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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses dilemmas facing rural schooling today as a result of industrialization and the changing nature of rural communities. Examples are drawn from the literature on Maine and West Virginia schools and from the movie "Hoosiers." Although some rural communities have benefitted economically from industrialization, in most cases, only rural places near metropolitan centers and resort communities have experienced economic growth. Most chronically poor counties are located in rural areas, particularly in Appalachia and the South. Rural schools often have difficulty providing educational resources equal to those offered by more affluent towns. In addition, rural communities frequently lack active parents and community groups. Inequities typically translate into fewer mathematics and advanced placement courses in rural high schools, fewer programs for gifted and talented children, fewer alternative school programs, and an inadequate school transportation system. Questions about who controls rural schools and the ultimate purpose of instruction are dilemmas facing contemporary rural communities. Most rural communities have waged a losing war over who controls local schools as rural-to-urban migration and the notion that "bigger is better" have forced school closure and consolidation. The metropolitan model of schooling has attacked a fundamental assumption of rural schools: that rural schools are cultural centers of the community and not just sites for pedagogy. In addition, professional educators have typically assumed that their mission is to educate students for furthering careers in the city. However, the task of educators bent on educating and exporting students is difficult due to misconceptions about the relationship between schooling and work. In addition, educators have been schooled to believe that the expressed traditional values of rural residents are illegitimate. This paper contends that the traditional values of rural communities are relevant to rural education and questions the human costs of an education bent only on competitive consumerism. (LP)

ON HOOSIERS, YANKEES and MOUNTAINEERS

For almost two hundred years economists, politicians and philosophers have debated the desirability of industrial development and its effects upon society. [1] Since the mission of public schools is to socialize children into adult life, and since our schools were once under direct community control, the changing nature of our communities in this century has profound implications for educators. This is particularly true for rural communities and schools as we intend to show.

Industrial development has transformed our cities since the late 1800s. Some urban (and later suburban) communities profited greatly from such development; others less so. Since the plight of many urban schools today is well-represented in the educaiton literature ,we need not dwell on this topic.[2] It would be much more difficult to find rural American communities which have benefitted from industrialism to same extent. Metropolitan communities in the U.S. draw people and resources from the countryside, and have so for a hundred years. Even today job opportunities continue to decline in most rural communities , which means that many rural students must seek educational degrees consistent with employment in the city. [3] Rural educators thus face the double challenge of generating dollars to operate local schools where property values are low, while at the same time teaching values and skills primarily functional in metropolitan America.

Dilemmas of Rural Communities in Industrial Nations

The dilemmas that face rural schooling today are implicit in classical economics texts; visible in the film industry; and audible in conversations in qualitative research about rural education problems. This paper is an attempt to illustrate these dilemmas.

In the classical texts, for example, economic growth associated with industrial capitalism was often credited with ushering in leaps forward in social progress. Other authors recognized that industrial development could only occur if rural citizens were coerced or enticed to leave

their homes and seek work in the city. And this would best be accomplished if government policies forced the producers of food to be as efficient as producers of manufactured goods. [4]

Robert Owen challenged several underlying assumptions held by most advocates of industrialism. He questioned the view that city life was preferable to life in the countryside; that wage labor could elevate the masses out of poverty; and that consumption was the cornerstone of human happiness. In his view , industrial capitalism created poverty as well as wealth and was not an economic panacea. Poverty was not the only drag the human condition, for industrial economic development also assaulted the social web of western culture.

> A principle quite unfavorable to individual and general happiness was working havoc with his (sic) social environment, his neighborhood, his standing in the community, his craft; in a word, with those relationships to nature and man in which his economic existence was formerly embedded. The industrial revolution was causing a social dislocation of stupendous proportions, and the problem of poverty was merely the economic aspect of this event.[5]

Debates between economists in the early days of the industrial age presaged events to come. The industrial revolution in the U.S. was dramatic and comprehensive: our cities grew larger, becoming metropolitan as industrialization expanded. Many rural communities and agricultural workers disappeared from the countryside as government policies encouraged agribusiness as well as large scale fishing and timbering industries with subsidies. And Americans of all stripes became "consumers;" living within a market economy where careers increasingly replaced craft guilds and subdivisions replaced communities.

