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THE CENSURE OF SENATOR JOSEPH R. MCCARTHY
AS REPORTED IN FIVE WISCONSIN
DAILY NEWSPAPERS

By

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INTRODUCTION

United States Senator Joseph Raymond McCarthy--patriot or antilibertarian? The question in all probability cannot be answered to the satisfaction of all Americans. To those who idolized him, McCarthy was an American patriot and the term "McCarthyism," in the senator's own words, was "a household word describing a way of dealing with treason and the threat of treason." To his enemies, he was a demagogue and McCarthyism, in the minds of the New York Times' editors, among others, stood for "the invasion of personal rights, the irresponsible attacks on individuals and institutions, and the disregard of fair democratic procedures."¹

There can be little doubt that the American press was instrumental in McCarthy's rise to fame and consequently his rise to political power. As a senator he made some sensational charges that newspaper editors deemed obliged to publish regardless of whether McCarthy documented his accusations. The great mass of Americans formed their opinions of the Wisconsin senator through information received via the news media. Because the press played such an important role in McCarthy's career, it is important to consider and evaluate its performance in covering his political life.

¹New York Times, November 11, 1954, p. 30.

This study will examine the reportage by five Wisconsin daily newspapers of events prior to and including the action of December 2, 1954, when the senate censured McCarthy's conduct as unbecoming a member of the United States senate. Responsibility in covering a controversial figure such as McCarthy, and the performance of the five papers in reporting the news of the senate censure debate also are considered.

Five Wisconsin daily newspapers were chosen for consideration in this study. The only competing daily newspapers published in Wisconsin in 1954 were the two in Milwaukee, the state's largest city with a population of 637,392; and the two at Madison, the state capitol, with a population of 96,056. The fifth newspaper in the study was published at Appleton, the principal community of the Fox River Valley, with a population of 34,010, and the legal residence of Senator McCarthy. Only Wisconsin newspapers were evaluated, partly to limit the paper's scope, but also because it was believed the Wisconsin press had a particular duty to inform McCarthy's constituents of his activities. The two Milwaukee papers examined were the Journal and the Sentinel; the two Madison papers the Capital-Times and the Wisconsin State Journal; and the Post Crescent of Appleton.

The Milwaukee Journal, published weekday evenings and Sunday mornings, and owned by the employees of the Journal Company, listed a circulation of 346,364 in 1954. The Journal was served by its own Washington bureau and by the

complete wire services of the Associated Press, of which it was a member. It also subscribed to the United Press, the New York Times News Service, and the North American Newspaper Alliance. The Milwaukee Sentinel, published weekday mornings and Sundays, with a circulation of 184,155, was one of the daily newspapers then owned by the Hearst Publishing Company. The Sentinel received its wire news from the Hearst Headline Service, the Washington news bureau of the corporation; from the Associated Press, of which it was a member; and from the Hearst-owned International News Service.

The two newspapers at Madison, the Wisconsin State Journal,² published weekday mornings and Sundays with a circulation of 42,704 in 1954, and the Capital Times, published weekday evenings with a distribution of 41,961, were owned by Madison Newspapers, Incorporated. The corporation operated the business, circulation, and mechanical departments of both newspapers, but the corporate structure of each newspaper was separate, and the publications were editorially independent and competitive. Each newspaper was a member of the Associated Press, and each subscribed to the services of the United Press.

The Post-Crescent at Appleton was published weekday evenings and Sundays. In 1954 its circulation was 32,179

²Wisconsin State Journal hereinafter cited as State Journal.

and like the other newspapers in the study, was a member of the Associated Press.

Each of the five dailies listed its political affiliation in 1954 as "Independent."³

All the newspapers studied relied exclusively on the wire services for daily reports of the censure debate, and four used primarily dispatches from the Associated Press. The Sentinel used the AP sparingly, relying mainly on INS. For the most part, then, differences in daily coverage depended on how each paper used the wire service reports.

³Editor and Publisher Year Book--1955, "Daily Newspapers of the United States," Thirty-fifty Annual International Year Book (New York: Editor and Publisher Co., 1955), pp. 163-64.

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF JOSEPH R. MCCARTHY

Joseph Raymond McCarthy was born on a farm in Grand Chute, Outagamie County, Wisconsin, the fifth of seven children.¹ Grand Chute is near Appleton in the center of a section known locally as "the Irish Settlement." When he was fourteen, the family moved to another farm in Manawa in adjoining Waupaca County. When the family moved, the youth quit school to become a full-time chicken farmer, building an original flock of fifty to one that eventually numbered ten thousand. When he was nineteen, however, the business failed, and he returned to high school in Manawa. At Little Wolf High School he crammed four years of high school into one year while supporting himself as the manager of a chain grocery store and as an usher at a motion picture theatre.

