

# **Edward R. Murrow**

## ***See it Now* (CBS-TV, March 9, 1954)**

### **"A Report on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy"**

Edward R. Murrow may not have scored the first blow against Joseph McCarthy, but he landed a decisive one. For that, he always will be linked inextricably with the Wisconsin senator, and remembered by Americans as a champion of liberty and democracy. As early as 1950, Murrow observed on the air that "the weight of the public testimony has tended to show that so far, Senator McCarthy's charges [against suspected communist subversives] are unproven." On March 9, 1954, Murrow, then the most respected journalist in America, engaged in a tough exposé of the senator and his tactics; the last paragraphs of his presentation are indelibly etched into our history as is the rhetoric of McCarthy himself. In the interest of the "fairness doctrine," McCarthy was given an equal amount of time for a rebuttal, which he delivered in his classic acerbic style on April 6, 1954. This was the beginning of McCarthy's downfall.

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Murrow: Good evening. Tonight *See it Now* devotes its entire half hour to a report on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy told mainly in his own words and pictures. But first, ALCOA would like you to meet a man who has been with them for fifty years. (Commercial break.)

Murrow: Because a report on Senator McCarthy is by definition controversial we want to say exactly what we mean to say and I request your permission to read from the script whatever remarks Murrow and Friendly may make. If the Senator believes we have done violence to his words or pictures and desires to speak, to answer himself, an opportunity will be afforded him on this program. Our working thesis tonight is this question:

If this fight against Communism is made a fight against America's two great political parties, the American people know that one of those parties will be destroyed and the Republic cannot endure very long as a one party system.

We applaud that statement and we think Senator McCarthy ought to. He said it, seventeen months ago in Milwaukee.

McCarthy: The American people realize this cannot be made a fight between America's two great political parties. If this fight against Communism is made a fight between America's two great political parties the American people know that one of those parties will be destroyed and the Republic cannot endure very long as a one party system.

Murrow: Thus on February 4th, 1954, Senator McCarthy spoke of one party's treason. This was at Charleston, West Virginia where there were no cameras running. It was recorded on tape.

McCarthy: The issue between the Republicans and Democrats is clearly drawn. It has been deliberately drawn by those who have been in charge of twenty years of treason. The hard fact is -- the hard fact is that those who wear the label, those who wear the label Democrat wear it with the stain of a historic betrayal.

Murrow: Seventeen months ago Candidate Eisenhower met Senator McCarthy in Green Bay, Wisconsin and he laid down the ground rules on how he would meet Communism if elected.

Eisenhower: This is a pledge I make. If I am charged by you people to be the responsible head of the Executive Department it will be my initial responsibility to see that subversion, disloyalty, is kept out of the Executive Department. We will always appreciate and welcome Congressional investigation but the responsibility will rest squarely on the shoulders of the Executive and I hold that there are ample powers in the government to get rid of these people if the Executive Department is really concerned in doing it. We can do it with absolute assurance. (Applause.)

This is America's principle: Trial by jury, of the innocent until proved guilty, and I expect to stand to do it.

Murrow: That same night in Milwaukee, Senator McCarthy stated what he would do if the General was elected.

McCarthy: I spent about a half hour with the General last night. While I can't -- while I can't report that we agreed entirely on everything -- I can report that when I left that meeting with the General, I had the same feeling as when I went in, and that is that he is a great American, and will make a great President, an outstanding President. But I want to tell you tonight, tell the American people as long as I represent you and the rest of the American people in the Senate, I shall continue to call them as I see them regardless of who happens to be President.

Murrow: November 24th, 1953.

McCarthy: A few days ago I read that President Eisenhower expressed the hope that by election time in 1954 the subject of Communism would be a dead and forgotten issue. The raw, harsh unpleasant fact is that Communism is an issue and will be an issue in 1954.

Murrow: On one thing the Senator has been consistent... Often operating as a one-man committee, he has traveled far, interviewed many, terrorized some, accused civilian and military leaders of the past administration of a great conspiracy to turn the country over to Communism, investigated and substantially demoralized the present State Department, made varying charges of espionage at Fort Manmouth. (The Army says it has been unable to find anything relating to espionage there.) He has interrogated a varied assortment of what he calls "Fifth Amendment Communists." Republican Senator Flanders of Vermont said of McCarthy today:

He dons war paint; he goes into his war dance; he emits his war whoops; he goes forth to battle and proudly returns with the scalp of a pink Army dentist.

Other critics have accused the Senator of using the bull whip and smear. There was a time two years ago when the Senator and his friends said he had been smeared and bull whipped.