The primary economic dilemma for rural places was thus how to deal with the growth of metropolitan America and the eclipse of rural America. Once largely agriculturalists, today fewer than 3% of American workers are primarily engaged in farming or other occupations dealing directly with natural resources. This does not mean that all rural places in the U.S. have declined, for some rural communities have benefitted from economic development; there are those that have weathered domestic economic changes; and there are those which have always

been poor. As Tom Gjelten and others suggest, the location, source of wealth and economic stability of rural communities makes them very diverse. [6] In most cases, though, only rural places near metropolitan centers and resort communities have benefitted from industrialism in the past fifty years. In such places increasingly well-paid jobs and rising property values consistent with economic growth may **permeate** rural communities, which of course makes them less rural.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture gives some picture of the diversity, as well as the poverty of many rural American locales. In 1985 there were 347 non-metropolitan US counties (out of 2,443) where the primary income source for citizens was transfer payments; 242 non-metropolitan counties which were persistently poor over several decades; and 200 counties where extractive industries were primary employers. Too often extractive economies are ' boom and bust and offer low wages ; counties where residents rely on disability and welfare incomes are typically poor and counties with persistent poverty are just that. [7]

It is still true that most chronically poor counties in the nation are located in rural areas, particularly in Appalachia and the South. In 1986, the non-metropolitan poverty rate was 50% higher than the metropolitan rate. In fact, general poverty rates for all non-metro counties nearly equaled those of our central cities in the late 1980s. Rural poverty in the 1980s remained higher, rose more rapidly and fell more slowly than the metropolitan rate in this "recovery" period. Displaced rural workers were unemployed more than 50% longer than urban workers and, when they did return to work, were more likely than urban workers to take pay cuts and lose insurance benefits. [8] Rural per capita income also declined substantially during the 1980s even in counties with significant manufacturing and extractive industries. This is due to the fact that jobs created in rural America typically pay either minimum wage or close to it.

Rural schools in such places often have difficulty providing educational resources equal to those offered by more affluent towns. And, communities surrounding such schools frequently lack active parents and community groups to model and support the goals of schooling. The Children's Defense Fund summarized a variety of data-based studies related to rural children " at

risk." The CDF argued that rural schools suffer from weaknesses that critically affect their students when compared with schools in much of metropolitan America. The CDF notes, for example, that most rural states have minimal cost equalization formulas based on population density. This means that local taxes must equalize expenditures in poor and rural districts. Naturally, poor school systems have difficulty in generating extra taxes, which leads to significant inequities. These inequities typically translate into fewer mathematics and advanced placement courses in rural high schools, fewer programs for either gifted and talented children, fewer alternative school programs or programs for pregnant teenagers, and in some cases even the failure to provide transportation to and from school. [9]

The Cultural Dilemmas of Rural Education

Although the economic problems of many rural schools are serious they are only part of the story. In addition, formal public schooling in rural places often involves cultural contradictions. As a consequence of the industrial revolution formal education in America was designed to further industrialization and urbanization. The common school movement in particular was an attempt to solve city problems of immigration, social disorganization and child labor abuses which were rarely issues in the countryside. [10] Later, urban reformers exported compulsory public education to the countryside. [11]

In rural America, however, local communities operated schools and dedicated instruction to local needs. The curriculum of rural schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was often limited to character training and basic literacy and numeracy. Many rural citizens had mixed feelings about education beyond the eighth grade, since rural economies usually did not require workers with advanced degrees. But the school "house" itself was typically the location for many adult activities such as social gatherings, lectures, meetings, political rallies, and dances; and not just a place for children to receive instruction. Furthermore, the community often viewed the school as a critical symbol of its own identity. [12]

Although prominent educators championed urban education early in the century, at least since the Cold War the aims of schooling have been directed toward national and international

goals. Henry Perkinson claims that our schools today are dedicated to giving students the skills necessary to escape local communities in order to pursue "careers" wherever they may exist. [13] Who controls the rural school, differing expectations about the value of advanced learning, and the ultimate purpose of instruction are dilemmas that continue to face rural communities.

