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Oberlander, H. Peter, ed., assisted by Hilda Symonds. *Canada: An Urban Agenda — A Collection of Papers*. Ottawa: Community Planning Press and ASPO Press, 1976. Pp. ix, 234. \$7.00

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[See table of contents](#)

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Oberlander, H. Peter, ed., assisted by Hilda Symonds. Canada: An Urban Agenda - A Collection of Papers. Ottawa: Community Planning Press and ASPO Press, 1976. Pp. ix, 234. \$7.00.

At the Guelph conference in May the message we received on planning in Canada's past was a tale of failure and irrelevance. Virtually all historians, planners and geographers spoke pessimistically of our ability to plan. In this volume we are again told that we have not done well, but that we must and shall. Professor Oberlander concludes: "All contributors agree; there are good reasons for hope" (p. 234). At the outset he asserts: "It is now urgently necessary for Canada to strike out in its own...." (p. 2). Are these just pious feelings or does the volume provide grounds for serious expectations? I suggest that it is mostly the former with a few sparks of critical realism and of policy sense.

In this book a report of the 1975 Vancouver joint conference of the Community Planning Association of Canada and the American Society of Planning officials, twenty contributors have presented six papers and twelve commentaries, together with a prologue and epilogue by Oberlander. The first two papers are overall statements entitled "A new agenda for our cities" and "Paddle-to-the Sea: How we got here and where we're going" by Brahm Wiesman and Kenneth Cameron respectively. The third by Ira Robinson and Walter Jamieson deals with "Values and alternative urban futures as the basis for policy-making." The final three papers consider more specific matters: J.E. Wiebe on "Land use and environment," Leonard Marsh "On housing policy and community planning," and Wallace Atkinson on "Urban transportation problems - solutions." As a group these writers and the commentators speak mostly as persons well-established in planning at federal, provincial or municipal levels, or as academics who have served as advisors to various governments. Not surprisingly, then, the preface states that "every attempt has been made to focus the policy discussion on currently available solutions. A pragmatic approach and middle range time scale was urged upon all authors" (pp. i-ii).

The first paper projects us beyond pragmatism. "The new urban agenda involves a value shift: from unlimited growth to managed growth; from efficiency to equity; from the consumer society to the conserver

society" (p. 13, Wiesman). Here is a radical set of goals! Unfortunately much of the book does not provide anywhere a deep enough economic and cultural analysis to say how we achieve these. What is missing is a sense of Canada's place in the world economy, of over-capitalized technologies, of the culture (or ideology) of Canadians. Except for the occasional commentator, the dominant view is that of a Canada autonomous from the U.S. and from multi-national corporations. How seriously can we talk of the goals of managed growth, equity and conservation without recognizing the basic sources of funding for activities within Canada? Where is the awareness that funding for energy development comes from New York banks putting us in hock and the multinationals who invest but siphon off the resources and the dividends. Planners by and large always ignore the question of money; economy is separate from culture. If we are to pursue these three goals, a dramatically different way of public funding and a change in consciousness is needed. Our market system is committed to growth. Equity of incomes--personal and regional, would take us well beyond the liberal view that every person should look after himself. Conserver concerns can hardly arise without the first two. In fact, the culture of Canadians reflects the values of the multinationals.

The market solution is riding high in these days of cutbacks. Indeed, Atkinson advocates "indexing transit fares to the cost of inflation" (p. 222), another way of saying that users pay (as one commentator suggests). The users are in large measure the lower income persons whose relative incomes have been shrinking. Since this solution smacks of making transit competitive, how are we then, to push toward managed growth, equity and conservation with this kind of advocacy?

Another improbability expressed is that the federal government should take a larger role in housing. In 1974 the liberals promised urban transit funds but have not delivered, and all attempts at righting regional disparities have been feeble. So why expect, as does Marsh, serious federal support of non-profit and coop housing (which he likes)? The commentators on his paper provide a glimmer of light in suggesting that the provincial and local governments should take much of this role. Indeed, it should be said that Quebec is pointing the way for all

provinces. Of course, it will take some doing to have Ontarians realize they are Ontarians! I come away from this collection feeling that more of the commentators had the right points to make than the authors.

But I must exempt Wiesman despite my basic complaint above, and for historically minded persons we should ponder his assertion "that previous experience is not a very reliable guide to action" (p. 41). What use is history? It must then be a guide to what we should not do, if it is to be relevant. Of course, we could say history provides its own intrinsic interest for impartial historians, and certainly the integrity of past ages must be upheld. Yet this can be done only in dialogue with our living present. Otherwise, as another reviewer stated recently: "impartiality can easily verge into a narrow specialization, triviality, and detail for its own sake" (Theodore Zeldin, New York Review of Books, XXIV, 19 (Nov. 24, 1977), pp.45). So all those people at Guelph who presented woeful tales about planning should take heart for they were up to a point saying the right things.

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Bettison, David G.; Kenwards, John K.; and Taylor, Larrie. Urban Affairs in Alberta. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1975. Pp. xii, 529. \$8.50.

Urban Affairs in Alberta is the second and concluding volume of the series on urbanization in Canada prepared by the now defunct Human Resources Research Council of Alberta. The authors have collected into this second volume all the research completed by HRRC on Urbanization in Alberta, the first volume having focussed primarily on the Canadian scene.

The first part of this book (Chapters 1, 2, and 3) describes the development of urban planning and development in Alberta, from the