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BOOKS

Editor Against McCarthy

THE AGE OF SUSPICION, by James A. Wechsler; Andre Deutsch, English price 16/-.

(Reviewed by Anton Vogt)

THE best thing that can be said about McCarthyism is that all the worst things have been said by Americans. This does not make the U.S.A. safe, but nothing else can. Only the assumption of freedom to speak one's mind can make that freedom real; and it must be pursued offensively and defensively before any authority, and at whatever cost, Eternal vigilance is still the price of democracy.

Current confusions have focused attention on external enemies, and especially Communism. Twenty years ago "Eternal one would have said, "and especially Fascism." Then, as now, the

enemy was inside the gate as well as on the frontiers; for no democracy yet has been made safe from the mental



SENATOR McCARTHY "Eternal vigilance is still the price of democracy"

strait-jacket or the goose-step procession, nor is it ever likely to be. As pendulums swing from Left to Right, the Liberal holds both elbows out and refuses to shut his mouth.

James Wechsler was brought before the un-American Activities Committee in May, 1953. As Editor of the New York Post, he had attacked both Joe Stalin and Joe McCarthy, McCarthy, conveniently closing his left eye, saw red with his right. Wechsler, on Columbia campus in his 'teens, had been a Communist; McCarthy, with his usual combination of subtlety and naiveté, bullying self-righteousness and smearmongering, was out to get him. Wechsler out-pointed him strategically, tactically, and on television. But he is "saddened by those in responsible positions who keep inventing reasons for avoiding a quarrel with the man." The age of anxiety begins when suspicion sticks.

Wechsler's book is a testament of freedom: an autobiography which would never have been written if that freedom had not been threatened by an unscrupulous man, who in his person embodies a larger threat. McCarthy invites silence as the safest course; mocracy is government by discussion. The democrat who keeps his mouth shut to keep his job disfranchises himself as a citizen. There are lessons here for us all. But no less impressive than his conclusions about the contemporary problem are Wechsler's probings into his own past. He recreates the political '30s with a compulsion that becomes nostalgic; and he describes his own ideological flounderings with scrupulous honesty. This is a book I strongly recommend to Cabinet Ministers, Chambers of Commerce, and the Federation of Labour. Communists will not like it.

CIVILISED MAN

HUMANITIES, by Desmond MacCarthy; MacGibbon and Kee, English price 15/-,

SIR DESMOND MacCARTHY was a civilised man. That is the reflection that comes into one's mind again and again on reading this last very mixed bag of his essays, with a preface by Lord David Cecil, which is itself a quite admirable review. The essays are autobiographical, they are on the theatre, T. S. Eliot as critic, on eight or ten different writers; and the collection ends with two short stories which must be,

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