

these values were written into the British North America Act, they were held not only by a capitalist élite, but by the vast majority of Canadians. They would not be seriously challenged until a general consciousness of conflicting class interests developed. The founding of the *Ontario Workingman* in the 1870's undoubtedly indicated increasing class consciousness, but one would like to know more of the paper's history and the size of its circulation. Did the concept of class become a determining force in Canadian history during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, or, as the relatively slow development of the trade union movement would suggest, was this to be delayed until the twentieth century? An effort to write three dimensional history deserves applause, but when one of the dimensions is exaggerated, distortion is the result.

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H. J. DYOS (ed.). — *The Study of Urban History*. London: Edward Arnold, 1968. xxii, 400 pp.

The town has always been a proper, even traditional, area of study for historians and until recently no one questioned their ability to analyse adequately the significance of towns in the development of society. After all, urban history was viewed as history writ small, an integral part of the historical discipline. Major historians — Bloch, Pirenne, Febvre, Asa Briggs, Bridenbaugh, Kirkland — when writing about the town did not find it necessary to develop new techniques (apart, perhaps, from a casual recognition by French historians of the relevance of demographic and geographical studies to their work), and there was nothing to suggest that urban studies would upset any historical apple-carts. Clio in the town was neither challenged nor disturbed.

Now all this has dramatically changed and historians are slowly becoming aware that a spectre is haunting them — the spectre of "urban history", a branch of history which, unlike other sub-disciplines of the historians' craft, the history of medicine for example, is much too germane to central historical problems to be shrugged off and ignored. Courses in urban history have sprung up in universities everywhere, and inter-disciplinary departments, such as M.I.T. and Harvard's Joint Centre for Urban Studies, University of Wisconsin's (Milwaukee) Department of Urban Affairs, and University College's (London) Centre for Urban Studies, are fast becoming indices of progressive academic commitment. It is indicative of modern trends that when Vassar recently decided to move from a classical curriculum towards a more dynamic and "relevant" educational programme it should fasten upon a multi-disciplinary Institute for the Study of Man and his Environment. There has been such an avalanche of studies in urban history over the past few years that specialised publications such as the *Urban History Group Newsletter* (started in 1954 and

run by the University of Wisconsin [Milwaukee]) and the *Urban History Newsletter* (published since 1963 by Dr. Dyos at Leicester University) are hard-pressed to keep abreast of current scholarship. Urban History, gauged by the number of doctoral dissertations, scholarly monographs, inter-disciplinary international conferences, new courses, and allocation of Federal and other funds, is no longer a Cinderella subject but is now an important part of academic life everywhere.

Now why does all this activity constitute a spectre? What is there in urban history to challenge the traditional historian? The challenge lies in the way many major urban historians are asking the same questions and employing the same vocabulary and concepts as sociologists, urban planners, geographers and social psychologists, and, consequently, are beginning to write a style and form of history that augurs a possible historiographical revolution. When, in the opening pages of *The Study of Urban History*, two prominent historians like H. J. Dyos and F. Bedarida assert, respectively, "the urban historian cannot remain an historian *pur sang* for long without running the danger of deserting the problem in front of him" (p. 7), and "History does not of itself provide a sufficient basis on which to rest a real understanding of the town" (p. 48), the time has arrived when all historians, whatever their particular focus, should take a long, hard look at what is happening within the realm of the urban historian.

The appearance of *The Study of Urban History* (the published proceedings of the "international round table conference" of the Urban History Group, held at the University of Leicester in Autumn, 1966) is thus both timely and important. The conference was inter-disciplinary, with its forty-three participants drawn from history (with a heavy concentration of economic historians), Sociology and Geography (the two disciplines of most assistance in the development of urban history), demographic studies and English. Rather surprisingly, neither Political Science nor Psychology was represented. The nineteenth century provided the setting for most of the sixteen papers; and while this may in part reflect the interest of the editor and principal organiser, Dr. Dyos, a distinguished historian of Victorian London, the nineteenth century *is* stimulating the greatest research activity. Despite the frequent discursive forays to which historians, thank goodness, are prone, the conference addressed itself to two main problems — the methods and sources relevant to urban history, and the desirability and feasibility of comparative urban studies. These two themes provoked a flood of fascinating questions which, though of particular significance for urban historians, are hardly less relevant to all historians. Problems raised were: the advantages of group as against individual research; the qualitative versus the quantitative approach to history; does a pre-conceived methodological framework, with a rigid definition of standard terms and a check list of what to look for, guide, or bind, the historians' hands; how many monographs must there be before the historian attempts a synthesis; what

