By BARI WATKINS
Thresher Reporter

The SA has forever redeemed itself. And if Senator J. William Fulbright had needed redemption he would have won it too. By naming Fulbright’s “The Arrogance of Power” as the Book of the Semester the SA has brought before us all a book which cannot be ignored.

The book transcends politics, not by ignoring the issues at hand — the Vietnamese war and American Asian policy to be specific — but by approaching the problems through a re-examination of the precepts upon which such issues are based.

Two Americans

The conclusions he reaches are terrifying, especially to a culture-behind-the-walls. We do not wish to see the war fever raging in our country. We refuse to acknowledge the horror and suffering we are bringing to the people — and children — of Vietnam. And we deny the state of mind that makes such things possible.

Fulbright, however, faces the mind of America squarely. He sees two Americas; he says, “one is the America of Lincoln, and Adlai Stevenson; the other is the America of Teddy Roosevelt and the modern superpatriots.”

It is the latter America that is now in control; we are faced with a kind of moralism of “absolute self-assurance fired by the crusading spirit.” This America denies the right of dissent — a right that Fulbright calls an “act of patriotism, a higher form of patriotism . . . than the familiar rituals of national adulation.”

God of Consensus

The universities of this war-crazed America are being denied their position in the intellectual side of the decision-making process. The Senate is being denied its constitutional right of “advice and consent.” The ordinary man who questions our position in Vietnam (or the Dominican Republic or Indonesia) is regarded as a traitor to the great god of consensus.

Fulbright sees this denial of the democratic process, and makes the reader feel it deeply as an acute task. His book does not scream hysterically for redemption, but it cries deeply and passionately for a redress of grievances.

In slightly more concrete terms, Fulbright sees a paranoia in American foreign policy that is reflected in our attitude toward the nationalistic revolutions of the Third World of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Paranoia

We claim to be in favor of nationalism and humanitarian reform, but since most of these revolutions are at least associated with nationalistic, Yugoslavia-style communism we feel we must resist. American paranoia toward communism as an absolute evil has made us unable to see the forest of nationalism for the trees of suspected communism.


All is not protest and bewailing, however. The Senator presents a rational, truly moral basis for future policy in the Third World, and specific proposals for implementing them.

Need For Protest

It might have been noted that in the preceding paragraphs American policy and errors — and tragedies — have been consistently referred to as “ours.” They are ours — just as much as Robert McNamara’s or Lyndon Johnson’s or the man-in-the-street’s.

Rice has not protested. Not as a university, not in groups, not even vocally as individuals. Such protest is the first step toward the humanitarian democracy of Lincoln and Stevenson. If this book cannot force protest and discussion into the open, then the university is dead after all, and we are dead with it.