Mr. Keefe: You would sometimes think to hear the quartet that call themselves "Operation Truth" damning Joe McCarthy and resorting to the vilest smears I have ever heard. Well, this is

the answer, and if I could express it in what is in my heart right now, I would do it in terms of the poet who once said:

Ah 'tis but a dainty flower I bring you,  
Yes, 'tis but a violet, glistening with dew,  
But still in its heart there lies beauties concealed  
So in our heart our love for you lies unrevealed.

McCarthy: You know, I used to pride myself on the idea that I was a bit tough, especially over the past eighteen or nineteen when we have been kicked around and bull whipped and damned. I didn't think that I could be touched very deeply. But tonight, frankly, my cup and my heart is so full I can't talk to you.

Murrow: But in Philadelphia, on Washington's Birthday, 1954, his heart was so full he could talk. He reviewed some of the General Zwicker testimony and proved he hadn't abused him.

McCarthy: Nothing is more serious than a traitor to this country in the Communist conspiracy.  
Question: Do you think stealing \$50 is more serious than being a traitor to the country and a part of the Communist conspiracy?

Answer: That, sir, was not my decision.

McCarthy: Shall we go on to that for a while? I hate to impose on your time. I just got two pages. This is the abuse which is... the real meat of abuse, this is the official reporter's record of the hearing. After he said he wouldn't remove that General from the Army who cleared Communists, I said: "Then General, you should be removed from any Command. Any man who has been given the honor of being promoted to General, and who says, 'I will protect another general who protects Communists,' is not fit to wear that uniform, General." (Applause.)

I think it is a tremendous disgrace to the Army to have to bring these facts before the public but I intend to give it to the public, General. I have a duty to do that. I intend to repeat to the press exactly what you said so that you can know that and be back here to hear it, General.

And wait till you hear the bleeding hearts scream and cry about our methods of trying to drag the truth from those who know, or should know, who covered up a Fifth Amendment Communist Major. But they say, 'Oh, it's all right to uncover them but don't get rough doing it, McCarthy.'

Murrow: But two days later, Secretary Stevens and the Senator had lunch, agreed on a memorandum of understanding, and disagreed on what the small type said.

Stevens: I shall never accede to the abuse of Army personnel under any circumstance including committee hearings. I shall not accede to them being brow-beaten or humiliated. In the light of these assurances, although I did not propose cancellation of the hearings, I acceded to it. If it had not been for these assurances, I would never have entered into any agreement whatsoever.

Murrow: Then President Eisenhower issued a statement that advisers thought censored the Senator, but the Senator saw it as another victory, called the entire Zwicker case "a tempest in a teapot."

McCarthy: If a stupid, arrogant or witless man in a position of power appears before our Committee and is found aiding the Communist Party, he will be exposed. The fact that he might be a General places him in no special class as far as I am concerned. Apparently -- apparently, the President and I now agree on the necessity of getting rid of Communists. We apparently disagree on how we should handle those who protect Communists. When the shouting and the tumult dies, the American people and the President will realize that this unprecedented mud slinging against the Committee by the extreme left wing elements of press and radio was caused solely because another Fifth Amendment Communist was finally dug out of the dark recesses and exposed to the public view.

Murrow (points to a chart): Senator McCarthy claims that only the left wing press criticized him on the Zwicker case. Of the fifty large circulation newspapers in the country, these are the left wing papers that criticized. These are the ones which supported him. The ratio is about three to one against the Senator. Now let us look at some of these left wing papers that criticized the Senator.

*The Chicago Tribune*: McCarthy will better serve his cause if he learns to distinguish the role of investigator from role of avenging angel...

*The New York Times*: The unwarranted interference of a demagogue -- a domestic Munich...

*The Times Herald*, Washington: Senator McCarthy's behavior towards Zwicker is not justified...

*The Herald Tribune* of New York: McCarthyism involves assaults on basic Republican concepts...

*Milwaukee Journal*: The line must be drawn and defended or McCarthy will become the government...

*The Evening Star* of Washington: It was a bad day for everyone who resents and detests the bully boy tactics which Senator McCarthy often employs...

*The New York World Telegram*: Bamboozling, bludgeoning, distorting...

*St. Louis Post Dispatch*: Unscrupulous, McCarthy bullying. What a tragic irony it is that the President's political advisors keep him from doing what every decent instinct must be commanding him to do...

Well, that's the ratio of a three-to-one, so-called "left-wing" press.

Another interesting thing was said about the Zwicker case, and it was said by Senator McCarthy.

McCarthy: Well, may I say that I was extremely shocked when I heard that Secretary Stevens told two Army officers that they had to take part in the cover-up of those who promoted and coddled Communists. As I read his statement, I thought of that quotation "On what meat doth this, our Caesar, feed?"

Murrow: And upon what meat doth Senator McCarthy feed? Two of the staples of his diet are the investigation (protected by immunity) and the half-truth. We herewith submit samples of both.

