HISTORY NOW AND IN THE FUTURE
Keynote Address: Symposium on the Humanities in the Secondary School Curriculum: History as a Case Study*

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In assessing the health of history as a discipline, and attempting predictions as to its future, I find conflicting evidence. Signs of robust health and good prospects conflict with ones suggesting that death looms nearby. To avoid the latter and realize their potential, historians must fully employ their strengths and doctor their weaknesses. Their greatest strengths lie in their special way of looking at human affairs and in the complexity of their profession, its point of view and its accomplishments; their weaknesses are found in inadequate appreciation of complexity, both its virtues and its shortcomings, and ineffective communication with a public that needs to hear and learn from historians.

Several sets of numbers suggest that history is not as robust as it once was. The numbers of degrees awarded offer especially dramatic evidence. In 1973, our graduate institutions awarded 1,215 Ph.D.s in history; by 1983, the number had fallen to 616, a drop of nearly 50 percent. In 1971, our colleges and universities conferred 44,663 B.A. degrees in history; in 1981, the number was only 18,301, a drop of over 50 percent. Looking at the trend several years ago, one historian with a quantitative bent and a playful attitude predicted: "At that rate the last history major in America will graduate sometime in 1984!"[1]

Yet, the historical profession is much larger and much more complex, both socially and intellectually, than it was a half century ago. By growing greatly in size, chiefly because of the enormous expansion of higher education, the profession has substantially increased its capacity for production; as it has grown, it has opened up to social groups that were largely unrepresented earlier. Once it was largely the preserve of males of Anglo-Saxon background, but after World War II, it was "democratized. . .by an influx of people with working-class and immigrant backgrounds,"[2] and more recently, women have become more numerous and important, a fact symbolized by the election of Gerda Lerner and Anne Scott as presidents of the Organization of American Historians. As these social changes have taken place, American historians have steadily enlarged their conception of what parts of the past should be studied. Elites, of course, including political elites, remain important to historical writing, as they are in history, but they are not as important in the written version as they once were. Much work over the past century, most of it over the past two decades, has shifted attention away from elites and focused it on broad social groups. The process of change began years ago with attention

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to farmers and workers by Turner, Beard, Hicks, and Commons. The elder Schlesinger, Hansen, Wittke, and Handlin included immigrants in their writings. John Hope Franklin, to mention another pioneer, included blacks; others included Indians. The movement seeks both recognition and appreciation; it is still under way. It has been accompanied recently by a move away from almost exclusive attention to males, and it now involves a determination to achieve "historical perspective on the everyday activities of ordinary people."[3] Obvious in areas like the new social history, black history, women's history and the history of popular culture, this determination appears as well in the new political and the new labor history. No longer narrow, the American historical profession now studies virtually all aspects of and all people in the American past. It also explores parts of the world -- Asia, Africa, the Muslim Middle East -- that were largely ignored by American historians before World War II.

Why has this profession so expanded its conception of what aspects of the past are historically significant? The changes in the number and the mix of people in the profession are surely basic, but other factors also contributed, including developments outside of it. Some of these are intellectual, such as the rise of a new social history in France and Great Britain, the flourishing of the social sciences in this country, and the emergence of a "New Left." Other developments are political and social, including the emergence of the United States as a global power, the rise of black protest and of the women's movement, and the multiplication of social problems. "As new concerns arise in the present," Carl Degler has written, "we ask fresh questions of the past, therby bringing novel subjects into the purview of the historian."[4]

In addition to the broadening tendency, another part of the intellectual ferment in the historical profession in recent years has been a strong drive to improve methods. For some, like Lee Benson, this has involved a hope of making history, at last, scientific. The most obvious feature of this hope has been increased use of quantification, which has assisted significantly in the rise of both the new political history and the new social history as well as in the rise of subfields, such as local history. There are other features as well, including the use of theories, concepts, hypotheses and models, usually borrowed from the social sciences, and the insistence that examples and sources be truly representative. Oral history and psychohistory are also new methodologies.

