Fulbright's last frustration

The great dissenter finally found himself a compatible Secretary of State—and now it's too late

By Daniel Yergin

For more than 30 years, he managed his trick, to be two things to two sets of people. To the people of the world, he was the urbane peace prophet J. William Fulbright, of the furrowed brow, the three-piece suit, the dignified mien, and, for almost all that time, of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. To the folks down home in Arkansas, he was plain old Bill Fulbright, shirt sleeves rolled up, baggy pants held up by suspenders and collar open at the neck, talking to them about the price of cotton and chickens, doing their business in Washington, D.C., and mostly keeping a discreet silence on the burning matter of race. At last, however, as he approached his 70th year, the trick failed him. Voters in the Democratic primary decided that Fulbright had neglected them and that they preferred instead an immensely popular young Governor named Dale Bumpers, young enough to be Fulbright's son, new enough to have almost no history and no enemies. Bumpers had declared throughout his campaign that there was a mess in Washington, and that Fulbright had been there all those years. So, curiously, this man, never touched himself by a hint of scandal, became the first major casualty of Watergate and the Incumbents Syndrome of 1974.

The Senator from Arkansas is as controversial in his lame-duck days as he has been throughout his long career. The famous dissenter has ended up the most fervent defender of Secretary of State Kissinger. The leading critic of Presidential power has wound up in a battle with those who want to limit that power in the area of détente. A major opponent of executive abuses now suggests that Watergate was "ballooned up" by a hyperthyroid press. Earlier this month, he delivered a deeply pessimistic speech at Winston Churchill's podium in Fulton, Mo., predicting a new Middle East war and world economic collapse. Lyndon Johnson used to accuse him of everything from disloyalty to being "unable to park his bicycle straight" to outright racism—"Fulbright didn't think yellow people cared as much for freedom as white folks did." Dean Rusk says he was a maverick in the Senate and "when a maverick becomes chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, it's difficult." The Washington Post says he "never managed to indicate persuasively that he had any larger or more humane view of the role of fairness and equality in American life." Henry Jackson says he is "beguiled by the Soviets." Others on Capitol Hill who agreed with him on Southeast Asia sadly dismiss him today as frustrated, bitter, crotchety—and obsessive on the subject of Israel.

Fulbright is, indeed, a complicated man, a man of many contradictions—a searing sarcasm and a courtly manner; long digressions on points that interest him; and yet impatience and even condescension toward those whom he considers dim; intense curiosity and a low boredom threshold; becoming modesty and a peacock's pride; a deep- and wide-ranging intellect and yet a peevish turn; humanitarianism on a global scale and a slim civil-rights record; fierce bursts of energy and periods of moodiness bordering on depression; a sometimes wry, sometimes mocking cynicism and yet high-flying idealism; conservatism about the limits of human capabilities, yet utopianism about international law and organization. And, finally, both arrogance and self-doubt.

With all this said, he may well figure in history as the most famous Senator of his time, blemished, not necessarily a hero, but a man of perception and courage, a historic figure, a statesman. As Frank Church once remarked to an aide during a heated Senate debate: "When all of us are dead, the only one they'll remember is Bill Fulbright." His long, rich and troubled career not only illuminates and tells us much about, but is intimately bound up with, the entire course that United States foreign policy has followed since World War II, with all the pains and trials that two generations of Americans have experienced as our nation came into hegemony on the world scene—and then began to see it slowly slip away.

He arrived in the House of Representatives in 1943, as much a novice to politics as to the Congress. Within a short time he had created a kind of educational monument with his Fulbright-scholarship law and had secured a niche in history with the one-sentence Fulbright Resolution by which the House put itself on record for the first time as supporting a postwar United Nations. Fulbright himself was just 38, with a dilettantish, improbable quality to his background—the Statesman from the Backwoods—that would provide the ready paradox for the next three decades.

Initially, he became critical, as we entered the postwar years, of the rising tide of anti-Communism. In late 1945 he spoke out in one of the most thoughtful critiques of Truman's foreign policy. "We have already fallen to quarreling with Russia, like two big dogs chewing on a bone . . . To be tough or soft toward a nation is not a policy." But the pressure and evidence were so overwhelming that Fulbright soon subscribed to the cold-war consensus that guided United States policy—and stilled dissent—until the Vietnam war. In May, 1946, he asked in a speech: "Is it the purpose of Russia to dominate the world through a subtle combination of infiltration and force?" Along with most other Senators, he answered, "Yes."

In February, 1954, he was the only Senator to vote against an appropria- *(Continued on Page 76)*

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tion for Senator Joseph McCarthy's witch-hunting investigations, and in July, 1954, he filed the bill of particulars that formed the basis of the censure motion against the Senator from Wisconsin. "His style and his manner and what he said offended me," recalled Fulbright in one of our several conversations. "I thought it was outrageous the way he operated. It resulted in great criticism against me. I put in the record a selection of the most violent vituperation I ever received from all over the country. It was perfectly obvious that, politically, it was not a very wise thing to do. And I think it did leave a residue in the minds of many people in the Senate and the House that I was somehow naive about Communism . . . I don't think I was naive — and I don't think I am today. But that's just an example of a difference in view."