The Hollywood film Hoosiers set in Hickory, Indiana, in the early 1950s clearly portrays these cultural issues and dilemmas of rural life and rural schools in a metropolitan nation. While very few of the critical incidents and issues teachers and students face in the film have meaningful parallels in urban and suburban schools, or appear in the professional education literature, any rural schoolteacher or principal would recognize them immediately.

Hoosiers is at one level a film of the David and Goliath genre. The primary story-line involves basketball, and the fortunes of the Hickory High School basketball team. Allegedly based upon a true story, Hickory only has 7 players from a student-body of 64 boys but the team succeeds in winning the state basketball championship against a school with 2800 students. A second critical theme in the story involves how important the success of the basketball team is to the social life and symbolic identity of the town. To the chagrin of many educators, high school athletics often appear to overwhelm the instructional activities which we pedagogues wish were paramount. Unfortunately, we see in Hoosiers an example of the way sports (and sometimes band or dramatic productions) have been the center of rural community interest in public high schools. To only a lesser extent has this been true in urban places. In either case, to solve the many problems of rural schooling, educators have tried to convince students and their parents of the primacy of academic knowledge with only marginal success.

Often only those rural students who want to leave the community in search of further education or employment adopt the teacher's view of the value of formal schooling. This is particularly true in regards to the value of post-secondary education. This tension between local culture and academic success is a critical subplot in Hoosiers , much as it is in our own research. Barbara Hershey - who plays English teacher Myra Fletcher - contests the recruitment of the town's star ball player who is at the same time her best student. Coach Norman Dale (Gene

Hackman) has heard about Jimmy, and would like him to join the team. Ms. Fletcher, a Hickory native, wants her best student to flee Hickory, a town she sees as culturally limiting. She warns Dale, a newcomer "from away," not to try to recruit Jimmy, who, according to everyone in town, is the key to a winning season. Ms. Fletcher pleads her case early in the film: Leave him alone, all right ? He's a real special kid and I have high hopes for him. I think if he works really hard he can get an academic scholarship to Wabash College. He can get out of this place. Dale responds by asking, " Why? Do you have something against this place ? " Yes," she answers, "he could do better."

Continuing the debate, Fletcher complains: "A basketball player 'round here is treated like a god. How can he ever find out what he can really do ? I don't want this to be the high point of (Jimmy's) life. " Dale replies, " You know most people would kill to be treated like a god, just for a few moments." She ends their discussion with a terse rejoinder : " Just stay away from Jimmy, I don't want him coaching in Hickory when he is fifty years old."

In interviews we have completed in different parts of the country, we have found many parents who express mixed feelings about public schools which are dedicated to training their children for national purposes. Tom Goodwin, a fifth generation Yankee from Tremont, Maine voices such sentiments : "Our children are our greatest export. We feed them we clothe them, we educate them and (then) we send them away to find work. We pay three times in raising them: for their expenses; with taxes to educate them and then in losing them." 14

The History of Rural School "reform"

Most rural communities in our metropolitan nation have waged a losing war over who controls local schools and to what purpose their children's education is directed. The demographics associated with industrialization and urbanization doomed many small schools; and the logic of social progress mentioned earlier did-in a myriad of others. Massive migration to the cities forced the closure and consolidation of many small, rural one and two-room schools. But the actual loss of rural children to the city was only one cause of school

consolidation. Notions of administrative and pedagogical progress akin to the "bigger is better" insight of leaders in the private sector triggered another. [14]

School reformers throughout this century attempted to create larger and more efficient schools, likening the "laws" of school administration to the "laws" of efficient industrial and agricultural production. Thus, metropolitan America and the metropolitan model of schooling attacked a fundamental assumption of rural schools: that they were valued as cultural centers of the community not just as sites for pedagogy. Distinguished early twentieth-century reformers like Elwood Cubberly, for example, argued that American's rural school problem was a phase of the rural life problem. And the rural life problem was that living in the countryside wasn't as good as living in the city, for the city promised social progress and cosmopolitan life, while rural communities and their schools either followed out-moded instructional strategies or were in the throes of economic collapse. [15] So, for Cubberly and school reformers to follow, modernizing and consolidating these inefficient outposts of the past became a national quest. For the most part these rural school reformers were successful, for between 1903 and 1980 the total number of schools in the U.S. as reduced from 238,000 to 61,000. [16]