The study of history today, viewed intellectually, is an exciting enterprise for those engaged in it, perhaps more exciting than ever before, yet negative attitudes toward the discipline now exert powerful influence. The situation may not be as troubled as it seemed to me in 1975 when I reported on "The Status of History in the Schools," and I may even have exaggerated the severity of the "crisis" then. It now appears that the survey on which I reported was conducted when enrollment in history was at its lowest point and that the survey was more accurate for higher education than for the secondary schools. Apparently, the position of American history in those schools is currently about as strong as ever. At least, it is still the most widely taught social study.

Nevertheless, problems do plague the contemporary study and teaching of history, even at the high school level. World

history especially has fallen sharply from the enviable position it occupied a century ago when it was the most widely taught social study. Since then, it has been driven from first place by American history and pushed back even more by the advance of other social studies. (The strength of world history in Georgia identified in Professor Fink's report [see following article] is impressive.) Moreover, the material that is taught in history courses is often presented by teachers who have little interest in it; training in history required of history teachers has been reduced in some places. (The term "rather peculiar," used in Professor Fink's report describing Georgia's educational policies, may be too strong. Many teachers of history now have had little training in it. I am surprised to find Georgia in that list, for in 1975 I reported that qualifications for history teachers were "highest in the South."[5]) In some secondary schools, history has been displaced by consumer education, contemporary problems and other subjects regarded as more relevant or practical, and the historical approach to human affairs has been subordinated to other approaches in social studies programs.

Evidence from the colleges and universities is even more spectacular. Enrollments in history programs dropped sharply after the sixties, falling in many places by the mid-seventies to or below the level of a decade before even though total enrollment in higher education had grown substantially. Signs of recovery have begun to appear, but enrollments remain far below what they were at the beginning of the 1970s.

Historians are divided on the reasons for their new status in American life. Some stress internal factors; others blame external ones. The former emphasize poor teaching, which is widely described as dull, factual, narrow, irrelevant. The mediocre teacher, according to the critics, relies upon the lecture method, calls upon students to memorize rather than think, and is out of touch with new trends in the profession. A related critique blames the textbooks used in the secondary schools, a theme developed most emphatically by Frances FitzGerald in America Revised, a fascinating if less than consistent book that criticized both the narrowness of earlier texts and the inclusion of the many groups in American life in recent ones. She blamed the publishers for the change, maintaining that their interest in sales encouraged them to respond to pressures. She also maintained that present-day texts are written by committees and, designed to offend no one, are incredibly dull, passionless, and impersonal, acknowledging neither conflict nor motivation and discussing problems in ways that imply easy solutions.

Those individuals who stress the shortcomings of the profession disagree as to the identity of the most significant sinner. Some point to the teachers in the secondary schools, insisting that they turn off students before college and university professors have an opportunity to inspire them. Others blame the professors, arguing that they harm the secondary schools by failing to provide adequate training or good models for future teachers and damage the colleges by neglecting and abusing graduate students and failing to prepare them for careers as teachers. Still others accuse conditions and policies responsible for overburdened, inadequately trained and disinterested teachers. Too many

students per class, a charge given much attention in the Georgia report, and too many coaches teaching history are frequent complaints.

Some commentators have criticized historians for a "relentless drift into specialization."[6] Historians, they contend, have come to know more and more about less and less or, as one observer put it, less and less about more and more. There is, they complain, lack of meaningful generalization in history, capable of being grasped and appreciated by students and others.

Although reforms are needed, this emphasis on internal defects does not give us a fully satisfactory explanation for the decline in history's status. It does not adequately explain a change that took place recently. It seems unlikely that history teachers and textbook writers suddenly declined in quality while their competitors improved. Furthermore, while some of the internal factors, such as the preparation of texts by committees and commitment to specialties, have grown in importance recently, they are also at work outside of history.