In 1930, he entered Marquette University in Milwaukee as an engineering major, but his interests turned to the study of law in his junior year. Again, he supported himself by taking outside jobs. He was admitted to the Wisconsin bar in 1935.

¹Biographical material, unless otherwise noted, is from the New York Times, May 3, 1957, p. 14.

Upon graduation, McCarthy hung out his shingle in Waupaca but after nine months he moved to Shawano where he practiced law at fifty dollars a week with an attorney named Michael Eberlein. In 1936 the young lawyer ran as a Democrat for district attorney of Shawano County. He lost the three-way election but he did better than expected, finishing behind the favored LaFollette Progressive candidate but ahead of his Republican opponent.

By 1939, McCarthy had switched his allegiance to the Republican party and was ready for his second attempt at winning an elective office. He was elected judge of the Tenth Judicial Circuit, one of the courts of first jurisdiction in the state. McCarthy's opponents claim that during his campaign for judge, and during his subsequent years on the bench, McCarthy demonstrated the use of unscrupulous power that they say later became a familiar device of his in the United States Senate. During the 1939 campaign, one critic charges, McCarthy tacked seven years on his opponent's age, and subtracted a year from his own in order to be distinguished as the youngest Circuit Court judge in the state's history. After his election he earned a reputation in divorce cases "as a kind of mobile Reno--a circuit judge who worked exceedingly fast and seldom found any obstacles in the statutes, particularly where friends of political supporters were involved."²

²Richard H. Rovere, Senator Joe McCarthy (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1959), p. 92.

Without resigning his judicial post, McCarthy obtained a direct commission to serve in World War II as a Marine Corps lieutenant. He accompanied a Marine light bomber squadron to the Solomon Islands where he served from September 1 through December 31, 1954. Although he was an intelligence officer and not required to fly missions, he actually flew a number as a tailgunner and later used the nickname "Tailgunner Joe" in his political campaigns.

Upon his return to the United States, McCarthy campaigned in uniform for the Republican nomination for the United States Senate seat held by Alexander Wiley since 1938. His candidacy was conducted despite a military ruling that forbade servicemen from speaking on political issues, and a Wisconsin law that prohibited judges from holding other than judicial offices. Senator Wiley easily won the primary, but McCarthy made a good showing, receiving nearly 100,000 votes more than any of the other three unsuccessful candidates. McCarthy was relieved from active duty in the Marine Corps on February 20, 1945, and resigned under honorable conditions on March 29, 1945. He was re-elected circuit judge that year, but in the following year went after bigger game--the United States Senate seat held for twenty years by Robert M. La Follette, Jr., and for twenty years before that by La Follette's father.

McCarthy carefully laid plans for the 1946 Republican primary and he was aided by two tactical errors committed by La Follette. First, he remained in Washington for much

of the campaign while McCarthy launched a vigorous campaign based on the slogan, "Congress Needs a Tailgunner."³ Second, La Follette chose 1946 as the year to bring the Progressive party back into the Republican fold. Many of the Progressives felt a closer tie with the Democratic party and hedged at identification with the GOP. Likewise, some Republicans viewed with something less than wild enthusiasm the idea of being represented by a man with the liberal voting record of La Follette. In any case, McCarthy gathered the support of the state Republican organization and defeated La Follette, 207,935 to 202,536. He then easily beat his Democratic opponent in November, 620,229 to 278,722. The Irish chicken farmer had become a United States Senator.

McCarthy's early years in the senate were relatively unnoticed by the public, but were later to be subjected to senate investigation. He associated with the lobbyist for the Pepsi-Cola Company, a soft-drink manufacturer, and was at one time referred to in Congress as "the Pepsi-Cola Kid." He also associated with real-estate lobbyists and was paid \$10,000 by the Lustron Corporation for an essay he wrote entitled, "A Dollar's Worth of Housing for Every Dollar Spent."⁴

But the problems of Pepsi-Cola and the real-estate lobby were unimportant to a public increasingly concerned

³Ibid., p. 100.

⁴U. S., Congress, Senate, Hearings Before A Select Committee to Study Censure Charges, 83rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1954, Part 1, p. 23.

with the menace of world communism. On March 12, 1947, President Truman called on congress for \$400 million to aid Greece and Turkey against Russian aggression in a speech later known as the "Truman Doctrine." That June, Secretary of State, George Marshall, formulated his Marshall Plan; and, while the armies of Mao Tse-tung swept the Nationalist forces from the Chinese mainland, the Russian dictator Stalin precipitated a crisis in occupied and divided Germany by blockading all highway, river and rail traffic into Berlin. By December, 1949, Chiang Kai-shek occupied Formosa but the communists owned China.

