

die hier vorgelegten Beiträge tun. Doch der Band macht zugleich deutlich, daß in den dafür geeigneten Teilbereichen eine primär quantifizierende, mit klaren Fragen arbeitende, Anregungen aus den systematischen Sozialwissenschaften aufgreifende Stadtgeschichte noch sehr viele neue Erkenntnisse bringen kann und in Deutschland im Grunde erst am Anfang steht. Der Band dokumentiert nicht nur den Stand der hiesigen Forschung Ende der 70er Jahre,⁴ sondern er regt hoffentlich auch dazu an, diese Art von mühsamen, aber potentiell ertragreichen Studien (möglichst im Vergleich miteinander) fortzusetzen und weiter zu entwickeln.

Jürgen Kocka

James H. Treble, *Urban Poverty in Britain 1830—1914* (= Batsford Academic Book), B. T. Batsford Ltd., London 1979, 216 pp., clothbound, £ 12.50.

James Treble has produced a worthwhile but unexciting book. He sets out »to delineate the principal routes to poverty in an urban context; to examine its principal socio-economic characteristics; and to chart its course over time« (p. 12). To do so he uses a working definition bequeathed by the classic social investigators of the nineteenth century, which distinguished between »primary« (where aggregate earnings failed to provide a household with a basic minimum of subsistence, or »physical efficiency«, to use Seebohm Rowntree's phrase) and »secondary« poverty (where an adequate household income was squandered by inefficient management). However, as Treble reminds us, in practice the distinction can't be pushed too far, as the definition of minimal subsistence could be so stringent as to exclude any recreational or convenience expenditure, up to and including the practice of thrift (through savings, insurance, and self-improvement). Given what we now know about the structured social, psychological and cultural experience of being or becoming poor, one might add, the distinction is extremely artificial, and under the circumstances the idealized model of a rationally calculating household becomes an unreasonable one to apply. But with this caveat, Treble does a careful and valuable job of considering the measurable evidence of urban poverty.

The book has five main chapters, an introduction and a short conclusion. The first two chapters consider the relationship of poverty to the urban labour market. The author is well-known for his essays on the labour market in Glasgow before the First World War, and here the discussion is predictably solid and informative, proceeding by the meticulous accumulation of examples. Having explored the dimensions of low pay in the context of »a volatile, highly imperfect, and in certain areas, glutted labour market« (p. 13), he goes on to consider the specific problems of unemployment and underemployment. In one of the strongest parts of the book Treble shows how the basic problem of low pay — especially concentrated in the sweated trades and the domestic system, but also in broader areas of female outwork, including box-making, the fur trade, and metal-working (e. g. file-making, nailmaking, chain-making) — was critically overdetermined by »the impact of casualty, seasonality and technological unemployment« (p. 15). When added to the effects of cyclical downturns in the economy (»the main generator of wide-spread indigence on society«, p. 86), these structural factors exposed an enormous proportion of the working class to the experience of poverty (Booth and Rowntree towards the end of the period estimated around 30 per cent), or to

4 Siehe dazu die Einleitung von *W. H. Schröder*, auf der Basis der beiden QUANTUM-Erhebungen über laufende und abgeschlossene Arbeiten zur quantifizierenden historischen Sozialforschung (= Bde. 5 und 10 der Reihe »Historisch-Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungen«, Stuttgart 1978 und 1979). Diese sehr brauchbare, mit dem Register leicht zu erschließende Dokumentation wurde für das Jahr 1980 in Bd. 12 derselben Reihe fortgesetzt (jeweils von den Bearbeitern *W. Bick*, *P. J. Müller* und *H. Reinke* — alle QUANTUM).

some level of serious hardship. A third chapter considers some other causes of poverty, including the »adverse family circumstances« of »sickness, widowhood, large families and old age« (p. 91) and the self-inflicted difficulties of »imprudent budgeting and heavy drinking« (p. 120), while the two final ones deal with the different ways of alleviating the problem, and with the specific issues of food consumption and housing.

It is difficult to quarrel with the careful and judicious survey of the evidence. But there might have been more imagination in the definition of the basic problem, or at least in the pursuit of its larger implications for the economic, social and political history of the period. This is especially true of the more routine discussions of the last two chapters, which add little to what we already know through the copious historiography of the poor law and the less voluminous but equally informative literature of the housing question. At times Treble seems to be tilting against some current social-historical orthodoxies (like the tendency to play down the responsibility of the poor for their own poverty through such things as heavy drinking and other kinds of improvident behaviour), but this potential element of controversy is normally stifled by a prevailing tone of rather flat even-handedness. More seriously, he makes no attempt to locate the importance of factors like seasonality and casualty of employment in the continuing characteristics of British capitalism as a whole, for until a very late stage before the First World War British industry was still extraordinarily dependent on a reserve army of unskilled and irregularly employed labour. Omissions like these make Treble's conclusion — »that Rowntree's considered judgement that between twenty-five and thirty per cent of Britain's urban dwellers subsisted in either primary or secondary poverty« (p. 188) — acceptable, but not particularly inspiring.

Geoff Eley

S. E. Finer, *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick*, third ed., Methuen, London/New York 1980, pp. XII, 555, clothbound, £ 19.50.

Finer's biography of Edwin Chadwick appeared in 1952 and the publication of a new edition is to be welcomed. It would be unfortunate if so admirable a survey of the career of one of the greatest reformers of the nineteenth century in Britain were allowed to go out of print. Chadwick, a disciple of Jeremy Bentham and the philosophical radicals, was closely associated with two major reforms in the nineteenth century — the poor law and public health. When parliament was reformed in 1832 the poor law, still based upon Acts passed in Elizabeth's reign, was administered by some 15,000 parishes. The old and the sick were relieved at home by cash payments. Children were apprentices. Unemployed able-bodied adults were set to work by the parish while those unwilling to work were punished. By 1832 circumstances had greatly changed since the scheme was first put into operation. Britain was becoming industrialised and there were times when unemployment was high in both urban and rural areas. A Royal Commission was appointed to examine the administration of the poor laws. Chadwick was appointed one of the assistant commissioners. Eventually he was responsible — with Nassau Senior — for drafting the report of the Commission.

The report concentrated on the problem of rural pauperism in the southern counties of England. It condemned the allowance system by which low wages were supplemented by a dole from the poor law authorities. It was argued that this encouraged farmers to reduce wages while placing an ever increasing burden upon the ratepayers. Two remedies were suggested and they were embodied in the Poor Law Act of 1834 — the »workhouse test« and the principle of »less eligibility«. Adult able-bodied paupers were to be relieved only in a workhouse in which their standard of life would be lower than that of the lowest paid independent labourer. The difficulty was that the lowest paid workers earned so little that a »less eligible« situation would amount to starvation. Supporters of the new law claimed some success in the