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Book Review

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BOOK REVIEW

THE NIGHTMARE DECADE: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SENATOR JOE MCCARTHY.
By Fred J. Cook. New York: Random House. 1971. Pp. xi, 626. \$10.

He was a master of the scabrous and the scatological; his talk was laced with obscenity. He was a vulgarian by method as well as, probably, by instinct. He belched and burped in public.¹

He was warm and friendly. He took his job seriously, but never himself. He would go to great lengths to help those he knew who were in trouble. He had more real personal courage than almost any man I ever knew.²

It is not only difficult but virtually impossible to be completely objective about Senator Joseph McCarthy. Those who lived through his era retain varying memories and confusing impressions of what it really was like. The perspective of history demands the passing of time to assess effectively the full significance of McCarthyism. However, a complete understanding of an era should also include what we might term historic empathy. We must be able to visualize and feel conditions as they were at that moment without prescience of events to come. We must remember that the United States government did include communist sympathizers and pro-Soviet advisors immediately after World War II and that they were in positions whereby they could twist and pervert American foreign policy. We must remember that not only the average citizen, but even government leaders were apprehensive about this menace. Even so, "the timorous conformity of an entire generation"³ to the outlandish tactics and egoism of one man is incredible.

The incredibility of the McCarthy decade, however, was not only in the execrable demagoguery of McCarthy but also in the unbelievable apathy of the administration, legislators of both parties, and the general public to his indiscriminate, unwarranted accusations and his belligerent, bullying examinations of witnesses.

There have been and always will be demagogues ranging through all shades of the political spectrum. Half-truths and innuendos are weapons that must be faced continuously by people in public life. Why, then, was Senator McCarthy permitted to continue using his official office and the floor and committee rooms of the U.S. Senate to carry on his abusive harassments? Why did it take so long to reach the censure vote? Edmund Burke said, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." Why did good men do nothing?

The Nightmare Decade provides some answers to these questions and raises other questions relating McCarthyism to the present administration in Washington. Fred J. Cook has explored fully the great variety of source materials covering McCarthy's personal life as well as the detailed documentation of his public

1 R. ROVERE, SENATOR JOE MCCARTHY 48 (1959).

2 R. COHN, MCCARTHY 267 (1968).

3 F. COOK, THE NIGHTMARE DECADE 4 (1971) [hereinafter cited as COOK].

life. In lucid journalistic language, Cook provides a comprehensive, meticulously researched, completely critical portrait of a disgraceful era.

McCarthy's rise to fame and power was both relentless and ruthless. He lived in a world of half-truths. His shipboard leg fracture "became magnified into a war wound suffered at death's door"⁴ for which he eventually received a meritorious citation. Building upon his war record, shady financial manipulations, and an opportunistic judgeship, he catapulted himself into the national scene. But as a freshman Senator, he was a failure.

In retrospect, the most interesting aspect of McCarthy's early senatorial performance was his style. From the beginning, he displayed only contempt for the traditions of the Senate, defied powerful colleagues, and indulged in debating tactics that other senators sometimes found irresponsible. McCarthy was, therefore, kept on the fringes of the Senate, far away from the centers of real influence and power.⁵

He needed an issue to ignite support and he found it in the growing fears arising after the convictions of Alger Hiss, Judith Coplon, and Klaus Fuchs. He would carry the banner of anticommunism.

How this crusade became an utter debacle is minutely described as Fred Cook guides us through the "nightmare." This journalistic history is as complete as McCarthy's false accusations were incomplete. McCarthy would accuse "scores of officials of treason, and then he would protest that he must not be asked to name them because it would not be *fair* to them to do so before they had a chance to answer."⁶ And in the end, McCarthy never established the presence of even one communist in Acheson's State Department. But "the McCarthy crusade depended on making what *might be* seem factual."⁷ The facts themselves were superfluous.

The memories sting a little as we recall the charges and abuse directed at Owen Lattimore and General Zwicker, the suicide of Raymond Kaplan following harassment of *The Voice of America*, and the attempt to "wreck the Army" when the Army failed to grant favored treatment to G. David Schine, friend and protege of McCarthy and his counsel Roy Cohn. The Army-McCarthy hearings, Joseph Welch's impassioned pleas, and McCarthy's eventual censure by the U.S. Senate are vividly re-created.

