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Brownell, Blaine A. *The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930*.
Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1975.
Pp. xxi, 238. Tables. $12.50

A. F. J. Artibise

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Citer ce compte rendu

much is blamed on late nineteenth century urban school leadership. At times it is short-sightedness on the part of the city school superintendents; occasionally Bullough even hints at a conspiracy thesis. Historians must assess these people in an 1870's context, rather than a 1970's, and match them against the circumstances of an earlier time.

Bullough and his fellow urban educational historians in both Canada and the United States have to date given us much valuable information and insight in such areas as school attendance, school administration, and educational aims. Perhaps we are now ready to move on to the next stage, a stage that highlights the central players of the historical drama - the pupils. We tend to conclude that by the turn of the twentieth century, the school had replaced the home and the church as the most important experience in the child's process of "growing up". Maybe so, but what of the school's continuing competition with the playground, the tenement building, the street market, and the part-time job? What of its later competition with Hollywood movies, comic books, radio and television? In short, we will never get close to the crux of the urban school experience until educational historians pay more attention to the history of popular culture as it influenced childhood and adolescence. That may be our task for the late 1970's and the 1980's. [Robert M. Stamp, University of Calgary].

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Brownell, Blaine A. The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1975. Pp. xxi, 238. Tables. $12.50.

This study of seven southern cities (Atlanta, Birmingham, Charleston, Knoxville, Memphis, Nashville, and New Orleans) during what the author calls the "crucial period" of the 1920's has several goals. First, it attempts to demonstrate that a more or less consistent

conception of the city, a guiding complex of beliefs concerning the nature and role of the urban community - an urban ethos - was maintained and expressed by spokesmen of the leading white commercial and civic groups in the major "circulating media" in southern cities during the 1920's - newspapers, chamber of commerce publications, church periodicals, promotional tracts, and official city documents. Second, Professor Brownell shows that this ethos was shared in some degree by large numbers of city dwellers - it can be found in labor union publications, novels, and black newspapers - and that it was one major conceptual context within which urban policy was formulated.

The Urban Ethos in the South differs from previous examinations of urban imagery in that it deals with random visions of the city in terms of larger "concepts of community"; concepts which involve not only visual representations but notions about the city's history and future, its role within regional and national patterns, and its relationship to the individual and to various social groups. In short, Brownell's study examines urban imagery, urban boosterism, and concepts of the urban community in the context of a specific historical and regional situation, and relates them to general patterns of social thought and municipal policy.

The urban ethos   developed and promoted by commercial and civic leaders throughout the South was a set of beliefs in which the ideal city was corporate and interdependent, a place where things as they were and the forces of growth were harnessed together in the pursuit of progress. In attempting to relate this image to the facts, however, Brownell finds that the urban ethos served only to cripple any chances cities may have had of becoming "ideal" metropolises. The image of the community of happy, prosperous citizens all pursuing the same goals was simply without foundation in social and economic fact. And because its purpose was to promote growth while retaining the existing social order, the urban ethos was largely a rhetorical device used for social control. Still, the urban ethos was part of the conceptual

framework within which urban policy was made, and the outlines of its imprint can still be seen in the appearance, structure, and problems of southern cities for several decades after the 1920's. [A.F.J. Artibise, University of Victoria].

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McKay, John P. Tramways and Trolleys: The Rise of Urban Mass Transport in Europe. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976. Pp. 266. $14.50.

This volume is a study of the introduction and impact of the electric "trolley" car on European cities at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. The author argues that this technological innovation was revolutionary. In effect, it provided the working classes with wheels and thereby enabled them to escape the increasingly crowded centres of their industrial cities. And the cities, as a result, were for the first time able to expand beyond their medieval limits. In addition, the "streetcar" created a revolution in recreation for the working class, and a significant improvement in wages and working conditions for transit workers.

Additional themes focus on the development, diffusion and management of the new technology and the relationship of the public and private sector in the process. As a final important facet, the author sets out some of the dicta on which comparative investigation might be made. A number of possibilities for the Canadian urban scene spring immediately to mind. The volume is near essential background reading for study of both "trolleys" and cities. [John H. Taylor, Carleton University].