First, the half-truth. This was an attack on Adlai Stevenson at the end of the 1952 campaign. President Eisenhower, it must be said, had no prior knowledge of it.

McCarthy: I perform this unpleasant task because the American people are entitled to have the coldly documented history of this man who says, "I want to be your President."

Strangely, Alger -- I mean, Adlai [laughter] -- But let's move on to another part of the jigsaw puzzle. Now, while you think -- while you may think there can be no connection between the debonair Democratic candidate and a dilapidated Massachusetts barn, I want to show you a picture of this barn and explain the connection.

Here is the outside of the barn. Give me the pictures of the inside, if you will. Here is the outside of the barn up at Lee, Massachusetts. It looks as though it couldn't house a farmer's cow or goat from the outside. Here's the inside: a beautifully panelled conference room with maps of the Soviet Union. Well, in what way does Stevenson tie up with that?

My -- my investigators went out and took pictures of the barn after we had been tipped off of what was in it -- tipped off that there was in this barn all the missing documents from the Communist front -- IPR -- the IPR which has been named by the McCarran Committee -- named before the McCarran Committee as a coverup for Communist espionage.

Now, let's take a look at a photostat of a document taken from the Massachusetts barn -- one of those documents which was never supposed to see the light of day. Rather interesting it is. This is a document which shows that Alger Hiss and Frank Coe recommended Adlai Stevenson to the Mount Tremblant Conference which was called for the purpose of establishing foreign policy (postwar foreign policy) in Asia. And, as you know, Alger Hiss is a convicted traitor. Frank Coe has been named under oath before congressional committees seven times as a member of the Communist Party. Why? Why do Hiss and Coe find that Adlai Stevenson is the man they want representing them at this conference? I don't know. Perhaps Adlai knows.

Murrow: But Senator McCarthy didn't permit his audience to hear the entire paragraph. This is the official record of the McCarran hearings. Anyone can buy it for two dollars. Here's a quote: "Another possibility for the Mount Tremblant conferences on Asia is someone from Knox' office or Stimson's office." (Frank Knox was our wartime Secretary of the Navy; Henry Stimson our Secretary of the Army, both distinguished Republicans.) And it goes on: "Coe, and Hiss mentioned Adlai Stevenson (one of Knox' special assistants) and Harvey Bundy (former Assistant Secretary of State under Hoover, and now assistant to Stimson) because of their jobs."

We read from this documented record, not in defense of Mr. Stevenson, but in defense of truth. Specifically, Mr. Stevenson's identification with that red barn was no more, no less than that of Knox, Stimson or Bundy. It should be stated that Mr. Stevenson was once a member of the Institute of Pacific Relations. But so were such other loyal Americans as Senator Ferguson, John Foster Dulles, Paul Hoffman, Harry Luce and Herbert Hoover. Their association carries with it no guilt, and that barn has nothing to do with any of them.

Now -- a sample investigation. The witness was Reed Harris, for many years a civil servant in the State Department, directing the information service. Harris was accused of helping the Communistic cause by curtailing some broadcasts to Israel. Senator McCarthy summoned him and questioned him about a book he had written in 1932.

McCarthy: Now we'll come to order. Mr. Reed Harris? Your name is Reed Harris?

Harris: That's correct.

McCarthy: You wrote a book in '32, is that correct?

Harris: Yes, I wrote a book. As I testified in executive session...

McCarthy: At the time you wrote the book -- pardon me; go ahead. I'm sorry. Proceed.

Harris: At the time I wrote the book the atmosphere in the universities of the United States was greatly affected by the great depression then in existence. The attitudes of students, the attitudes of the general public were considerably different than they are at this moment and for one thing there was generally no awareness, to the degree that there is today, of the way the Communist Party works.

McCarthy: You attended Columbia University in the early thirties. Is that right?

Harris: I did, Mr. Chairman.

McCarthy: Will you speak a little louder, sir?

Harris: I did, Mr. Chairman.

McCarthy: And were you expelled from Columbia?

Harris: I was suspended from classes on April 1st, 1932. I was later reinstated and I resigned from the University.

McCarthy: And you resigned from the University? Did the Civil -- Civil Liberties Union provide you with an attorney at that time?

Harris: I had many offers of attorneys, and one of those was from the American Civil Liberties Union, yes.

McCarthy: The question is did the Civil Liberties Union supply you with an attorney?

Harris: They did supply an attorney.

McCarthy: The answer is yes?

Harris: The answer is yes.

McCarthy: You know the Civil Liberties Union has been listed as "a front for, and doing the work of," the Communist Party?

Harris: Mr. Chairman this was 1932.

McCarthy: Yeah, I know it was 1932. Do you know that they since have been listed as "a front for, and doing the work of" the Communist Party?