An alternative hypothesis emphasizes broad cultural forces, especially widespread doubts about history's utility. According to this view, decision-makers, concluding that history is of little use for an individual eager to make a living or a society eager to solve its problems, dropped history as a course requirement for graduation, and students took advantage of their new freedom to study other things. The Georgia report suggests more interestingly that even those who choose history are much more interested in other things and are encouraged by school administrators, parents and others to value other activities more highly. The proponents of the cultural factor recognize large-scale media attention to history and growing interest in historical sites, ethnic traditions and the like but express a dim view of the intellectual quality of their versions of the past and thus do not see them as evidence of a strong public interest in history.

Doubts about history's usefulness are not new. For many years, commentators have suggested that Americans are dominated by the present and the future and believe that the past has no importance for them. The industrial revolution, by transforming the material conditions of life, strengthened these tendencies. "A profession that sets itself up as custodian of the past among a people . . .that has characteristically sought identity in the future," C. Vann Woodward remarked several years ago, "would seem to have little ground for complacency -- about either the future of the past or the future of the craft that deals with the past."[7]

Nevertheless, as Woodward also observed, the profession did enjoy a time of exceptional growth in members and class enrollments, in fact, something of a boom, for more than two decades following World War II. This boom now appears to have been largely a function of World War II and the Cold War. Before those events, historians had become concerned about challenges to their discipline. It seemed to be shrinking in importance in secondary schools, losing ground to other social studies and current events and suffering from increasing doubts about its adequacy as a means of training citizens, which for years had been defined as its chief purpose, a

definition that made it a widely required subject before World War I. Then, in 1942-1943, the New York Times triggered public as well as professional debate with reports that most high school graduates had distressingly limited knowledge of United States history, more than 80 percent of the colleges and universities did not require study of American history for graduation, and more than 70 percent did not even require American history for admission. The reports alarmed many people who feared that Americans did not understand and might lack enthusiasm for the institutions and ideals for which the war was being fought, and the debate led to the passage of laws and regulations mandating U.S. history for graduation from high school and college. Furthermore, national leaders during the postwar years, including President Harry S. Truman, spoke frequently of the value of historical study. To them, the past taught lessons of great importance, and the history of the 1920s, 1930s, and World War II seemed especially important, teaching the folly of isolation and appeasement and the wisdom of involvement and strength. They saw themselves, and their admirers saw them, as having learned the lessons of history and avoided the mistakes of the past.

In the late sixties and early seventies, history's boom in the schools and colleges came to an end, and the discpline, measured in terms of classroom attention to historical themes and enrollment in history classes, went into decline, soon creating a "job crisis" in the profession. Since the decline set in only a short time ago, it must be related to special circumstances of the recent past. Several factors, including the rise of radical protest, especially on campuses, have been suggested. Those opposed to the Vietnam War had to contend with the argument that the "lessons of history" mandated the American presence in Southeast Asia; revolutionaries had to deal with the insistence that "history proved" that change could take place only at an evolutionary pace, at least in the United States; those who identified with underprivileged groups encountered history courses that were little more than the story of elites. While some members of the "New Left" developed new ways of interpreting history, emphasizing the lives of the people, the American revolutionary tradition, and the people's ability to create the future they desired, others moved away from history, regarding it as irrelevant and an obstacle. Protected by laws and regulations, it seemed to be part of the power structure, and it turned out to be a part that could be overturned quite easily.

The collapse of radical protest and the swing to the right in American politics did not significantly improve the status of history. To be sure, American conservatives who identified history with patriotism did advocate study of the past, but their versions of it bore little resemblance to academic history. Also, for many students, conservatism meant little more than the right to get ahead economically, and the study of history seemed to offer little help in that pursuit. Furthermore, Jimmy Carter's reading of history, with its emphasis on the limits of America's power and possibilities, was not what many so-called conservatives wanted to hear. Just as much as the radicals before them, they thought in terms of breaks with the past and virtually boundless possibilities, and they wanted versions of history that confirmed their visions or no history at all.

History's troubles of late have also been linked by some

analysts, most notably Hazel Hertzberg, to a more fundamental factor: the emergence of post-industrial society. Hertzberg argues that a different conception of time, one characteristic of such a society, began to emerge after the Second World War and became widely evident in America before the end of the 1960s, especially among the young. This view, influenced by affluence, television and the rapid pace of change, involves an intense preoccupation with the present, the "now," and is detached from the past, which seems remote.

