Editorial note

> The whole purpose of the *Yearbook* is . . . to sustain the disciplined
> approach to the study of urban history, to encourage the sharper
> definition of its objects and the pioneering of more precise
> analytical techniques, and to provide a thorough information
> service for its practitioners covering current research and publica-
> tion across as wide a field as can properly be handled.

So proclaimed the editorial in the first issue of the *Urban History
Yearbook*, and that policy remains in place in this the seventeenth
edition, and the first to bear a volume number.

As a forum for the exchange of ideas and information, as an oppor-
tunity to explore alternative methods and approaches and to discuss
sources and evidence, the *Yearbook* has a unique role to play. Judged
by longevity and subscriptions, if by nothing else, it is one which
continues to offer a valued research and reference tool to a broadly
defined group of urban historians. The combination of articles,
reviews, surveys of periodical literature, synopses of theses, and a
distillation of proceedings from national and international
conferences has no equivalent among history periodicals, and this
format itself permits something of the evolutionary nature of the
subject matter to emerge — another editorial policy expressed in the
early issues.

The current group of articles offers some challenging urban vistas.
Mayne reviews a specific aspect of urban imagery, the slum, and
investigates the making and reproduction of myths. In so doing he
offers an historical dimension to labelling theory, and demonstrates
some possibilities for bridging between historical sociology and urban
history. Though expounded in an Australian context, Mayne's
methodological message is deeply significant for British and North
American urban historiography since it deals with the transmission
of preconceptions; he urges urban historians to re-examine

terminology, to beware contemporaries' labels, and sounds a warning about such complacency. Meller shows that though prominent town planning propagandists such as Geddes and Mumford alerted the world to the interconnections between social processes and spatial form, town planning ideology and reconstruction after two world wars both replicated and reinforced the concept of separate spheres for men and women.

Both Meller and Mayne seek to place their work in a broad context, laden with significance beyond the specific arenas of housing and town planning. As such they are exemplars of an editorial policy stated in the first issue of the *Yearbook*, and restated above.

Morris throws down a challenge. In so doing, he, too, responds to the editorial policy with its licence to go beyond the purely research-based paper. Some academics have contemplated an urban agenda; many have shirked the definition of urban; but few dare a prescriptive role, far less one of 'relevance', for urban history. Urbanism is, was and will remain about the nature of regulation and intervention, about private and public structures by which to control society, and about how economic efficiency, social justice and technological change can be managed. More specifically, the indirect impact of one set of decisions upon another group necessitates compensatory and accommodationist responses. This may be financial or in the form of political concessions to affected interests, and Morris enunciates with calm conviction why, as such issues have come to the top of the contemporary political agenda, urban history has an unprecedented opportunity to inform debate.

Urban history as a socially useful and valid dimension to contemporary issues also surfaced recently in a series of imaginative essays edited by Richard Lawton and entitled *The Rise and Fall of Great Cities*.[2] In 1972, in the course of his inaugural lecture[3] entitled 'An Age of Great Cities', Lawton borrowed from Robert Vaughan's publication (1843) by the same name and noted the unprecedented pace of nineteenth century urban change. Not only were social, economic and demographic changes presented as incomparably dynamic, but Victorian legacies remained evident in the twentieth century landscape. If the inaugural lecture 'professed' the importance of the city as a historical laboratory in which to study the social and spatial processes underpinning urbanization, implicitly it also addressed the contemporary city as a living organism, relevant to modern policy issues. That credo, updated in a collection of essays by distinguished urbanists, takes a long-term view of city development and reviews the process of urban mutation in a British context. In their conceptual and historical sweep the essayists demonstrate what has evidently eluded Joyce in a recent review,[4] namely, that urban history is not simply an antiquarian interest in places, but about evolving economic, social and political processes which shaped towns, individually and collectively.

Paradoxically, Lawton's title, *The Rise and Fall of Great Cities*,

suggests a pessimistic view of urban prospects, yet Lawton and most of the contributors take the positive stance that cities have always been under varying degrees of demographic and environmental pressure, and that the enduring urban conflict between public interest and private gain will continue to pose problems, to which cities will respond. This offers a further view of the 'externalities' to which Morris' *Yearbook* article refers. Several contributors to the Lawton volume argue that the eventual urban environmental outcome, both physical and moral, will be neither better nor worse, but different, since the city is an artifact of the society in which it is found, and society will continue to redefine policies and amend organizational structures in accordance with its evolving priorities. In the dynamic of urban adaptation various authors forge an effective link between past and present, and in essence argue that cities are what society tolerates.

