

Stradling, David. *Smokestacks and Progressives: Environmentalists, Engineers, and Air Quality in America, 1881–1951*. Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. Pp. x, 270. Black and white illustrations, bibliographical essay, index. US\$42.50 (hardback)

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cially. Others reveal something of the ethnic diversity of the city and its impact on Edmonton's cultural life, or tell us more about the lives of some famous and not-so-famous Edmontonians (people as varied as fur trader James Bird, early businessman Alexander Taylor, suffrage activist and magistrate Emily Murphy, labour politician and mayor Elmer Roper, musician Tommy Banks, and sports entrepreneur Peter Pocklington).

Like all conference proceedings, these essays are somewhat uneven in quality, but there is enough in *Edmonton: The Life of a City* to justify careful perusal.

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Hamlin, Christopher. *Public Health and Social Justice in the Age of Chadwick: Britain 1800–1854*. Cambridge Studies in the History of Medicine. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pp. vii, 368. 7 black and white illustrations, and index. US\$64.95

Nineteenth-century urban historians are familiar with campaigns to clean up unsanitary cities through the provision of clean water and the efficient removal of human and industrial waste. This public health movement, as it is usually called, took its origins in early Victorian Britain under the leadership of the bureaucrat Edwin Chadwick, and by the end of the century his program for urban renewal had been largely adopted in England and abroad. Analysis of the differential implementation of sanitary reform is a staple of Victorian urban history, yet according to the medical historian Christopher Hamlin the content of Chadwick's program itself has never been subject to proper scrutiny. Historians have accepted Chadwick's paradigm for public health as though it was the only possible rational solution to the crisis of urbanization. In this important book, Hamlin subjects Chadwick's model of public health to critical reappraisal. Chadwick, Hamlin argues, did not discover the sanitary solution to excessive urban death and disease. Rather, he actively constructed a narrow, technocratic, conservative version of public health in contrast to a rival social medicine with far more reformist potential.

The first two chapters outline the state of social medicine before Chadwick. Here Hamlin brilliantly recovers a lost tradition that was especially prominent among Poor Law medical practitioners and Scottish physicians. Medical men had realized well before Chadwick that filthy circumstances and water predisposed the poor to ill health, yet their theory of disease admitted a much greater range of potentially destabilizing influences on health than did Chadwick's. They were especially concerned with work and wages, and with the medical consequences of low pay and brutal working conditions.

This early social medicine was, however, never institutionalized in Britain, and one of Hamlin's goals is to explain that failure. Hamlin

devotes five chapters – more than half of the book – to the years 1833 to 1845 during which Chadwick created the sanitary version of public health. Chadwick was, he argues, fully aware of the Scottish strand of social medicine, and providing an alternative to it was the *raison d'être* of his famous 1842 *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*. Far from being an empirical investigation of excessive mortality, Hamlin notes, the *Report* was a polemical, ideological document designed to preclude certain forms of analysis rather than to foster proactive behavior.

This is the heart and soul of the book. Hamlin's lesson that Chadwickian public health is not an objective response to deteriorating conditions is well taken. Yet one cannot but feel that Hamlin protests too much at Chadwick's reactionary tendencies. Although Chadwick's public health may have been less threatening to the status quo than the earlier social medicine, to call it politically "innocuous" (15, 83, 157, 185) may strike some readers as special pleading.

Three following chapters focus on Chadwick's attempt to create constituencies for public health: in Parliament, which resulted in the passage of the 1848 Public Health Act; in towns, which generated widespread official inspections of localities; and among civil engineers, which conveniently marks the end of the book and Chadwick's permanent exile from government service in 1854. Hamlin's attempt to deal with what he calls the marketing of sanitation to towns is the least satisfying chapter for urban historians; there is little in the way of local studies here. To be fair, Hamlin reserves his analysis of the workings of public health for a future volume, and even with this limitation, future treatments of local sanitary reform will be indebted to Hamlin's reappraisal.

This provocative book should be of interest to a wide range of readers. It is a deeply researched, theoretically informed, and engagingly written attempt to fully integrate public health into Victorian social and political history.

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"I have heard it said," wrote the City of Winnipeg's Smoke Inspector in 1909, "that a 'smoky city means a prosperous city,' but common sense is opposed to such an assertion." Smoke, W.F. Thornley argued, "means waste, it also means that the atmosphere is fouled by unconsumed carbon ... which may mitigate against the public health, in addition to being a menace to the comfort of the individual."

Though Winnipeg's air quality had shown some recent improvement, he reported, "there is still work to be done."