But we continue to be haunted by the question: Why did it go so far? Men of all political complexions were hesitant and avoided contending with what appeared to be a national fear of the Red menace. Conservative Joseph P. Kennedy provided strong financial support for McCarthy's investigations. His more liberal sons were taken in. "John F. Kennedy . . . in 1960, was highly suspect in liberal segments of the party because he had not taken a forthright stand on McCarthyism when it mattered."⁸ Robert Kennedy's "attachment to McCarthy's brand of anticommunism was far closer and more enduring

4 COOK at 87.

5 A. MATUSOW, ed., JOSEPH R. MCCARTHY 15 (1970).

6 COOK at 5.

7 *Id.* at 282.

8 *Id.* at 285.

than that of his brother." He resigned as counsel to McCarthy's subcommittee "but he parted on the most cordial terms and remained forever faithful to McCarthy's memory."⁹

At the beginning of his political career, Richard M. Nixon used the issue of communism to help defeat Helen Douglas and thus became a U.S. Senator. He surely was aware of the effectiveness of the issue and perhaps some of its validity. However, *The Nightmare Decade*, an effective journalistic history, becomes a hodgepodge of political editorializing when Cook leaves the facts and speculates within the confines of his own biases concerning the current administration. In designating Nixon and Agnew as the heirs of McCarthyism he speaks of McCarthy's tactics and technique. He refers to Agnew's attack on the news media as "the old McCarthyism resurgent, hate-filled, appealing to a blind super-patriotism; impervious to reason."¹⁰ The inference throughout these arguments is that the current administration in Washington learned demagogic methods under the tutelage of the McCarthy era. Certainly, Mr. Cook is aware that demagogues have thrived throughout recorded history and that McCarthy was merely a recent example who attained considerable success as one. If Nixon and Agnew are the legatees, they inherited the stigma of a disgraceful era in our political history. Whether the criticisms of the news media have been "hate-filled" and "impervious to reason" or whether they have been candid and sincere does not seem to be an appropriate consideration for *The Nightmare Decade*, and Mr. Cook's digression into such conjecture mars an otherwise outstanding reportorial work.

It might have been more appropriate to look at the effect of McCarthyism on today's State Department and our muddled efforts in Far East diplomacy which, in Viet Nam, could be called disastrous:

As McCarthy mounted his attack against "Communists in government" even some conservative American officials with recent experience in China found themselves under suspicion, their careers in jeopardy over the "loss of China." Anyone who had uttered a kind word about Mao or an unkind word about Chiang Kai-shek was pronounced unreliable. In bureaucratic terms, the upshot of this witch hunt was that the nation's leading China specialists were hounded out of the government. Once out, they were generally silenced. Their knowledge of Asia, so desperately needed in the 1960's during the plunge into Vietnam, was absent from government decision-making. In the intervening years, a new generation of China specialists was developing; but these were younger men, lacking direct experience of China. The big decisions were left to politicians or to Soviet specialists.¹¹

The actual legacy of McCarthyism has been deep and lasting, and continues to influence American diplomacy. The fears he incited and the intimidations he provoked were incredible. *The Nightmare Decade* will be a bad dream for many years to come.

Henry B. Fuller*

⁹ *Id.* at 287.

¹⁰ *Id.* at x.

¹¹ KALB & ABEL, *THE ROOTS OF INVOLVEMENT* 60 (1971).

