

Leavitt, Judith Walzer. *The Healthiest City: Milwaukee and the Politics of Health Reform*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1982. Pp. vii, 279. Tables, maps, illustrations. \$25.00 (U.S.)

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nated banking system, assured the less prominent role for the local entrepreneurial elite and that Calgary would be much less the master of its own destiny. In the same vein, McComb's chapter 'Conservatism and Culture' is of particular interest, for Calgary as much as Houston is the most conservative city within its national orbit. Yet for reasons that beg analysis, Calgary's conservatism is at once the same and undeniably different. Such parallels and contrasts are intriguing. A serious study of the two cities, one as the measure of the other, would seem to promise attractive rewards.

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Leavitt, Judith Walzer. *The Healthiest City: Milwaukee and the Politics of Health Reform*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1982. Pp. vii, 279. Tables, maps, illustrations. \$25.00 (U.S.)

Prior to World War II, public responsibility for the provision of social services in North America rested primarily with municipal government. Yet Canadian and American historians have given little attention to the pioneering role assumed by local authorities in developing social policies which would ultimately become the backbone of the so-called welfare state. Fortunately, Judith Leavitt offers a much needed local perspective in her book, *The Healthiest City: Milwaukee and the Politics of Health Reform*.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin is representative of many mid-sized North American cities which had to confront the problems that accompanied dynamic urban growth and social and economic change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As the economic centre of the region, Milwaukee grew from roughly 20,000 in 1850 to 373,000 in 1910. Much of this increase occurred as a result of immigration and by 1890, 20 per cent of the inhabitants did not speak English as their mother tongue. Germans and Poles were the dominant ethnic groups, and their concentrated presence in specific wards added an important dimension to the process and progress of health reform. In addition, Milwaukee's municipal politics contributed to the evolution of preventive health measures primarily due to the presence of a firmly-committed Socialist party with substantial middle class support. By examining Milwaukee's development from a dirty, disease-ridden and over-crowded city in the late nineteenth century to a healthy, sanitary centre which consistently won the National Health Conservation contests in the twentieth, Leavitt has presented a thought-provoking introduction to the politics of health reform and made a solid contribution to the slowly-growing literature in the field of municipal welfare policy.

*The Healthiest City* rests on a firm foundation of research. Leavitt has consulted the annual reports of Milwaukee's health department, the Wisconsin board of health's reports, a wide-ranging spectrum of daily papers including the ethnic press, the local medical society's records and the papers and publications of civic welfare groups. Consequently she is able to trace not only the administrative history of public health services in Milwaukee but also the efforts of lay and medical reformers to achieve change. To present her material, Leavitt has chosen a thematic rather than a narrative structure. In her opening chapter, she supplies a brief history of Milwaukee's demographic and territorial expansion between 1840 and 1912. She pays close attention to the changing ethnic composition of the city and quantitatively proves that ethnicity was a factor in mortality from specific diseases such as diphtheria. Her statistical profile of disease and death in the city also lends credence to the hypothesis of the British scholar, Thomas McKeown, that public health measures and changing attitudes towards personal hygiene contributed to improvements in health and longevity. Next, she discusses in general terms the appointments and policies of the health commissioners active between 1867 when the Health Department was established and 1912 when the health-oriented Socialist government was defeated. Leavitt's major contention is that civic governments responded to specific disease threats with prodding from health commissioners and concerned laymen during the nineteenth century, but that political, economic, and cultural factors more often determined the evolution of health policies.

To validate her thesis, Leavitt offers three case studies of important health concerns. In her chapter on smallpox, she describes graphically the way in which the threat of epidemic disease galvanized politicians and health officers into action. She points out that cultural influences such as Polish opposition to isolation and quarantine were equally potent factors in limiting the success of preventive endeavours in the nineteenth century. Moreover, she uses the medical controversy over the efficacy of vaccination to indicate how medical knowledge and professional cohesiveness (or lack of it) aided or hampered the health department in its efforts. In the two succeeding chapters on garbage disposal and milk purification, Leavitt again highlights the political and economic interests which were able to dominate discussions about the best methods of dealing with these environmental issues. Each of the case studies provides a probing analysis of the reform process and demonstrates how the politics of confrontation which characterized the health department in its early years was gradually replaced by the politics of cooperation as the health commissioners and their staffs became more accustomed to health department procedures, and the medical profession became more united and supportive of preventive services.