Meanwhile, as administrators at the statehouse worked to reduce the number of rural and small schools via consolidation, educators at local levels were increasingly charged with convincing students that their futures lay in some other (metropolitan) community. Educators in the U.S. have rarely thought or been taught that saving or supporting rural communities was professionally appropriate, and such an idea remains virtually unmentioned even today in our professional colleges of education. Instead, professional educators typically assumed that their mission was to transmit the academic and educational skills their students might need to further careers in the city. This task often proved (and still proves) problematic, however, because many parents and communities sought (and still seek) to keep their children nearby. Put another way, some communities still insist that schools and children belong to them and that many children want to belong. Most professional educators seem convinced that learning is either context free and independent of place, or that rural parents and communities don't really

know what is good for their children. Such conflicts are particularly obvious in continuing battles over consolidation of rural schools.[17]

Viewing Cultural Contradictions Today

Many rural communities face increasing pressures from careerism and consumerism. In such places people still believe that rural life is better than metropolitan life even with all its glitter. In other places, the glitter is highly valued, but poverty makes avenues to "the good life" difficult to find or use. There is very little in the professional education literature, however which suggests that many rural school 'problems' really represent cultural differences in values or are associated with real economic concerns. Often, for instance, rural parents in very poor districts reject local tax increases for "better" schooling because they have rarely witnessed the utility of such schooling in their own occupational histories. More affluent rural communities may support the education of their children through high school but are less enthusiastic about post-secondary schooling.

Furthermore, many rural Americans aren't sure that city life is the best thing for their children. Clinging to the belief that their children should remain close to home, they perceive that the further most children go in school the more likely they are to move away eventually. Critics of rural schools and rural parents often suggest that such sentiments show disregard for the advantages of education. We submit, rather, that such sentiments held by parents and students alike, demonstrate understanding of the benefits and liabilities implicit in rural education.

In our work in Maine and West Virginia, the theatrical debate between Hackman and Hershey profiled earlier remains very real. In DeYoung's most recent fieldwork site, a twice consolidated school in West Virginia, a debate allegedly arose in the early 1920s as enrollments grea about whether the school needed a new gym or a new library. 16 Most teachers wanted the library, but many of the parents wanted a gym as the boy's team had just won a state championship even without a home court. At the last minute, on a split school board vote, the gym was added even though it was barely large enough to hold a game. And to this day, the

most famous student the school ever produced - and it produced and exported hundreds of successful students to Ohio and Michigan, etc. - was Danny Heater who broke the national single game high school scoring record. Reporters still come to the school from as far away as Washington, DC to write stories about his exploits.

Ties to community, place and family are often strong in rural communities, and it is the local schoolhouse where many of these attachments are formed and solidified. At the same time, the academic skills and values emphasized today often run counter to place and community. This contradiction is often visible in places where personal relationships and attachments to place go back generations. Hoosiers posits the question well. Is it better to be a hero, or at least well known and liked in one's home community ? Or is it more important to be employed in the city but anonymous ? This relatively simple question underlies a major tension in many small American towns, especially those where there appears to be little opportunity for local professional employment.

Curricular Issues at the Rural High School

If we, therefore, take one part rural skepticism regarding the utility of book-learning for employment in timbering, farming, fishing or mining; combine such sentiments with the declining economies of many rural places from which local property taxes are used to staff and maintain schools; add the pinch of despair many rural parents feel as they come to understand that successfully educating their children means they will lose them to the lure of the city; include the possibility that family emergencies or deaths may burden adolescents with the responsibility of supplementing the family's income from any available income source; and include the fact that derogatory and negative stereotypes (redneck, hillbilly, hick) frequently blemish descriptions of rural peoples, then it becomes possible to understand why many rural students lose faith or the desire required to use education as a springboard to American middle class success: assuming this is even what they want.