Winnipeg's smoke problem was hardly unique. As David Stradling makes abundantly clear in *Smokestacks and Progressives*, the "smoke nuisance" was a characteristic feature of urban life across the United States (and Canada, too, as the Winnipeg example demonstrates). A by-product of an urban industrial order built on cheap, soft (bituminous) coal, dense smoke clouds cast a gloomy pall over city life leaving a blanket of grimy, acidic soot draped across local landscapes. Belched from manufacturing and apartment chimneys alike, as well as emanating from coal-fired steam engines, smoke emerged as yet another obstacle to the construction of a civilized industrial society.

Smokestacks and Progressives tells the story of the fight to improve air quality in a number of major American cities, including such urban smoke chambers as Pittsburgh, Chicago, and Birmingham. Not surprisingly, the smoke issue was first raised by the so-called "progressive reformers," those upper- and middle-class do-gooders who spent an enormous amount of energy between 1880 and 1920 attempting to cleanse the moral fabric of industrial America. Like reform crusades against disease, drink, and prostitution, antismoke advocates were, says Stradling, "steeped in Victorian ideas of cleanliness, health, aesthetics and morality." In drawing a direct connection between the purity of the urban atmosphere and the relative moral health of the local population, smoke reformers – a good many of whom were women – worked tirelessly to have municipal by-laws passed to eradicate the smoke evil.

For the most part, the reformers succeeded: many major American cities passed smoke ordinances designed to purify the urban atmosphere. Ironically, such reform success, Stradling argues, ultimately aborted a fledgling environmental movement. In order to enforce the law, municipalities were forced to rely on smoke experts – like Winnipeg's W.F. Thornley – who were conversant with the technical language of coal, boilers, and locomotive engines. The result, Stradling suggests, was the transformation of the smoke problem from an issue of high moral (read environmental) probity to a mere matter of technological efficiency.

By any standard, *Smokestacks and Progressives* is an impressive achievement and an important contribution to the growing literature on the history of environmental politics. Those who argue that the politics of pollution is a relatively recent phenomenon will be hard pressed to maintain that position, given Stradling's detailed dissection of the local politics of smoke control.

That said, the book is not without its problems. Most obvious is Stradling's failure to set the smoke issue in its proper context. Though he does pay some attention to London's notorious "fog," Stradling offers little insight into the European experience with smoke, though the first smoke ordinance can be traced back to at least the fourteenth century.

Perhaps more serious is Stradling's failure to identify that while coal smoke generated some reformist angst, it was smelter

smoke that produced the most visceral conflict throughout Europe and North America. Moreover, unlike Stradling's comfortable urban reformers, victims of smelter smoke were prepared to challenge the economic and political authority of some of the most powerful corporations in North America in order to alleviate the smoke burden. Set against a wave of bitter smelter smoke wars, reformist pressure for tepid smoke by-laws was mild by comparison.

The contrast between the intense social conflict generated by smelter smoke and the modest reform campaign for urban smoke abatement raises serious doubts about Stradling's contention that "the philosophy driving the antismoke movement was closely akin to modern environmentalism." At its best, the contemporary environmental movement offers a compelling challenge to the corporate economic order's excessive materialism and its voracious appetite for consumption. Moreover, the best of modern environmentalism is prepared to sacrifice fleeting economic growth for sustained ecological integrity and social justice.

Antismoke reform of a century ago, as Stradling himself concedes, offered no such vision. The reformers belief in health and beauty – which Stradling mistakenly identifies as the basis of modern environmentalism – is simply an antecedent of the "green-washed" corporate product that masquerades as modern environmentalism today. Indeed it is precisely the co-opted character of the smoke reform campaign, free of any redeeming environmental or social value, that constitutes the real message of *Smokestacks and Progressives*.

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Collin, Jean-Pierre, et al., *La Rive-Sud de Montréal. Dynamique intermunicipale et intégration métropolitaine*. Montréal: INRS-Urbanisation, 1998, 274 pages.

:La Rive-Sud de Montréal est-elle un ensemble urbain à part entière? Quel est le degré de cohésion interne de cet espace qui comprendrait, selon les auteurs, les MRC Lajemmerais, Champlain, Roussillon et La Vallée-du-Richelieu. Et quels sont ses rapports avec l'agglomération urbaine de Montréal d'une part, et la région de la Montérégie d'autre part? Ce sont là les questions que pose un groupe de chercheurs d'INRS-Urbanisation, dans un ouvrage qui constitue une version révisée d'un rapport préparé à la demande de la Ville de Longueuil. La pertinence des questions posées est grande, étant donné l'acuité des débats actuels portant sur les structures politico-administratives du territoire québécois. Les chercheurs d'INRS-Urbanisation sont bien placés pour aborder ces questions puisque le premier auteur de cet ouvrage a été assez étroitement associé aux travaux de la Commission nationale sur les finances et la fiscalité locales dont le rapport, connu sous le nom de «Rapport Bédard», a été rendu public en avril 1999.