After 1973, an "energy crisis" seemed to threaten one feature of the new American society--affluence, but even that development threatened the life of history, at least in the mind of one of its prominent practitioners. Persuaded that a fundamental change was taking place, that "the people of plenty have become the people of paucity," David Donald suggested that his most useful function as a teacher of undergraduates was "to disenthrall them from the spell of history, to help them see the irrelevance of the past."[8] But how, without understanding American history, could one fully understand the resistance to the theory of the energy crisis and the confidence that technology would guarantee continued economic growth?

Although there does appear to be a connection between the pace of change in our times and the decline in interest in historical study, if not in history as a form of entertainment or a foundation for national, community and ethnic pride, it is not true that the pace has destroyed the utility of historical study and historians. History, is, after all, the discipline that specializes in the study of change in human affairs. Furthermore, the historical process, even when moving at its most rapid pace, does not leave all features of the past behind, and the actors on history's stage, even the revolutionaries, are never completely free of the grip of the past. Those who are unhappy with the present can deplore the elements of continuity -- the forces of resistance and the representatives of the past, but they are inevitably present in every situation. It is a duty of historians to alert people to the elements of continuity just as it is their duty to point out that all things will not remain as they are.

History supplies an essential way of looking at human affairs, one that focues on changes and continuities and the forces responsible for them. People need it in order to understand their origins, the influences that have shaped them, and the possibilities that lie ahead. Historical study supplies people with a rich body of experience from which they can draw conclusions about behavior, combatting the narrowness of the lives of individuals and of generations, helping people overcome their tendency to learn from one set of experiences at a time, those supplied by the recent past, and suggesting to them that several pasts are relevant to the present and that the "lessons of history," rather than based on one set of experiences, should be drawn from all significantly relevant episodes.

History, Gerda Lerner has argued, can and should provide a source of personal identity. It keeps alive the experiences, deeds, and ideas of people, locates each individual life as a link between generations, and allows people to transform the dead into heroes and role models. "With the case of women, we can best illustrate that history matters," she has argued.[9] For many years, history did not

perform these functions for many groups, including women. They were left out, rendered invisible, obscured, deprived of a usable past because historians did not think in ways that directed them to women and their activities. Instead, historians focused on men's activities, assuming that only they were historically significant and thereby nourishing in men a sense of superiority. Recently, historians began to ask new questions and consult formerly neglected sources in order to undo the damage that had been done to women -- and also to to men -- by interpretations of history that encouraged both groups to see women as inferior.

Yet, although history's usefulness seems obvious to some historians, that does not mean that other people agree. To assure the study of the past a healthy future, historians must become more persuasive. They depend on others in very practical ways, just as others have intellectual and emotional needs that only historical study can satisfy.

At the risk of sounding like a commercial, let me suggest that historians need to reach out more effectively to other people. One obvious way of doing so is to improve history teaching. Because improvements must be made on all levels and good teaching is being done by some people on all levels, teachers everywhere can and should help one another. To do so, they must find ways of communicating with one another more than they do now. They should share experiences and not assume that valuable suggestions can flow only in one direction. Further, all teachers need to believe in what they are doing in the classroom, develop enthusiasm for it if they lack that now, be interested in teaching all students in their classes, not just those who hope to become historians, and find ways to communicate their enthusiasm and interest. Also, each teacher should recognize his/her strengths and weaknesses and employ the appropriate techniques rather than assume that all must employ the lecture method or discussion or audio-visual aides. Individual teachers should have their own styles, styles that are suitable for their personalities and their subjects.