In the years that followed, Fulbright was among the very first figures to challenge the anti-Communist consensus. He did it quietly, and yet there is no question that at that early date, while Henry Kissinger was just turning his Ph.D. thesis into a book and describing scenarios for limited nuclear warfare, Fulbright was pointing the direction toward what a decade and a half later became known as détente. He called then for "gradual adjustment with the Russians that would be to mutual benefit" and argued "that recognition of the evidence of mutual capacity to destroy each other provides the United States and the Soviet Union with a basis for agreements." And he favored a diplomatic opening toward the People's Republic of China.

In 1959 Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson (who, when approached on foreign affairs would say, "See Bill. He's my Secretary of State") succeeded in persuading Theodore Green, the 91-year-old chairman of Foreign Relations, who had some trouble staying awake and more trouble with his hearing aid, to step aside. Fulbright became chairman and remained so longer than any other man in the nation's history.

It was also in this period that there emerged his most famous flaw—at least as far as many liberal admirers were concerned—and that was on race and civil rights. He was among the Senators who signed the Southern Manifesto, protesting the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision. When crisis broke out in Little Rock, Ark., in 1957, he lined up with his angry white constituents.

The explanation often given was one of cold political calculation—that to be a statesman, you must get re-elected, —backed up with the example of Arkansas Congressman Brooks Hays, who supported integration and was defeated by a write-in candidate in 1958. "Fulbright was unabashed in that," recalled former Senator Albert Gore, another Southerner. "He regarded this as a necessary ticket of admission from Arkansas. He made the compromises I wasn't able to make—and he remained in the Senate six more years than I did."

But that does not completely explain Fulbright's position. If never a fervent, active segregationist, he certainly was a paternalist, and did little to try to lead his constituents. "The whites and Negroes of Arkansas are actually prisoners of their own environment," he once wrote. "Certainly, no one of them has ever been free with respect to racial relationships in the sense that the Vermonter, say, has been free."

When I asked him about his stand on segregation he replied, "In the nineteen-forties I was accused of being a nigger lover and a tool of the labor people. . . . I felt that the most effective approach

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would be better education and health for the black people." He recalled a speech he made almost 30 years before on the role of the legislator; it still is his ultimate explanation: "In those matters, I said then, that are within the experience of your constituents, especially those involving their social and economic relationships, matters involving their own personal experience, I resolved those questions in favor of the ascertainable majority will. I didn't profess to know more about the things that they knew about than they did. This would apply to such pedestrian things as the cotton program. The same would apply to the desirability of the integration of the schools. It was their children that were involved. On other subjects not within their experience, I thought it was my duty to follow my views—to use one example, the war in Vietnam. I knew they did not approve of my policy."

In 1960, his stand on race did cost him—and, his admirers would say, the nation. Fervently backed by Lyndon Johnson, Fulbright was John Kennedy's first choice for Secretary of State, though Fulbright never clearly wanted the job. Kennedy, on the advice of his brother Robert and others, finally decided against the Senator because of his position on integration — and less than full support on Israel—and so the job went to Rusk.

If Fulbright had been defeated or retired in 1962, he would already have left the Senate with a highly credible record. But he was to make his greatest mark in the years that followed, as he lost confidence in the men, institutions and policies with which he had identified, and took the lead in the battle against both the Vietnam war and the anti-Communist theology that had dominated America's postwar foreign policy.

His respect for both Kennedy and Johnson had been great. He had enjoyed being summoned to the White House, and he was pleased to do his chairmanly part. "Fulbright ran the committee as though foreign policy were too complicated to be left to the mere amateurs in the Senate. He saw his job as assisting the professionals in the White House and State Department," a committee staffer recalled.

On Vietnam he had been harboring private doubts. In May, 1964, he cut out a newspaper photograph of South Vietnamese soldiers torturing a suspected Viet Cong, and sent it to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. "I have been gravely concerned over the situation in Vietnam even without reports of tortures and indiscriminate bombing," he wrote. "We should cut our losses and withdraw."

But in August, 1964, the Administration charged that North Vietnam craft had attacked American ships in the Tonkin Gulf. At Johnson's request, Fulbright then skippered the Tonkin Gulf Resolution as its mandate to initiate the air attack over the North, and as the major legal justification for prosecuting the entire adventure. Wayne Morse, one of the two "nay" voters along with Ernest Gruening, correctly characterized it as "a predated resolution of war."

During the brief debate on

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the resolution, Fulbright was ambiguous. On the one hand, he said it would give the President broad powers to do whatever he deemed necessary to defend South Vietnam. He found it "quite consistent with our existing mission and our understanding of what we have been doing in South Vietnam for the last 10 years." On the other hand, he argued that the resolution was only a limited tool, that it would not lead to American participation in a land war in Asia, and that Johnson would need further authorization to expand the war.

Fulbright accepted the Administration's version of events, and was angered by what he then saw as North Vietnamese arrogance. But he was also willing to forget his doubts so that he could do his part, playing senior Senate foreign-policy partner to the President, helping the "moderate" Lyndon Johnson in his 1964 race with Barry Goldwater, who, Fulbright believed, essentially advocated a policy of "co-annihilation."

Though the 1965 escalation disturbed Fulbright, he tried to influence the President through private memoranda and talks. (He had learned the dangers of publicly opposing a President of one's own party—Truman once dismissed him as "an overeducated Oxford s.o.b.") But history shows that Fulbright's private arguments to Johnson were perceptive. That spring, he sent a memo to the President warning him not to escalate the war because "an independent Communist regime" would not be incompatible with American interests, because "the commitment of a large American land army would involve us in a bloody and interminable conflict in which the advantage would lie with the enemy," and because a "full-scale air war" would not defeat the Viet Cong in the South and might lead to an intervention by the North Vietnamese Army or even by China. The only questionable part of the memo was Fulbright's acceptance, along with almost everybody else, that China was an imperialist power intent on expansion.