comes first, the research or the general hypothesis; should the urban historian be content to allow each discipline involved in urban studies to develop its own historical perspective, or should he endeavour to acquire (no doubt often at the expense of not fully comprehending) and synthesize other disciplines in his own; how presentist an approach should the urban historian have; how can history aid the urban planner? Not all these problems are explicitly stated, but they are implicit throughout the discussions.

What emerges from the conference is a frank acknowledgment that the urban historian has much to learn from the social sciences. This is far more than paying the customary lip-service to the value of "inter-disciplinary study" (that frighteningly modish phrase), and involves a far deeper commitment than friendly verbal fencing with "old so-and-so" in the Sociology Department. It indicates a genuine desire of urban historians to augment their understanding of the past by employing frameworks derived from Sociology (kinship, fertility and mobility patterns, heterogeneity, ecological concepts, demographic analyses, social organisation, behavioural concepts), and geographical criteria (town plans, maps, spatial concepts) and developing, through serious re-thinking, a new historical synthesis. If there is to be any genuine inter-disciplinary approach to the past, it is most likely to come, one feels, from the urban historian. Most readers of *The Study of Urban History* will sadly agree with S. G. Checkland, whose thoughtful paper, "Towards a Definition of Urban History", sums up and concludes the conference (this paper will surely be incorporated into the theory section of many courses on urban history): "The conference", he writes, "has obliged us to face up to the techniques of documentation, quantification (including computerising), visual interpretation, mapping, social structuring, and many others. Most of us [historians] will go away no longer conjuring in our minds those notions that are so comforting and which make for easy exposition, but appalled at our ignorance and naïveté..." (p. 361).

If the inter-disciplinary theme of the conference may be regarded as a remarkable success, its two main aims remained unrealized. The quest for common definitions of standard terms and for a framework to make comparative urban history easier was unsuccessful, and on page 274 during the fifth discussion, after twelve papers had been presented, the participants are still arguing as vigorously as ever about the meaning and content of, for example, the "process of urbanisation". It is perhaps foolhardy to seek to subject urban history to a uniform set of methodological criteria, for it is, after all, an area of study that involves such diverse themes as "housing, building, land use, land tenure, transportation, administration, finance, politics, health, sanitation, food supplies, population, family, social class, élites, power structures, sub-cultures, crime, conflict, protest, philanthropy, welfare, architecture, spatial planning, the demands of terrain, the aesthetics of the city, locational advantage, the industrial mix, the commercial facilities of the central business district"

(pp. 351-352). Certainly most historians, keenly aware that their discipline is already synthetic (concerned as it is with a "seamless robe"), are unlikely to succumb just yet to any pre-set criteria or rigid definitions, however attractive they may be. It is interesting that some urban historians appear prepared to advance superior claims for demographic (and ecological) studies of the city, and to demand that all urban history be placed upon deep demographic foundations. The attractions of such a focus are apparent. The keen interest of many urban historians in the city as an organism, being born, growing, dying (a biological view of the city, almost), encourages quantitative studies; and demography does, without doubt, provide a firm quantitative framework in which to place more qualitative research and judgments. Demographic studies would, no doubt, put comparative urban history on a more systematic footing. And demographic forces *are* important. Demographic pressures for example cannot be ignored in almost any aspect — political, social, economic, physical, religious — of the development of Victorian London. But however valuable quantitative studies are, they constitute but one of many valid approaches, and no historian should be made to feel guilty for failing to employ them. As Dr. Eversley, who has himself made important contributions to the field of historical demography, writes, it is to the credit of urban historians that they refuse to be forced into a common mould by accepting that certain concepts and methods possess universal application (p. 279).