The profession cannot depend on isolated individuals to solve its problems. They demand organized effort. History teaching now needs, Hertzberg contends, "theories, historical analyses, and unifying ideas sufficiently powerful to recreate a sense of purpose, sufficiently broad to encompass all who teach and learn history, sufficiently persuasive to convince students and the public that history in the schools and colleges . . . [is] worth studying."[10] Individual teachers, working alone, cannot satisfy this need anymore than they can free themselves from frustrating burdens. The leaders of the American historical profession in its early years, from Herbert Baxter Adams to Charles A. Beard, had a strong interest in the classroom, but too often, especially in its time of rapid growth in the 1960s, the profession paid little heed to the craft of teaching. During the past decade, groups like the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians revived their interest in teaching, and that interest must continue, grow, and become more effective. The organizations should, for example, help teachers keep informed about developments in the discipline and incorporate new findings into their courses.

In addition to improvements in teaching, efforts must be made to strengthen the teacher's tool, the textbook. One of

the suggestions to emerge from FitzGerald's work and the debate it stimulated was that the historical organizations should do what they can to force improvements. Being more specific, participants insisted that the organizations must review the textbooks. There are difficulties here, but ways should be found to enlarge significantly the role of professionals in the preparation of textbooks, combat the influence of other groups, and bring the texts into harmony with the best scholarship. Since many teachers are inadequately trained in history and most have too much to do, the quality of the books is very important.

Concern about teaching and textbooks generates interest in style as well as substance. In a sparkling address, the late Holman Hamilton insisted that Clio, the Muse of History, must be "garbed in more becoming robes than most of us have permitted her to wear."[11] Improvements in style, he argued, would stimulate demand for history classes and history books. Too many historians, he and others have objected, speak and write only to one another, often only to members of their own specialties.

In their efforts to enlarge interest in and understanding of their subject, historians should also try to have an impact on media history. "It is not enough to shrug off what is perpetrated in history's name through this medium, or to snarl at it or curse it," Hamilton wrote about TV's presentations. "For the medium reaches millions -- millions who identify such warps and twists with the so-called 'history' they think they know."[12] Well-qualified historians should be employed as advisers--and advisers whose counsel is respected--and historians should gain opportunities to serve as critics, preferably very close to the time of presentation and in forms that are available to teachers before they encounter questions from media-indoctrinated students. Some scholars are already reaching out in these ways; opportunities to do should be enlarged.

Another area outside the academy in which classroom historians and historical organizations should enlarge their interest is historic preservation. This has become a large activity in recent years, supported by federal legislation, but historians are not as heavily involved in it as some other groups, including archaeologists. While historians held back, archaeologists moved in and are now well entrenched, sometimes playing roles that could be better played by historians. Other groups with other goals, including conservation of all usable parts of the built environment and recovery of the nation's neighborhoods, have also moved in, so that considerations of "historical significance" are often absent from preservation projects. But there are encouraging signs, such as activities of the OAH Committee on Public History and the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History. Historians may yet exert a large influence on historic preservation and use it to affect attitudes toward and knowledge of the past and study of it. This could influence the environment in which all historians work.

The effort to reach out beyond the academy could, and should, I believe, include efforts to bring genuine historical perspectives into the policymaking arena. Some historians, such as David F. Trask, Peter N. Stearns, and Otis L. Graham, Jr., have given good advice on this. Perhaps the nation needs a Council of Historical Advisers, in part because of the

shortcomings of the ahistorical advisers, the economists, who have been relied upon so heavily, even more because our leaders so frequently draw upon their own conceptions of the lessons of history to make and justify their decisions.

Fortunately, some historians have been active outside the classroom, some for many years, and growing interest in their work has generated the new, though not universally accepted term "public history," new programs of instruction, a new journal, and new history organizations. These public historians have much to teach their academic colleagues that the latter need to know. Most basically, the school people need to learn about and come to appreciate the range of activities in which public historians engage. Beyond that, academic historians should benefit from the work of public historians in their teaching and research and seek advice from them on the reform of graduate education so as to make it more useful, on ways of working with politicians, government officials, businesspeople, lawyers and others, and on means of communicating with people outside the classroom and beyond the historical profession. In one large area of American life, the corporate world, there are potentially many opportunities for historians, but corporate executives need to become more aware of the value of history, and historians need to train students in ways that help them seize the opportunities.