Against this backdrop McCarthy, little known and unnoticed, on February 9, 1950, addressed the Ohio County Women's Republican Clubs of Wheeling, West Virginia. The menace of communism, asserted McCarthy, came not from without but from within. He said that he held in his hand a list of names of persons who had been made known to Secretary of State Dean Acheson as members of the Communist party but who were nevertheless still employed by the State Department and were shaping State Department policy.⁵ Critics said McCarthy had claimed the possession of a list of 205 such communists. McCarthy later insisted he had said there were fifty-seven. The next night McCarthy repeated his charges in Salt Lake City, and the following night in Reno.

⁵New York Times, February 13, 1950, p. 3.

Eleven days after his Wheeling speech, McCarthy was called before a specially created subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to substantiate his charges. Senator Millard F. Tydings, a Maryland Democrat, was subcommittee chairman. After hearing more than three million words of testimony the senate group failed to find any communists currently employed by the State Department. The Democratic majority of the subcommittee issued a report charging McCarthy with making charges and employing methods that constituted "a fraud and a hoax."

That November, when Tydings sought re-election, he was defeated by little known John Marshall Butler under circumstances that resulted in an investigation by a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. On January 22, 1951, the subcommittee issued a report identifying McCarthy and his staff as having been active in the defeat of Tydings.

On August 6, 1951, pursuant to a resolution offered by Senator William Benton, a Connecticut Democrat, a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administrations was created to investigate aspects of McCarthy's financial affairs. Detailed testimony was taken and a report issued after McCarthy declined to appear before the subcommittee. The report included six questions three of which McCarthy had refused to answer on the grounds that the subcommittee was controlled by Democrats bent on smearing him. The questions, put forth by subcommittee member

Thomas Hennings, a senator from Missouri, in a letter to McCarthy on November 21, 1952, asked:

1. Whether any funds collected or received by [McCarthy] to conduct [his] activities, including those related to communism, were diverted to [his] personal advantage.

2. Whether [McCarthy] used [his] official position as a member to obtain a \$10,000 fee from the Lustron Corporation which was almost entirely subsidized by agencies under the jurisdiction of the committees of which [he] was a member.

3. Whether [McCarthy's] activities on behalf of interest groups were motivated by self interest.

4. Whether [McCarthy's] activities in senatorial campaigns, particularly with respect to the reporting of financing, involved violations of the federal and state corrupt practices acts.

5. Whether loans or other transactions which [McCarthy] had with the Appleton State Bank, of Appleton, Wisconsin involved violations of tax and banking laws.

6. Whether McCarthy used close associates and family members to secrete receipts, income, commodity and stock speculation, and other financial transactions for ulterior motives.⁶

The subcommittee, stymied by McCarthy's refusal to testify before it, suspended its hearings.

McCarthy won renomination by Wisconsin's voters in the 1952 primary election, defeating his nearest rival by nearly 300,000 votes. In the general election, however, his edge over Thomas E. Fairchild was only 130,000 votes. He trailed the entire Republican ticket in Wisconsin and was far behind Eisenhower's plurality of more than 357,000 votes. But the Republicans gained control of the United States Senate in 1952 and McCarthy was rewarded with the

⁶U. S., Congress, Senate, Hearings Before a Select Committee to Study Censure Charges, 83rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1954, Part 1, pp. 44-45.

chairmanship of the senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

By the opening of the second session of the Eighty-third Congress in 1954, McCarthy was at the peak of his power. His communist investigations during both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations had commanded continuous front page attention in the nation's press. He had attacked former Secretary of State George Catlett Marshall as a "communist dupe;"⁷ and his investigations subcommittee, led by its young chief counsel Roy Cohn and Cohn's ever present companion, G. David Schine, had investigated and made a shambles of the government operated radio network Voice of America. But when Schine, the subcommittee's unsalaried "chief consultant," received a draft call to serve in the armed forces, and McCarthy trained his sights on alleged security leaks in the Army, the stage was set for the Wisconsin senator's ultimate return to obscurity.

On April 25, 1954, McCarthy's own investigations committee opened hearings to determine certain issues between McCarthy and the Army. The Army contended that McCarthy and members of his staff, particularly Cohn, had sought to obtain preferential treatment for Schine both before and after he had been drafted. McCarthy contended that the Army had sought to use Schine as a "hostage" to get the subcommittee to ease the pressure of its investigations into

⁷U. S., Congressional Record, 82nd Cong., 1st Sess., 1951, Vol. XVIIIIC, Part 5, p. 7054.

reported spying and sabotage at the Army Signal Corps installation at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.⁸ The hearings lasted thirty-six days and were viewed by millions of Americans over national television. For most, the hearings offered the first opportunity to actually observe McCarthy in action.