"He used to listen," said Fulbright of Johnson, "but in evaluating my advice against that of his chief advisers, McNamara and Rusk, he decided that they knew the facts."

An open break did not occur for more than a year after the Tonkin Gulf—and arose not from Vietnam but the Dominican Republic intervention of April, 1965. The Administration claimed that American nationals were threatened, that a Communist uprising was at the core of the civil strike. A careful Foreign Relations Committee study convinced Fulbright that the Administration had used a phony Red Scare to try to justify both to itself and to the country an unjustifiable intervention. On Sept. 15, 1965, he rose in the Senate: "The Administration acted on the premise that the revolution was controlled by Communists —a premise which it failed to establish at the time and has not established since."

From that moment can be dated the breakup of the cold war consensus and the beginning of a meaningful dissent. "Mr. Johnson never forgave me," recalled Fulbright. "With a man like President Johnson, you either went along or you got off. He didn't tolerate differences of opinion very easily. After I made that one speech, I sent him as nice a letter as I could saying it was nothing personal, but he never again wished to talk to me. Never again was I consulted." He smiled slightly. "Of course, when I look back on it, I wasn't ever really consulted in the sense that he was ever interested in what I had to say. He had made up his mind already. He was trying to keep me in bounds, so I wouldn't take issue and embarrass him. But the September speech was the breaking point." The speech was aimed at the stupidity and what he was soon calling the arrogance of American power but, though he liked to pretend it was not directed also at Johnson, Johnson rightly saw that it was. As a Foreign Relations Committee staff member recalled, "The Dominican episode indicated to Fulbright an impetuosity on the part of Johnson, and raised doubts about his policies elsewhere."

By the time of the 1966 hearings on Vietnam and China, Fulbright was already a dove. As he saw the Tonkin Gulf Resolution become the permanent justification for an expanding war, and as increasing information pointed to United States provocation and fabrication regarding those two events in the Tonkin Gulf in August, 1964, Fulbright came to regret his role. It became a trauma; his friend Johnson had deceived him, he had been humiliated; he had helped perpetrate a fraud. "For a time," said one senatorial staff member, "he seemed to be confessing every day."

"I personally feel that the committee, the public and I personally were duped, that we were lied to, that the basic situation was not true," the

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Senator now said. "You can't have an opportunity to exercise judgment if the facts are misrepresented."

Nothing bruised Fulbright as much as the suggestions emanating from those around Johnson, no doubt reflecting the President's own comments, that the Senator's dissent resulted from abnormal psychology. "I've often wondered why I take a different view from others. One's disposition toward life — some people are disposed to be much more aggressive than others in their approach to any kind of problem—I don't know how to explain it except to say that we're all the result of all of our experience. There was nothing in my background to give me the same kind of egoism—I'm not sure that's the right word, it may be offensive—as Lyndon Johnson." He emphasized the importance of his father's death when he was 18. "He left six children and my poor mother. We thought we were going to the poorhouse; I was young, and we were distracted, and I learned humility —if you want to call it that. I wasn't prepared to be pushing people around. I was trying to survive."

But, despite his fantasies of poverty, his background also made him independent and self-confident — intellectually, financially and emotionally — all his life. "The combination of all these types of things," he said, "gives you a different approach. I would react differently from Johnson — and Nixon. It was much more difficult for Mr. Johnson to accept what he would interpret as a defeat than for me."

He recalled a White House meeting in February, 1965, when a decision to escalate the bombing was made. Only Senator Mike Mansfield and Fulbright took issue. "I didn't have any particular reason for dissenting, for disagreeing. I had no intelligence reports. . . . It just seemed the wrong thing to do; it was purely instinctive." That points, perhaps, to something else in Fulbright not present in Johnson or Nixon: a distaste for combat, an indisposition toward militancy.

Johnson and his advisers, Fulbright said, "had no conception that the Vietnamese would react as they did . . . I think the basic assumptions which led us into the war in Vietnam were quite false, partly the result of ignorance, misunderstanding."

Fulbright surely did not want to be a dissenter, and that uncomfortable position was a source of endless frustration, for he never could understand why Johnson and his advisers could not see their mistakes, admit that the Emperor had no clothes, forget all that claptrap about honor, and liquidate the mistake. "We go ahead treating this little pissant country as though we were up against Russia and China put together," he once exasperatedly remarked.

Fulbright turned Foreign Relations into a teach-in. The televised Vietnam and China hearings in 1966 were among the most important the committee ever had—not in terms of legislation, but in terms of airing views and information contrary to those put forth by the executive. The hearings were the crucial beginning step within the United States to making a realistic appraisal of American policy in Asia.

But Senators are legislators as well as educators, and here Fulbright was far less successful. "Under him, the committee carried on a more or less continuous challenge to the war, kind of making a record against it," recalled former Senator Eugene McCarthy. "Sometimes, he seemed indifferent to the committee. If he had consulted it, and mustered its support, he might have done better. But he would present his case. If people wanted to follow, fine; if they didn't, all right. Plato says somewhere, I think, that the guardians of the Republic should not be boon companions. Fulbright represented that rule in action. He seemed to be saying, 'You're a Senator, and I'm a Senator, and you should use your own judgment.' He wouldn't say, do this because we're old friends, or you owe me a favor, or do this for old times' sake. Which made him the direct opposite of Lyndon, who would say, 'I need your vote' if he was short of breath."

