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Book Review: The Judicial Record of Justice William O. Douglas

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Book Review

THE JUDICIAL RECORD OF JUSTICE WILLIAM O. DOUGLAS. By Vern Countryman. Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1974. Pp. 382. \$15.00.

Justice William O. Douglas has participated in more decisions of the United States Supreme Court than any other person in history. Although he did not participate in every decision, he was known as an active jurist and retired from his duties on the bench only when his failing health prevented him from maintaining this active posture. His record for longevity may never be broken.

The measure of a jurist, however, lies in the quality and not in the quantity of his work. The issues to which Mr. Justice Douglas addressed himself in the Supreme Court were the most significant and challenging of any period in our judicial history. *The Judicial Record of Justice William O. Douglas* by Harvard's Royall Professor of Law, Vern Countryman, who once acted as Justice Douglas' law clerk, would appear to be required reading in view of his unquestioned qualifications to present a survey of the jurist's contributions.

The author's task was undoubtedly too vast in scope to accomplish more than the survey which he promised. This eliminates an exploration of the meanings, significance and subtleties which should be given to any analysis of this topic to fully appreciate Justice Douglas' contributions to American jurisprudence.

Professor Countryman has succeeded in being both objective and "honest" in his summary, but in so doing he has lost some of the color, insights and delicate interplay of political and legal thought which his own experience could have brought to this analysis. In

omitting meaningful editorial comment the author has shortened his book, but he has produced one which is better suited for research than for recreational reading alone. It is a worthy contribution to the legal community, however, and will provide excellent resource material on every major subject considered by the United States Supreme Court between 1939 and 1971. Hopefully, the author will undertake to give us a similar survey of the last four and one half years of Justice Douglas' tenure. The book provides excellent reference material and is indexed so as to present a wide range of subjects in a well-organized fashion to provide Douglas admirers with excellent resource material for many years to come.

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