

William Allen White: Maverick on Main Street. By John DeWitt McKee. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975. Pp. x, 264. Notes, selected bibliography, index. \$12.95.)

If Kansas' William Allen White were living today, he would quickly and correctly be charged with advocacy journalism, which he and most other newspapermen of his day practiced to the hilt. The publisher of the *Emporia Gazette*, a literate, sensitive, and able man who spent his life in two worlds, journalism and politics, had no problem with having one foot in each or moving from one world to the other. He was both a nationally and internationally known publisher, columnist, and editorial writer and a highly partisan Republican.

As author John DeWitt McKee points out in this excellent, well written, and superbly researched book, White's age was an age of personal journalism, and one dominated by newspapers. Only in White's last years did radio get its foot in the door of the news business; there was no television in his lifetime.

The highlight of McKee's book about this remarkable American may be the account of White's long efforts to make his beloved Republican party a faithful reflection of what he perceived as the real needs and aspirations of the people. He worked toward that goal with presidential candidates from Theodore Roosevelt to Wendell Willkie. For White, always a prairie populist at heart and usually in practice, success was mixed at best. He hated to see TR lose in 1912, and Roosevelt's death in 1919 was a heavy blow.

As the United States drifted toward involvement in World War II, White worked to keep the United States out, founding the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies. But after Pearl Harbor he went all out in the effort to win the war. After all, he said, William Allen White would be one of the first people Hitler would hang.

The man could write—forcefully, effectively, dramatically. The 1896 editorial which made his reputation—"What's The Matter With Kansas?"—was simply the first of dozens which made people stop, read, think—and even change their minds. He could write of the soul and spirit too. His tribute to his daughter Mary, after her death in an accident in 1921,

remains some of the most moving writing in American journalism.

In the final chapter of the book McKee writes: "William Allen White was never as liberal as he thought himself; certainly he was never the radical he called himself" (p. 198). And in the same chapter McKee comments that all his life White stood in the broad middle way of midwestern liberalism, throwing brickbats at the extremists on either side of the highway. "Because democratic liberalism has so many shades and because William Allen White felt free to move over the whole spectrum of that liberalism, he confused his friends and enraged his enemies" (p. 202).

McKee, professor of English at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, has written a fine work. There is no trace of literary sterility. White comes through as a flesh and blood human, deeply involved in the passions and controversies of his time, a newspaperman and politician who made a significant contribution to his nation in both fields.

Indianapolis News

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A Little Group of Willful Men: A Study of Congressional Presidential Authority. By Thomas H. Ryley. (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1975. Pp. 198. Notes, bibliography, index. \$12.95.)

In early 1917 a small coalition of United States senators filibustered to death the so called Armed Ship Bill which would have given President Woodrow Wilson authority to place weapons on American merchant ships. The successful Senate effort provoked Wilson into firing his famous arrow of wrath at the "little group of willful men" who, "representing no opinion but their own, have rendered the great government of the United States helpless and contemptible" (p. 3).

Although this dispute has been obscured in history by Wilson's later battle with Congress over United States membership in the League of Nations, the struggle was no small matter. It involved some of the great names in Senate history (George W. Norris, Robert M. La Follette, Henry Cabot Lodge) and dealt with a major foreign policy issue. The outcome not only exercised an impact on the operating procedures of the Senate (the first cloture rule ever was adopted