Fulbright would not make a direct legislative challenge. "Of course, the committee could have brought to the floor of the Senate an amendment to terminate all funds for the war," said Albert Gore, a member of the committee in those years. "Perhaps we should have. But I'm sure it would have destroyed us and the movement politically. For the country was at war, American soldiers were on the battlefield, and any move to deny them weapons, food, transport, air cover, would have created violent and widespread opposition." Fulbright generally let others take the lead. "If I offered legislation, it wouldn't look right," he would say. He also recognized that he himself

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was too controversial, that attaching his name could be a sure way to assure an amendment's defeat. Many of his colleagues resented him personally, and he himself did not have the patience to seek out colleagues individually to sell his position. The intellectual Southern gentleman in him, perhaps, prescribed limits on how he would attack, how aggressive he would be —in contrast to a Senator Jackson. It was this characteristic, plus obsessions with smaller issues like Radio Free Europe, that led some admirers to conclude that passivity and lack of focus were his real flaws, that he suffered from an instinct for the capillaries.

He did, finally, involve himself in legislative action, although his efforts even then were essentially on the periphery. In 1969, after threatening a filibuster, he helped push through a Senate amendment to the defense appropriations bill that prohibited the President from sending troops into Laos and Cambodia—something Nixon had said he would not do anyway. It was the model for the later Cooper-Church amendment on Cambodia and the McGovern-Hatfield amendment to end the war.

What is most important to say about Fulbright and Vietnam is that, though he was not the first Senator to oppose the United States involvement in war there, he, more than any other politician except perhaps Eugene McCarthy, made opposition respectable, even possible. His example seemed to say that you could still be a loyal American and not subscribe to the militant anti-Communist creed. "The change of public attitudes about the Vietnam War would not have been possible without his leadership," says Albert Gore. "Only he was in a position to provide it. The chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee was absolutely necessary to challenge an almost all-powerful executive. Only by this taking the issue to the people were public attitudes altered. He may well have saved us from a war with China."

Another reason that Fulbright has been more important as a statesman-educator than as a great lawmaker, is that he simply does not have the gregariousness that makes one popular with colleagues. When other Senators called Fulbright the professor it was not exactly a compliment. "He has not had a head-on, frontal power, a personal influence on other Senators," said Senator Clifford Case, a member of the Foreign Relations Committee and a Fulbright admirer. "Rather, it's a strong indirect influence, a forcing of all of us to face our conclusions and justify them. Everybody is as effective as he can be. Fulbright of course has been an enormously useful member of this body. More than most people, he is capable of preserving an independent position. In the Senate, that means a certain aloofness, a certain quality that can be misunderstood among some members as intellectual snobbishness. I don't think that's true. In the short run, people say, his influence was lessened, but he has done what he's done because it's what he had to do. . . . I was more interested in a possible solution. His opposition was based upon broad conceptual grounds."

Fulbright's cast of mind was such that he challenged not merely policy, but the underpinning assumptions. He began the effort with "Old Myths and New Realities" in 1964, in which he attacked the "master myth" of a monolithic international Communist conspiracy, and continued it much more forcefully in 1967 in his most influential volume, "Arrogance of Power." He argued that the United States,

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blinded by its own power and self-confidence, had sought to remake the world in its own image.

He went much farther, however, in a little-noticed, but much more startling book, "The Crippled Giant," published in 1972. With this, the chairman of the United States Foreign Relations Committee became a cold-war revisionist, for his book was an obituary for that concept, a complete rejection of the conventional wisdom. He declared that the United States must share blame with the Soviet Union for the confrontation. "Change," he wrote, "has come not from wisdom but from disaster." American public leaders, including one J. William Fulbright, had gotten it wrong, not completely wrong perhaps, but wrong enough to make way for Vietnam and other disasters. We had misunderstood the men—and the minds of the men—in Moscow, Peking and Indochina. We decided without real evidence that they were part of a giant international revolutionary conspiracy and failed to observe that they were also nationalists. We set off on a universal crusade, all-too-often military in form, called "containment."

"Well, it would be a very odd thing if I didn't change my views in the light of new knowledge," he said when I raised the question of his inconsistency. "It isn't so much that you change your views relative to certain facts—it's that new facts, new elements appear." Fulbright encountered these new elements in hearings, formerly classified papers, memoirs, and various recent histories. "After World War II we were sold on the idea that Stalin was out to dominate the world. I didn't have the knowledge or the foresight to make a judgment at that time. I didn't know about Ho's letters to Washington—or that they were ignored. Very few people did make the right judgment. Henry Wallace sensed it, he had a feeling about it, but he was ridiculed for being a visionary, an appeaser, unrealistic. The crux of the problem was the generalization of the Truman Doctrine. It changed from a rescue operation for Greece in 1947 into an ideological crusade. It prepared the way for the kind of intervention we later undertook, it created the attitude, the state of mind, that later led to Vietnam."

