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Arthur P. Solomon, ed. *The Prospective City*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1980

Richard Gilbert

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factor in keeping the most prominent activists oriented to Queens Park and Ottawa, rather than the municipal arena. These are problems of a different order than those raised by Freeman, problems which transcend black and white moralism. In one of his childrens' books, *Cedric and the North End Kids*, Freeman tells the story of Cedric, a shy, black, immigrant child, who ends up as a chum of a porkish, loudmouth Hamilton native who sports a sweatshirt emblazed with Hamilton's motto, "The Ambitious City." Eventually, the loudmouth is caught trying to steal a toy mountie from a local smokeshop, and the ambitious lad is saved the penalties of *hubris* only by the good sense, solidarity, and sound morality of Cedric. If only real life were this simple, Bill Freeman and Marsha Hewitt could have written a very good book.

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#### THE POVERTY OF LIBERAL AND MARXIST ANALYSIS?

The following two reviews by Toronto urban activists are published together not just because they provoke thought about community values and the future of American cities, but also since they are concerned with the concept of "privatism" which has been so much a part of urban-history writing during the past ten years. Both reviewers are alert to the ways in which "privatism" - the search for private gain with a sacrifice of community values - is a constant feature of urban affairs. Their reviews go beyond this, however, and challenge two approaches to understanding the

city and its current problems. Alderman Richard Gilbert tears a strip off the hide of a social-science liberalism and optimism evident in American literature. Jim Lemon takes a critical view of European structuralist Marxism and even the more humanistic British labour-history branch of Marxism. A geographer and community-focused reformer, Lemon wonders about the constraints of a class analysis. Perhaps the Toronto experience, described in places by Alderman Gilbert and implied in Jim Lemon's accent on community, could lead to distinctive thoughts about power in the urban setting, the theme of the 1982 Urban History Conference to be held at the University of Guelph.

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Arthur P. Solomon, ed. *The Prospective City*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1980.

This review should be regarded as a curiosity piece rather than as an aid to scholarship. It describes and assesses a book about American cities, written for the most part by academics for academics. Before reading the book I knew next to nothing about American cities and even less about the scholarly study of urban matters. Perhaps my only qualification for this enterprise is that I have been studied by academics in my capacity as a member of Toronto's City Council, which occupation brings me most of my income. It is as if an Austrian stone-mason were being asked to comment on the architecture of neighbouring Italy.

The book in question is a weighty volume - literally 1,050 grams - longer than I am used to reading, and containing more ponderous words and sentences than I usually care for. Its 491 pages, 15 chapters, 72 tables, and 16 figures are organized into five sections, the last four of which have four-page editorial introductions. Some twenty pages of publishing preliminaries include an editorial preface and tables of contents. The book ends with a list of the seventeen contributors to the book and their impressive affiliations, a list of the forty-four books published by the Joint Center for Urban Studies (a co-operative venture of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) of which this is the latest, and a seventeen page index. Most of the entries in the index were quite unknown to me, including all of the people apart from a few dignitaries, most of the places, and many of the other items, particularly those that were given abbreviations, for example, JOBS, MDTA, OSHA, and PEP. I sought what was familiar and was comforted by the presence of such items as automobiles, energy, housing, and sewers.

#### DESCRIPTION

The first of the five parts of the book consists of a single chapter by the editor, who is Director of the Joint Center. This part is called "City and Suburb: Past, Present and Future." The chapter is called "The Emerging Metropolis." Neither title seems entirely appropriate because the substance chiefly concerns something called the 'central city,' its decline during the past few decades, and its possible resurgence. The chapter concludes with a number of questions, the

last of which concerns the definition of a distressed city. It is apt that Mr. Solomon should ask this kind of question. He seems confused about terminology. The terms 'city,' 'central city,' 'inner-city,' and 'in-town' are used interchangeably. In one paragraph, on page 22, all four appear.

Solomon's confusing presentation is not confined to his imprecision with words. He, or his editor, have little sympathy for readers. The meaning of some sentences is quite impenetrable. Other sentences contradict one another. For example, Solomon wrote on page 5 that "increases in suburban population ... are much smaller than increases in suburban employment," but on page 12 that "employment has been suburbanizing somewhat more slowly than population."