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BOOKS RECEIVED

- COMMON MARKET AND AMERICAN ANTITRUST.** Edited by James A. Rahl. In this book, an attempt is made to deal with the problems presented by international antitrust conflict, with the United States and the Common Market as specific objects of study. American and foreign antitrust laws are treated in detail as well as attempts by international organizations to deal with restrictive practices. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company. 1970. Pp. xxiii, 476. Price unreported.
- CRIMES, COURTS AND FIGURES: AN INTRODUCTION TO CRIMINAL STATISTICS.** By Nigel Walker. Professor Walker tries to cut through the maze of criminal statistics presented by governmental agencies and explain such basic concepts as how offenses are reported and how the efficacy of corrective and deterrent measures should be evaluated. Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc. 1971. Pp. 160, \$2.95. (Paperbound).
- DRUG MISUSE: A PSYCHIATRIC VIEW OF A MODERN DILEMMA.** By the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry. In this critical assessment of the nation's response to the growing problem of drug misuse, the GAP's Committee on Psychiatry and Law concludes that law enforcement activities should be directed primarily towards the illegal manufacture and distribution of dangerous drugs. Misusers of drugs, whose only crime is possession, should not be regarded as criminals, but as troubled individuals who need medical therapy. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1971. Pp. 93. \$1.95. (Paperbound).
- FEDERAL INCOME TAXATION OF BUSINESS ENTERPRISE.** By Bernard Wolfman. Professor Wolfman attempts, as completely as possible, to introduce students to the basic concepts of corporate taxation. Principal emphasis is placed upon Subchapter C of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Special attention is paid to the problems presented by "small business" corporations, the accumulated earnings tax and personal holding companies. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1971. Pp. xxix, 1095. Price unreported.
- HARMONIZATION OF EUROPEAN COMPANY LAWS: NATIONAL REFORM AND TRANSNATIONAL COORDINATION.** By Eric Stein. Professor Stein outlines the changes which European company law has taken and must take in order to provide a regional legal framework in which multinational European business can flourish. Special attention is paid to the European Economic Community. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1971. Pp. lxii, 558. \$22.50.
- THE INJURY INDUSTRY AND THE REMEDY OF NO-FAULT INSURANCE.** By Jeffrey O'Connell. Professor O'Connell, who is a co-designer of the Keeton-O'Connell No-Fault concept, adopted by Massachusetts, argues that no-fault insurance presents a realistic method of eliminating protracted and expensive arguing over who is at fault in an automobile accident. Chicago: Commerce Clearing House, Inc. 1971. Pp. xiii, 253. \$8.50.

- LAND USE PLANNING: A CASEBOOK ON THE USE, MISUSE, AND RE-USE OF URBAN LAND.** By Charles M. Haar. In this second edition of Professor Haar's textbook, more stress is laid on federal policies and activity in the area of replanning and refurbishing urban areas. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1971. Pp. xxxix, 788. Price unreported.
- THE LAW OF ASSOCIATIONS.** By George D. Webster. This treatise attempts to cover all of the legal and tax aspects of nonprofit organization management. Extended coverage is given to association incorporation, antitrust implications of association pricing activities, and federal tax aspects of association activities, including industry-sponsored foundations. Washington, D.C.: American Society of Association Executives. 1971. Pp. xxv, 569. \$19.95.
- LAWYERS FOR PEOPLE OF MODERATE MEANS: SOME PROBLEMS OF AVAILABILITY OF LEGAL SERVICES.** By Barlow F. Christensen. The wealthy have rarely been deprived of legal services. The poor have recently been afforded legal assistance through various legal aid programs. But what about those whose means are "moderate" but who nevertheless would find a lawyer's bill to be a financial disaster? In this book, Mr. Christensen critically evaluates the alternatives for providing legal services for the middle class. The alternatives considered include special law offices, group legal services, referral services, and membership programs (unions, trade associations, etc.). Chicago: American Bar Foundation. 1970. Pp. xii, 313. \$5.50. (Paperbound).
- MARIJUANA: THE SECOND TRIP.** By Edward R. Bloomquist, M.D. Dr. Bloomquist has written this informative book primarily for laymen, to inform them of the principal effects of marijuana on the individual. A chapter concerned with the legal aspects of marijuana is included. Beverly Hills: Glencoe Press. 1971. Pp. x, 434. \$6.95.
- MODERN DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LAW OF TRUSTS.** By George W. Keeton. Professor Keeton comprehensively examines the English law of Trusts, including tax implications, trust investments, the perpetuity rule, spendthrift trusts, and death duties. Belfast: Northern Ireland Quarterly. 1971. Pp. xxv, 342. \$17.50.
- THE POLITICS OF RIOT COMMISSIONS.** Edited by Anthony M. Platt. In this work, Professor Platt, of the School of Criminology at the University of California at Berkeley, presents significant segments of riot commissions' reports, scanning a time period from the 1917 East St. Louis riot to the 1970 campus disorders. Platt's thesis is that riot commission members are drawn only from the most successful and powerful segment of American society, and represent an attempt to inhibit the possibility of sudden and major social change. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1971. Pp. x, 527. \$3.95. (Paperbound).