But Fulbright qualifies and requalifies those remarks, "for Truman of course was there in Stalin's time." While Russia's "very traumatic experience in World War II gave some justification for fearing a resurgent Germany," Stalin was "certainly a very ominous character. I'm not saying that Mr. Truman or Mr. Acheson is to blame. . . . Mr. Acheson does have a great reputation. He replayed a conventional and brilliant role under the old idea of power politics and colonialism. Judged on the standards that were common to the world up until the invention of nuclear weapons and the power thus to wipe out whole countries, I suppose his attitude would be considered appropriate. But I think basically he had little feeling that it was possible to create a more cooperative world. He thought the United Nations was a fraud. This is where he was lacking in foresight. He was a very great advocate, but I don't think he was a wise man, a man of any profound understanding of what was taking place in the world at that time." Indeed, although he achieved prominence as a critic of the Eisenhower-Dulles foreign policy, today Fulbright judges Eisenhower, the President who resisted interventions, the most capable of postwar Presidents in foreign policy: "The attitude of President Eisenhower was probably the most in accord with our national interest and that of the world."

In the last few years, a new Fulbright has appeared — Fulbright the Consenter. The particular subject of consent is Henry Kissinger, and the Senator is accused of having been duped by Kissinger, even of helping to perpetrate some kind of Kissinger cover-up. There is no question that Kissinger has established a friendly relationship with Fulbright—and in the process has charmed him. "He's the ablest Secretary of State I've had contact with," said Fulbright. "He's on the right track. He's done more than anybody else in 30 years to at least bring into view the prospect of a settlement. This is quite a change from the cold-war days that began in the late nineteen-forties and ran right up until now."

But the major reason for his consent is that Kissinger's key policies are, as Fulbright the professor puts it, "correct." He approves wholeheartedly of the pursuit of détente with Russia and China and the seeking of an

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"evenhanded policy" in the Middle East. And he worries about who could replace Kissinger: "I don't know anybody who has his background and his capacity to negotiate."

He gets angry at the charge that he is "covering up" for Kissinger on wiretapping. "I wasn't trying to protect Kissinger, he's not my ward." He says there were "some discrepancies" on the matter of Kissinger, the Plumbers and wiretapping, "but they weren't very substantial. They didn't show any great moral degradation or anything else—they just didn't amount to very much."

Fulbright's distaste for the Watergate exposé era is pronounced. Last year he told aides that he thought a Senate censure of Nixon—à la Joseph McCarthy—would have sufficed, would have done enough to discipline an "arrogant" Administration. At times, he sounds almost like Julie Nixon Eisenhower as he criticizes the press. "I think this is part of the Watergate. The Watergate was ballooned up into an enormous issue. People like those two reporters who uncovered it for The Washington Post and The Post itself—they were sort of like Christopher Columbus — they had discovered a whole new world. People made reputations overnight discovering some new scandal. They're still doing it, they just love it. The papers are devoted almost altogether to stories of this kind. . . . No one really approved of wiretapping, going back 50 years, but we all knew it was going on, and all accepted it—and a lot of other practices. In their minds people don't approve of covert C.I.A. activities, and yet the majority of people say we've got to do it because the others are doing it."

And again, as a long-time critic of the C.I.A., he dismisses shock over recent revelations about Kissinger's role in C.I.A. operations in bringing down Chilean President Allende. "These revelations are not creeping out. We knew about this intervention of the C.I.A. The C.I.A.'s been doing this for years—they bragged about it in the old days." Fulbright himself was defeated in two attempts to increase Congressional oversight of the C.I.A.

Those who have listened closely will have noticed that the Senator who used to thunder on about the powers and responsibilities of the Senate in foreign policy making now criticizes the Congress for trying to intervene in that very same process. This is not a new Fulbright but an old one, the one who in 1961 complained, "For the existing requirements of American foreign policy we have hobbled the President by too niggardly a grant of power." His explanation, again, was that "you deal with a situation that is changing all the time, and when the executive is ignoring the Congress, and it did in many cases, as with Vietnam, we did finally develop quite a strong support for ending the war, but the executive found ways of evading it anyway."

The truth seems to be that, for Fulbright, the "Senate's role" was not an important issue in itself, no matter what his orations suggested, but merely a tool with which to attack a policy — Vietnam — with which he did not agree. Had he supported L.B.J. no one would have been more articulate than he in attacking Congressional encroachment on the President's prerogatives.

Most controversial in recent years has been his position on the Middle East. He has called for a negotiated political settlement, and an "evenhanded approach," meaning less diplomatic and military support for Israel and more pressure for a withdrawal from the occupied territories. Here, too, he is a fervent supporter of Kissinger, but while there is not a great deal of difference in their stands — Fulbright seems to want more concessions from Israel more quickly —Fulbright's is *qualitatively* different. For he has become obsessive on the subject of an Israeli-Jewish lobby and power network, somehow manipulating George Meany, the military-industrial complex and the United States Senate to smash détente and to distort American policy and interests in the Middle East.

In the nineteen-fifties Fulbright became critical of ethnic groups seeking to shift or direct American foreign policy on questions involving the countries to which they felt ties. Initially he had in mind certain Eastern European minorities, but increasingly he came to focus on an American Jewish lobby linked to Israel. In May, 1960, he criticized the Douglas Amendment, an effort to link foreign aid for Egypt with Egypt's opening of the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping. He called it "a textbook case of how not to conduct international rela-

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tions." It would accomplish nothing, he added, "beyond the appeasement of certain uninformed minority groups in the United States."