Although the hearings themselves were inconclusive, something intangible had happened as a result of them. Congressmen who had never spoken publicly against McCarthy now openly denounced him. And his enemies were not limited to the opposition Democratic Party. In the words of Senator Charles E. Potter, Republican from Michigan, a member of McCarthy's investigations subcommittee:

As the hearings ended in June, 1954, a new atmosphere spread through the Senate Building. Many Senators who had lived in complete terror of Joe McCarthy, who had been avoiding their responsibilities to save their political lives, were suddenly brave again. They talked openly now, instead of in whispers; they poured out the anger they had held back for so long. They had seen him strike down Tydings of Maryland and Benton of Connecticut and had trembled when he invaded many states to wage a vicious campaign against them and had sent his hatchet men into others. They knew now that he was finished and they closed in for the kill.⁹

On the morning of June 11, Senator Ralph Flanders, a Vermont Republican, strode into the Senate Caucus Room and,

⁸U. S., Congress, Senate, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Investigations of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, 83d Cong., 2nd Sess., 1954, p. 2.

⁹Charles E. Potter, Days of Shame (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1965), p. 285.

before television cameras gathered for the Army-McCarthy hearings, informed the Wisconsin senator that he would speak about him on the Senate floor. That afternoon, in front of a packed senate gallery, Flanders delivered a stinging rebuke of McCarthy in a speech that ended with a resolution of censure. It read:

Resolved, That Senator McCarthy be separated from the chairmanship of the senate committee on government operations and furthermore be prohibited from being chairman or vice chairman of any such subcommittee thereof.¹⁰

The wheels were turning but before action was taken, Flanders, on July 20, read a new resolution that he preferred to be considered over the first:

Resolved, That the conduct of the senator from Wisconsin, Mr. McCarthy, as chairman of the senate permanent subcommittee on investigations, is unbecoming a member of the United States Senate, is contrary to senatorial traditions, and tends to bring the Senate into disrepute, and such conduct is hereby condemned.¹¹

Flanders announced he would send the resolution to the desk on July 30 as a privileged matter and move its adoption without reference to a committee.

Ten days later the senate galleries were packed in anticipation of the opening of the censure debate. But first Flanders again presented a new resolution, this one to take precedence over the one introduced on July 20:

¹⁰U. S., Congressional Record, 83d Cong., 2d Sess., 1954, Vol. C, Part 6, p. 8033.

¹¹Ibid., Part 8, p. 10993.

Resolved, That the conduct of the Senator from Wisconsin is unbecoming a member of the United States Senate, is contrary to senatorial traditions, and tends to bring the senate into disrepute, and such conduct is hereby condemned.¹²

Flanders supported his resolution with a list of thirty-three specific charges against McCarthy, but several senators voiced disapproval that the resolution itself contained no specific charges. Senator Wayne Morse, an Oregon Independent, while opposing it on this ground, said he would be pleased to prepare a bill of particulars to be attached to the resolution in the form of an amendment.¹³

The resolution was not greeted with enthusiasm by the senate's conservative Republicans. Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen reacted violently, condemning the resolution for being personal, not legal. But his bitterest words were saved for what he called the resolution's sponsors. Dirksen told the senate and its spectators that the Communist party, the Labor League, the Daily Worker, the Americans for Democratic Action, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the National Committee for an Effective Congress, "and all their affiliates have crawled in bed with Senator Flanders to defeat Senator McCarthy."¹⁴

The next day Senator J. William Fulbright, Democrat from Arkansas, entered the drama and presented to the senate

¹²Ibid., Part 10, p. 12729.

¹³Ibid., p. 12733.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 12742.

a bill of particulars against McCarthy in the form of an amendment to the resolution.

On August 2, majority leader, William Knowland of California moved that the resolution, along with its amendments, be referred to a select committee composed of three Democrats and three Republicans. Members were to be chosen by their party leader and approved by the Vice President. The committee was to study the resolution and its proposed amendments and to make recommendations for action to the senate. Knowland's motion did not specify that the committee make its report before the senate adjourned for the year. When Senator Irving Ives, Republican from New York, proposed such an amendment, the majority leader balked, but then consented. The senate then voted seventy-five to twelve to send the resolution to a select committee.¹⁵