At the primary school level, problems of absenteeism and failure to master basic literacy skills are factors in the comparatively poor achievement of rural and poor children.[18]

Historically, vocational and agricultural education programs have been important in rural high schools, but the decline in the number of jobs in agricultural or manufacturing within depressed economies further disadvantages students who master such skills. [19]

Furthermore, rural high schools frequently assign minority and poor students to non-college-bound tracks on the same bases as they do in urban high schools. And, as in metropolitan high schools, the rural middle class can demand advanced academics for their children at the expense of those whose parents don't understand the implications of tracking. [20] Una Reck and her colleagues, for instance, studied a variety of public schools in one Appalachian North Carolina system for the National Science Foundation. One of these studies documented ways in which teachers categorized students and held expectations which favored middle class kids at the expense of poorer "redneck kids." [21] In another study, the researchers found that adolescents living in more rural and remote areas of the county participated less in the life of the high school, and that such students were far over-represented in lower curricular tracks. [22] It is significant that teachers in most schools in the research preferred teaching middle class students and the more affluent children who had moved to the area from metropolitan areas, even though most teachers were locals. The possibilities for rural and poor students to use local schools to move into a larger society thus appear even bleaker when the hometown teacher has low expectations for their success.

In another mountain town, DeYoung found a significant clash between a school staff clinging to the notion that a high school (academic) education wasn't for all students versus, a county superintendent who claimed that low teacher expectations helped push-out those already handicapped by their social circumstances. The contest over who would "take ownership" of the very high dropout rate (29%) proved to be a critical theme in this research.[23] The school's vocational director noted the irony of promoting strong vocational education programs in an area with traditionally high unemployment. On the one hand, he claimed:

> .. to have a saleable skill is a value to most of our families here. That's a value. For example, here in vocational section we have almost no problems with

> parents. None. They love what we do because that fits their norm, (where) in academia they just have problem after problem... it's much more difficult for (many) parents to relate to the need for academic skills as far as there is to earn a living, because most of them don't have (such skills) either. (Meanwhile) we have sort of a trap in this area geographically, because I have so many young ladies and young married people and young adults up these hollows that have great skills as far as working IBM typewriters and word processors and those types of things. But for what? Where are they going to go? You can't (commute) for minimum wage. That plus the fact that most Appalachians are n not mobile anyway. They want to live here. They want to stay here. There is a sort of security in the mountains.

The "sort of a trap" noted by the vocational director often finds rural students in an occupational and educational world for which they have little knowledge and over which they have little control, but one where educators fault them for their situations and expectations.

Young people in rural communities often differ in their aspirations and expectations. In "Sawyer," a Maine milltown, Gordon Donaldson distinguished three sorts of young people based upon their orientation to the future. Approximately 50% of his sample were "traditional youth," having little experience beyond the town and expecting (often hoping) to remain there. Another 40% of his students he termed "modern achieving;" youth who longed to leave what they perceived as restrictive small-town life. And 10% were "questioning;" both more experienced outside Sawyer than either of the other two groups but at the same time more uncertain about their futures. "Questioning youth" appeared to appreciate what life in their small rural communities had to offer, but wanted to expand their horizons before returning to live and work near family and friends. They wanted the best of both worlds.

Unfortunately, various factors worked against both the traditional and questioning youth, including counselors whose models of successful adult transition deprecate graduates who stay at home. Donaldson noted that standardized questionnaires and counselors assumed that rural youth who "remain behind" in their rural communities are less likely to mature into a healthy adulthood than their counterparts who leave. This, of course, was the claim Myra Fletcher made and the assumption Robert Owen challenged.

Douvan and Adelson's national study of adolescents also illustrates such an ideology by claiming that rural adolescents frequently belong to "subcultures" which are "less advanced,

psychologically, than (their) suburban or urban counterparts." [24] Such models or understandings, of course, place professional educators in the position of "helping" young people use the school to escape the local community, rather than to using the school to help restore the local community.