Historians also must build new syntheses that can be grasped by many readers and listeners. The task is the most pressing intellectual responsibility facing the American historical profession right now. Knowing much more about the past then ever before, historians have discarded old syntheses but find it much more difficult than did their predecessors, like the Beards, to put the known parts together, yet they need to do so if they are to serve more satisfactorily the public's need for historical understanding. "We are clearly right to have shaken off the old WASP-imposed and WASP-centered unity of American history," Degler assures us, "but we have not yet created a new, equally holistic conception of American history to replace it. As historians of the United States, we ought to be thinking long and hard about doing it, for. . .the present version is more chaos than history."[13] As Bernard Bailyn put it: "The great proliferation of historical writing has served not to illuminate the central themes of Western history but to obscure them."[14]

Although not all specialists feel the need for synthesis, some do. Some, Lawrence Veysey suggests, feel "little incentive to try to piece these histories together into a whole. . .because the parts are seen as the realities, the whole as an artificial construction sustained by politicians and financiers."[15] Yet, I believe that specialists should at least advise other historians as to what is most significant in the specialties, for those who have broad responsibilities, such as teaching the survey courses, cannot work in everything that seems important to historians in particular fields. Representatives of many different areas are clamoring for attention and making claims for the importance of their findings, often powerful claims. If their work is to have impact on the wider world, specialists need to spell out "central themes" in social history and the other fields.

Gerda Lerner, for one, sees the development of her field as, not a final goal, but only a stage in the production of a

new and superior overall interpretation. Women's history has developed as a field because "history as traditionally recorded and interpreted by historians has been in fact, the history of the activities of men ordered by male virtues -- one might properly call it 'Men's History,'" she maintains. The effort to "reconstruct a female past" has developed because of "monumental neglect" and is not "descriptive of a past reality but . . . a conceptual model and a strategy by which to focus on and isolate that which traditional history has obscured." Her hope is that no historical account would be written "that would not deal with the actions and ideas of both men and women." "What is needed," she advises, "is a new universal history, a holistic history which will be a synthesis of traditional history and women's history."[16]

No one in the historical profession has expressed more concern about this problem than William H. McNeill, an historian with an unusually broad range. Professional historians, he maintains "are seldom capable of thinking seriously about how best to present their subjects to undergraduates at an introductory level," and thus they have chosen "to inflict their professional concerns, somewhat watered down, on increasingly indifferent undergraduates."[17] "In the absence of any unifying vision of the field as a whole, most academic historians addressed themselves to fellow specialists, heedless of murmurs about irrelevancy coming from students and other outsiders," he reports. "How long an evermore specialized research . . . can flourish on American soil is a question for the future," he suggests in a remark not designed to comfort his colleagues. The achievements of American historians, he comments, "deserve an admiration that is, for me, rendered particularly poignant by the forebodings I feel about the future of highly specialized work of the sort that so successfully engaged the profession in the 1970s."[18] The absence of new syntheses, he implies, threatens the profession's relations with students and the public.

The task of working out new syntheses will be enormously difficult. There is a vast amount of knowledge to be drawn together, and it increases every day. Tough issues concerning causality, periodization, and the relative importance of the different aspects of the past must be faced. We need, for example, to work out the interrelations between elites and ordinary people. Are the latter actually, as the new social historians insist, "determining forces in the realms they themselves might hold most important," or do those traditionally called leaders have a "determinative role in shaping the lives of so many members of their societies?"[19] The parts need to be brought together not only into fuller descriptions but also into more powerful explanations of what happened.

My conception of the tasks that must be performed have major implications for the roles and importance of the broad historical organizations, above all the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians. They need to do what they can to help all parts of the profession. They should not displace the specialized societies. Rather, they should collaborate with them so as to give greater recognition to and enlarge opportunities for groups and individuals and look after broad needs that the specialized organizations cannot serve. The AHA and the OAH should become, more than they are now, meeting grounds for all types

of historians in which they gain respect for one another and learn how to work together to improve the profession and make it more useful to the whole society. The more specialized groups cannot play these unifying, snythesising roles. And they cannot be expected to provide the leadership in vital efforts to influence public attitudes toward the historical profession so that people outside of it come to see it as more valuable and useful than they now perceive it to be. In the situation that now faces historians, they need the organizations with broad responsibilities, but those groups must be controlled by awareness of and appreciation for the great complexity of the present-day historical profession in America and a determination to truly represent and benefit from the several parts.