The six senators chosen for service on the select committee were known in the senate for their quiet demeanor and were practically strangers to the public. On the Republican side were Senators Watkins of Utah, Carlson of Kansas, and Case of South Dakota. Senators Johnson of Colorado, Stennis of Mississippi, and Ervin of North Carolina served for the Democrats. Senators Watkins and Johnson were selected chairman and vice chairman, respectively. The committee was confronted with a formidable task. It had to

¹⁵Ibid., p. 12989.

make recommendations to the senate on a sensitive issue. Included in the censure motion and its amendments were more than fifty charges of misconduct that the committee had to examine and report on between August 31 and September 27.¹⁶

The Watkins committee eliminated all but thirteen of the charges due either to duplication or lack of documentation. The remaining charges were then studied under five categories:

1. Incidents of contempt of the senate or a senatorial committee.
2. Incidents of encouragement of United States employees to violate the law and their oath of office or executive orders.
3. Incidents involving the receipt or use of a confidential or classified document or other confidential information from executive files.
4. Incidents involving abuses of colleagues in the senate.
5. Incidents relating to Army General Ralph W. Zwicker.¹⁷

The first category of charges referred to McCarthy's dispute with the Senate subcommittee on privileges and elections, which had investigated his financial affairs in

¹⁶U. S., Congress, Senate, Report of the Select Committee to Study Censure Charges, 83d Cong., 2nd Sess., 1954, p. 2.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 5.

1951-52. Although invited to testify five times he refused unless, he said, he was subpoenaed. McCarthy said he would not testify because the subcommittee was attempting to "smear" him, and he accused its members of "stealing the taxpayers' money in digging up unfounded charges." In a letter to chairman Senator Guy Gillette on May 11, 1952, McCarthy accused the subcommittee of doing the communists work in "exposing" him. He also saved some unkind words for individual subcommittee members, calling Senator Robert Hendrickson, Republican from New Jersey, "a living miracle without brains or guts."¹⁸

The select committee concluded that it was McCarthy's duty to accept invitations to testify and that his failure to do so hamstrung the committee and thus obstructed the orderly process of the senate. No formal subpoena should be necessary, the committee said, to bring senators to testify before committees when their and the senate's honor are at stake. The committee ruled that McCarthy had denounced the subcommittee without justification and that he had failed to explain three of the six questions raised by Senator Hennings. Specifically, he had not answered whether funds collected to fight communism were diverted to other purposes, whether certain of his official activities were motivated by self-interest, and whether he had violated the law in his senate campaigns.¹⁹

¹⁸Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 30.

Thus, the committee reported, McCarthy's conduct before the subcommittee, the senate, and Senator Hendrickson was "contemptuous, contumacious, and denunciatory without reason or justification, and was obstructive to legislative process. For this conduct, it is our recommendation that he be censured by the senate."²⁰

The second category of charges concerned incidents of encouragement by Senator McCarthy of federal employees to violate the law and their oaths of office or executive orders. During the televised hearings that spring, the Wisconsin senator had publicly urged federal employees to give him any information of wrong doing in their departments. McCarthy had admitted to the select committee that his request for information included that which was classified. While admitting that giving classified information to unauthorized persons, such as himself, was illegal, he claimed that other federal statutes imposed a duty upon federal employees to give him any information of wrong doing. Vice President Richard Nixon, he argued, had also requested classified information from federal employees when he was a congressman.²¹

The select committee reported that it could not condone McCarthy's action. Since it appeared to the committee, however, that he had acted in good faith and had been motivated by a sense of official duty, censure was not warranted.²²

²⁰Ibid., p. 31.

²¹Ibid., p. 33.

²²Ibid., p. 39.

The third category of charges was based on incidents involving the receipt or use of a confidential or classified document or other confidential information from executive files. The question in point arose from a document produced by McCarthy in the Army hearings. He had referred to it at the hearings as a copy of a two-and-a-quarter-page letter from F.B.I. Chief J. Edgar Hoover to Army Major General Bolling, marked "confidential," and complaining about the poor security system at Fort Monmouth. Hoover had immediately denied that the paper was a copy of any letter sent to Bolling, but had said it was identical in some respects to a fifteen-page interdepartmental memorandum from the F.B.I. to Bolling. He had also stated that the information contained in the document, which McCarthy had offered to make public, was classified.²³

In offering to make a classified document public, the select committee stated, McCarthy had committed a grave error. It believed, however, that he had not known the document was not authentic. Furthermore, since McCarthy had been under the stress of being questioned by the subcommittee when he had revealed the paper, and since the contents of the documents had been relevant to the subject matter under inquiry at the time, the committee did not recommend censure.²⁴

²³Ibid., p. 40.

²⁴Ibid., p. 45.

