

## Book Reviews

D. DESSERTINE and O. FAURE, *Combattre la tuberculose, 1900–1940*, Lyons, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1988, 8vo, pp. 244, illus., Fr. 110.00, (paperback).

Recent French contributions to the history of tuberculosis have been impressive, often iconoclastic, and this volume is a valuable addition to the corpus. As Pierre Guillaume set out to destroy the Western myth of tuberculosis as the gentle killer (in *Du désespoir au salut*, 1986), so Dessertine and Faure undermine the French myth of the early twentieth-century anti-tuberculosis campaign as an “enormous, infallible machine” which eradicated the disease by “modern” methods and became a model for the control of specific diseases.

The book is a local study of the anti-tuberculosis campaign in the Lyonnais, a region which, thanks to private enterprise, took a pioneering part in the struggle. Vigorously written and packed with illuminating observations, it effectively destroys any lingering belief in a coherent, nationally directed anti-tuberculosis campaign. While the administrative perspective continued to be dominated by the late nineteenth-century German policy of prevention and control through the isolation of sufferers, the dire consequences of the First World War left the daily implementation of the policy to local effort. Here the hand of private enterprise is clearly visible, whether in the personnel of the departmental committees, the financing of sanatoria, the sale of charity stamps (which illustrate the volume), or the failure to establish the disease as a worthwhile medical specialty. While sanatoria, dispensaries, and “preventoriums” emerged as the institutional bases of the campaign, no attempt was made to incorporate, coordinate or direct the efforts of the existing institutional structure: the communes, the departments, and the hospitals.

Social themes dominate the argument of this book: tuberculosis was seen as a social disease, to be eradicated by social control and social improvement; yet the broader social history of the region is only glimpsed, tantalisingly suggested by the variety of local experience across the region. While such a short work (some 65,000 words) inevitably has its shortcomings, this lively and stimulating study is well worth careful reading, and constitutes an excellent example of the corrective and positive value of the local historical viewpoint.

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ANGUS McLAREN and ARLENE TIGAR McLAREN, *The bedroom and the state: the changing practices and politics of contraception and abortion in Canada, 1880–1980*, The Canadian Social History Series, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1986, 8vo, pp. 186, \$14.95, (paperback).

Angus McLaren has earlier explored questions about the history of birth control and abortion in England and France. In this co-authored volume, the focus is Canada and the material presented suggests a number of similarities with the debates carried on elsewhere by socialists, feminists, and neo-Malthusians in the early twentieth century.

Perhaps because of their familiarity, the similarities are less interesting than the differences that the Canadian material reveals. Canada differed from England in that the Canadian criminal law defined both contraceptives and abortifacients as obscene. Thus, while birth control practices may have varied little between the two countries, the legal context was different, as was the development of the birth control movements. Canada did not produce a feminist campaigner of the stature of Margaret Sanger or Marie Stopes though Canadians wrote to both women for advice. It was a wealthy rubber manufacturer, A. R. Kaufman, who initiated a unique system of visiting nurses to distribute birth control information all over Canada. Birth control clinics elsewhere relied on clients coming to the service, but Kaufman’s nurses took the service to the clients. This admirable scheme arose from a less admirable eugenic desire to lower the birth rate of the working class.

Kaufman’s career illustrates the authors’ point that those involved in the debates over birth control had much more complex agendas than a simple concern about family size. One of these was the desire to stem the fertility of French Canadians. The final section of the book charts the fall in fertility in Québec and the shifting stance of the Catholic Church on birth control. The