

Preface

Patronage dictated all Senate staff appointments in the years before the Second World War. Not only members of each senator's personal staff (then quite small in number), but also committee clerks and messengers, elevator operators, doorkeepers, waiters, barbers, and Capitol police officers mostly owed their appointments to the patronage system. After the war, the Senate underwent modernization when the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 restructured committees and expanded the staff. During the subsequent three decades the number of Senate employees grew from 1,000 to over 6,000, accompanied by an increasing professionalization of the staff. The Senate developed a permanent service force, chosen for individual expertise rather than political loyalty.

One man closely identified with the transformation from patronage to modern, professional staff was Darrell St. Claire, who served the Senate for almost forty years until his retirement on April 1, 1977. As an aide to Arizona's long-time Senator Carl Hayden, St. Claire became secretary to the Democratic Patronage Committee, which dispensed staff positions to majority party members during the New Deal years. Later, as Chief Clerk and Assistant Secretary of the Senate, he became a leader in the movement to install a more professional staff, and took on the responsibilities of personnel management in the office of the Secretary.

Aside from administrative matters, Darrell St. Claire's interests lay in foreign relations. As a new Senate employee in 1933, he attended the London Economic Conference, chiefly to keep an eye on the unpredictable Foreign Relations chairman, Key Pittman. During the war, he served overseas in the Navy before returning to become legislative liaison for the State Department. He later served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's staff, under chairmen Theodore Green and J. William Fulbright, and for many years was executive secretary for the American delegation to the Interparliamentary Union, bringing members of Congress together with their international counterparts. His role was chiefly that of planner and facilitator, but his efforts helped smooth the way for those directly involved in the policy-making process.

Seated at his desk beyond the swinging doors of the Secretary's office, just off the Senate floor, Darrell St. Claire was well known to Senators and Senate staff. From that vantage he observed and dealt with some of the Senate's most influential and colorful figures, whom he describes in detail in these interviews, along with his own role in the modernization of the United States Senate.

Darrell St. Claire died on April 8, 2011, at the age of 104.