The fourth category of charges dealt with abuses of senate colleagues. Specifically, he was charged with ridiculing and defaming Senator Hendrickson, in language cited previously, and Senators Gillette, Monroney, Hayden, and Hennings of the Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections. He had also spoken unkindly of Senator Flanders, calling him, "senile--I think they should get a net and take him to a good quiet place."²⁵

His abuses of the subcommittee members were studied under the first category of charges, and censure was recommended for his actions. But the select committee believed there was no basis for censure for McCarthy's remarks concerning Senator Flanders since the Vermont Senator had provoked the attack through words of his own.²⁶

Finally, McCarthy was charged with abusing General Ralph Zwicker who had testified in a closed hearing before Senator McCarthy's subcommittee near the conclusion of the Army hearings. The general had been questioned by McCarthy about the promotion and honorable discharge of Major Irving Peress, an alleged Communist. After the general had refused several times to answer questions, saying an executive order prohibited him from testifying on the matter, McCarthy said,

. . . General, you should be removed of command. Any man who has been given the honor of being promoted to

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 46.

General and who says, "I will protect another General who protects communists," is not fit to wear that uniform, General. I think it is a tremendous disgrace to the Army to have this sort of thing given to the public.²⁷

McCarthy told the select committee that when questioned, General Zwicker had been evasive, that he had changed his story several times, that he was difficult to examine, and that he had been arrogant.²⁸

The committee thought differently. It found no evidence that General Zwicker was not telling the truth in testifying before McCarthy; nor did it find evidence that the general was intentionally irritating, evasive, or arrogant. It did find that McCarthy's conduct was improper and recommended censure for his treatment of General Zwicker.²⁹

The select committee's report was made public on September 27. It amended the Flander's resolution to contain the specific charges for which it recommended censure. The proposed amended resolution read:

Resolved, That the senator from Wisconsin failed to co-operate with the subcommittee on rules and administration in clearing up matters referred to that subcommittee which concerned his conduct as a senator, and affected the honor of the senate and, instead repeatedly abused the subcommittee and its members who were trying to carry out assigned duties, thereby obstructing the constitutional processes of the senate, and that this conduct of the senator from Wisconsin in failing to co-operate with a senate committee in clearing up matters affecting the honor of the senate is contrary to senatorial traditions and is hereby condemned.

²⁷Ibid., p. 54. ²⁸Ibid., p. 55. ²⁹Ibid., p. 61.

Section 2: The senator from Wisconsin in conducting a senatorial inquiry intemperately abused, and released executive hearings in which he denounced a witness representing the executive branch of the government, General Ralph W. Zwicker, an officer of the United States Army, for refusing to criticize his superior officers and for respecting official orders and executive directives, thereby tending to destroy the good faith which must be maintained between the executive and legislative branches in our system of government; and the senate disavows the denunciation of General Zwicker by Senator McCarthy as chairman of a senate subcommittee and censures him for that action.³⁰

On November 8 the senate convened in extraordinary session to weigh the merits of the Watkins committee recommendations for censure. Before debate began in earnest, however, McCarthy, on the floor of the Senate, accused three committee members of being biased against him. He pointed out that Senator Ervin had admitted to a newswoman that he did not want to serve on the select committee because he had once written unfavorable letters about McCarthy.³¹ He then turned on Senator Watkins, claiming that the select committee chairman had told a reporter during the Army-McCarthy hearings that he hoped the television cameras had not caught him shaking hands with McCarthy since such an action would be hard to explain to his Utah constituents.³² Finally, he charged that Senator Johnson of the select committee, had said that all Democratic senators loathed McCarthy and favored the Flanders resolution. When Senator Watkins pointed out that at the conclusion of his committee's hearings McCarthy had thanked the committee for its fairness,

³⁰U. S., Congressional Record, Part 12, p. 15922.

³¹Ibid., p. 15930.

³²Ibid., p. 15931.

Senator McCarthy replied that since that time he had discovered several inconsistencies in the committee report.³³

The most strenuous objection to the committee report was to the assertion that no senator had the "right to impugn the motives of individual senators responsible for official action, nor to reflect upon their personal character for what official action they took."³⁴ McCarthy and his supporters argued that such a policy violated the principle of freedom of speech. Senator Herman Welker, Idaho Republican, was particularly adamant on this point. He quoted several precedents in which senators had employed violent language but had not been censured.

In the last minutes of debate on November 10, McCarthy requested that a speech he had prepared for delivery, and which he had given to the press the night before, be entered in the Congressional Record. The speech was to play an important role in the eventual passage of the censure resolution. He claimed that the resolution should be understood primarily in terms of its bearing on the Communist issue. The fight against subversion would be slowed down by the resolution's passage and the Community party would win a major victory.

