

# Editorial note

The current strengthening of interest in urban studies in the Americas and Australasia seems likely to have new implications for the study of urban history. The Canadian Institute of Urban Studies founded at the University of Winnipeg in 1969 has supported urban history from the outset especially with the publication of the *Urban History Review*, but now Australians have taken a new initiative in publishing an *Urban Studies Yearbook* (Allen and Unwin), as very much a multi-disciplinary enterprise: the first issue of 1983 was edited by Peter Williams and focused on social process and the city. In Britain, the 1982 Open University course (No. D202) *Urban Change and Social Conflict* is worth noting for its two historically based units and the way it defines the nature of urban studies. The importance of urban study as a form of 'critical scholarship' is the theme, on a narrower front, of Gerald Grace (ed.), *Education and the City: Theory, History and Contemporary Practice* (1984) in which the editor draws interestingly on neo-Marxist analysis.

Another significant methodological development is the growth of interest in comparative urban history. Japan has been in the fore here with the *Comparative Urban History Review*, published since 1982 by a Tokyo-based group. However, the Canadian Institute of Urban Studies reports the forthcoming publication of a volume of conference papers, *Urbanisation in the Americas: The Background in Comparative Perspective* which looks to be a new departure with the inclusion of Latin American countries. This *Yearbook* has sought to make its own contribution to comparative study. In this issue, Peter Clark draws attention to a course on urbanization in Western Europe involving co-operation between a British university and universities in Holland and Belgium. There is also an article on the urban history of Athens as a study in 'peripheral' urbanization, and a lively review of South African urban history. In the last regard, it is pleasing to note the role of urban history in the growth of a more radical social history in South Africa, thereby reflecting trends that Max Kelly reported on last year in respect of Australia. At the same time, there are continuing tensions in the latter country between social and urban historians to judge from the way that Ian Davey and Kerry Wimshurst question the relevance of an urban-rural dichotomy to the study of education as a central component of social history in a contribution to another comparative venture, *Urban Educational History in Four Nations* (ed. R. K. Goodenow and W. E. Marsden, forthcoming for Sage of New York).

At home, regular communications have been received about the progress of an unusual project to promote the publication of a new 'collective' history of the London County Council. The idea seems to have emanated initially from members of the Historic Buildings Division and has been discussed in 'open' meetings, which have also appointed editors and an advisory committee. These meetings still go on, pending news of grant aid. The scope of publications in urban history generally is a matter that has been under consideration by a sub-committee of the Urban History Group, with Bob Morris taking over as chairman after his election to the Council and as secretary of the Group. There is considerable optimism that a market for urban history still exists, with towns continuing to provide an entry into historical study whether practitioners label themselves as specifically urban historians or not. Further publishing initiatives are needed to reflect changes taking place as new research interests, approaches and topics come to the fore; and there is a case also for a set of 'readings' to aid teaching and exemplify best practice. Discussion has been less about the principle than about the forms new

ventures should take. Meanwhile, an updated version of the *Register of Research in Urban History*, formerly part of the *Yearbook*, is now available as a separate publication of the Urban History Group (price £1.50 on application to myself).

The most important event in the urban history calendar in Britain continues to be the annual two-day conference which from the beginning has been held prior to and at the venue of the Economic History Society conference, normally in late March. After eight years of shouldering responsibility for the programme, Anthony Sutcliffe has handed over to Martin Daunton as chairman of a conference sub-committee. The latter undertook overall planning for the York conference this year and before that in September 1984 organized the first of what might become bi-annual one-day conferences in the form of a colloquium on 'Urban space and building form', the idea being to bring together early modern and modern urban historians with members of various sub-groups, in this case, urban architectural historians, members of the construction history group and some geographers. A report on these and other conferences is provided in the *Yearbook* as usual. It goes to press just too early to include the one-day meeting of the Pre-Modern Towns group in December, another well-supported annual fixture.

This twelfth issue of the *Yearbook* provides a set of articles that range from the medieval period to the twentieth century. Thanks are due to the contributors of these, and to the members of the editorial board who seem to put in more work as each year passes to maintain the world-wide coverage for which we aim. It is a pleasure also to express appreciation of the continuing support and co-operation of Peter Boulton and Susan Martin of Leicester University Press. As in previous years the editor wishes it to be known that he is interested in receiving articles, and suggestions for articles, in keeping with the *Yearbook* – for example, bibliographical surveys, comparative studies, discussions of major themes, accounts of sources and methods, and also of methodological issues, including substantive case studies, provided they are shown to have a methodological significance. Intending contributors should contact the editor at the School of Education, 21 University Road, Leicester.