Harris: I do not know that they have been listed so, sir.

McCarthy: You don't know they have been listed?

Harris: I have heard that mentioned or read that mentioned.

McCarthy: Now, you wrote a book in 1932. I'm going to ask you again: at the time you wrote this book, did you feel that professors should be given the right to teach sophomores that marriage -- and I quote -- "should be cast out of our civilization as antiquated and stupid religious phenomena?" Was that your feeling at that time?

Harris: My feeling is that professors should have the right to express their considered opinions on any subject, whatever they were, sir.

McCarthy: All right, I'm going to ask you this question again.

Harris: That includes that quotation. They should have the right to teach anything that came into their minds as being the proper thing to teach.

McCarthy: I'm going to make you answer this.

Harris: All right, I'll answer yes, but you put an implication on it and you feature this particular point of the book, which, of course, is quite out of context, does not give a proper impression of the book as a whole. The American public doesn't get an honest impression of even that book, bad as it is, from what you are quoting from it.

McCarthy: Well, then, let's continue to read your own writing, and...

Harris: Twenty-one years ago, again.

McCarthy: Yes, but we shall try and bring you down to date, if we can.

Harris: Mr. Chairman, two weeks ago, Senator Taft took the position that I took twenty-one years ago, that Communists and Socialists should be allowed to teach in the schools. It so happens that, nowadays I don't agree with Senator Taft, as far as Communist teaching in the schools is concerned, because I think Communists are, in effect, a plainclothes auxiliary of the Red Army, the Soviet Red Army. And I don't want to see them in any of our schools, teaching.

McCarthy: I don't recall Senator Taft ever having any of the background that you've got, sir.

Harris: I resent the tone of this inquiry very much, Mr. Chairman. I resent it, not only because it is my neck, my public neck, that you are, I think, very skillfully trying to wring, but I say it because there are thousands of able and loyal employees in the federal government of the United States who have been properly cleared according to the laws and the security practices of their agencies, as I was -- unless the new regime says no; I was before.

McClellan: Do you think this book did considerable harm, its publication might have had adverse influence on the public by an expression of views contained in it?

Harris: The sale of that book was so abysmally small. It was so unsuccessful that a question of its influence... Really, you can go back to the publisher. You'll see it was one of the most unsuccessful books he ever put out. He's still sorry about it, just as I am.

McClellan: Well, I think that's a compliment to American intelligence... (Laughter). I will say that for him.

Murrow: Senator McCarthy succeeded in proving that Reed Harris had once written a bad book, which the American people had proved twenty-two years ago by not buying it, which is what they eventually do with all bad ideas. As for Reed Harris, his resignation was accepted a month later with a letter of commendation. McCarthy claimed it as a victory.

The Reed Harris hearing demonstrates one of the Senator's techniques. Twice he said the American Civil Liberties Union was listed as a subversive front. The Attorney General's list does not and has never listed the ACLU as subversive, nor does the FBI or any other federal government agency. And the American Civil Liberties Union holds in its files letters of commendation from President Truman, President Eisenhower, and General MacArthur.

Now let us try to bring the McCarthy story a little more up to date. Two years ago Senator Benton of Connecticut accused McCarthy of apparent perjury, unethical practice, and perpetrating a hoax on the Senate. McCarthy sued for two million dollars. Last week he dropped the case, saying no one could be found who believed Benton's story. Several volunteers have come forward saying they believe it in its entirety.

Today Senator McCarthy says he's going to get a lawyer and force the networks to give him time to reply to Adlai Stevenson's speech.

Earlier, the Senator asked, "Upon what meat does this, our Caesar, feed?" Had he looked three lines earlier in Shakespeare's Caesar, he would have found this line, which is not altogether inappropriate: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves."

No one familiar with the history of this country can deny that congressional committees are useful. It is necessary to investigate before legislating, but the line between investigating and persecuting is a very fine one and the junior Senator from Wisconsin has stepped over it repeatedly. His primary achievement has been in confusing the public mind, as between internal and the external threats of Communism. We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine, and remember that we are not descended from fearful men -- not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate and to defend causes that were, for the moment, unpopular.

This is no time for men who oppose Senator McCarthy's methods to keep silent, or for those who approve. We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result. There is no way for a citizen of a republic to abdicate his responsibilities. As a nation we have come into our full inheritance at a tender age. We proclaim ourselves, as indeed we are, the defenders of freedom, wherever it continues to exist in the world, but we cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home.

The actions of the junior Senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad, and given considerable comfort to our enemies. And whose fault is that? Not really his. He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it -- and rather successfully. Cassius was right. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves."

Good night, and good luck.

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Source: University of Maryland (<http://www.honors.umd.edu/HONR269J/archive/Murrow540309.html>)