At the very end of Solomon's chapter are the claims that "This is the first book to provide a systematic, interdisciplinary analysis of the forces that are shaping and will continue to shape the emerging metropolis. It is a first step in our understanding of these forces. What our cities and suburbs actually become depends on how we as a nation complete the analysis and act on it." I was taken aback by the prospect of 222 million Americans together completing a systematic, interdisciplinary analysis. Nevertheless, I was able to remember Mr. Solomon's elaboration of these formative forces earlier in the chapter: "Changes in manufacturing and transportation technology, the desire for more spacious living arrangements, and rapidly rising real incomes were the dominant factors shaping the post-World War II metropolis. The

future city will be shaped by different demographic and economic factors; chief among these are changes in household composition and lifestyle, adjustments to environmental and resource limitations, shortages of energy and capital, and shifts in the post-industrial economy."

The emerging forces shaping the emerging metropolis have given rise, according to Solomon, to five emerging policy issues. The issues are presented as unanswered questions. Will the purchase and renovation of old houses in urban centres by the relatively rich (a phenomenon called "regentrification" by Mr. Solomon, who must imagine that gentry once lived in them) help the relatively poor people who live there or merely displace them? Will scarcity of fuel cause denser development and more renovation? Will "the growing sentiment across the country that the public sector has become too large" prevent municipal governments from promoting "central-city revival"? Will no-growth policies of suburban communities perpetuate racial and economic segregation? Should the U.S. federal government support "distressed cities" by providing incentives strong enough to overcome "market conditions" that may favour decentralization?

The second part of the book is titled "The Intrametropolitan Location of People and Jobs." It consists of three chapters, one on trends in population and its distribution, one on race relations in the U.S. and their implications for urban areas, and one on urban economics. The first, by William Alonso, argues that the "population factor" - meaning falling fertility and falling household size (described by Alonso as "the

population distributing itself more finely into households") - "ensures that things cannot stay the same." "The thesis of this paper," writes Alonso, "is that it is no coincidence that the decline in household size accompanies population declines, nor is it possible for things to go on as usual." Both declines are caused by the same "changes in our society," which appear to be a rate of increase in "husband-wife families" that is lower than the rate of population increase (6% versus 7% for the period 1970-76) and growing numbers of women who work (an increase of 31% from 1970 to 1978, to be compared with an increase of 13% in the number of men who work). Underlying these changes are "principal causes" that themselves are caused by "the greater emphasis placed on the individual and the greater legitimacy accorded to a variety of life choices, including that of changing choices." The "changed emphasis" has even more causes, namely "the increased ability of women to earn a living and ... the improved education of the population." Having cut open the etiological onion, Alonso seems to have been too tearful to reach a precise point. "If people behave as they always have," he concluded, "we shall have an explosive suburbanization. If behavior changes, we shall have clustering and reurbanization, or perhaps some other effect that has not occurred to me."

The chapter on race relations is by Thomas F. Pettigrew, who echoes Alfonso's recurring sentiment - "tomorrow is certain to be different from today," he notes in his first sentence. His third sentence attempts to set the scene for what is to come: "From the macro and micro perspectives of

demography and social psychology, this paper will focus first on these rapid racial shifts and will then place the intrametropolitan distribution of black Americans within the context of these shifts." The attempt is unsuccessful. Nowhere in the chapter is there evidence of "rapid racial shifts." What is happening to blacks in the U.S. appears, from Pettigrew's own words, to be much the same as is happening to other Americans, i.e., "low birth rates, emerging black suburbanization, and regional shifts in population from north to south." Two factors qualify the similarity: (i) Some 58% of black Americans live in or near urban cores - the figure for Americans classified as "white" is 26%; (ii) residential segregation practised by white Americans "has emerged as a functional equivalent to the explicit state segregation laws of the past." Pettigrew concludes with an interesting proposal to achieve desegregation: "whites could routinely be given unusually attractive, subsidized terms to finance housing in mixed areas of the central city, and blacks routinely be given such terms to finance housing in the suburbs."

