

## PREFACE

The Senate Committee on Labor, Education, and Public Welfare was a catchall committee which handled legislation on health, education, labor, veterans' affairs, juvenile delinquency, problems of the aging, and sundry other subjects. For many years the Senate's conservative "Inner Club" looked upon the committee as a convenient place to assign and isolate their more liberal colleagues. The committee labored long each session only to see its handiwork stalled on the Senate floor or blocked in the House of Representatives. Yet, under the effective chairmanship of Lister Hill, and his successors Ralph Yarborough and Harrison Williams, the Labor Committee produced a series of landmark social legislation, much of which was enacted during the heyday of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society.

Stewart E. McClure served as the committee's chief clerk during this turning point era, from 1955 to 1969, and from 1971 to 1973. In these oral history interviews he recounts the committee's frustrations and its triumphs, and recalls its most significant members, such as Wayne Morse, John Kennedy, Joseph Clark, Jacob Javits, Barry Goldwater, and Everett Dirksen. As chief clerk he attended and took minutes for all executive sessions, scheduled hearings, oversaw the staff, assisted the chairman, drafted speeches, and served as an "idea man." One of his ideas was to link education to defense in the wake of the Soviet Sputnik scare, a proposal which resulted in the National Defense Education Act. McClure discusses both legislation and the legislative process, and the senators and staff who shaped American lawmaking from the 1950s to the 1970s. He also gives candid assessments of the internal politics and stresses of committee life during those years.

Born in Omaha, Nebraska on March 11, 1913, Stewart McClure attended Amherst and graduated from Columbia College and the Columbia School of Journalism. During World War II he served in the Army Air Corps in Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany. After the war he worked for the American League for a Free Palestine, the International Rescue Committee, and the National Committee for an Effective Congress. In 1949 he joined the staff of Senator Guy Gillette as administrative assistant. When Senator Gillette was defeated for reelection in 1954, McClure became chief clerk of the Labor Committee, at the time Lister Hill assumed the chairmanship. McClure remained with the Labor Committee until Senator Hill retired in 1968. After two years as a professional staff member of the Public Works Committee, McClure returned once more to the Labor Committee as chief clerk from 1971 until his retirement from the Senate in 1973.

"I regret to see Stewart McClure retire," former Senator Lister Hill wrote on that occasion. "He has been such a fine and able public servant. In fact, in all my forty-six years in the House and Senate I never knew a finer one. He is so able and could always write a splendid report on legislation, and he was a beautiful speech writer. He was not only a man of great ability but one of dedication and integrity."