Thursday, September 11, 1997 and Wednesday, May 5, 1999, stand out as political watersheds in the evolution of Scotland. On the first date, 74.3 percent of Scots (with a 60.1 percent voter turnout) indicated their preference for establishing a Scottish Parliament with the ability to increase or lower income taxes by up to three percent of the rate determined by Westminster, while May 5, 1999 signifies the date when the long struggle for devolution became a reality. For the first time since the Union of 1707, the Scottish people had representation in Edinburgh in the newly elected Scottish Parliament. As remarkable as these events were, however, they were not entirely unexpected for keen observers of British politics: since the early 1970s, public opinion polls consistently revealed that a vast majority of Scots supported either devolution or outright independence, be it within the United Kingdom or as an autonomous member state within the European Union. The realisation of the Scottish Parliament, therefore, was the culmination of a longstanding political struggle for some form of home rule.
Nonetheless, both of the aforementioned dates are landmark events that have contributed to a profound transformation in the Scottish political landscape and society more generally. Unfortunately, neither *How Scotland Votes* nor *Scotland and Nationalism*, provides much insight regarding these critical events. The first book was published prior to the 1997 referendum, and although Harvie does address the milestone in this updated version of his classic work on Scottish nationalism, his remarks are far too brief and therefore his analysis is wanting.

As Bennie et al and Harvie both detail with such clarity and insight, the Scots have a rich cultural heritage and their own distinct political, economic and religious institutions, all of which have collectively nurtured a separate Scottish national identity. The latter book in particular, “…concerned with political nationalism, why it remained apparently in abeyance for two and a half centuries, and why it became relevant in the second half of the twentieth century” (p.2), is replete with references to the cultural foundations of the nationalist movement. For Harvie, much can be explained by the fact that post-Union Scotland “was gripped in a complex cultural dialectic” (p.36). As he notes, the Scottish political intelligentsia was in no way a unified body; the group was divided between those who were avowedly Scottish and those who looked to the British Empire for power, patronage and, ultimately, progress. While the many detailed (but, at times, pretentious) cultural references make *Scotland and Nationalism* a fascinating read, they similarly elevate the book beyond the full comprehension of those who do not have much background in or knowledge of Scottish society, history and politics. This is the case despite the fact that the book deliberately replaced academic footnotes with a bibliographical essay as a means of ostensibly “appealing to the elusive ‘general reader’” (p.xi).

Notwithstanding this limitation, it should be recognised that it is Harvie’s treatment of the cultural component of the Scottish nationalist movement that truly sets this book apart from other works in this field of study. Unlike Quebecers, who have been and continue to feel compelled to accentuate their distinctiveness from the rest of Canada, Scots are secure in the knowledge that they are culturally different from the English. Time and energy
has not been needlessly spent debating this point. Consequently, since its inception, the modern nationalist movement in Scotland has been able to focus almost exclusively on articulating an economic rationale for independence. Academic studies devoted to this subject matter have therefore focused narrowly on the economic aspects that account for the rise of Scottish nationalism. For the most part, scholarly treatments of the independence movement in Scotland have not adequately addressed its critically important cultural precursors.

_Scotland and Nationalism_ is a notable exception. Beginning with the Union of the Crowns in 1707, this book, a literary _tour de force_, meticulously chronicles the evolution of the nationalist movement in Scotland paying particular attention to the influence of the intelligentsia and cultural nationalists in the early part of the twentieth century – people like Lewis Grassic Gibson, Compton Mackenzie and Hugh Macdiarmid – leading up to the creation of the Scottish National Party in 1934. Harvie then proceeds to document the trials and tribulations of the SNP from the immediate post-war period, when the party was no more than a “resilient little sect, rather than a political movement” (p.169), to the “Scottish settlement” of 1997 at which point it had effectively matured into “the only opposition in town” (p.248).

Bennie et al offer quite a different book. Based on data derived from the 1992 Scottish Election Study and supplemented with earlier Scottish and British election surveys, _How Scotland Votes_ offers the reader an account of Scotland’s political distinctiveness in typical academic fashion. The introductory chapter broadly covers Scottish politics since 1945, and makes the argument that class and materialist politics have been dominant, as has been the case in other parts of Europe. Part 1 of the book proceeds to set out the context for understanding modern Scotland by examining British Parliament, Scottish administration and local government. Each of the remaining chapters in the first part of _How Scotland Votes_ is devoted to one of the four main political parties that have been vying for the loyalty of the Scottish voter: the Scottish Labour Party, Scottish Conservative Party, Scottish National Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats. These pithy chapters provide an excellent overview of the
Part II of the book focuses on Scottish voting behaviour. Chapters six and seven examine the issues of class and religion in Scottish politics. After presenting their data, the authors draw the conclusion that “class is still an extremely relevant feature of voting in Scotland” (p.107) and, “as elsewhere in western Europe, religion is less significant politically than it once was” (p.119). Subsequent chapters deal with the Scots as economically rational voters, national identity and the image of political parties and leaders on voting behaviour. The book concludes with a brief discussion of the salience of home rule as a political issue in Scotland.

Bennie et al begin the final chapter by arguing, “home rule has, in a way, become the key to understanding Scottish politics” (p.152). This reviewer could not agree more. Home rule has been an integral part of Scottish political debates since the nineteenth century, and finally became a step closer to reality with the election of Tony Blair’s Labour government in 1997. Labour campaigned in that election on the promise that devolution would lead to the decline, if not outright demise, of the Scottish nationalist movement, while the unionists countered that it would be the slippery slope to full independence. While it may be somewhat premature to comment on the accuracy of either prognostication, this latest development begs further scrutiny. Scots are now much closer to being “masters of their own destiny,” but in time the seductive lure of Europe may prevail. One thing is certain: the Scottish National Party will continue to espouse the virtues of that option.

Bennie et al have written a book befitting the neophyte student of Scottish politics. Whether the appeal of the subject matter is academic or general interest, *How Scotland Votes* is highly recommended; at 160 pages, it is a short, easy read that highlights the key social, economic and political features that make Scotland unique. More sophisticated readers will undoubtedly find *Scotland and Nationalism* a challenge well worth the effort.

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