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tactics and pragmatism he displayed. But Bevan's accomplishment, formidable as it was, has to be put in proper perspective. Unlike Lloyd George in 1911, Bevan had the backing of a movement that already had force. Does Webster deny that? If so, he takes issue with Bevan himself for this is what the Minister had to say when he introduced the Health Service Bill in 1946: "The first reason why a health scheme of this sort is necessary at all is because it has been the firm conclusion of all parties that money ought not to be permitted to stand in the way of obtaining an efficient health service."

Frank Honigsbaum, London

JONATHAN BARRY and COLIN JONES (eds), *Medicine and charity before the welfare state*, Studies in the Social History of Medicine, London and New York, Routledge, 1991, pp. x, 259, £45.00 (0-415-05741-8).

One would not have thought a decade ago that the history of philanthropy would be such an attractive field for scholars today, but, as the welfare state is being reconsidered, more traditional forms of welfare have come back into focus. This book of essays, which covers western Europe from the Middle Ages to the 1940s, is a worthy addition to the burgeoning literature. It is based on papers given at the annual conference of the Society for the Social History of Medicine in 1988. While it tends to treat medical charity in isolation from other charitable forms (some of the writers seem to be ignorant of the work on philanthropy more generally), it does raise a host of important issues, including the relationship of charity to the state, the role of economic factors in determining charitable trends, and the role of medical practitioners in charitable institutions.

The volume brings together a strong team of historians, though in the nature of conference papers some of them have tried harder than others. In general, those essays succeed best which linger over the sources, and keep the jargon at bay and the generalizations within bounds. Perhaps the strongest part of the volume is the Introduction by the editors Jonathan Barry and Colin Jones. They have pieced together the disparate essays with considerable skill and have treated the wider issues with a becoming tentativeness, as befits the present state of research. They are, for example, not altogether happy with the established economic explanations of charitable relief. As they put it, "a neat fit between medical and economic criteria" is not always apparent. More might have been said in the essays about the charitable "disposition", Christian in character, geared to the giver as well as the recipient, which helps to explain why the relatively prosperous mid-Victorian years were a charitable golden age in Britain. It is a weakness of this volume that it does not get beneath the surface of the psychology of religiously motivated charity.

One of the virtues of the book is that it questions, though not for the first time, the Whiggish perspective which assumes that there is a "linear progression" from charity to welfare. Yet there is a danger, despite the efforts of the editors, that the very title of their book may reinforce this dubious notion. The time is ripe for a conference on medical charity *and* the welfare state, which would begin where this volume leaves off. Should it convene, we may find out just how indebted the welfare state, and the National Health Service in particular, is to charitable traditions and funds. Arguably, the voluntary sector, stimulated by government social policy after the Second World War, has been more resilient than the state welfare departments themselves.

F. K. Prochaska, London

JOHN DUFFY, *The sanitarians: a history of American public health*, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1990, pp. 330, \$32.50 (0-252-01663-7).

John Duffy's contributions to the history of medicine in America have been substantial and broad-ranging. His vision of medicine as a discipline encompasses the subject not only in its institutional, clinical and scientific aspects, but also takes in public health. Thus his two-volume

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history of medicine in Louisiana (1958–62) was balanced by the two-volume history of public health in New York (1968); in 1976 he published *The healers*, a history of American medicine, and now *The sanitarians*. Lucidly written, well organised and comprehensive, Duffy's works make pleasurable and informative reading.

The sanitarians spans four centuries of public health in America, from the earliest European settlements to the present day. It is a subject which, as Duffy notes, American historians have tended to neglect, and much research remains to be done. His aim in this book has therefore been to outline the main developments, focusing on organised and institutionalised efforts to improve community health, and to tease out of this account the characteristic patterns which run through American public health history. Many of these are universal, as relevant to other countries as they are to America: acceptance of endemic disease alternating with sharp reactions to epidemic outbreaks; the effects of immigration and urbanisation; the struggle to educate people to replace traditional ways of maintaining health with more effective ones. By detailing the particular experience of America in these areas, Duffy reinforces our general knowledge of the problems which beset the development and enforcement of organised public health measures and policies.

Each country has its individuality, however. In this respect, Duffy's account offers some stimulating insights. In the beginning, for example, there was young colonial America with its unspoiled environment—fresh bracing air, fertile lands, virgin forests, and lakes and streams of pure water. But the colonists brought the sanitary baggage of the old European civilisation with them. The colonies quickly came to harbour endemic diseases and virulent epidemics; the new towns replicated the overcrowding and insanitary conditions which centuries of occupation had created in the Old World.

The huge size of the American continent and the pioneering spirit of the early settlers left a dual legacy to those who attempted to remedy this despoliation in later years. The pioneering spirit was perhaps the root of the evil. Duffy considers that the American commitment to rugged individualism and personal liberty, combined with a suspicion of government controls, have bred a resistance to public health regulations which restrict personal liberty and impose additional costs on business. In addition, Americans have an enduring belief that hard work, thrift, temperance and sound morals guarantee a measure of economic success; this results in contempt for the poor and unhealthy, who are considered responsible for their own misfortunes.

These attitudes reinforced what the country's geographical vastness and early colonial history had initiated: the fragmentation of administrative responsibility for public health, both locally and nationally, as a result of an ever-increasing plethora of privately, municipally, state- and federal-funded agencies. Although Congress has begun, in the last twenty-five years, to attempt comprehensive health planning and co-ordination, powerful vested and local interests (and most recently the Reagan administration) continue to resist and erode such centralising efforts.

The paths by which white middle- and working-class America achieved its modern standards of personal and community health were tortuous but at least led to a satisfactory outcome. There remains the paradox that this wealthy and successful nation still contains pockets of poverty, illiteracy and ill-health more extreme than are to be found in Europe. Duffy is not optimistic about the prospects for improving public health in America towards the turn of the twentieth century, quite apart from such new problems as AIDS. His concluding chapters make sober reading, and leave the reader reflecting on the hidden realities behind the public façades.

Anne Hardy, Wellcome Institute

GERALD N. GROB, *From asylum to community: mental health policy in modern America*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1991, pp. 427, illus., £25.00, \$29.95 (0-691-04790-1).

Professor Grob has made the history of American mental health care very much his own subject, and this third volume takes the story up to 1970, though without any hint of a successor. It can be compared with Kathleen Jones's work on Britain—much shorter but more