In chapter six, "The Volunteers," Leavitt adds a further dimension to her study by demonstrating the way in which female-dominated voluntary groups and philanthropic indi-

viduals supported health reforms and spear-headed the demand for an extension of services during the Progressive Years. Her insights concerning the motivations, activities, and impact of the reformers is carried through into her discussion of Milwaukee's attempt to lower infant mortality and to combat influenza in 1918.

Leavitt concludes her work by presenting an evaluation of the factors which she believes have determined the success or failure of health reform in general. She summarizes her six categories as "the nature of the issue, medical theory and abilities, economic interests, political pressures, individual actions, and social and cultural diversities" (p. 241). Her conclusions are both convincing and inspiring; convincing because they so clearly put Milwaukee's experience into perspective and inspiring because they suggest a model for Canadian and American urban historians to emulate. All in all, Leavitt's monograph is an excellent first step towards a North American overview of public health reform.

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Cranz, Galen. *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America*. Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: The MIT Press, 1982. Pp. xiii, 347. Maps, illustrations. \$25.00 (U.S.).

*The Politics of Park Design* is the first history of "the American park movement in one account, not restricted to one city, one region, or one period" (p. xi). Basing her study on the assumption that urban parks developed in a "remarkably homogeneous" fashion, sociologist Galen Cranz traces the history of city parks in three centres, New York, Chicago and San Francisco. The book first examines the evolution of public parks ideology from 1850 to the present, focussing on the assumptions and ideals of park promoters and administrators. The second half assesses the socio-economic position of park enthusiasts and park recipients, concluding with suggestions for future park development in the United States.

The core of this volume is to be found in Cranz's typology of four ideal types of urban parks, each representing a stage in the park movement's overall development. Public parks first took the form of "pleasure grounds," which dated from 1850 to 1900. Planned according to a coherent body of principles based on the artistic concept of the picturesque, the pleasure ground was meant to draw together families from all social classes. An institution advanced by middle class reformers and aesthetic idealists, the "romantic" pleasure ground, with its curved lines and natural contours, was intended to serve as a counterpoise to the harsh realities of urban life. The "reform park" that followed centred more

narrowly on children and, to a lesser extent, working class men. Built upon the progressive reformers' faith in specialization and expert guidance, the park now became a smaller but more highly structured ground where professional supervisors would organize play. In so doing it would act as a vehicle of social progress. But the moral vision and philosophical consistency of early park designs gave way after 1930 to facilities where recreation services, regardless of type, were to be delivered on demand. The loss of idealism associated with this "public service" approach to park planning led to increasing bureaucratization of park systems and an emphasis on efficient management at the expense of reform. Cranz's final stage of development, the least convincing of her models, is defined as the post-1965 era of the "open-space system." Predicated on an "anything goes" philosophy, parks now took on any shape, size or function, often embracing elements of popular culture that had previously been excluded from parks, even in the recent "recreational facilities" era.

The value of Cranz's sociological approach is to be found in the clarity with which new directions in park planning are isolated and identified. She provides an analytical framework currently missing in the American literature on urban parks. Such precision also serves to obscure the complexity of park history, however. Cranz's model, which emphasizes the typical characteristics of contemporary thinking in each period, overlooks the extent to which traditional attitudes about parks persisted across the sharply-defined temporal boundaries of her typology. Referred to as "layering," this continuity is mentioned but not analyzed. Similarly, by organizing the book so rigorously into chapters according to function (principles, promoters, users, beneficiaries, role of parks), Cranz has isolated from one another her examination of park principles and the sources that nourished them. A narrative format might have integrated cause and effect more fully while sharpening the work's analytical thrust.

Of more concern is the extent to which *The Politics of Park Design* is a comprehensive history of urban parks in the United States. While the sub-title suggests otherwise, it is not. One has to question the extent to which metropolitan trends, evident in large centres like New York, extended throughout the urban system. In addition, one wonders what proportion of new parks created during the 1900-1930 period were "reform parks," and what proportion were merely utilitarian grounds laid out in response to the growing popular demand for athletic fields. Comments about public use of parks notwithstanding, *The Politics of Park Design* is written essentially from the top down, focussing on the ideas of park innovators. But recent literature suggests a different approach to park history. It stresses that, historically, society's lower middle and working classes had their own views of how public space should be used, a perspective not encompassed in the "four distinct constellations" of ideas about city parks discovered by Cranz (p. x). Roy Rosenzweig, in an essay cited in Cranz's bibliography, argues that in the