland*, ed. Robert Underwood, Croom Helm, £5.95.