

## Inside the U.S. Senate

ADVISE AND CONSENT, by Allen Drury. Doubleday & Company, Inc., New York, 1959. 616 pages. \$5.75

Reviewed by DOROTHY SARA

**T**HIS first novel, by a man with a background of fifteen years of reporting the goings-on in our national capital, has as its "hero" not a person but a country—the United States. Its setting is the Senate in Washington, D.C. and the cast of characters is made up of prototypes of politicians and elected officials of varying political shades. The central theme is whether or not the Senate will "advise and consent" to the nomination by the President of the United States of a new cabinet member, a Secretary of State.

The book is not a dull recording of committee meetings; it is a dramatic portrayal of the minds and hearts of those who are concerned with the welfare and survival of their country even though there is much politicking in their methods, as well as those who put personal gain above the nation's good.

Mr. Drury's experience as a veteran Washington correspondent is shown in the way he reveals the behind-the-scenes activities of the Senate, the debates for and against the cabinet nominees, the workings of the wily minds of some senators as pitted against the profound sincerity of others. His words draw clear personality pictures of these people, not merely as politicians but as individual men and women whose own lives are deeply affected by their responsibilities as elected representatives of the people.

The author deftly describes the so-

cial activities in Washington which are the scenes of the plotting of political shenanigans; he delves into the private lives and loves of some of his characters without over-dramatizing the unsavory aspects to produce an artificial literary effect. In the integration of the personal and political lives of his people Mr. Drury proves himself a moving novelist.

Fictitious names are used by the author, and there is much provocation to the reader in attempting to identify those people on the recent and contemporary Washington scene who seem to fit the fictional characters.

Undoubtedly the intention of Mr. Drury is to shake up the lethargy of those who feel that having elected their representatives and sent them to Washington they just let them worry about what goes on. While he uses the fictional method of writing, the book should hardly be regarded as just another novel; it contains much "non-fiction" material to give the reader a clear picture of what goes on in the Senate and perhaps jolt him out of a lackadaisical attitude into a more active participation in the administration of his country.

In the author's words "The great Age of the Shoddy came upon America . . . With it came the Age of the Shrug . . . A dry rot had affected Americans . . . and every sensitive American knew it." This book, then, is his intention to cure the dry rot and prod people out of the age of the shrug into a more personal and active interest in the final words of the book "America . . . the kindly, pleasant, greening land about to learn whether history still had a place for a nation so strangely composed of great ideals and uneasy companions. . . ."

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