Section One of *The Study of Urban History* consists of papers by Dyos and Bedarida on what might be called the history of urban study in England and France respectively. Dyos' paper, in addition to its formidable bibliography, contains an excellent analysis of changing attitudes towards the town, and sets the tone for the conference by calling for a broader and more imaginative approach to urban history. Bedarida's thoughtful paper on the development of urban history in France (Köllmann from Germany and Schnore from the U.S.A. are the only other non-Britons at the conference) made one wish that someone had performed the same task for Italy. One wonders what developments in urban history are taking place in that country whose unity has been fragmented so often by civic pride and civic consciousness.

Section Two comprises papers dealing with methodology, and the reader is treated to the view of experienced historians laying bare their research techniques. As is the way with men who feel themselves to be pioneers, the authors occasionally take themselves too seriously and regard their problems as unique; nevertheless what they have to say is of immense interest to all historians. W. A. Armstrong, a historical demographer, demonstrates the value of going behind published census reports to the enumerators' original census books, and his paper contains an excellent analysis of traps and pit-falls within the census reports, for which all researchers who use these gold-mines will be grateful. Dyos and Baker's paper, "The Possibilities of Computerising Census Data" stunned the conference into a rare moment of bewildered silence.

Certainly this reviewer was as befuddled as most participants by the description of the programme being fed the ICT Atlas Electronic Computer. Nevertheless, the paper surveys the uses and abuses of computer research in history and affords a most valuable analysis of the questions which historians ask of their material and the process of selectivity that takes place in their minds even before they confront their sources. We are reminded, reassuringly, by the authors that the answers a computer provides are still *sources* to be interpreted critically. Certainly, urban history "with its ton upon ton of deeds, directories, vestry minutes, rate books, school log-books, election data, surveyors' returns, medical officers' reports, census books and the like..." (p. 89) is specially suited to computer research; but, as the authors emphasise, "any tendency to make a new orthodoxy of historical statistics in place of conventional documentation would obviously be pernicious" (p. 89). Conzen (a Geographer) in his paper makes so strong a case for the use of town plans that one is forced to agree with Hoskins that "to publish a town history without maps is like publishing a book without an index; the book ought to be taken out of copyright straight away as a punishment" (p. 150). The last paper in this section is F. H. W. Sheppard's delightful "Sources and Methods used for the Survey of London". Sheppard grants us a valuable glance at the monumental team research that lies behind the impressive trappings of the *Survey*, of which he is the editor. The exciting, often frustrating, quest for leads will be of interest to anyone who has both marvelled at the comprehensiveness and cursed the incompleteness of the National Register of Archives. It is a sobering thought that after sixty years of the most energetic team research, only one-third of the London County Council area has been covered in the thirty-four volumes and sixteen monographs published in the *Survey* to date.

The third section contains two papers. G. H. Martin's "The Town as Palimpsest", which somehow, in arguing that roads and buildings may be read as historical documents, manages to avoid triteness, is rendered delightful by the author's eye for paradox and his ability to make suggestive comparisons. F. M. Jones' "The Aesthetics of the Nineteenth Century Industrial Town" is an odd man out, for amid so much quantitative analysis, Jones bravely strikes out for the seductive realm of hypothesis and quasi-psychological speculation. He considers such intangibles as noise and smell, as well as dirt and grime, and asks how men responded to them. Whereas Martin asks us to look at a road for what it may tell us about the past community, Jones asks us to consider the curve of a street, a rise, an arch, an enclosure, a sudden vista, colours, and texture for their impact upon past inhabitants. His analysis of the value of cleanliness and especially shine as a buffer against the grime of the Victorian workaday world is hard to accept, and inevitably he finds it difficult to document what he calls the "psycho-physical response" to the town environment. In this, as in other areas of psychological history, insufficient sources leave the historian with many interesting hypotheses but few concrete answers. Inevitably

the phrase "must have" creeps into Jones' paper. But to anyone who has suddenly found tranquil charm in a curved street or a hill or a sudden view of trees and sky, even in a slum (or for that matter to anyone who has wondered what unwritten urban or hill-billy edict dictates the scrubbing of Baltimore's marble steps), Jones' paper will be extremely suggestive.