The West Virginia county superintendent mentioned earlier believed that in addition to low expectations his high school teachers held for many rural and poor teenagers, his county's high school dropout problem was also partly a function of young people becoming too comfortable in their own remote communities. Convinced that retaining small schools was fiscally impractical , he was no ally of those seeking to stop an imminent school consolidation. In fact, he supported consolidation, believing that transporting fifth graders to a larger consolidated middle school would be less traumatic for his most rural and poor students than the previous policy of beginning busing at the ninth grade level. Defending his support of middle school consolidation on pedagogical grounds, he stated:

> I'm not saying that we helped stimulate their community and that sort of thing, but that's not our mission anyway. Our mission is to deal with the kids and get them through high school and give them a good education. And if they want to stay here, fine. And if they want to go somewhere else, that's OK too. But we can't concern ourselves with keeping the school in the community for the sake of the adults.

Why Post-Secondary Education?

Living near a metropolitan area, or growing up in a rural place with visible opportunities for skilled labor may facilitate the educators' task of convincing students about the utility of advanced schooling for their lives. But for the many rural children growing up in communities where either physical labor or transfer payments remain the source for most adult income, the task of educators bent on educating and exporting students appears very difficult.

Statistical data illuminate the picture. The most economically depressed regions typically have the lowest rates of high school graduation, and report the most problems . [25] In the West Virginia school district mentioned earlier, part of the frustration over a 29% high school dropout

rate in 1989 was that third grade reading scores were among the highest in the state. On the 1992 NAEP, Maine's fourth graders ranked first nationally in math and second in reading. And the state's eighth graders ranked fourth in combined scores. Maine students graduate from high schools at a rate higher than the national average: 82.4%. However, fewer Maine students go further in school even though at an earlier age they are among the best in the country. In 1993, only 58% were in post-secondary institutions, compared with a national average of 66%; and only 19% of the states residents are college graduates compared to a New England average of 27%. [26]

In Tremont Maine, the poorest town on Mount Desert Island, the figures suggest that parents strongly support elementary and secondary education. Children in the elementary school perform as well on the Maine Educational Assessment as do children from Mount Desert, the most affluent town on the island. The citizens of Tremont are concerned about their children's education and proud of the local elementary school. Residents spend 71% of the town budget on education, whereas Mount Desert must only allocate 45% of its budget to achieve similar per capita school expenditures. Guidance counselors at the consolidated Mount Desert Regional High School report that Tremont's children are well prepared and are over-represented in the upper percentile of students at the high school. Yet, few students from Tremont go on to post-secondary education. Only 76.% of Tremont residents are high school graduates and only 16.8% have college degrees. [27]

Similar disparities exist between the education of immigrants to the state and native-born people. Relatively few Maine natives have the education to take professional jobs that already exist in Maine. Although 67% of the state's labor force was born in Maine, only 53% of the owners, managers, professionals and technicians were born there. In 1989, 40,000 persons with graduate or professional training beyond college, were employed in the state, but only 33% of these highly educated workers were natives. [28] Even when good jobs are available in states like Maine, then, rural residents don't always seek post-secondary education that would qualify them.

Why fewer Maine students seek post-secondary education is a complex issue, involving deeply rooted cultural patterns and the perceptions of the state's opportunity structures. Misconception about the relationship between schooling and work provides one explanation. Kim McBride, Program Director of the Maine Aspirations Compact, suggests that "kids think being from Maine is a liability." [29] This attitude is based on at least two misunderstandings: first, that rural students are academically incapable, which the NAEP data clearly refutes. And secondly, that very few jobs exist for highly trained workers. National data sets also underscore significant differences between metropolitan America and the countryside: rural students have significantly higher graduation rates, but enroll more frequently in non-college preparatory courses and apply for college less frequently than their suburban counterparts. [30] When small-town high school students do attend college, however, their performance is typically equal or better than that of students from larger high schools. [31]

But there is more to it than this. Educators have themselves been schooled to believe that the expressed traditional values of rural residents are illegitimate. Robert Cobb reports disbelief among the professionals he works with about the aspirations and values of Yankees who work in the fishing industry. For example, the official view is that men who dig clams or worms have hard lives and low-status jobs. Though digging is, in fact, exhausting and back-breaking, clam-diggers report great satisfaction in being self-employed and in charge of decisions about when and where to live and when to work. They also report enjoying the extra time they have for their families, and for hunting, fishing, and other leisure activities and can earn up to $40,000 a year.[32] Such sentiments are also reported by West Virginia residents who choose not to leave home in search of city jobs.

What are People and Schools Really for?

