

Book Reviews

by the Group a recognizable pattern of the pre-industrial western European family can be detected. Mr. Laslett's classic paper on the villages of Clayworth and Cogenhoe, where this was first revealed, is here, as is one on long-term trends in bastardy. There are others on parental deprivation, the history of aging and the aged, age of sexual maturity in Europe since the Middle Ages, and the household and family on U.S. slave plantations. Although these articles deal entirely with people, the individuals do not appear through the statistics, and the conclusions are average and impersonal. Nevertheless, this building material will no doubt be fleshed out as historical sociology develops, and in the meantime it should, in addition, be, as Mr. Laslett maintains, useful in the tackling of present-day population problems.

ANGUS McLAREN, *Birth control in nineteenth-century England*, London, Croom Helm, 1977, 8vo, pp. 263, £8.95.

Dr. McLaren's purpose is to define the social and political background to birth control in the nineteenth century. In his deep and scholarly analysis, he first of all discusses the eighteenth-century background to the birth control debate; next, the problem of contraception and the class struggle; third, neo-Malthusianism and its late nineteenth-century critics; and finally the theory and practice of birth control up to 1914.

He declares that throughout the discussion of birth control in the nineteenth century the main problem was "the reproductive behaviour of the working classes in general and women in particular". His book is therefore "a social history of this issue both from above and below".

In all, his excellent study is an outstanding contribution to an issue that today is of central social significance. It can be warmly recommended to a wide audience of experts and lay people.

ANTHONY S. WOHL, *The eternal slum. Housing and social policy in Victorian London*, London, Edward Arnold, 1977, 8vo, pp. xxiv, 386, illus., £15.50.

The publishers claim this book to be "the first full-length study of working-class housing in a British town". The latter is Victorian and Edwardian London, which typifies other British cities, and the evils of urban overcrowding form the central theme. It is a scholarly book, well illustrated with contemporary photographs and drawings, and it represents an important contribution to the social and political history of housing. The author displays wide knowledge of his field and its background, and draws upon a great deal of primary source-material, especially vestry reports. His book provides an excellent account of the appalling conditions under which individuals in the nineteenth century lived, knowledge of which is essential for anyone investigating the medical or social history of British cities. It can be strongly recommended.

JENNI CALDER, *The Victorian home*, London, Batsford, 1977, 4to, pp. 238, illus., £5.50.

The author, a professional writer, gives an excellent account of all aspects of the Victorian home. For many it was a place of peace, order, harmony, and comfort,