The last chapter in this part is by J. Thomas Black, whose aim is "to explore some of the trends that suggest where the central city might be headed, how well it can be expected to play its historic roles, and the implications of these trends in terms of the future economic viability of central cities and related public policy." Using copious data from the early 1970s, Black demonstrates that neither the North-Central and Northeastern regions of the U.S. nor their large metropolitan areas are in economic decline, notwithstanding the net fall in

population of some of their metropolitan areas. Black restricts his discussion of the fates of urban cores to "central cities that have not been able to expand their boundaries ... to capture suburban growth and decentralization." These cities, argues Black, have lost their dominant role as regional retailing centres. They have lost manufacturing jobs and, after a gain during the 1960s, service jobs. Paradoxically, the amount of office space in core areas increased by 43% from 1970 to 1978. Presumably these new buildings are occupied by machines rather than by people. Overall, the number of jobs in cities appears to be falling at an even higher rate than the population. Black concludes, "for most cities the recent trends clearly indicate a general shrinkage in overall economic activity in the near future." Corrective action, according to Black, would entail "improvements in downtown access, circulation, and parking, assistance in land assembly for new projects, and assistance in the creation of support facilities (such as conference centers, hotels, and restaurants)...." Black also proposes subsidizing "middle-income household resettlement in older, formerly declining areas," which he sees as being "vastly important to providing residential support for the economic sectors of the city that show growth potential (office and speciality retail, in particular), but it is also important in reversing the generally negative image of the city as a place to live."

The third part is titled "Prospects for Renewing Our Central Cities." Mr. Solomon characterizes two of the three chapters in this part as an

argument as to whether the "signs of new residential vitality ... are durable enough to revitalize central-city neighbourhoods." Close examination of the positions of the supposed antagonists reveals little disagreement. The chapter by Franklin J. James, entitled "The Revitalization of Older Urban Housing and Neighbourhoods," concludes that "there is little evidence of a back-to-the-city movement" and that "it is unjustified and misleading [to conclude] that the recent upsurge in reinvestment in older central-city housing may solve many of the pressing social, economic and fiscal problems of declining cities." Ira S. Lowry, in his chapter "The Dismal Future of Central Cities," is in general agreement. Belying his title, and the misleading editorializing, Lowry also foreshadows "a slow process of social redevelopment that surely will make cities better places to live than they are now." He focuses on "building a sense of community" and suggests decentralization of municipal government and "sorting residents into specialized communities" as routes to follow.

The third chapter of this part is the longest and most boring of the volume. It is titled "The Economic Performance and Prospects of Cities." Harvey A. Garn and Larry Clinton Ledebur are its authors. The chapter covers much the same ground as the earlier one by Black but in uncomfortably greater detail. The authors' chief point is that cities differ. Their final section, titled "Whither the City" - Is there an omitted question mark here or an added *h*? - contains the following: "Thus we must address ourselves to the economic prospects of these distressed metropolitan areas and

their central cities. Our findings lend scant support to the thesis that the economic fortunes of these central cities are beginning to turn round." Thus Garn and Ledebur appear to differ from Black as to whether there are distressed metropolitan areas, but share his pessimism as to what will happen to the central parts of these areas. One intriguing feature of this chapter is a list of 147 U.S. cities, ranked from bad to good in terms of a composite index based on five measures of economic activity. As I was preparing this review I was shown a similar table, published in the *New York Times* on July 7, 1980, which is to appear in a report by Richard P. Nathan and Jame W. Fossett. They have ranked 53 of Garn and Ledebur's 143 cities according to an "urban conditions index ... based on age of housing stock, population loss and the concentration of poverty from 1960 to 1970." Much could be written about these broadly similar rankings and the many discrepancies between them. More should be written about the usefulness of creating them in the first place. What could be learned from the similar standings of Newark (very high) and Tucson (very low) in the two rankings, and the discrepant ratings of Minneapolis, which Garn and Ledebur regard as among the "least distressed" cities but which Nathan and Fossett consider to be among the "most depressed"?

The fourth part of the book has the title "Transforming Our Post-Industrial Suburbs." According to the editorial introduction, it is reasonable to conclude from the four chapters in this part that "concern over conservation alone is unlikely to threaten the suburban lifestyle that has dominated the urban landscape since the 1950s." I

thought this an astonishing position to hold in 1980 - or even in 1978 or 1979 when the various parts of the book were probably written - and so I read on with special care.

