

**Harney, Robert, and Troper, Harold. *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890-1930*. Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1975. Pp. x. 212. \$14.95**

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for comparison. The author apparently took the maps he discovered in various planning studies and simply reproduced them in the book. An attempt to provide a set of standard, original maps for each city would have given his study an avenue for comparison which it simply does not have in its present form.

Far more regrettable than these flaws, however, is the fact that the author did not devote any attention to the conceptual or methodological problems faced by those interested in the study of the Canadian city. After having completed the vast amount of research that obviously went into the preparation of this book, it is certainly unfortunate that Professor Nader did not choose to share with the reader any of the lessons he must have learned along the way. It would have been enlightening, for example, to have had Professor Nader, an urban geographer, comment precisely on the role he believes the historical dimension plays in the development of theories of urban evolution. Since one of the great attractions of urban studies as a research area is its ability to bring together the approaches and insights of a large number of disciplines, some mention of the problems and potential of inter-disciplinary urban studies would have been most welcome. Instead, these two books only indicate how far off we are from any integrated history of the Canadian city. Hopefully, Professor Nader will comment on the subjects of methodology, conceptualization and interdisciplinary communication in future publications.

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In terms of its stated objectives, Immigrants is an ambitious

study. While endeavouring to redress the neglect of immigrants in Toronto history, the authors also have sought to demonstrate the photographs can be treated as documents. A brief but fluid text and some remarkable photographs do realize the first aim. The European background, the decision to emigrate, shelter in the new environment, labour and enterprise, acculturation and persistence of old ways receive consideration. Striving to impress readers with the fact that Toronto contained non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants, the authors have given the impression that the immigrant communities were stable. The text and the photographs bring the immigrants to Toronto, present the interaction of newcomers and the established community, but they impart little sense of people in motion, the movement through Toronto. Not only did many arrivals pass on to the West or to the United States, but some returned to Europe. For example, the construction trades slowed considerably in 1912 when Balkan immigrants in the hundreds returned to participate in the Balkan War. Immigrants, therefore, conveys the sense of there being immigrant communities without treating the question of transiency and departure. One wonders if the authors have too readily dismissed "arid statistics about the urban past"; a quantitative study of "the Ward", for example, might well enhance our understanding of the immigrant community which by the 1880's had replaced the Anglo-Saxon labourers who lived in what had originally been known as Macaulay Town. Something of the dynamics of "the Urban Experience" is lacking.

A few factual errors should be noted. Citing the establishment of the Bureau of Municipal Research in 1915 rather than in 1914 (p. 30) is very minor, but the claim that not until the 1920's did "newcomers become significant in politics, and even then bloc voting and 'ethnic politics' did not really exist in Toronto" (pp. 150, 178) raises a more interesting issue. Toronto did have boss politics with ethnic bloc voting at least from the 1880's; Alderman Harry Piper and later Dr. William Beattie Nesbitt managed "the Ward" machine between 1885 and 1907. As for bloc voting, let passages from a letter to Piper written by B. Rosenthal, President of the Toronto Hebrew Congregation, dispell some of the belief that Toronto escaped political practices commonly associated

with American cities.

Mr. Davis is at present our representative and you know perfectly well how hard he has always worked for your party ... having at his own expense cards printed with the name of candidate and X to show the Jewish residents here how to vote.... There is no split among Jews regarding their vote, like the Catholics and Orangemen ... I only wish to warn, as word to the wise, the Jews poll something over 600 votes.

Such testimony does not appear in health officer's reports, nor is it likely to be elicited from oral sources which are not plentiful for the pre-World War I era. And from these two sources, the volume derived many of its facts, anecdotes and impressions.

This question of sources, incidently, raises another critique, the most important from a methodological standpoint. In Urban History Review, No. 2-75 (October, 1975), Professor Troper presented what promised to be a bold new scheme, suggesting that photographs "can be analysed and read much the same as the written word -- not to replace the written words, but as yet another dimension by which the historian might document his analysis of the past". The design resembled that of Harold Mayer and Richard Wade in Chicago, Growth of a Metropolis (1969). They too claimed that their work differed from other pictorial histories because it attempted "to use photographs as evidence instead of illustration". With pictures, text and themes blending, that endeavour left the conviction that photographs could be used as a documentary source. The format of Immigrants tends to frustrate a like achievement. The essays are separated from the photographic "evidence"; the latter has been placed at ends of chapters with a text which tends to repeat points made in the essays. Even more of a problem in executing an innovation, the authors may well have worked with a topic that is not the most appropriate. The photographs are impressive, they do stir emotions, but then that has been a long standing use in traditional illustrated works. The point is this, does the book truly demonstrate that photographs have been read? Mayer and Wade impress because their subject includes tangible

elements of city-building: architecture, construction techniques and spatial relationships. They "read" photographs on these topics because pictures "tell us things we cannot get easily or at all in other ways". Harney and Troper prepared a text which does not convincingly demonstrate the reading of photographs; their telling points came from traditional sources and oral history. The one contribution that their photographs make, beyond illustrating, is that the search uncovered essential oral history sources: "Almost without exception photographs also unlock a stream of memories". The limitations of oral history are too well known to be cited here, but one hopes to see more of their effort to coordinate photo research "with a systematic oral history project". Clearly a more explicit discussion of method is required and perhaps their work will be valued for opening such an area of concern.

Therefore, despite a different ambition, Immigrants remains a traditional history with excellent illustrations. It does, moreover, avoid sugary nostalgia which characterizes many Toronto "picture books". But it also avoids footnotes and bibliography. The hard-nosed look at Toronto and the failure to mention the building blocks that made so much of the work possible points to a basic ambiguity. The book has been pitched at two levels: first, informing the urban community and second, presenting a scholarly contribution to urban-social history. Contributions are most evident in its service to the former; urban specialists might have wished for more fulfilment of promise.

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