A few days later, he left for the Middle East. He first visited Egypt; then he went to Israel, presented a university lecture and encountered demonstrators. "What in the deuce were these students doing marching around with umbrellas?" he asked afterward. "It's not raining." An aide replied, "They think you're an appeaser."

Mutual antagonisms mounted in the early nineteen-sixties when Fulbright's investigation into foreign lobbying zeroed in on Israel and the United Jewish Appeal. In 1970-71, Fulbright became infuriated by what he judged to be the swift and unquestioned manner in which Israeli military aid could sweep through Congress, and, at the same time, began to advocate forcefully an Israeli pullback to its 1967 borders in accord with U.N. Resolution 242. Whatever Fulbright's private feelings — and it should be said that he has been personally and professionally close to Jews—he has been pointing to a harsh truth: The longer a settlement is delayed, the more the regional and worldwide power equation will have shifted against Israel. Israel's security, he has been saying, will not come from armaments and enlarged borders, but only in the form of a settlement. This famous non-interventionist has even gone so far as to propose a formal American treaty guaranteeing Israel's 1967 borders, but our own domestic debate is so fevered that opponents charge that this is only a trick—as if Fulbright would only make the promise so that it could later be broken. Which, upon examination, is a ludicrous suggestion.

Not long ago, he described himself as "a friend of the Arab governments and peoples" in warning the OPEC countries of the dangerous consequences that could follow from what he described as the OPEC "power trip"—a new arrogance of power. I asked him about the growing talk of an American military intervention in the Middle East. "It would be a great tragedy," he said. "But in view of the irrational things we've done in the past, how can you eliminate it? I don't advocate it, because there are reasonable alternatives. We should negotiate a settlement that is acceptable to the parties there—it's easily said and

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difficult to do, but it's the only way in the long run."

A few weeks ago, he was guest of honor at a small party at which both Arabs and Jews were in attendance. When he got up to reply to the toast, he said, "This thing has always bothered me throughout my life—now we can gather in this room, and exchange ideas and friendship —and yet, on a larger scale, we always have a conflict." Yet it is exactly because he has no confidence in the ability of men to avoid going to war that he has held so long and tenaciously to his belief in international organization. "We've had four major wars in my lifetime alone," he said later. "Is this going to go on and on? Nuclear weapons have changed the nature of the game. One more war—it could be the ultimate disaster."

"When the two great nuclear powers signed the ABM treaty," he continued, "they in effect said we have no defense against nuclear power. That is the first step towards the acceptance of coexistence. If that rules out the use of nuclear power, then the struggle to prove which concept of society is a valid one will be confined to negotiations, diplomatic and economic means. The nature of international relations has been transformed by the power of complete destruction. But the cold warriors refuse to recognize that. They still look upon warfare, the threat of warfare, the great huge stockpiles, as definite tools and weapons in international relations. I don't think they are.

"The character of anti-Communism has changed," he said. "It isn't militant and open and blatant as it was in the day of Senator Joe McCarthy. And of course the official governmental attitude of détente, of normalizing our relations with Russia, has been a very beneficial and intelligent move. But there are very strong forces in the Congress that have succeeded in dulling and blunting that policy. It remains to be seen whether they can completely thwart it or not."

Frustration is a word that comes frequently to Fulbright's lips. "You consider all the work that went into the final demolition of the ABM concept," he said. "It's a very unsettling concept. It disturbs everybody, including your antagonists. But now it's being revived and relatively easily, under the guise of counterforce, which has overtones of a first-strike capacity. I don't know how many billions will be involved. We must have wasted five or ten billion on the ABM concept. Then you get a whole new crowd down at the Pentagon, with their enthusiasm, and they come up and make a sale. There's never any end to it."

He charges in particular that great Congressional support for Senator Jackson's amendments—to the initial SALT agreement, and now to the trade bill—"raise doubts in the minds of the Russians about the seriousness of the policy of détente—upon the capacity of the President to obtain the support of the Congress." And he fears that an American failure to follow up could undermine Brezhnev's position and bring to power a more hardline faction in the Soviet Union.

"Senator Jackson and Senator Stennis and the great majority of the Armed Services Committee dominate the Senate. Senator Stennis confines his efforts primarily to military affairs, but Senator Jackson's the most active. He's into everything, all related to thwarting the movement toward détente. Their group represents the most powerful combination of economic and political power in the country, an enormous constituency, disposing of $85- to $95-billion a year." Jackson and those of like mind, he says, "are very consistent in every way in trying to keep America expending most of its efforts on military affairs. What I said about Acheson holds—they simply do not recognize the significance of nuclear weapons and hydrogen bombs—that you don't play games with those like you used to with rifles and bows and arrows. It's too dangerous. But we get on this kick and go all out, spending and spending. This inflation —which I think is largely brought about by the war expenditures, and wasteful expenditures like space, finally brought to a head by the war in the Middle East—is leading us to the possibility that we will lose our democratic system, lose Congress, and have an authoritarian government like most other governments. Inflation destroys confidence, and the people welcome an authoritarian take-over.

"The spirit generated by the war in Vietnam gives strength which is translated into votes in Congress — appropriations of enormous sums for these purposes. Even in a funny way it had something to do with this obsession with going to the moon. Kennedy was the one who had something to do

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with that, as an expression of our national leadership—an aberration of *very dubious wisdom*. There's nothing wrong with going to the moon, it's just that we can't afford it. Just one of those things that we did that wasted an enormous amount of money. . . . We've had obsessions, illusions of grandeur that we could do anything we liked, and there were no restraints at all. We were young and inexperienced and we got rich too quick."