The first chapter of this part is by Richard F. Babcock, a lawyer who writes as if he is used to writing for people who enjoy reading. He did not once use the phrase "central city." His chapter seems to have two points. One is that effective land-use controls in suburbs have often contributed to urban sprawl. The other is that proper scrutiny and regulation of the use of public land requires "replacement of the municipality as the final administrative decision maker" by "some agency with a broader constituency." Babcock writes sensitively about the relationships between city hall and neighbourhood organizations. He writes somewhat arcanelly about the role of the judiciary in land-use regulation. His hint that a major problem in urban areas has been an all-too-cozy relationship between city hall and the development industry fell on his own deaf ears. Merely giving direct jurisdiction over land use to state or metropolitan governments would provide no protection against large landowners. They can peddle and deal effectively wherever the need arises.

The next chapter, by Bernard J. Frieden, is an almost passionate attack on "environmental groups across the country [who] are trying to limit or stop the construction of new housing." Frieden, who preceded the editor as Director of the Joint Center for Urban Studies, is against environmentalists, particularly those who are preservationist rather than conservationist, and anyone else

who opposes large, planned developments in established suburbs. He is for home builders and their customers. Frieden argues that the preservationists are "limiting the nation's ability to supply new housing at a time when the number of families in need of such housing is growing rapidly," and that "environmental politics will produce the very patterns of suburban growth that generated so much environmental criticism in the past" and "expensive housing on large lots." Frieden's sources are almost all from the early 1970s. He seems unaware of Alonso's "population factor" and the possibility that the number of families in need of new housing may not be growing rapidly. Nonetheless, Frieden makes some good points about the arguments and objectives of those who resist development.

Chapter 10, the third of the fourth section, is the shortest in the book. Had I been editor, I would have made it the longest. Its title, "The Influence of Energy on Future Patterns of Urban Development," is the most portentous in the book. Its author, Dale L. Keyes, claims that "it seems unlikely that considerations of energy efficiency would have much impact on the future siting decisions of firms," and proceeds to focus instead on "households and the features of urban spatial design that hold promise for reducing household energy expenditures." Keyes argues that scarcity and rationing of fuels, even gasoline, are unlikely, and that modest responses to modest increases in relative price are all that can be expected. The "typical metropolis two or three decades from now," writes Keyes, "will have smaller populations and centripetal [did he mean to say centrifugal?]

forces will continue to dominate the overall pattern of development.... The single-family home (now well-insulated) on a quarter-acre lot will still be the first choice of most families.... Autos ... [will still be] ... the choice of the vast majority of travelers.... Unemployment, which is largely insensitive to increases in the price of energy, will continue to decentralize." What is conspicuously lacking in Mr. Keyes' exposition is any basis for his sanguine expectation that oil and natural gas will continue to flow into North American homes and cars in much the same way as they have been doing for the past thirty years.

Similar ostrich-like equanimity about future energy supplies is evidenced in the next chapter, "The Interaction of Transportation and Urban Land Use," written by Gregory K. Ingram. "The next few decades," Ingram concludes, "will witness a continuation of extensive development in the metropolitan fringe, as well as modest amounts of private central-city renewal." High energy prices will be no problem, writes Ingram, because of factor substitution (unexplained), rising income levels (the fact that real incomes are falling and have been doing so for three years is ignored), and increased efficiency of automobiles. Ingram overlooks the point that all the improvements in efficiency in the world will make little difference if there is no readily available oil left. Regarding interactions, Ingram cites evidence that "the spread of the automobile has been a major cause of lower residential densities in the United States" and that "low-density residential development encourages high levels of auto ownership." Even going

around in circles requires energy.