Such a view positions the urban dimension as a dependent variable, the outcome of economic, social and political forces determined *extra muros*, and thus beyond the control or even influence of city dwellers. Such a view, presumably shared by Joyce, presupposes that, as a dependent variable, the city, with its unique characteristic of physical proximity, did not shape its own townscape and develop specific social and institutional structures to deal with conflicts of interest. The historiography of both the early modern period and the nineteenth century amply demonstrates that towns were often muscularly independent. They were not puppets.

Morris claims that 1990 is 'a point of unprecedented opportunity'. This is because the current political agenda is heavily skewed towards issues which can be clarified with reference to urban history. Urban education, local taxation, civic services, the funding of arts and recreation, and the provision of the water supply, as well as policies concerned with race, unemployment and crime, are all cases where the private versus the public dimension would be informed by reference to the rich historiography on these subjects. The *Yearbook* has sought to provide a sharper analytical focus on such academic issues, and responses to Morris' article will be welcome.

Together Mayne, Meller and Morris take a clear and provocative line, and it is anticipated that this will spark replies. But the current *Yearbook* issue also recognizes the importance of giving continued exposure to urban history through diverse disciplinary approaches and temporal coverage, as with Atkins' use of London directories to map long-run spatial changes in the city, and by devoting space to urban archaeology. Nor is the early modern period neglected since Wright addresses the fluidity of urban populations in her account of itinerants in towns. The catholicity of the *Urban History Yearbook*'s contents for 1990 thus perpetuates the established editorial policy of diversity, though not in the strait-jacket of a single academic discipline.

The annual bibliography has been of major importance to

researchers and librarians over the years. Almost 18,000 items have been classified thematically and cross-referenced by town between 1974 and 1990. With help from assistant bibliographers and contributions from some foreign correspondents, and with a break of only one year during this period, the task has been the heavy responsibility of Diana Dixon. Her stalwart efforts can truthfully and appreciatively recorded by the editorial board; but due recognition can only be guessed, since it is the users of the bibliography who remain the beneficiaries of her stamina in the compilation of entries. The indirect contribution of the annual bibliography to urban history scholarship is immeasurable.

A regular feature of the *Urban History Yearbook* until 1980 was the Register of Research — a broadly defined listing of active researchers both inside and outside higher education institutions, and those registered for M.Phil or Ph.D degrees. In 1981 this register was separated from the *Yearbook*, and a revised and updated second edition was published in 1990 which is available from: The Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RH. Compiled by Diana Dixon, and containing names, addresses, fields of interest, recently completed theses and those still in progress, and related details of more than 1,000 researchers, this, too, is a welcome research tool spawned by the *Urban History Yearbook*.

Finally, to those who referee articles, offer advice and provide the considerable support necessary to produce the diverse elements of the *Yearbook*, the editorial board would like to record their appreciation. Their reward may even be in heaven, but on urban earth at least their contributions to the annual enrichment of the general field of urban history are in the minds of researchers.

Notes

1 H.J. Dyos, 'Editorial', *Urban History Yearbook*, 1974, 5.
2 Richard Lawton, ed., *The Rise and Fall of Great Cities*, London and New York: Belhaven Press, 1989.
3 Reprinted as 'An age of great cities', *Town Planning Review*, 43, 1972, 199-224.
4 Patrick Joyce reviewing R.J. Morris, ed., *Class Power and Social Structure in British Nineteenth Century Towns*, in *Social History*, 13, 1988, 245-7.

Instructions to Contributors

The editorial board welcomes submissions from authors on all aspects of urban history. Articles of a comparative or thematic nature are especially encouraged, as are articles which raise methodological issues. Manuscripts seeking to place the development of individual towns or cities in a wider framwork are also welcomed. No historical period is excluded.

Submission of papers

Two copies should be sent to the Editor, Dr Richard Rodger, Department of Economic and Social History, University of Leicester LE1 7RH. Copies on disk (Mackintosh, IBM compatible or by E-mail UHY @ UK. AC. LEICESTER. VAX) are welcome once a paper has been accepted for publication.

Preparation of papers

Papers should not normally excede 6000 words, and should be typed, double-spaced and on A4 or equivalent paper, with the author's name and address on a separate page. Tables should be submitted on a separate page, with captions, as should figures or diagrams. A clear indication should be given as to their location in the text. Figures and diagrams should be provided in camera-ready form once the paper has been accepted for publication. All notes, also double spaced, should be end-notes. Articles should be cited in the form: A. Spokesman, 'Teaching as missionary work', *Journal of Psychics*, **13** (1988) 35–9; books should be cited as: W. Reuter, *History a Day Early*, (1995), 24–58. Harvard-style references are *not* acceptable.

Style sheet

Further details and a style sheet are available from the Editor, or from Leicester University Press, University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH.

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