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BOOK REVIEW

CITADEL: THE STORY OF THE U.S. SENATE. By William S. White. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957. Pp. 274. \$3.75.

Citadel, The Story of the United States Senate is a penetrating and valuable study of "the world's greatest forum of debate" by William S. White, chief congressional correspondent for the New York Times. The author has admirably achieved the purpose stated in his Foreword—to deal with the Senate "with all its strengths and all its weaknesses, rather as one would try to deal with the story of an extraordinary and significant man." *Citadel* is not an unemotional, dispassionate historical statement of the chronology of the upper chamber of the Congress; it is instead a portrait of a living body as described by a highly-skilled, sensitive observer of the operations and personality of the United States Senate.

Mr. White first proceeds to locate the Senate within the total governmental framework as a uniquely ambivalent body which possesses, in addition to its primary legislative functions, serious responsibilities in conjunction with the executive branch in the establishment and implementation of foreign policy and the selection of members of the judicial branch and key officials of the departments and agencies of the government. But more important, in the view of the author, than a description of the duties imposed on the Senate by the Constitution is the role it has played in lending continuity, restraint, creativity and direction to the operations of government. It is primarily in this body—in essence the meeting place of two ambassadors from each of the sovereign states—that the doctrine of the concurrent majority is most artfully and skillfully employed. It is here that the "harsh and fundamental" divergencies of our country are accommodated and ameliorated.

Mr. White's day-to-day observations over a considerable period of time have led him to some interesting and thought-provoking conclusions about the personality of the Senate. Perhaps the most important of these is that there is an "Inner Club" of the Senate which controls and dominates the actions of the entire body in a rather imperceptible and almost mysterious fashion. Though unquestionably every Senator does not have the same degree of influence in the deliberations and the business of the Senate, is this not true of any body of nearly 100 men. Here, as elsewhere, experience, personal leadership qualities, and intelligence will dictate the role to be played by each individual in the work of the group. And it must be noted that the committee form of organization adopted by the Senate reposes many prerogatives in com-

mittee chairmen with accompanying influence and voice in the Senate's over-all operation. This is true, of course, to an even greater degree with regard to the individual importance of the majority and minority leaders. The varying degrees of influence of the members of the Senate may be conceded, but it is difficult to move from that fact to the idea of an almost organic Inner Club.

Another provocative concept advanced by the author is the existence of a "true Senate type." Every group has an organizational personality and perhaps those individuals who most nearly approach the group characteristics can be said to be representative of the group or to be true group types. But, of greater significance is the wide diversity of personalities which combine to make the whole. The "Southern flavor" of the Senate referred to by the author is probably due not so much to the fact that the Senate was an improvisation of the South in the writing of our Constitution as suggested in the book, than to the practical fact that most Southern states are one-party states affording their representatives in the Senate the opportunity to acquire seniority which in any body, and in the Senate in particular, brings valuable experience, prestige, and influence in the operation of the organization. But even after these factors had been given their proportionate weight, it is very true of Senate history that Southerners have played an unusually dominant role in its life. Whether it was because the political environment seemed more natural for Southerners, or because a feeling for the law was more deeply inbred or whether it was because men of talent were denied the opportunities that lead their peers in the North to success in the business world; whatever the combination of reasons may have been, the fact remains that the Southerners have set the tone for the life of the Senate through most of the years of its history.

One of the most courageous actions of the author is his effort to characterize the Senate Democrat and the Senate Republican. If he were not so universally admired and respected he might well have brought bipartisan wrath on his head by describing the Democrats as casual, gossipy, relaxed, disconnected, eloquent and the methods of debate used by the Republicans as tireless, dogmatic, stubborn, repetitive and clear.

The chapter on Senate committees is an excellent essay which in a few pages and with some pointed anecdotes accurately portrays the processes by which the great bulk of the Senate's work is done. The range of activities encompassed within the operations of the Senate is so overwhelming that the only possible approach is specialization. Thus, it is in committees where one can channel his interests, talents, and efforts that each Senator makes his greatest contribution; it is here that he can accumulate information and practical experiences in the

fields of the committees' jurisdiction and put his special talents and information to the best use. Mr. White deals forthrightly with an issue supercharged with emotionalism: the seniority system by which committee assignments and chairmanships are obtained. He points out that committee assignments—at least for Democratic Senators—are based not only on seniority but also on such other important factors as geographical and ideological representation. With regard to chairmanships, the author recognizes the demands that have been made for reform, but frankly finds no alternative worthy of serious consideration.

Despite Mr. White's obvious affectionate regard for the Senate, he takes it to task for permitting its committees to trample on the constitutional rights of individuals investigated and, in practical fact, tried in public hearings. His is not a legal or formalistic criticism, but the reaction of a trained newspaperman who has observed the process in action. And he is careful to note that these abuses have been dealt out by members of both political parties and representing all shades of political opinion. The investigative power is a valuable—if not indispensable—tool of the Senate which, as is indicated so clearly in the book, has generally been used properly and profitably. But the author has appropriately directed attention to an area of Senate activity deserving of careful scrutiny by each member of the Senate.

A substantial body of literature has been written about the Senate, but *Citadel* performs a special role in, for the first time, portraying the Senate as an organic unit. The anecdotes and personal recollections liberally used by the author aptly illustrate the various broad principles and details he has fashioned into an image of a vital, living force in our nation's growth and development, the United States Senate. Those anxious to understand the operations of the Senate and to gain an insight into the complex interplay of personalities and forces that lie behind the usual surface view of this unique body will find what they seek in William S. White's *Citadel*.

SENATOR JOHN F. KENNEDY