As I said before, Fulbright is a complicated man. He is a conservative in temperament. He has a kind of Swiftian pessimism about human possibilities, about the capacity for reason, a despair at the follies of his fellow men—and an almost patrician disdain for the vulgar emotions that move the mob. And he has a Burkean faith in institutions and the inherited ways, a belief in slow evolution, and a strong disbelief in man's capacity to create overnight a new order. But when his eye turns to international relations, his character becomes confused. He's both an internationalist and an isolationist—a non-interventionist, really. He is in many ways a realist, and yet surely also an idealist, one of the few remaining Americans to have kept faith with Woodrow Wilson's dream that a League of Nations, a United Nations, can solve basic problems among nations, that the international system can be recreated, that the sovereignty of nations can be subsumed under a liberal world order. He is Wilson's last true heir. Fulbright, characteristically, disagrees: "I don't consider myself an heir of anybody—just a politician doing what he can to improve the world . . . a product of a remote village in the Ozarks who happened to have certain experiences."

In 1964, a few months before the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Walter Lippmann wrote of Fulbright, "What will be remembered is that he opened up public discussions of the unsettled questions of foreign affairs." Yet that is not what Fulbright really wanted; he never wanted to be a dissenter, a pathbreaker. All these years, he's been waiting for the public and the Administration to catch up with him — to see his light. And that is Fulbright's last frustration. For the man who will be remembered as the Great Dissenter in the United States Senate wanted all along to be a Consenter, to play on the same team with the President and the Secretary of State, but in pursuit of a policy in which he — Fulbright — could wholeheartedly believe. And after 30 years, at the very moment that Fulbright found a Secretary of State with whom he could collaborate in the cause of a little rationality and relaxation of tension, at that moment, the voters of Arkansas decided it was time for a change. ■

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Split images: Resistance to integration (Little Rock, 1957), which "plain old Bill of Arkansas" supported; and the Vietnam war, which Fulbright the internationalist opposed. Admirers of the one despised the other.

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The Senator with President and Vice President after the 1961 State of the Union address. "He enjoyed being summoned to the White House and was pleased to do his chairmanly part."

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Rhodes Scholar days: Fulbright (dark jersey) on the lacrosse field of Oxford University—1928.

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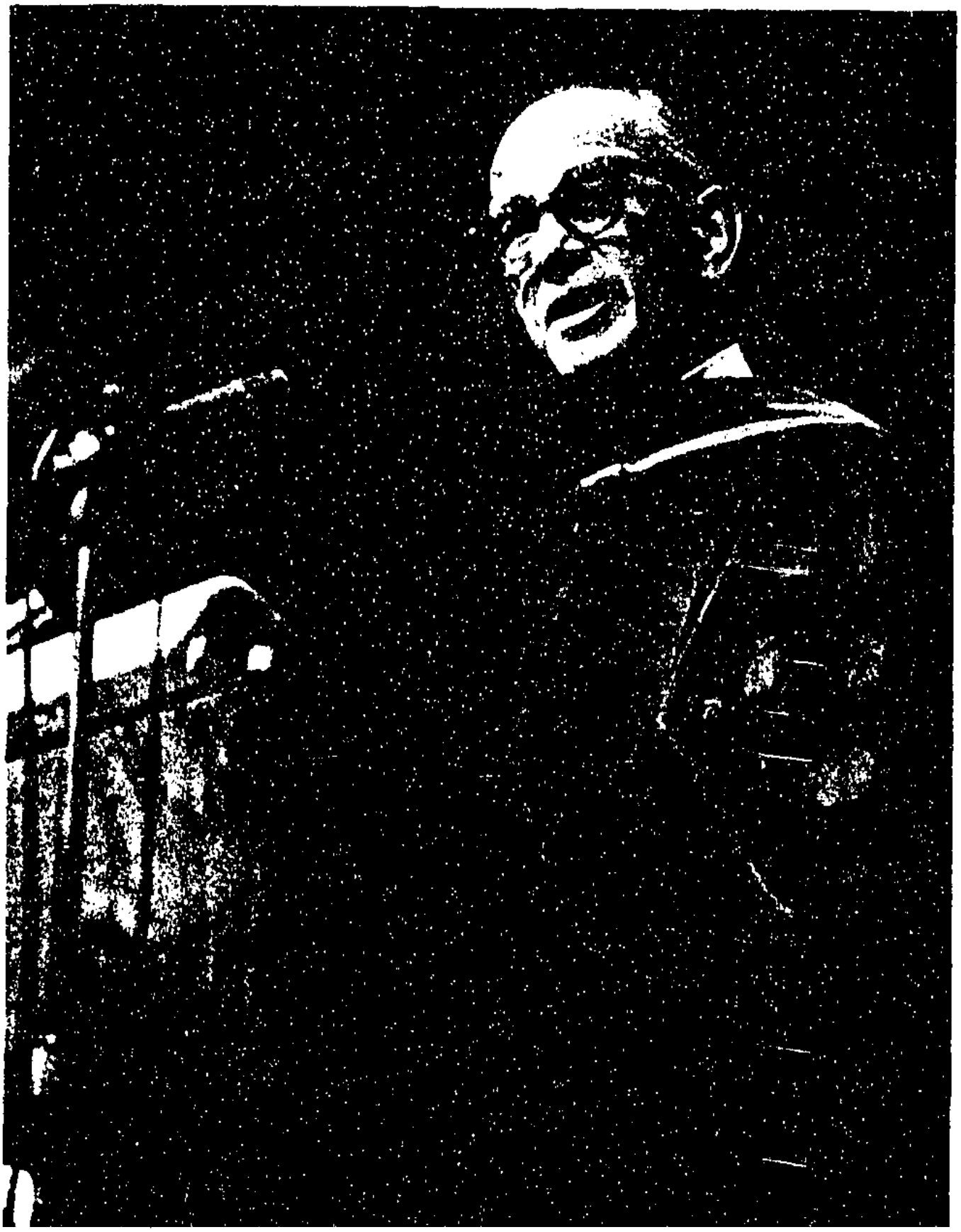
Published: November 24, 1974



