ferences. I would hope that, as we begin to formulate new policy options for the nineties, other voices, as well as perspectives from other paradigms, would be heard—voices that view the world through different academic eyes and voices that come from a deep understanding of a particular region. Charles F. Wilkinson's *Eagle Bird: Mapping a New West* (Wilkinson, 1992) is one example of such a regional-sensitive work. Just as rural policy needs to be different from urban policy, rural policy for the West must be different from that in the rural Northeast, the Southwest, or the Mississippi Delta. No single book from a particular academic discipline can capture the complexity of rural America, much less prescribe a comprehensive set of policy alternatives. *Rural Policies for the 1990s* attempts to do too much.

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Community and the Politics of Place. Daniel Kemmis. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990, 150 pp. ISBN 0-8061-2477-6 (pbk)

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Now and then, a book is published that becomes an indispensable source for an audience the author might have never considered. This may be the case for Kemmis' *Community and the Politics of Place.* I would put this book in the company of Jonathan Sher's *Education in Rural America* (1977), Paul Nachtigal's *Rural Education: In Search of a Better Way* (1982), and the recent *Small Districts, Big Problems* (1992) by Patricia and Richard Schmuck as one of the most significant books in the field of rural education for the past half century.

Community and the Politics of Place is a beautifully written treatise on rural political economy. It represents one particularly lucid account, out of a growing number of communitarian critiques, of the highly individualistic republicanism promoted by the dominant versions of the western liberal tradition. Whereas this description sounds highly theoretical, the book is, in fact, very readable and imminently practical. Focusing for the most part on the rural west, especially his native Montana, Kemmis writes about the forces contributing to a "deepening failure of public life" while developing a vision for building on the "common-unity" (or community) that can serve to reinvigorate it. Although schools are rarely mentioned in the book, it takes little imagination to envision the role they might play in this process. Before discussing that role, however, I delineate a few of Kemmis' central themes.

The first distinction Kemmis makes is between an 18th-century Jeffersonian republican vision for America and an 18th-century Madisonian federalist vision. Whereas Jefferson believed that a cultivated "civic virtue" widely dispersed among the people was the key to democratic living and the public good, Madison believed just the opposite. In his view, the people could not be trusted to put the public good before individual interest. Madison's response was to create what Kemmis calls the "procedural republic," the complicated series of checks and balances that enable individuals to pursue their own interests without the bother of considering the public good. (Here, Kemmis borrows from Michael Sandel's (1984) notion of "the unencumbered self" as an integral part of modern liberalism.) According to Madisonian theory, the public good results "without anyone willing it to happen." It is easy to see connection of this kind of political theory to Adam Smith's economic treatise published just 11 years before our constitutional convention. In economics, according to Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, the "invisible hand" of market forces creates the greatest economic good. For Madison, it was an invisible hand of human nature that would create the greatest political good. "It may be a reflection of

human nature," wrote Madison in defense of his elaborate system of checks and balances, "but what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary" (quoted in Kemmis, p. 14). Political deliberation on the part of the masses was something Madison and other federalists feared. Kemmis points out that the rebellion of some 1200 Massachusetts farmers under the leadership of Daniel Shays served as a catalyst for this fear and the subsequent call for the Philadelphia constitutional convention.

Jefferson, the chief spokesperson for a civic republicanism that would encourage (rather than discourage) active political deliberation on the part of the masses, was serving at the time as the U.S. ambassador to France. He was not able to be a part of the process. Perhaps partially due to his absence, the federalists won the day in Philadelphia and instituted a kind of centralized bureaucratic form of government that would monitor the pursuit of self-interest for the people. There would be "public hearings" and "due process" for any who felt maligned by another's pursuit of self-interest. With these procedural mechanisms in place, all were free to go about their business "unencumbered" by a responsibility for producing the good society. This, according to Madison, was produced by the very act of pursuing self-interest. "The highest good," according to Kemmis' analysis of federalism, "would emerge without anyone willing its existence" (p. 15).

The West, and the rural West in particular, stands as a cogent reminder that the highest good has not emerged from the pursuit of self-interest. Kemmis' book is a passionate argument for a re-embrace of Jeffersonian civic republicanism where people are "encumbered" with a responsibility to live well in a shared "place." It is the place, according to Kemmis, that brings different people together. The mechanisms for arbitrating differences between groups or individuals in the procedural republic are necessarily distant and disconnected to the place that gives meaning to the lives of the people involved. The solutions handed down by the procedural republic are almost always undesirable from the point of view of both parties. But when people take responsibility for working out their differences (and the impetus for doing so is the common interest of living well on "a certain definite part of the earth"), the solutions turn out well for both. The procedural republic works against the possibility of a full public life in this country, because it was structured to minimize this kind of living.