There are many other examples of culture contrast and conflict to be found in rural schools in the US. For many small towns, the schoolhouse has symbolically been the most important building in town and the center of community life, but state politicians and educators view its facilities as instrumental for instructional rather than symbolic needs. Closing schools or making

them independent of locals thus erodes the meaning of community and whatever traditional culture remains. Do we need communities anymore or can we create those independent of place (i.e., "communities of learners")? Ought schools to work for the success of all students or mostly for those going on to college?

In Culture Against Man (sic), Jules Henry identifies and criticizes traits characterizing middle class American culture. [33] He complains that twentieth century America is a culture driven by achievement, competition, and the aim of ever-higher standards of living. Driven to expand, the economy constantly creates consumer needs to fill. We are thus contributors to "progress" since we teach children that consumption is so important that their entire educational careers ought to be devoted to getting jobs that maximize opportunities for consumption. Here again the debate between **Ricardo** and Robert Owen can be seen, but now transferred to the schoolhouse.

Having accepted that the ultimate purpose of schooling is to train children for entry into the work force, we must then explain how and why some children fail to take full advantage of the system. Since everyone cannot come out on top in the race for opulence and recognition, such reasons have to be carefully constructed. The failure seems to be OK if some don't have the genetic material to succeed. Or it is at least understandable if some start from disadvantaged environments. Or, it must be their fault if some want to remain behind on the farm or in the woods. Yet, this entire framework rests on assumptions that getting a good city job, a mortgage on a new house, and a car to take the family away from it all once or twice a year defines human happiness. All doubtful assumptions, to be sure.

In Hoosiers, basketball player Ollie talks nonchalantly in social studies class about the meaning of "progress" in his town. Since the film is primarily about basketball and doesn't allow us to intervene and challenge his definition, we cannot ask him if he recognizes some of the contradictions in his list, nor if he believes that modern education is progressive, too. "Progress," he says, is "electricity, school consolidation, church remodeling, second farm tractors, second farm cars, hay bailers, corn pitches, field choppers and indoor plumbing." We cannot argue too much about the desirability of indoor plumbing or electricity. We do, however, rhetorically

wonder how many farmers were able to survive in farming as they borrowed money to purchase second farm tractors, second farm cars, hay bailers, corn pitches and field choppers in order to remain competitive. And, we wonder why remodeling the rural church was seen as progress, while remodeling the rural schoolhouse didn't make his list.

Is it the educators' responsibility to focus on community economic and social problems as educationally important, or is our job done after we have delivered state department mandated instructional packages and tested for their success? This is a rhetorical question too. We contend that the rural school problem in the U.S. is indeed a function of the rural life problem, but we contend that the rural life problem is really to convince those who live in the city that their success is importantly built upon the backs and minds of those who still live and often want to live in the country. It may be difficult if not impossible to convince the American elite and the private sector that metropolitan living is not the ultimate human experience. After all, their very way of life depends upon skills less frequently required in the countryside, and values consistent with careers and consumerism. And anyway, few of these people read Phi Delta Kappan.

Our target is rather the professional education community which has historically abandoned questions of the social purpose of schooling in the U.S. when it comes to either rural or urban schools. Throughout rural America for almost a century, and in urban America for over thirty years, we have been exhorted to achieve magical world class standards in the competition for global markets as if succeeding in such arenas is an end in itself or can ever be completely accomplished. Is formal schooling only a matter of more and better instruction? Is the real purpose of the school to supply workers and consumers for a national economy regardless of other human and social costs? Who does the school serve, and who might it serve if communities rather than careers were the aim of education reform? And what price do we pay by educating students to flee the communities that nurtured them ? Worthy questions to ponder and act upon, in our opinion. Wendell Berry phrases our concerns well:

> According to the new norm, the child's destiny is not to succeed the parents, but to outmode them, succession has given way to supersession. And this norm is

> institutionalized not in great communal stories, but in the education system. ... The child is not educated to return home and be of use to the place and community, he or she is educated to leave home and earn money in a provisional future that has nothing to do with place or community. ... (T)he costs of this education have been far too little acknowledged. One of the costs is psychological, the other is at once cultural and ecological. [34]

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