

hearing can be obtained by the counsel foregoing argument, and submitting the case on briefs, yet four years usually elapse after a case is filed before it can come up for consideration in the ordinary course, and there are now four thousand cases on the docket awaiting a hearing.

It must not, however, be thereby inferred that the judges of that court are tardy in their work. The annual session lasts for six months, during which time not one of the judges is absent for a day, save on account of serious illness. Five of the nine judges must be present to constitute the court. Once in two years each judge must go out on duty as a circuit judge, the country being divided into nine circuits, one of which must be covered by each of the judges. From the decision of a justice of the Supreme Court acting as circuit judge an appeal can be taken to the Supreme Court, which tribunal can upset any law passed by Congress and signed by the President, if it can detect a constitutional flaw, and from the decision there is no appeal.

An appellant must ordinarily make a deposit of \$1,000 to cover printing and fees, so that the expense of obtaining a final adjudication is no small consideration. Except in very important cases, one hour only is allowed for argument on each side, and thus from fifteen to twenty cases are disposed of each week. The Reports of the Supreme Court now cover about 112,000 pages, and of these nearly two-thirds have been published during the last thirteen years.

The method of arriving at the opinion of the court is as follows: Every Saturday, during term, the cases which have been heard during the week are discussed by the judges, and, finally, a vote on the merits of the case is taken, beginning with the junior judge, and ascending in order of seniority. These votes are recorded in a locked volume, and the contents are never revealed. The Chief Justice then assigns all the cases which have been thus discussed to some one of the judges for re-examination, distributing them according to the recognized specialty of each judge, who then goes over the case and writes out his opinion. When the proof is returned from the printer, one copy is sent to each of the other judges, who do not hesitate to correct, alter, or even to cut it to pieces, criticizing its law, and even changing the punctuation. The proofs thus corrected are sent back to the author, who revises his own opinion in the light of the sugges-