

## Book Reviews

of the Council strengthened. Scientific standards were also raised.

Reform was too slow for firebrands like Babbage and his supporters. Dr Marie Boas Hall has presented a very balanced account of the ensuing debate on the decline of English science. No one today can accept without reservation Babbage's hysterical outburst on this subject. His views were based on a misapprehension of the function of the Royal Society, and on a misplaced sense of personal grievance. As pointed out by the writer, this conflict was really between the new "professional" scientists and the wealthy amateurs who were professional only in the spirit of the seventeenth-century foundation of the Royal Society—Babbage (a wealthy amateur himself) never recognized this. A thorough revision of the statutes eventually took place in 1847 under the Presidency of the Marquis of Northampton, and a truly scientific society for the scientific élite had then been created. In the second half of the century, the present-day administrative structure evolved, with the President acting as chairman of the governing Council, and the Treasurer and Secretaries as executive officers.

In the second half of the book are described the Royal Society's encouragement of science through its honours and awards, the judicial election of Fellows from what later came to be called the "pure" and "applied" sciences, the awarding of grants first from the Wollaston Bequest and later the Government Grant, and in its capacity as adviser to the government on scientific matters. Also dealt with are the Society's interest in scientific exploration, and its relation with the emerging specialized scientific societies (on the whole, extremely harmonious). Singled out is the Society's long-standing interest in terrestrial magnetism and meteorology. Later expeditions in which the Society was active were more concerned with medicine and biology. The history concentrates on the organizational aspects of this work and not on its scientific content. The Royal Society was also actively involved in the dissemination of scientific information, and in the late 1850s, following up a suggestion by Joseph Henry of the Smithsonian Institution, began the *Catalogue of scientific papers*. Such a catalogue was at that time a very novel concept.

Dr Boas Hall has fully succeeded in her intention to produce a readable introductory survey, useful to both the Fellows of the Royal Society interested in their past, and to professional historians. We learn a great deal about the changing structure of English nineteenth-century science, as mirrored by the premier scientific society which, throughout these changes, remained true to its Royal charter to improve "naturall Knowledge".

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RICHARD ALLEN SOLOWAY, *Birth control and the population question in England 1877–1930*, Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. xix, 418, £23.20.

It would only be a slight exaggeration to describe most writing about fertility over the past century as demonstrating the futility of men telling other men what women ought to be doing. Either by decrying the fall in the birth rate, in the fashion of most eugenicists, or by adopting a neo-Malthusian stance welcoming the arrival of contraception, most commentators on population trends told us much about ideology and relatively little about the determinants of fertility. Of course, we should not be too harsh on these individuals, since present-day demographers have not done much better in unravelling the mystery of fertility decline.

What is most striking about the underlying ideology expressed in writings about population is their profoundly pessimistic character. As Professor Soloway's stimulating book shows, amateur demography was (and probably still remains) an attractive vehicle for the educated expression of social fears. It would be a mistake, though, to locate such opinions only on the margins of politics. Many socialists and neo-Malthusians as well as birth controllers like Marie Stopes were steeped in the same social prejudices held by their most unyielding adversaries.

In effect, the wealth of detail Soloway has amassed about the period 1880–1930 suggests that population questions touch the deepest concerns of thoughtful Englishmen in roughly the same way as religious questions did a century earlier. Professor Soloway, the author of a

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well-known study of English ecclesiastical thought on social questions, was clearly in an ideal position to investigate the campaigns and ruminations on fertility in this period, and he has done the job with exemplary thoroughness and care.

It is possibly to be regretted that the author did not highlight the peculiarities of the English debate on these questions by reference to more European and American writing. To do so would be to define demography as a system less of social biology and statistics than of social thought and rhetoric, bearing the distinctive hallmarks of very different national cultures. That task remains to be done.

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JANET PERCIVAL (editor), *A guide to archives and manuscripts in the University of London*, vol. 1, London, University of London Library Resources Co-ordinating Committee, 1984, A4, pp. xi, 219, £7.50 + postage (paperback).

This welcome guide brings together the results of work done by six archivists on the collections held at the School of Economics, the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University Library, and at Imperial, King's, and University Colleges. Each institution receives a separate entry, which gives a list of manuscript holdings in alphabetical order and useful information to the prospective reader. The utility of the volume is enhanced by a select bibliography and a full name index.

Some entries must surely send any proper historian, i.e. one who relishes the *pulvis literaria* of documents, into an enthusiastic fit of anticipation: 500 *boxes* of the main Beveridge collection and about 3 *bays* of Malinowski papers. For readers of this journal, the archives of University College, with its distinguished medical and scientific traditions, are those of most obvious interest. Though the collections of Chadwick, Galton, Pearson, and Haldane are perhaps best known, they do not exhaust the riches of the UCL holdings: witness those of Barrington, Bayliss, Burdon-Sanderson, Cameron, Carswell, de Beer, Horsley, Jenner, Lewis, Penrose, and Sharpey, plus various students' notes on lectures and demonstrations. If the other five institutions do not rival UCL in their medical archives, they should not be airily dismissed. One wonders, for instance, what jewels lie in the 70 boxes of the British Hospitals Contributory Schemes Association, 1913–47, or in the 21 boxes of the Unicorn Bookshop, covering anarchist and sexually subversive publications of the 1960s (both LSE)?

Janet Percival and her colleagues are to be congratulated for the skill and energy which they have lavished on this first volume, which deserves wide circulation and may be obtained from the Publication Office, University of London, 52 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PJ, allowing 75p for postage. It is an enticing earnest of the second volume, which will cover the remaining schools and institutes of the University.

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JAMES H. CASSEDY, *American medicine and statistical thinking, 1800–1860*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, Harvard University Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. x, 306, £18.00.

Following a course he initially charted out in *Demography in early America: beginnings of the statistical mind, 1600–1800* (1969), James H. Cassedy in his new study carries his account of “statistically minded physicians” (p. viii) up to the start of America's Civil War. Statistical activity among physicians steadily increased during this period, and attained its nineteenth-century peak, Cassedy proposes, in 1860. Enthusiastic but rarely mathematically sophisticated, physicians engaged in a crude Baconian programme of collection, propelled by the belief that enough facts duly enumerated would have something important to say for themselves. Nevertheless, the reform animus of this endeavour is evident, for statistical arguments became central in efforts to improve orthodox medical care of the mentally and