Perhaps what I am calling for fundamentally is the ascendancy of a personality type in the profession. This is a person who respects the work of others and has a strong desire to define the contributions made by them, not merely point out their shortcomings, although, as we all have them, they too must be recognized. (Defining a contribution, of course, implies defining what is not contributed and what is not a contribution and comparing the product with others.) The predominantly positive attitude toward one's associates seems essential in efforts to bring historians and histories together. Those who respect only one type of historian or one kind of history cannot do what needs to be done.

If these are not the best of times for historians, neither are they the worst. If they are times of overcrowded classrooms in some places, low enrollments in others, underemployment, and negative attitudes toward classroom history, they are also times of intellectual ferment and challenge. Perhaps historians need not continue to create new specialties and methods, but they surely must maintain and perfect the ones that have already taken shape. Even more pressing are demands to strengthen skills of synthesis and communication. To quote Bailyn again: "The greatest challenge that will face historians in the years ahead . . . is not how to deepen and further sophisticate their technical probes of life in the past . . . but how to put the story together again, now with a complexity and an analytic dimension never envisioned before; how to draw together the information available . . . into readable accounts of major developments."[20] Historians are challenged to make history, the historical way of looking at human affairs, as important in American life as it should be. Historians cannot rely on the logic of their point of view to do this for them. History does not guarantee the health of history, although it does appear to offer assurances, or threats, that someone will supply the people with interpretations of the past -- if not historians then journalists, playwrights and politicians, among others. If the future of the past, this peculiar way of looking at human affairs, is to be as healthy as it should be, historians must think and act, and do so wisely. They must think and act along several lines at once. Individuals, acting on their own, can make contributions, but the toughness of the situation -- the size of the challenge -- calls also for organized effort.

NOTES

[1]Richard Jensen, unpublished manuscript.

[2]David Brody, "The Old Labor History and the New: In Search of an American Working Class," Labor History 20 (Winter 1979): 112.

[3]Peter N. Stearns, "Toward a Wider Vision: Trends in Social History," in Michael Kammen, editor, The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 205.

[4]"Women and the Family," in Kammen, Past Before Us, p. 308.

[5]"The Status of History in the Schools," The Journal of American History 62 (September 1975): 559; see following article for Fink's findings on Georgia.

[6]Carl Bridenbaugh, "The Great Mutation," American Historical Review 68 (January 1963): 325.

[7]"The Future of the Past," American Historical Review 65 (February 1970): 724.

[8]"Our Irrelevant History," The New York Times, 8 September 1977, p. A27.

[9]"The Necessity of History and the Professional Historian," Journal of American History 69 (June 1982): 15.

[10]"The Teaching of History," in Kammen, Past Before Us, p. 504.

[11] "Clio with Style," Journal of Southern History 46 (February 1980): 16.

[12]Ibid., p. 10.

[13]"Remaking American History," Journal of American History 66 (June 1980): 17.

[14]"The Challenge of Modern Historiography," The American Historical Review 87 (February 1982): 3.

[15]"The 'New' Social History in the Context of American Historical Writing," Reviews in American History 7 (March 1979): 5.

[16]The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 168-9, 180.

[17]"Studying The Sweep of the Human Adventure," Chronicle of Higher Education 15 (Jaunary 30, 1978): 32.

[18]"Modern European History," in Kammen, Past Before Us, pp. 95, 112.

[19]Stearns, "Trends in Social History," p. 218; Kammen, "Introduction: The Historian's Vocation and the State of the Discipline in the United States," in Kammen, Past Before Us, p. 24.

[20]"Challenge of Modern Historiography," p. 24.