The speech claimed that the real strength of the Communist party was the extent to which it had gained its objectives. The party, according to McCarthy, infected the

³³Ibid., p. 15928.

³⁴Ibid., p. 15949.

senate and had made the select committee "its unwitting handmaiden." He then warned against underestimating the strength of the Communists. "At Yalta, through the efforts of Alger Hiss, and perhaps others we know not of," Franklin Roosevelt had been persuaded to turn the fruits of a victorious war over to international Communism.³⁵

Two days later, Senator Barry Goldwater, Arizona Republican, spoke against the resolution in a speech that echoed McCarthy's words of November 10. The key issue, said Goldwater, was what would happen to the fight against Communism if McCarthy was censured. "All the discredited and embittered figures of the Hiss-Yalta period of American dishonor have crawled from under their logs to join the efforts to get even."³⁶

On November 18 Senator Majority Leader, William Knowland announced that Senator McCarthy was in Bethesda Naval hospital recovering from an attack of bursitis. After a short but sharp discussion the senate moved, against the votes of Senators Morse and Fulbright, to recess until November 29 when Senator McCarthy could rejoin the debate.

When the senate reconvened on Monday, November 29, members agreed to a unanimous consent request by McCarthy to terminate debate that Wednesday at 3:00 P.M. Three important test votes were taken on December 1 and the results clearly indicated that the senate would censure

³⁵Ibid., pp. 15952-954.

³⁶Ibid., p. 16001.

McCarthy. Senator Dirksen first introduced what, in effect was a substitute resolution, which stated that a reasonable doubt existed as to the authority of the senate to censure members for language or conduct in a prior session of Congress. (McCarthy's dispute with the subcommittee on elections and privileges had taken place during the 82nd Congress and he had since been re-elected.) The substitute further stated that a senator had no legal obligation to accept a committee's invitation to testify and that censure was not warranted for his refusal to accept such an invitation. Neither the use of "robust and salty language" toward senate colleagues, nor the employment of allegedly intemperate language in interrogating witnesses constituted grounds for censure. The senate rejected Dirksen's substitute, sixty-six to twenty-one. Nine senators did not vote.³⁷

Senator Carl Mundt, Republican from South Dakota, then proposed an amendment designed at softening the resolution, calling on the senate not to censure McCarthy, but to "disavow and disapprove of the intemperate statements employed by the junior senator from Wisconsin."³⁸ The amendment failed, seventy-four to fifteen. The hard core McCarthy supporters, Senators Dirksen, Welker, Hickenlooper, and Jenner, as well as Majority Leader Knowland, voted against the amendment. Senator Case, a member of the select committee, voted for it.³⁹

³⁷Ibid., p. 16329.

³⁸Ibid., p. 16330.

³⁹Ibid., p. 16335.

Finally, Senator Bridges proposed a substitute similar to Dirken's. It was defeated, sixty-eight to twenty.

The senate then turned to the consideration of the recommendations of the select committee. It will be recalled that the Watkins committee had proposed amendments to the Flanders resolution. If amended, the resolution would consist of two sections, each one censuring McCarthy on a specific charge. After the test votes of December 1, approval of the first section of the select committee's amendment, censuring McCarthy for abuses of the subcommittee on privileges and elections, was a foregone conclusion. The first section passed, sixty-seven to twenty, with nine senators not voting.⁴⁰

The passage of section two of the Watkins committee amendment was definitely not a foregone conclusion. Many senators, including southern Democrats, seemed reluctant to censure a senator for language used in interrogating a committee witness. To confound matters, Senator Case, on November 15, had told the senate he no longer favored his committee's recommendation to censure McCarthy for his alleged abuse of General Zwicker. New evidence, he had said, indicated that the Army had not cooperated with McCarthy in his investigation of Major Peress, and that the senator's treatment of General Zwicker had therefore been justified.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 16340.

Before the senate could consider section two, the matter was conveniently taken off its hands. Senator Bennett, Watkins' junior colleague from Utah, moved to replace the Zwicker charge with a section censuring McCarthy for vitriolic attacks on the select committee. With an almost audible sign of relief from the resolution's supporters, the substitution passed, sixty-four to twenty-three.⁴¹

Shortly after the passage of the Bennett substitution, the senate voted on the resolution as amended and passed it by a vote of sixty-four to twenty-two. Eight senators did not vote. Senator McCarthy answered "present" when his name was called. All forty-four Democrats voted for censure while the forty-four Republicans voting split evenly. The only independent, Senator Wayne Morse, voted for censure.⁴² In its final passage the Flanders resolution stated:

Resolved, That the senator from Wisconsin failed to cooperate with the subcommittee on privileges and elections of the senate committee on rules and administration in clearing up matters referred to that subcommittee which concerned his conduct as a senator, and affected the honor of the senate and, instead, repeatedly abused the subcommittee and its members who were trying to carry out assigned duties, thereby obstructing the constitutional processes of the senate, and that this conduct of the senator from Wisconsin in failing to cooperate with a senate committee in clearing up matters affecting the honor of the senate is contrary to senatorial traditions and is hereby condemned.