Fulbright, speaking this month at Fulton, Mo., where Churchill made his Iron Curtain speech in 1946, warns of the dangers of a new war breaking out in the Middle East.

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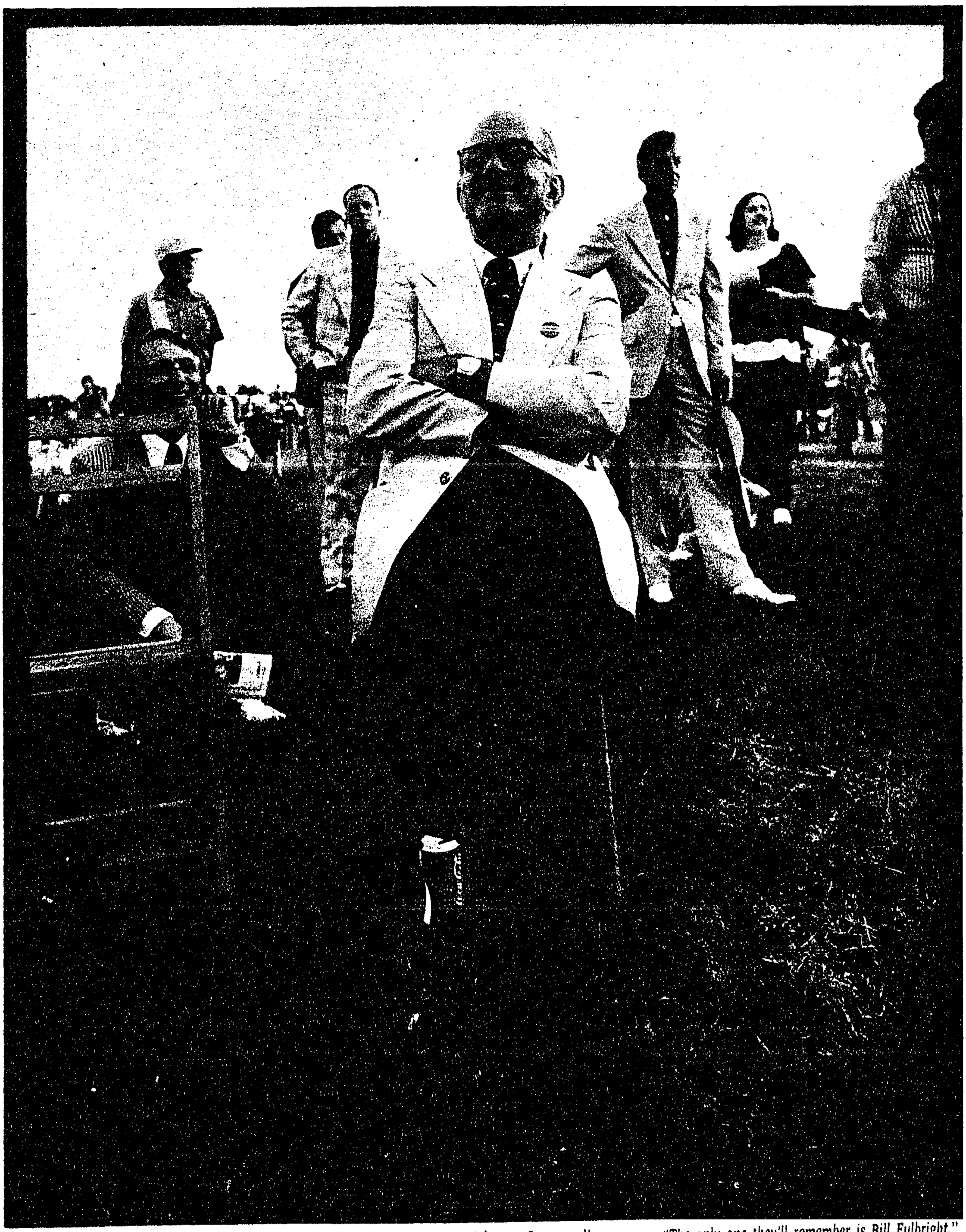

Final campaign: Fulbright at an Arkansas fair this year. Though voters dumped him, a Senate colleague says: "The only one they'll remember is Bill Fulbright."

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Microscopic particles (inset, bottom) of asbestos or an asbestoslike substance, says a Federal District Court, flow into Lake Superior by the Reserve Mining Company outfall. One response in Duluth: drawing drinking water from a filtered tap (inset, top).

Santi Visalli

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