In order for this kind of living to re-emerge in the American experience, Kemmis sees some needed changes in the areas of politics and economics. I would add to this the arena of public education as well, both for its own sake and for the contribution it can make to the other two areas. But first, let's consider Kemmis' prescriptions for economic change.

A prerequisite to any communitarian critique of liberalism is understanding that "the nation" is not the natural home for an economy, even though we have been operating in this mode for about 200 years. This is relatively easy to do since American corporations, having become larger and more powerful in recent years, have been consistently prodding us to think in terms that transcend our national boundaries, to recognize that we must now participate in an "international" economy. Others, however, take a different tack and stress the need for a shift to healthy local economies. Kemmis relies heavily on Jane Jacobs' theory of import substitution to demonstrate a place-conscious way to re-invigorate the economic life of cities and the areas that surround them. He provides clear examples of how this has worked in his own community of Missoula, Montana. Kemmis maintains that the people who share the same geographic place must be free from the procedural republic and must take responsibility for what the public good will look like in that place. To do this, Kemmis argues, people will have to reclaim the marketplace, or, in other words, give up the temptation to consider "the market" as some abstract force untied to a specific location. The health of the local economy and the local environment cannot be trusted to placeless forces (such as "the market") or entities (such as corporations). As a people, Kemmis points out, we have forgotten that we have granted corporations the right to exist. This dramatic loss of memory is predictable in a republic structured to work against active public deliberation in the political realm.

This leads to Kemmis' second arena for change. He calls his political prescription the "politics of inhabitation" and by this he means "a politics of citizens working out the problems and the possibilities of their place directly among themselves." He maintains that this "implies a revival of the old republican notion of citizenship based upon civic virtue," while it rejects the procedural mechanisms designed to "keep citizens apart" (to use

Madison's phrase) and render them "unencumbered" by a responsibility for creating a better society. To inhabit a place means to live well in it. Political and economic—and, I would argue, educational—policy will determine whether it is possible for citizens to inhabit, or live well in, a place. This meant for Jefferson, as it means for Kemmis, that the burden of creating limits of self-interest must become the possession of the people rather than the state bureaucracy. The nation state, and even the 50 sub-states, must be relegated to a minor role in the decisions that affect a shared place. According to Kemmis, "a politics of inhabitation may well be one in which cities and their hinterlands, together, are understood as a basic political unit" (p. 123).

So what do reclaiming the marketplace (largely through import substitution) and the politics of inhabitation mean for rural education? Putting the responsibility for economic and political decisions on the people will require the cultivation of deliberative powers. This can happen in rural schools. Perhaps not in highly authoritarian, procedural schools, where the voices of parents, teachers, and students are largely silent (the sort of school the Schmucks found far too many of), but in schools that are structured as places for active inquiry into the relationship of the school to its community. For too long the place of a rural school has been inconsequential. That is, "the certain definite part of the earth" upon which the school was built has been almost irrelevant to what has gone on inside. By reading Kemmis' book deeply, one can see how this uncritical embrace of the procedural school has complemented the deepening failure of public life in the procedural republic. Though education was not his topic, the book fairly shouts with possibilities for focusing the enterprise of rural schooling.

In this light, *Community and the Politics of Place* underscores the value of much recent work within the rural education research community. Alan DeYoung, for instance, has repeatedly reminded us over the last decade that we cannot assess the condition of rural schools without attention to the politics and economics that have shaped the rural school experience. Craig Howley was the first, andperhaps only, rural education researcher to consider the implications of the work of Jane Jacobs for rural America. Bruce Miller continues to stress the link between the survival of schools and communities in the face of placeless forces that impinge on them both. Toni Haas and Paul Nachtigal have begun to focus their work around the notion of "sustainability" and are actively looking at ways in which rural schools can contribute to the production of sustainable rural communities. My own recent work has been an attempt to retrieve the community-oriented emphasis of some of the original architects of liberalism, a kind of "agrarian" emphasis that was buried by the power of industrial and commercial wealth. All of this work suggests a possibility for a new vibrancy in rural America, a possibility of rejecting the idea of rural schooling as preparation for an unencumbered life in the procedural republic.[1] In an interesting and no doubt unintended way, Kemmis' book ties these existing strands of rural educational research together and provides a clear theoretical focus for future efforts.

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[1] For examples of recent work in rural education that resonates with Kemmis' treatise, see DeYoung (1989); Howley (1990); Miller (1990); Nachtigal, Haas, Parker, and Brown (1991); and Theobald (1992).