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Constitutional Law of the United States, by Hugh Evander Willis

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BOOK REVIEW

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW OF THE UNITED STATES, by Hugh Evander Willis. 1936.
The Principia Press, Bloomington, Indiana.

This reviewer has just finished a most interesting task, the critical reading of Dr. Willis' new book on the Constitutional Law of the United States.

When one reads this book he is immediately struck with the tremendous amount of intelligent labor that has been bestowed upon it. Not only does the book evince a careful and critical study of hundreds of authorities, both State and Federal, but it also indicates a most careful analysis of political science, philosophy and psychology.

Dr. Willis' approach to the subject of the Constitution is most enlightening. Having due regard to Mr. Justice Hughes' holding that the Constitution is what the judges say it is, Dr. Willis has attempted to explain why the judges say the things that they have said about it, and to catalog what they have said. He has made an exhaustive study of the political philosophy back of the makers of the Constitution, and of the interpreters of it. His chapter on Sovereignty is important and illuminating. The interest, however, of this chapter is not eclipsed by the valuable matter found in other chapters. Personal Liberty, Police Power, The Jurisdiction of the Federal Courts, The Framework of the Government, The Dual Form of Government, Taxation, all of these subjects are exhaustively and critically commented upon.

At this time when the Constitution occupies such an important place in the public mind, a book such as Dr. Willis' should be read not only by the legal profession but by those who wish to make up their minds as to the rightness or wrongness of positions advocated by public men. Yes, the Constitution itself is set out in the book, and this reviewer would recommend that many of those who have what seem to be positive ideas about the Constitution, at least effusive ideas concerning it, should read this part of Dr. Willis' book. One thus fortified would not be so apt to insist that the Constitution of the United States designates that the citizen is entitled to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." One having read this book will be more charitable of the views of opposing groups and will understand that the Constitution is not a static thing, but that it is a living and growing plan of state, unfolding from time to time with new powers and changed interpretations.

Dr. Willis' literary style has a pleasing and distinctive flavor. The book is well indexed, and contains an extremely valuable list of articles in periodicals that is not easily otherwise available. The draft of a suggested Constitution furnishes much food for serious thought.

To the practicing lawyer this book is a veritable storehouse of authority and logic, and one who has, or hopes to have, important matters involving State and Federal Constitutional principles, will find in this interesting and authoritative book the answer to his problem. This reviewer recommends it to the lawyer, to the public man, and to the citizen, and hopes that it will be found on the book shelves of all those to whom the changing lights and shadows of our political structure are interesting and important.

Hammond, Indiana.

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