

Book Reviews

to become exclusively a medical institution focusing on curative procedures, and ultimately to expand its clientele to all levels of society. While large-scale involvement of medical men with hospitals doubtless preceded the administrative-institutional transformation of the latter (medical professionalization around the hospital clinic in France following the Revolution may have been one necessary condition for the late-nineteenth-century transformation of hospitals), Cugnetti's detailed study of the Grenoble instance confirms the lack of interaction between organized medicine (with the partial exception of surgeons) and hospitals during the Old Regime. The curious mélange of welfare and penal functions served by the old hospital is evidenced by the Grenoble Hôpital Général's rules concerning discipline. In the scale of punishment inflicted on troublesome patients, the most severe penalty – worse than solitary confinement or ceremonial humiliation – was to be exiled from the institution.

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RONALD L. NUMBERS (editor), *Compulsory health insurance. The continuing American debate*, Westport, Conn., and London, Greenwood Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. xv, 172, £21.95.

American schemes for National Health Insurance were formulated before the First World War and have been pushed, refined, and developed since then. But, aside from the stopgap measures of Medicare and Medicaid, nothing has been introduced to correspond to European and Canadian compulsory health insurance or socialized medicine.

This volume addresses topics in the history of efforts to provide politically acceptable health coverage and alleviate the financial disaster that illness can threaten for Americans. The virtue of this collection of symposium papers, originally presented at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is the range of perspectives it offers. Ronald Numbers, writing as a social historian of medicine, analyses the view of physicians as they responded to “the specter of socialized medicine”, while Monte Poen, a political historian, introduces the delicate world of political expediencies that transformed Truman's lacklustre commitment to “compulsory” health insurance into only another weak strand leading towards Medicare.

The model of British National Health Insurance and the National Health Service has long been scrutinized suspiciously by Americans on both sides of the debate. Its clear weaknesses were made to appear formidable, and scurrilous tales of scandal and cheating were of great influence. This subject, which will be of particular interest to readers of this journal, is handled by Gary Land in a rather less subtle way than one might have expected from a cultural historian. Arthur Visel tear, on the other hand, discusses American attitudes and ideas linking insurance with public health in a very sensitive manner. Focusing on C.-E. A. Winslow, a public health champion of immense influence, Visel tear links two central debates in the organization of medicine during the period from the First World War to the particularly enlightened efforts of Henry Sigerist. Sigerist and Winslow suffered through the most crass form of red-baiting during the dark days of post-Second World War anti-communism, to the point where Winslow had to speak out against the abandonment of reason and attacks against “un-American art, and un-American music, and un-American science”.

Perhaps that extraordinary attitude has characterized many of the critics of health insurance, but Paul Starr, for one, believes that the long debate has brought the idea “from an idealistic youth to a kind of grim maturity”. Certainly, the recent proposals, championed by Edward Kennedy, Jimmy Carter, and their likes, have transformed the gleaming ideal of a healthy and more secure population into a technical dispute about the economics of cost containment.

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FRANCES FINNEGAN, *Poverty and prejudice. A study of Irish immigrants in York 1840–1875*, Cork University Press, 1983, 8vo, pp. x, 209, illus., Ir£15.00.

Frances Finnegan's study of Irish immigrants in York between 1840 and 1875 focuses on their demographic and occupational characteristics through quantitative analysis of census material. Whether the Irish were as antisocial as some contemporaries alleged is also subjected