

## **CAG Award for Scholarly Distinction in Geography**

### **Dr James T. Lemon**

Professor James Lemon has had a long and distinguished career in the field of Historical Geography. Following his undergraduate program at Western, in which he attained first class honours and the gold medal in Geography, he wandered away for a while to enroll in the Divinity School at Yale. After attaining a Masters in Divinity, he returned to Geography as a graduate student in historical geography at Wisconsin, to study with Professor Andrew Clark. Developing research on 18th century settlements in Pennsylvania, he wrote an outstanding doctoral dissertation, which was subsequently revised as *The Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (John Hopkins University Press 1972). It was awarded the prestigious Beveridge Prize of the American Historical Association for the best book in American History published in 1972, a remarkable achievement indeed for this young scholar. It remains an important landmark in Early American History and Geography.

Following his first teaching appointment at U.C.L.A., Professor Lemon moved to the University of Toronto in 1967 where a research and teaching program in the urban historical field consumed his scholarly life for the next three decades. He always attracted a diverse group of students to his undergraduate and graduate courses including not only those in Geography but other covering the broad spectrum from History of Planning. Many chose him as supervisor or second reader in Masters and Doctoral programs.

Much of this work culminated in the writing of *Toronto- Since 1918: an Illustrated History* (Lorimer 1985), which attained recognition as one of the finalists (best five books) in the City of Toronto Book Awards of 1986.

Just recently his third and perhaps most important book *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits: Great Cities of North America since 1600* (Oxford University Press 1996) has been published. *Liberal Dreams* is a brilliant work that combines a close examination of five cities at particular times---Philadelphia up to 1760, New York 1860, Chicago 1910, Los Angeles 1950 and Toronto 1975--- with an analysis of long term patterns of growth in the North American economy, technological change, the changing balance of public and private spheres of activity, and, as Lemon sees it, the interplay of liberal and communitarian values, with what nature provides and allows. It explores the shifting fortunes of North Americans and argues, essentially, that development is at an impasse at the end of the 20th century. It is a provocative book which will reach out without question to a large audience in the years ahead.

Professor Lemon has always brought an intense moral commitment and social concern to everything he does which coupled with his wide ranging reading and learning makes him an unusual and impressive scholar, a figure who walks his own line and does what he does independent of current fashion.

By recognizing him with this award, Geography shows for all the normative and careerist pressures it faces, it is still open to the type of broad reflection on the human condition that, throughout his scholarly life, Jim Lemon has offered.