The fifth and final part of the book is called "Shaping the Future Metropolis: The Role of Public Policy." The first three of the four chapters in this part concern past and possible actions of the U.S. federal government. Robert J. Vaughan provides an apparently exhaustive account of past actions. He concludes that market forces rather than federal policies have been the root cause of decentralization but "federal policies have accentuated these forces, and for many cities the increase in the speed and extent of decentralization may have been the straw that broke their fiscal backs." George F. Peterson examines tax incentives. He concludes that "implicit locational distinctions" in the Internal Revenue Code have encouraged "metropolitan and regional scatteration of population." Rather than invent tax advantages for cities, says Peterson, the U.S. government should provide "additional spurs to central-city development ... through ... grants or subsidized loan programs, which can be suited to individual urban markets." The third of these chapters, by John F. Kain and William C. Apgar, Jr., presents results from "exploratory simulations" with the conclusion that their model is "a promising analytical tool." The current version of the model "executes a series of seventeen behavioral submodels which simulate the activities of 72,000 to 84,000 sample households and 35,000 to 40,000 housing suppliers in each of ... two metropolitan areas."

The final chapter, by Roger W. Schmenner, is "an exploration of the policies and actions that a city might reasonably pursue to



keep its share of industry." This exploration is based on "survey responses of 535 plants from the Cincinnati metropolitan area (26 per cent of all area plants) and 496 New England plants, as well as on interviews with more than a score of companies, most of them among the largest multiplant operations in the country." Schmenner's well-reasoned essay makes the following points. Nearly all plant relocations are local, and for the purpose of securing additional space. But, "the net decentralization of industry is due not so much to the migration of growing plants to the suburbs ... as to the city's inability to attract new industry to replace plants that have either relocated or shut down." "Tax and financial incentives are generally ineffective," asserts Schmenner, except as tokens of a community's "willingness to host industry." A more important contribution to the creation of a good "business climate" might be the appointment by municipalities of "ombudsmen to guide businesses through the bureaucratic mazes" particularly "to satisfy the needs of smaller, home-grown plants with the expectation that a few of them will grow quickly and effectively within the city." Additional space for growth, says Schmenner, could come from expropriation of residential neighbours' property. Even with appropriate action, concludes Schmenner, "it is highly probable that the decentralization of manufacturing jobs will continue for some time."

#### ASSESSMENT

This is a lamentably poor book in every respect: "poor" because of the sloppy editing, the execrable use of English, the padding, the pomposity, and the

general poverty of the various analyses; "lamentably poor" because of the lost opportunities to prepare North Americans for hard times ahead. The overwhelming impression the book gives is that it was written by a bunch of people who, for the most part, do not like cities very much. The authors seem generally complacent about the prospect they raise of continuing urban sprawl and continuing deterioration of urban cores. The book gives off the acrid odour of triumphant scepticism; its contributors are mostly content to point to causes of urban demise, such as market forces, the spread of the automobile, and federal policies, rather than to suggest solutions. Solutions that are suggested range from the tame (low-interest loans to businesses Peterson) to the fatuous (more downtown parking - Black).

Perhaps because I know so little about U.S. cities, it is difficult for me to work out how these people have come to be so pessimistic. The City of Toronto, from my perspective, seems in reasonable shape as the "central-city" of a metropolis. A lot of people have been lost in the last decade - 15 per cent by one count - and our population this year may dip below 600,000 for the first time since the 1920s. Too many manufacturing jobs have gone. Our response to looming energy shortages has been inadequate, but we are trying. If, however, anything is going to decay around here, it will be the suburbs, not the city.

Prompted mainly by fears of gasoline shortages, people are now moving into the city, increasingly from the suburbs. House prices here will rise by 30 per cent this year. Rents of new accommodation

are rising out of sight. Only rent controls on existing units and an active programme of co-op and non-profit housing (much of it city-owned) keep the lid on a cauldron of tenants' discontent.

The centripetal trend is not confined to Toronto. In Montreal, nearly 50 per cent of purchasers of city homes come from the suburbs. In Ottawa, so many low-income tenants are being displaced, the City Council has just approved a one-year ban on the conversion of rental units into expensive owner-occupied homes. Vancouver planners report much greater demand for city housing. Each of these cities has been losing population as households shrink in size while occupying no less space. Jobs have been decentralized to the suburbs - in fact, in a modest way, Toronto has encouraged this trend as far as office employment is concerned. But Canadian cities are not noticeably in decline.

