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# In Perspective

## Fulbright's Example

By Max

ONE OF the penalties for an absence from Washington is that so many events have vanished beyond recall even though one would have liked to discuss them. Fortunately, some events last beyond their hour and help to mold the slow changes of national policy. In this category, beyond doubt, belongs the book containing a selection from the public papers of Senator Fulbright.

Our thanks must go to Mr. Karl E. Meyer, the editor, and to Mr. Walter Lippmann for his foreword.

Even friends and admirers of Senator Fulbright must read this book with a sense of astonishment. He is so much wiser and more generous than we had allowed ourselves to believe. There are, of course, some blots on his record. His conduct in the Little Rock controversy requires no eulogy, and his brief to the Supreme Court on segregation is no heroic document. But those who seek perfection should look neither at men nor at statesmen. It is enough that in an age of shabby values



Freedman

Senator Fulbright has raised the public debate to give a fair hearing to new ideas.

With Thorcau, he believes that it is never too late to give up our prejudices. Men with this faith in the power of reason are never common in public life and are never more needed than they are now.

SINCE THE WAR the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has had four important chairmen. In a formative period of American policy Senator Vandenberg provided an essential link between the past and the future. Under the guidance of Senator Connally the Committee became the forum for every major debate on foreign affairs. Without Senator George, it would have been impossible for Mr. Dulles to keep Congress under his spell. Now, with Senator Fulbright, we are watching a new tradition in the making.

Senator Fulbright has no ambition to be the agent of the White House or the State Department. Nor does he try to impose his own authority on the Committee. He remains a free spirit despite the power of his office and his loyalty to the Democratic Party. It is this freedom which explains his influence in Congress and the country. Speaking rarely but al-

ways with dignity, Senator Fulbright has usually on the big issues been ahead of public opinion. He was thinking of the problems of peace when others were still caught in the toils of war. He foresaw the need of bringing Congress and the President into a sensible partnership on the broad themes of foreign policy. He organized support for the United Nations when isolationism was still a smoldering force. He wanted the Marshall Plan to lead to the economic union of Western Europe. He advocated some form of political union if the members of NATO were to share an abiding purpose. It is a proud record, and it speaks for a man not adrift on the turbid stream of events but having a clear goal and making constantly for it.

AS A FINAL laurel wreath, it should be added that he has not always been most wrong when his advice has been neglected. His unavailing wisdom when he stood against the Cuban invasion is a title of glory in itself.

If one were to give a single passage as an expression of the central theme of Senator Fulbright's philosophy, perhaps one would be forgiven for choosing this declaration from an address in 1961:

"Our proper objective as a nation must be, as it was to Woodrow Wilson, 'to make a society instead of a set of barbarians out of the governments of the world.' Advancement toward this objective will require persistent effort in the face of inevitable frustrations. More fundamentally, it will require the cultivation of qualities that are associated with maturity rather than youth: qualities of wisdom, as well as resourcefulness; persevering determination, as well as righteous dedication; and, perhaps most of all, moral courage in place of adolescent bravado."

It often is held as a reproach against Congress that it has dwarfed its leaders into servants of a party instead of letting them become the guides of the Nation. This charge is too violent and sweeping to be either accurate or convincing. Senator Fulbright can be taken as a model of the better members of Congress who trust the public, when it has the facts, far more than they do the unexamined decisions of even the wisest official. But he also believes that the public must suspend judgment until it knows the facts, must never sharpen personal feuds, and must always resist the folly of giving simple answers to complex questions. Armed with this faith, he is unable to have more respect for the self-righteousness of public opinion than he has for the clamorous simplicities of the fanatic. Perhaps this independence of spirit explains why he has kept so many of the pieties of scholarship amid the rancors and vanities of politics. It is an example worth following.