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BOOK REVIEW

Outsider in the Senate

by

CLINTON P. ANDERSON with MILTON VIORST

New York: World Publishing Company, 1970.

Pp. 328. Price unknown.

Senator Anderson, in his introduction, describes this book as a summary of "the major triumphs and disappointments of my life in the realm of public affairs." It is that, and more. It gives an insider's view of the legislative process, and of New Mexican and national politics. This very readable, insightful, and at times amusing book portrays Senator Anderson as the product of an earlier, more tranquil era; his family background, his early years, his mother who wanted him to become a Baptist preacher, his being forced to withdraw from the University of Michigan School of Journalism at the end of his second year to contribute financial support to his family when his father broke his back in a fall down an elevator shaft, his social exploits as a gay young blade while working as a newspaper reporter in Mitchell, South Dakota, are all nostalgic recollections of a time forever lost in America.

Stricken with tuberculosis at the age of 21, in 1917 the doctor told his father, "this boy is going to die." However, young Clint was sure he would recover, "If I could get to a more hospitable climate." So, in October, 1917, he took the train, alone, to Albuquerque, "a town of fifteen thousand people, a large proportion of whom were 'lungers' trying to get back their health." When he sought admission at the Methodist Sanatorium, he relates how, "There was no vacancy when I arrived, and I sat down to wait . . . within a few hours a patient died," and there was a vacancy. The doctors who examined him upon his admittance gave him five days to live. But this man was stronger willed and stronger physically than they realized. He determined, "I had come to New Mexico to live, and I was going to leave that Sanatorium on my feet." He got well, stayed in Albuquerque, and in 1919 was working again, as a reporter for the Albuquerque Herald covering the Legislature in session in Santa Fe. This gave him his first real exposure to politics.

He served in many capacities, including State Democratic Party Chairman, State Treasurer, Relief Administrator (after an angry crowd of unemployed had deposed his predecessor by storming the Bernalillo County Courthouse). But he reports, "In spite of my little triumphs in politics, I resisted contemplating a political career for myself." Almost only by accident did Clinton P. Anderson run for

office. In 1940 a vicious battle for Bronson Cutting's former senate seat developed, between Senator Dennis Chavez and Congressman John J. Dempsey. To avoid an irreparable party split, former Governor Arthur Hannett suggested that what was needed was to nominate someone for New Mexico's sole Congressional seat who would promise to serve only one term so as to leave a spot for whoever lost in the Chavez-Dempsey contest. Governor John Miles agreed, and proposed that Clinton P. Anderson be the one. Clint reluctantly agreed to make the race, and carried the State of New Mexico by 12,000 more votes than did Franklin D. Roosevelt. He was assigned at first to committees such as Public Lands, Indian Affairs, and the Census (called lice and nits assignments due to lack of status). However, the Census Committee assignment gave him his first chance to demonstrate his ability to Sam Rayburn, then Speaker of the House, whose slogan for running the House of Representatives was, "If you want to get along, go along." Anderson was a strong supporter of Harry Truman for the vice-presidential nomination in 1944; then in 1945, when Truman became president, he called on Congressman Anderson to be Secretary of Agriculture and thus to become that rarest of specimens, a Westerner in a Presidential Cabinet.

Resigning from the Cabinet in 1948, Clinton Anderson was elected to fill the seat of Carl Hatch in the U.S. Senate, or what he refers to as "The Gentlemen's Club." His involvement with Los Alamos and atomic research—the desalinization of water project—are accounted in a chapter entitled, "Power in the Atom"; his battle with Lewis Strauss is told in "Grasping at Strauss"; "I Love the Out-of-Doors" tells of his fight for passage of the wilderness bill and water resources legislation; and self-explanatory is "Medicare: Anatomy of a Bill"; all give his own insights into wheeling and dealing in the national political arena on these important issues of the sixth decade which will leave their imprint on the remainder of the 20th century and beyond. Anderson's major role and interest in the battles for medical care and far reaching conservation measures are a testimonial to his people-oriented philosophy.

His insider view of the legislative process is enlightening. His first action in the Senate was to violate the rule he had learned in the House from Sam Rayburn—"If you want to get along, go along." As a freshman senator, he joined in the fight to curb the filibuster so that Harry Truman's civil rights legislation could have a chance. In so doing, freshman Anderson had to fight the Senate establishment and, as a result, become an "outsider" to the Senate power structure. He thus had to stand by and see others receiving attractive committee assignments and, as he says, "I felt the handicap for many years."

In the Medicare battle, he outlines how Senator Bob Kerr of Okla-

homa used his power as head of the Public Works Committee and second in line of the Finance Committee to shift the vote of Senator Jennings Randolph of West Virginia, who was actually a sponsor of the Medicare bill, but who was vulnerable because of a special \$21 million appropriation for West Virginia which he was fearful of losing if he opposed Kerr on Medicare. By shifting Jennings' vote, Kerr held up passage of Medicare for three years.

Friend, ally, acquaintance, observer of five presidents he has this to say:

Harry Truman: "I was impressed with Truman's integrity, and I had a great deal of confidence in his capacity. Truman's weakness, in fact, was his excessive modesty."

Dwight Eisenhower: "I suppose I expected too much from Dwight Eisenhower as President. A person of intelligence and character, though somewhat deficient in sense of humor." "What is tragic is that Eisenhower, because of his magic personality and unparalleled popularity, had it within his power to make fundamental changes in foreign policy, without evoking destructive political opposition . . . I do . . . severely criticize him for the lackadaisical view he took of his responsibilities as President, which I believe did a major disservice to the country during a critical period of our history." "I sincerely believe that today we are paying the price of a federal government which, for eight years, did nothing to keep up with the country's expansion as well as the cancerous growth of its problems."

John F. Kennedy: "He had the capacity to lift men up, to bring out the best in the country" . . . "If he had lived, Kennedy would have been one of the three or four most memorable Presidents of our history; he was tenacious and dedicated and . . . to my surprise, understood and even cared about the problems of the Southwest."

Lyndon B. Johnson: "He was, in my mind, a great organizer and a talented leader. I thought he might succeed where Kennedy failed in his relations with Congress . . . He might, I think, even have survived the disaster of the Vietnam War, but he failed utterly to understand the feeling of the American people about it . . . Lyndon behaved with the public good as his goal, but he hid so much from view that the public was never sure this was so."

Richard M. Nixon: "It would not be fair to attempt a comprehensive judgment on his presidency . . . nor has there been enough time . . . I do feel that he is an earnest man, capable of professional managerial stewardship, if not of launching far reaching initiatives."

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