

BOOK REVIEWS

Lancashire Hot-pot

University Perspectives. By John Knapp, Michael Swanton and F. R. Jevons. Pp. x+297. (Manchester University: Manchester; Barnes and Noble: New York, November 1970.) £3.00.

FOR roughly the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the precursors of the universities of Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester were combined as constituent parts of the Victoria University. It must have been a very loose federation because each college was sustained by fierce local pride, and, in retrospect, dissolution of the alliance seems inevitable. It took place as soon as it decently could after the demise of the Good Queen and Manchester was left with its own university. It is unique amongst English universities outside Oxford, Cambridge and London in consisting of two parts still affectionately called "Owens" and "Tech" by many former students. The latter is now the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) and for sixty-five years it has been the Faculty of Technology of the University of Manchester, though it has been called successively the Municipal School of Technology and the Manchester College of Science and Technology; names which emphasized its difference from the University of Manchester. Even now, many departments in UMIST are duplicated in Owens and to the outsider they seem often to operate as two independent institutions.

Mancunians will also claim that the University of Manchester has always held primacy of place amongst the great civic universities, and even a Yorkshire reviewer will concede this to be true for almost all the first half of this century. Many factors contributed to this. The city of Manchester was the centre of a great conurbation which, through its trade, looked outwards, and which possessed vigorous industries frequently founded by European immigrants who brought with them a love of music, literature and art and, encouraged by the *Manchester Guardian*, the city developed a real belief in itself as the country's pacemaker in the sciences

and humanities, and in its university as one of its chief instruments of progress. Those who doubt this should read Mary Stocks's *My commonplace Book*, where the impressions made on a Londoner by Manchester and its university are made abundantly clear. Immigrant scholars, scientists and engineers were made welcome and much esteemed in the university and, aided by its Literary and Philosophical Society with its glorious links with Dalton and Joule, the university encouraged the interested citizenry of Manchester to know what its savants were about and to share in their successes. Its science departments were especially distinguished; it was naturally expected in Manchester that professors in physics and organic chemistry, if not Nobel laureates already, would, in due course, be so honoured. Perhaps the most important factor in the success of the university was that the academic staff numbers were not incomprehensibly large; Alexander the philosopher could and did talk with Rutherford the physicist.

With UMIST, Manchester University is now the largest of the civic universities, and indeed exceeds both Oxford and Cambridge in size. But, as one who loves, admires and occasionally despairs of civic universities, I have not perceived that it has maintained its former pre-eminence. Partly this is due to the fact that the other universities have begun to catch up, partly that "formula financing" which has necessarily underlain much of UGC thinking in the last decade is a powerful force towards uniformity of university levels, but partly, as the editors of this book clearly feel, because the social unit comprehensible to a staff member in Manchester is now the department, and that outside the narrow professional context, communication, both intra- and extramurally, is often non-existent or ineffective. This book consists of twenty essays by Manchester academics aimed at reducing this unprofitable isolation. Inevitably it is a pot-pourri lacking the consistency of quality of ingredients of a good hot-pot. But unevenness is interesting and the variety of styles gives unparalleled insights into Liam Hudson's convergent and divergent

minds. It is invidious to select but I must report that I found the essays on government and history extremely interesting—that on history takes the form of a conversation about the Manchester history school involving Tom Jones, Thwackum and Square—whereas that on economics is arid and dull and does little justice to the distinguished work carried out in this field in Manchester. The last essay is by a theologian and in many ways is also the best because it is almost the only one, apart from Professor Cox's on English, which recognizes that many young people now at universities are seeking meaning and purpose in their lives. Sad to relate, many go away with minds full of tribology and marginal costs or orbital symmetries or whatever, but with little awareness of their own identity. Perhaps the theological essay serves to remind us all that possibly university teachers only have an incentive to think about their subjects in a wider context when their subjects become sufficiently unpopular! Meanwhile, horizons of Owens and Tech academics could be broadened by reading *University Perspectives*, and I suspect that this would also apply to many readers of *Nature*.

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Contemporary Marxism

Marx and Contemporary Scientific Thought. (Publications of the International Social Science Council, No. 13.) Pp. xi+612. (Mouton: The Hague and Paris, 1969.) 89 francs.

THREE years ago this May in Paris, while students battled with police in the streets, a distinguished group of forty-five scholars from twenty-one nations took part in a symposium on "The Role of Karl Marx in the Development of Contemporary Scientific Thought". I suspect that, for many years to come, historians will be smiling over this coincidental unity of theory and practice.

In the meantime, it is good to have at last the collected proceedings of this conference. I should perhaps offer two preliminary warnings about the book. The first is that about half of the essays have been written in or translated into French. Because some of the trans-