Leo Schnore's "Problems in the Quantitative Study of Urban History" brings the formidable array of the sociologist's machinery to bear on the question of whether the residential structure of the city evolves in a predictable fashion. Do Anglo-Saxon cities, for example, show a centrifugal movement of the wealthy out to the suburbs, in contrast to Latin cities, where the wealthy stay near the centre? Schnore argues that of the four main categories of urban sociology — demographic, ecological, behavioural and structural, the first two are best suited to historical analysis. His paper, impressive and stimulating as it is, suggests that sociologists may have too rigid a conceptual framework (town centre : suburb) to permit accurate and flexible historical analysis.

The six papers in Sections Five and Six move away from emphasis upon methodology to case studies, hopefully to lay the basis for comparative history. Foster's paper, "Nineteenth-Century Towns — a Class Dimension", develops, from an apparently naïve Marxist beginning, a dynamic approach which suggests that degrees of class consciousness and class organisation could be one excellent working method for comparative urban studies. Unfortunately this promising paper is marred by too cynical a view of the workings of capitalist society and a willingness to accept too readily working class statements at face value. The most informative and satisfying (to the historian *pur sang*) papers are those most traditional in their methodology and presentation. D. Reeder's look at the growth of London's western suburbs (a beautifully researched and refreshingly direct analysis, full of meaty findings and fascinating comparisons), Newton's analysis of Exeter (since the conference his book on Exeter has appeared) and Hennock's on the borough councils of Leeds and Birmingham (these last two rather Namierite studies) all lack the sociological trappings and complicated formulae of the other two papers in these sections (on towns in Wales and North-West England), but they seem to say the most about the past and convey the most about the cities involved.

Is there a moral here somewhere? Perhaps, after all, the historian should keep his check-lists of criteria, his framework, well hidden; perhaps sociological concepts do tie the hands; perhaps quantitative analysis must be subservient to qualitative judgment.

No review of *The Study of Urban History* would be complete which did not draw attention to the superbly edited discussions which follow each section. There are almost fifty pages of discussion, and Dr. Dyos is to be congratulated on the happy choice of chairmen, W. H. Chaloner, T. C. Barker, Sir John Summerson, J. R. Kellett, D. Eversley, W. G. Hoskins, and W. Ashworth, and the way they capture in their reports all the intellectual excitement, and parries,

thrusts, interchanges and (intense but gentlemanly) combat of discussion. The reader will find that the many questions the papers provoke in his mind will be asked and answered in the discussions, and thus he can conduct his own dialogue with the contributors.

One closes the book feeling that history is safe in the hands of urban historians. All the participants shared a fear of a "theory of urban history" and, fortunately, no pamphlet entitled "How to Write Urban History" will emerge from this conference. One suspects that *The Study of Urban History* marks a new period in the writing of urban history. Although it may frighten (often by turgid, jargon-bound prose) some young scholars away from this field it will attract and capture many more. The by-products and ramifications of the book will be great, and if the book fails to lay down a methodology and a common vocabulary for all urban historians, it does have a lot to say about the historian's craft in general. It is as valuable an exposition of historiography and inter-disciplinary co-operation as it is a study of urban history and it will force every historian who reads it to review his own techniques and re-examine the way he selects his sources and the questions he asks of them. *The Study of Urban History* will become required reading for urban historians, but it should be in every historian's library.

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HENRY PELLING. — *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain*. London: Macmillan, 1968. 188 pp.

Henry Pelling is so well-known as an authority on British labour history that one is inclined to forget how closely he has stuck to his last in the studies of the subject he has hitherto published. Sooner or later he was bound to break away from formal histories, and this he has now done in a series of short essays, which sometimes suggest a non-Marxist response to the essays of Eric Hobsbawm published in *Labouring Men*. The range is different, but there are plenty of shafts directed at Hobsbawm, who has replied in a very direct but good-tempered review, which ends with the comment that "Pelling has written an interesting but unconvincing book. It will be read and argued about, and for this the author deserves our thanks. Its chief merit is that it may — as it ought to — encourage further research..."¹

The main purpose of Pelling's book is not, however, a controversial one, but rather to take up a number of disputed issues and to suggest a solution. There are essays on labour attitudes to social legislation and to the law, on working-class attitudes to religion, on the labour aristocracy, on labour attitudes to the Boer War, on the strength of the Labour Party before 1914, a review of a book on the I.L.P., an account of two 1907 by-elections, an analysis of

¹ Society for the Study of Labour History, *Bulletin No. 18* (Spring 1969), p. 54.