This book joins a small number of empirical studies about direct democracy and specifically, the town meeting. Frank M. Bryson is author, coauthor, or editor of 11 books, including *Politics in the Rural South* (1958) and *The Vermont Project: Increasing Democracy on a Thomas Scale* (1989). Here, he unveils an incredible set of discoveries that fills a major gap in the literature on democracy and the town meeting. Other prominent scholars who have tackled some of these salient issues are Joseph Zeitlinman (*The New England Town Meeting* 1993) and Jane J. Manbridge (*Beyond Adversary Democracy* 1980), both of whose works are referenced extensively in *Real Democracy*. Bryson has performed yeomen's work in this landmark comparative study of town meetings that has evolved over three decades from 1969 to 1998. With help from his students as a part of their course responsibilities, he designed a framework for data collection and analysis of 1,435 Vermont town meetings held in 21 different towns (p. 260). Typically, his research teams would observe and document approximately 50 town meetings each year. One example of a significant finding from this massive longitudinal study was that "on average only 20 percent of the town's registered voters attended their yearly town meeting. . . and only 7 percent of them spoke out." (p. 280). Collecting data from hundreds of these towns is a remarkable feat because they often meet simultaneously in March, causing a logistical problem. Before Zeitlinman's book, there were no aggregate data on attendance rates of the New England towns.

To study this huge set of data, Bryson employed standard statistical techniques of multiple regression, correlation coefficient, and the Gini index. In addition, he crafted several original indices, for example, the raw best democracy index (RBDI) and the controlled best democracy index (CBDI). He and his students identified 338,663 acts of participation by 63,140 citizen-legislators that form the basis for this study.

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The book reviews that appear when a topic is a current one are many in number. In this case, the 'revisiting of old topics' is evident. In a recent issue of the American Political Science Review, reviewing the book 'The Crisis of Democratic Theory,' (1969) by Robert E. Holt, the reviewer states that the book is a 'must-read' for anyone interested in the future of democracy. He also notes that the book is 'an intellectual tour de force.'

The review follows the book's argument that democracy is in crisis and that there is a need for new democratic theories. The reviewer agrees with this argument and states that the book is a 'thought-provoking and challenging read.'

In conclusion, the reviewer recommends the book to anyone interested in the future of democracy and the role of politics in society. He states that the book is 'a must-read' for anyone interested in the future of democracy.