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Alexander, John K. *Render Them Submissive: Responses to Poverty in Philadelphia, 1760-1800*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980. Pp. xi, 234. $15.00

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Hershberg can claim more success in the pursuit of a new concept of urbanization but the most important step remains his own introductory chapter which is more an inspiration to research than a specification of actual process. *Philadelphia* emphasizes innovative themes such as the changing interrelationships of residence and place of work during industrial development, and the objective meaning of class and race within nineteenth-century urban social structure. However, important gaps remain in the delineation of Philadelphia's urbanization; many Canadian historians will be disappointed, for example, that the promotional activity of civic leaders is largely ignored. Between the lines, Hershberg also conveys this kind of disappointment and he undoubtedly would have welcomed to the project historians interested in topics such as civic politics.

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Holli, Melvin G., and Jones, Peter d'A., eds. *Biographical Dictionary of American Mayors, 1820-1980: Big City Mayors.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981. Pp.xii, 451. Tables, $69.50

This biographical dictionary details the political careers of 679 individuals who served as mayors of fifteen selected American cities between 1820 and 1980. The fifteen cities – Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and St. Louis – were chosen, the editors state, because they "have maintained *consistent* leadership in population and historical importance since the 1820s," the decade "popular election became the norm" in municipal politics in the United States. Not everyone will be happy with the selection criteria, the editors admit, but they promise a second volume to cover the mayors of fifty American cities omitted from the present study.

Although they vary in length, the biographies generally run about 500 words and relay valuable information on the family background and business interests as well as the political career of each mayor. Important elections are highlighted, the results dissected, and major political trends briefly noted. As well, the biographies discuss the form of government, population, and place of each city in the urban hierarchy during the incumbency of each mayor. Information is most complete for mayors elected since 1960, with current office-holders receiving the most print. Each entry also includes a note on sources, which scholars will find extremely useful since doctoral theses, manuscript collections, newspaper obituaries and the like

are listed in addition to the more usual published material.

The dictionary also offers twelve appendices, the most useful of which group the mayors by city, political affiliation, ethnic background, religion and place of birth. Surprisingly, given the ubiquity of the pocket calculator, the editors have not commented on trends in office-holding for the fifteen cities, either individually or as a whole. They limit their remarks to a two-page preface in which they plead the importance of studying big cities, a point surely conceded by all those who would consult this dictionary. It is disappointing to see the editors make so little use of the data they have compiled. Moreover, their taciturnity leaves the reader quite uncertain as to the rationale behind appendices tabulating the American urban population for the period 1790-1970, the population of the fifteen cities from 1820 to 1960, and of their ethnic and racial composition at arbitrarily selected intervals between 1860 and 1970.

Obviously the editors have aimed this volume, and presumably the larger one to follow, at reference libraries and, given the high quality of scholarship in the biographical entries, libraries should acquire it. Individual scholars will no doubt find the price too much to pay for a work that fails to draw more general conclusions about the American political system.

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Alexander, John K. *Render Them Submissive: Responses to Poverty in Philadelphia, 1760-1800.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980. Pp.xi, 234. $15.00

Render Them Submissive offers a curiously fragmented and one-dimensional view of attitudes towards poverty in an urban setting during the economic dislocation of the 1760s, the war between America and Britain, and the post-revolutionary era of reform and reconstruction. Despite these momentous events, John Alexander argues that neither the nature of poverty nor the "general" attitudes towards it changed in Philadelphia. All that he is willing to concede about underlying social and economic conditions is that the doubling of the city's population might have augmented distress. What changed was the political climate in which poor and non-poor co-existed. In this new environment, Alexander postulates, the poor became a sinister, dangerous class which the leaders of post-revolutionary urban society wished to control and reform rather than simply to relieve. The book's hypothesis, then, is that the extension of the franchise, part of the vaunted American egalitarianism, gave political power to

the poor of Philadelphia, much to the chagrin of their socio-economic betters. Several bread and election riots are cited to support the contention that the newly enfranchised poor posed a threat to the political status quo. Beyond that no evidence is presented that such a fear existed and was justified. No sustained critique of the misuse of power by any champion of the lower orders, which might have heightened their fear and suspicion, is mentioned.