Why are northern U.S. cities depressed or distressed while a hundred or so kilometres away there are thriving Canadian urban centres? Three things have contributed to the difference, in my view:

1. Slightly less preoccupation with the automobile, which has been the major cause of urban sprawl in North America and elsewhere. Until very recently annual Canadian non-military motor-fuel use has been a consistent 300 litres per person below that in the U.S. Now, because of our increasingly pusillanimous federal governments, Canadian use continues to rise whereas U.S. use is declining. Because merely the prospect of shortage is causing a retreat back to the cities in Canada, the actual practice of conservation in the

U.S. might soon cause an even greater retreat, if it is not already happening. Even without deliberately severe restrictions by foreign suppliers, oil use will have to decline sharply in the mid-1980s, in both Canada and the U.S., because there will be less oil to use. The manifest flaw of this book is its failure to come to terms with the implications of real fuel shortages for patterns of urban development. Soon there will be no new developments that are not at least a bicycle ride from a commuter transit service. That professional prognosticators, such as those who contributed to this book, can seriously predict more automobile-based urban sprawl defies my sense of propriety.

2. Canadians are slightly less preoccupied with market forces than Americans, forces that have been the second major contributor to urban sprawl. There is a little more respect for good government in Canada, and the peace and order that it brings. As a result, local government in Canada may have been just a little less corrupted by the concerns of the development industry. A remarkable omission from this book is the virtual lack of a useful analysis of the role of local government, which, almost everywhere, is supposed to regulate land use. It is possible to argue that urban centres are the way they are because of the governments they have suffered. Toronto had been blessed with feisty councils that have been able to hold their own when threatened by suburban imperatives.

3. The greatest influence of the major cause of urban sprawl, the automobile, fortunately coincided with the massive influx of southern European immigrants into Canadian urban centres in the 1950s and

1960s. In Toronto, for instance, they kept many of the residential neighbourhoods alive while suburban development was in full swing. For a time it looked as though these inner-city residents would be moving out just as the suburbanites moved back. Now, increasingly, the immigrants of 20 years ago are staying put, selling their cars if they had them, joining in the life of the city, and chuckling at the growing discomfort of their suburban relatives. Yet another flaw of this book is its failure to perceive that existing residents of urban cores might have a lot to offer. Only Lowry touches on this point, but with an odd proposal that would doom the local government of urban centres to impotence caused by factional squabbling.

Low-density suburban development will not be able to adapt to the sharp reductions in energy use that will begin during the 1980s. Only urban efficiency or rural self-sufficiency will allow North American society to continue in something like its present form. I'd like to read a book that helps me figure out how we can survive. This gloomy, inept book from Massachusetts is more of an invitation to live it up until the whole thing falls apart.

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Castells, Manuel. *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach*. Paris: Maspero, 1972, 1976. Trans. by Alan Sheridan. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977; London: Edward Arnold, 1977. Pp. x, 500. Tables, figures.

Castells, Manuel. *City, Class and Power*. Trans. by Elizabeth Lebas. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1978. Pp. x, 198. Tables.

Within the outburst of Marxist writings over the past two decades, two main lines of attack have developed. In the cultural-historical file, the flagship is E.P. Thompson's now well-known *The Making of the English Working Class*. In the structural line, the writings of L. Althusser stand out. Recently with the appearance of Thompson's *The Poverty of Theory* the struggle between these two perspectives has been engaged. Both invoke Marx, but historians may be relieved to know that the empirical, concrete approach of Thompson, Hobsbawm and others, have grappled successfully enough to soften, if ever so slightly, the harsh logical structuralism of French theoreticians.

This is apparent, even explicit, in Castells. Although very much a sociologist out of the French structural mode, in *City, Class and Power* [CCP], he recognizes the need to pursue concrete research with a more flexible language; the concern now must be more with "historical relevance than with formal coherence" (p. 12). Indeed, this is an advance from the logical preoccupations of *The Urban Question* [UQ] which is (ironically) incomprehensible because he seeks too tight a language.

Even so, the development of Marxist work in the urban scene is of importance. The writings of David Harvey, Allen Scott, Shoukry Roweis and others are influencing geographers, planners, and urban students generally. The