

Stelter, Gilbert A., ed. *Cities and Urbanization: Canadian Historical Perspectives*. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1990. Pp. vii, 277. Tables, maps, illustrations

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ing permits and bank demand deposits as "bellwethers" for overall economic conditions in the four cities. The economic data are badly handled for the purpose of description (for instance, no distinction is drawn between real and nominal wages or money supply) and of explanation (causality for the depression is attributed to an exogenous fall in the money supply). Nor is there a systematic comparative analysis of various regions, of regional urban centres, or of events before or after 1929-32 from which to draw any meaningful conclusions. At other times, the author departs from a comparative framework to suggest that the "political culture of the four cities" allows inferences to be drawn about the nation.

Second, problems abound with Mullins' implicit assumption that an organic "community," led by businessmen and civic authorities, responded to the needs of the unemployed in a conscious and coherent fashion. He does not seem to recognize that individuals organize their actions through other institutions, such as trade unions, which might engender conflict rather than harmony over political goals. As a result, Seattle's unique labour history gets little mention in relation to the city's Unemployed Citizens League, while the frequency of riots or the existence of the anti-communist "Red Squad" in Los Angeles goes largely unexplained. In Portland and San Francisco, we learn merely that there were surprisingly few riots.

Third, the book suggests that the citizenry first accepted and then challenged Hoover's oxymoronic credo of "cooperative individualism." Mullins defines "cooperation" and "individual self-reliance" to include any actions undertaken in concert by individuals at the local level to address their common needs. Through this simplistic and self-serving definition, "Hooverville" the shanty town on the out-

skirts of Seattle is transformed in a "manifestation of the pluck, independence, and individualism held in such high esteem by he whose name the community had taken." Similarly, the socialist-organized Unemployed Citizens League in Seattle becomes the best reflection of Hooverian "hopes and aspirations." When taken to this extreme, the concept of "cooperative individualism" loses whatever meaning it may have initially conveyed. Moreover, it is unclear if a broad community consensus of the virtue of "cooperative individualism" ever existed. An equally plausible explanation is that no change in motivations or attitudes among civic leaders occurred; they merely acknowledged that local resources were insufficient to cope with the needs of the unemployed (an appendix on voting behaviour in Seattle polling areas in 1928 and 1932 is far too selective and inconclusive to be of much validity in this regard.)

In short, views expressed by the president of the chamber of commerce or the local newspaper editor may be insightful, but serve as an incomplete and potentially misleading guide to history. Similarly, Mullins presents a useful, but limited account of events during the early years of the Depression. He adds to our understanding of the manner in which these four West Coast municipalities responded to the demands for relief, but this contribution serves as a poor substitute for a systematic analysis of the motivation and attitudes underlying local responses to unemployment in the Great Depression.

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After editing four volumes with Alan Artibise, Gil Stelter has pulled together a fifth composed of eleven papers written by geographers and historians. Except for his Introduction and the first paper, also his, they were first published between 1979 and 1987. In some way, the papers are representative of ongoing empirical research, but they are also intended as vehicles carrying Stelter's view of urban history, as laid out in the Introduction. Since nearly half of the work is by geographers, he might have included the term "geographical" in the title. Also, items in the "Further Reading" section, while helpful, seem to have been arbitrarily selected. Overall, though, the papers are by and large useful additions to urban studies, fulfilling the aim of the general editor of the series, "New Canadian Readings." As stated in the Foreword, the goal is "to bring some of the best recent work by this country's scholars to the attention of students of Canada."

Stelter's own essay, "The Changing Imperial Context of Early Canadian Development," usefully surveys some of the dimensions of urban life, especially the establishing of towns and their spatial design, in Europe, from the medieval era onward, as the context for early Canadian urbanization. Why he begins the essay with a straw man I do not understand. I doubt that anyone today believes the ideas for creating Quebec were *sui generis*. Also, word of recent work by Joseph Wood pointing to the dispersed character of early New England communities has apparently not reached Guelph.

David Hanna's "Creation of an Early Victorian Suburb in Montreal" is an excel-

lent empirical piece of work covering the building of terrace housing to the early 1860s. If comparisons were drawn with Toronto and Hamilton, the differences in timing of building might well show up interestingly. Unfortunately, Hanna does not clearly distinguish terrace from row housing.

"Communications and Urban Systems in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada," by Peter Goheen, builds on Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan and Allan Pred. It is a very interesting piece, perhaps the most interesting in the book. Goheen uses economic information to argue that Canadian telegraph and newspapers were not "autonomous". This raises an important question: despite the strong connections with and the enormous reliance on sources in the United States, how then did Canada survive at least until the east/west orientation was created? The bias of communication was clearly north-south on economic matters. Enough people have, apparently, distinguished political from economic concerns, or better, have filtered out the threats to Canada.

"The Mercantile-Industrial Transition in the Metals Towns of Pictou County, 1857-1931," by Larry McCann, describes dramatic changes in a small regional system of towns. Perhaps the crucial point is that, like the Maritimes generally, the area was slow to develop (by western world standards) but then declined early also. Last hired, first fired—the golden age of manufacturing was brief.

Montreal industrialized earlier and the region has done well in recent times. But much of its manufacturing has in the past been low value added. Bettina Bradbury's

"The Family Economy and Work in an Industrializing City: Montreal in the 1870s" uses the 1871 census to analyze the impact on working-class families, in particular the employment of children and women. Montreal, it seems, was like other metropolises of the era: working people eked out a sparse existence.

Michael Doucet and John Weaver, in "The North American Shelter Business, 1860-1920," use the records of a Hamilton property management company to argue that the systems of management changed relatively little over the period despite growth and swings in the real estate market. Even so, the firm was more professional in 1920 than in the beginning. Further, they dispute David Harvey's assertion of class monopoly rent power. This paper is part of a recent book on the shelter business.

The development of the Guelph urban field is the subject of Fred Dahms' "The Evolution of Settlement Systems: A Canadian Example." After reviewing a number of "theories," he concludes that C. Whebell's "corridor" model fits best. He also notes that the urban pattern has shown "remarkable stability." Central-place notions fit best, not at the outset in the mid-19th century or recently, but in the middle years when the pattern was filling out. This is consistent with some other recent studies.

Paul-Andre Linteau muses on the question: "Canadian suburbanization in a North American Context—Does the Border Make a Difference?" He concludes that Canadian urban growth has been "more orderly" and "better managed." But saying that Canadians, including Quebecois, accept

"government intervention and collective action" more than Americans is not quite right. Despite disclaimers, Americans with power have always used a great deal of government intervention for their own ends from military spending to exclusive suburbs. Admittedly, in this century Canadians have been more inclined, if tentatively, toward universality in education, urban infrastructure and social welfare measures.

"Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods" by the late Robert Harney grinds an axe: ethnicity is "*the* most salient feature of Toronto ..." (italics added). Hence, the tone of the argument is hectoring: scholars and citizens have not looked at the people as distinct from institutions and action and hence histories have been "monochromatic."

Finally, Alan Artibise argues, in "Exploring the North American West: A Comparative Urban Perspective," that urban history in this Canada has concentrated more on the "city-building process," in contrast to a rather stronger emphasis among Americans on "social mobility." Perhaps this is what upset Harney about Torontonians, coming from south of the border. Americans are interested in ordinary people—so history is from the bottom up—whereas Canadians are concerned about institutions, making places work. Hence, Americans are narcissistic—they have told themselves that over and over; Canadians are obsessed with public order. Are these the differences between the countries?

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