Unable to substantiate fear as a motive for antipathy towards the poor, the author hits on moral rectitude as the determinant of contemporary attitudes. Poor people were categorized either as worthy, moral, and honest or vicious, immoral, and undeserving. In a series of loosely related chapters describing the conditions of the poor, the political structure of urban society and attitudes towards crime, public and private poor relief, and charity education, Alexander tells us that contemporaries responded to poverty by praising the virtues of honest poverty and by trying to convince the dishonest poor to emulate their morally superior counterparts.

Anxious to avoid inconvenient complications, Alexander omits all reference to other contemporary categorizations of poverty. What of the casual and permanent poor? Many of the relief projects and social institutions highlighted in this study catered specifically to these economic and life-cycle conditions of poverty. What about the transient and resident poor? If Philadelphia was similar to other cities on the eastern seaboard, it did not want to relieve poor people who belonged elsewhere. Much of the explanation for the eager promotion of the recommendations system was related to the perceived need to identify the poor, not to teach them deference as Alexander would have us believe.

Central to the discussion are two chapters on public poor relief which examine the ubiquitous controversy over outdoor relief. The house of employment, opened in Philadelphia in 1766, not only failed to act as a reformatory for the vicious poor, by 1789 it had become little more than a refuge for the permanent poor. This does not prove, however, the failure of reform so much as the growing magnitude of systemic poverty. Moreover, the elimination of public outdoor relief should be placed within the context either of the expansion of private relief, which Alexander examines in a separate chapter, or of economic expansion in the city, which he considers irrelevant to this analysis.

The penultimate chapter on the education of the poor is the only one in which the author allows that a consensus on attitudes towards the poor might not in fact have existed. For a debate arose between those who wanted to use education to keep the poor in their place and those who wished to provide the poor with opportunities to improve

their condition. Here again, however, the economic aspect is ignored. Whether or not education contributed to upward mobility, it indisputably affected an individual's ability to find gainful employment and thereby avoid the necessity of seeking relief. Indeed, whereas Alexander favours the rather outdated interpretation of social control to explain responses to poverty in the late eighteenth century, an economic explanation seems more plausible. Increasing population, greater extremes of poverty and wealth, and the emergence of the economy-conscious middle class all point to a desire to control, not the poor themselves, but the escalating expense of both relieving and reforming them.

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White, Jerry. *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East End Tenement Block, 1887-1920.* History Workshop Series. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980. Pp.xvii, 301. Figures, maps, illustrations. $30.00

Samuel, Raphael, ed. *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding.* History Workshop Series. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981. Pp.xiii, 355. Illustrations. $32.00

These two recent volumes in the History Workshop Series are further tributes to the good sense and fruitfulness of its conception and the inspirational drive and tenacity of its founding editor, Raphael Samuel. For more than ten years now, Samuel has been challenging the arcane exclusivism of the academic establishment in his attempt "to bring history closer to the central concerns of people's lives." By drawing on energies outside the profession (though welcoming co-operation with academics who share his concerns), he has created more than a new school, he has created a movement. History Workshop with its journal, monographs, conferences and distinctive "enthusiasms" (its book reviews are called just that) is avowedly socialist and primarily concerned with working-class history. What needs equal emphasis, however, is that, if this is "people's history," it is also often very good history, by several non-partisan criteria. In his own work and editorial direction, Samuel never lets zeal or sentiment excuse the need for scholarly rigour, and he has in particular pioneered the new study of local and oral history. Based upon some six years of often difficult interviews with a notorious East End criminal (Arthur Harding, 1886-   ) who flourished in the early years of the century, Samuel's own volume here is a *tour de force* of oral history. Jerry White's community study of a sub-enclave of London's artisanat within a specific built environment is an impressive piece of micro-history with an effective