statesmen make the right decisions in influencing changes for the better. He is not optimistic about the influence of academics on policy. Historically their record is practically non-existent.

Packenham's thesis is worth the thorough and well-documented exploration he has given it. It might also be worthwhile to scrutinize the liberal rhetoric of policy-makers as an expression of practical politics rather than as beliefs deeply held. Nor has Packenham made any evaluation of the importance of liberal goals in comparison with other goals effecting foreign aid decisions, especially military security, balance of payments, and anti-inflationary goals. In practice most foreign aid went to nations on the perimeter of the Soviet Union without much concern for their form of government. Likewise, the reduction of aid and the present, "low profile" may turn on factors other than disillusion. However, none of these reservations should detract from the value of the author's reassertion of the influence of unexamined ideas and ideals in policy-making and social scientific inquiry.

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The Populist Context: Rural Versus Urban Power on a Great Plains Frontier.
By Stanley B. Parsons. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973. Pp. xviii, 205. $11.00.

Professor Parson's study of Nebraska politics in the 1880's and 1890's contains a number of detailed analyses of voting behavior and political organization. It also presents an interpretation that downplays the uniqueness or strength of Populism. According to the author, the Populist upsurge did for the first time bring a majority of farmers into positions of political power, but the victory was brief. Power remained largely in the hands of small-town leaders, and the Populists made their peace quickly with the Democrats. On economic issues, the Populists were strongly anti-Railroad, but some Democrats and Republicans held similar views. On the cultural issues of prohibition and nativism, Populists were far less cohesive or extreme than is often stated.

Parsons analyzes the county breakdown of votes in several elections, the pattern of legislative roll-calls on key issues, and the make-up of power structures in several counties. His statistical analyses are suggestive but occasionally flawed. One longs for mention of significance levels when he compares the average attributes of Republican and Democratic counties, or the voting patterns of Populist and major-party legislators. At one point a series of graphs on election returns counts votes for the 1894 Fusion slate both as Populist and as Democrat, leaving a misleading impression of an increase in anti-Republican strength, when in fact Republican candidates increased their share of the vote.

Nonetheless, much of the detail is interesting, even in sidelights. (It is of some interest today to learn that as early as 1890, the Standard Oil Company refused to sell a barrel of oil to Farmers' Alliance store.)

Most important is Parsons' evocation of the small town leadership of politics.
He rightfully faults William Diamond's classification of all towns of under 40,000 population as consisting of farmers, when, in reality, small towns had a commercial and speculative orientation which at times led to conflict with the farmers. Nonetheless, for a study of the "context" of populism, the analysis is somewhat unsatisfying. Differences between farmers and the county seats are stressed, but long periods of parallel voting are also noted. The economic reasons for possible convergence of interest are not explored, so one is left not knowing if town leaders outfought the Populists, if the farmers were incapable of leading themselves, or if the differences all along had been minor. The problem may be that while Parsons sought to test romantic notions of a Populist radical upsurge and claims of extreme nativist reaction, he did not try to test William Appleman Williams' evocation of the farmers' interests in economic expansion. A comparison with Michael Katz' studies of New England educational politics might have illuminated some apparently anomalous voting alignments on educational and health appropriations that Parsons finds. But Parsons does not address the questions about Populism or other topics posed by recent revisionist writers. The result is that this is not really a study of the Populist context, but only a presentation of facts that may some day be used to help illuminate that context.

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Riches, Class, and Power Before the Civil War. By Edward Pessen. Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1973. Pp. 378.

Edward Pessen continues his assault on the egalitarian thesis for Middle Period America by critically examining a series of Tocquevillean generalizations. Focusing on Boston, Brooklyn, New York, and Philadelphia, the author presents quantitative data on such variables as percentage of total wealth possessed by the wealthiest citizens, stability of individual fortunes, and social characteristics of the very rich; findings are further enriched by systematic impressions of elite lifestyles gleaned from diaries, records of voluntary associations, and histories. The study strongly refutes the egalitarian thesis, arguing that greater inequality and stratification of wealth, exclusive social networks, and continued political dominance by the rich in fact characterize the period. The book is suggestive, but several methodological and analytic problems limit the significance and validity of its conclusions.

Pessen commits overkill by "testing" generalizations that are unfairly divorced from Tocqueville's social theory and which reflect the weakest formulation of the egalitarian thesis. The research is careful and extensive, but it really is not surprising to learn that there were great inherited fortunes in America or that elites tended strongly to marry and associate privately with other elites. And at times the author overextends his data on elites to generalize about urban society. For instance, he demonstrates clearly that elites did not rise from poverty, but the data do not logically preclude the possibility that common men