Section 2. The senator from Wisconsin, Mr. McCarthy, in writing to the chairman of the select committee to

⁴¹Ibid., p. 16381.

⁴²Ibid., p. 16392.

study censure charges after the select committee had issued its report and before the committee report was presented to the senate, charging three members of the select committee with "deliberate deception" and "fraud" for failure to disqualify themselves; in stating to the press on November 4, 1954, that the special senate session was a "lynch party"; in repeatedly describing this special senate session as a "lynch bee" in a nationwide television and radio show on November 7, 1954; in stating to the public press on November 13, 1954, that the chairman of the select committee was guilty of "the most unusual, most cowardly thing I've heard of" and stating further: "I expected he would be afraid to answer the questions, but I didn't think he'd be stupid enough to make a public statement"; and in characterizing the said committee as the "unwitting handmaiden," "involuntary agent," and "attorneys in fact" of the Communist party and in charging that the said committee in writing its report "imitated Communist methods--that it distorted, misrepresented, and omitted in its effort to manufacture a plausible rationalization" in support of its recommendations to the senate, which characterizations and charges were contained in a statement released to the press and inserted in the Congressional Record of November 10, 1954, acted contrary to senatorial ethics and tended to bring the senate into dishonor and disrepute, to obstruct the constitutional processes of the senate, and to impair its dignity; and such conduct is hereby condemned.⁴³

The censure vote effected a kind of metamorphosis in McCarthy. Although he had lost none of his rights as a senator, he had lost status in the "world's most exclusive club."⁴⁴ Two-thirds of the senate had publicly rebuked him. President Eisenhower, who in 1952 had deleted from a Milwaukee speech a statement praising his old friend, General Marshall, and who had promised in 1953 to make no appointments displeasing to Senator McCarthy, turned a cold shoulder to the once powerful senator. In 1955, Senator and Mrs.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Rovere, op. cit., p. 236.

McCarthy were stricken from the list of those invited to White House functions. The press, which had once followed his every move, now ignored him.

McCarthy's health failed and he became a frequent patient at Bethesda Naval hospital. His admittance to the hospital on April 28, 1957, then, received little notice from the press. The next day, however, his condition was listed as "serious," and on May 2, at 6:02 P.M. he died of what his doctors described as "acute hepatitic failure." A newspaperman was said to have observed that he "made it just in time for the seven o'clock news."⁴⁵

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 247.

CHAPTER II

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRESS

The American press was faced with a tremendous responsibility in reporting the affairs of Joseph McCarthy. Twelve years after his demise the public has still not reached a consensus concerning his merits. Did he seek personal glory and power or was he honestly concerned about Communist subversion in the United States? While this question is perhaps impossible to answer, it is possible to review authoritative opinion from both sides of the controversy.

McCarthy's supporters point out that at the very least, he alerted the country to the danger of Communist subversion and exposed a shamefully lax security system in the Department of State. Conservatives William Buckley and Brent Bozell point out that although the Tydings committee in 1950 gave an across-the-board clearance to all of those on McCarthy's list of alleged subversives, the state department later screened 80 percent of the cases and separated 29 percent of them. "In other words," says Buckley, "the state department tacitly admitted that employees had't been adequately screened. Therefore we are indebted to McCarthy

for jolting the state department into reopening the cases."¹

McCarthy's supporters are willing to give him the benefit of doubt when the question of personal motives arises. Buckley and Bozell claim that it is impossible to determine whether McCarthy was above all a publicity seeker and that only one fact can be definitely determined--that he received more publicity than any American except the President. "However, since the need for public ventilation of the government's security derelictions is now firmly established, the presumption . . . ought to be that the senator who met the need was motivated by a desire to serve the people."²

But what of the charge that McCarthy, by publicly branding people as Communists, fellow travelers, or security risks, often ruined the reputations of innocent citizens? Buckley and Bozell answer that McCarthy's "method" was to act in the interests of national security--to assume a person unfit for government office if any doubt existed as to his loyalty. They say that McCarthy, in making accusations about the loyalty of state department employees, had no obligation to adhere to the standards of proof required of a district attorney. "For government employment

¹William Buckley, Jr. and L. Brent Bozell, McCarthy and His Enemies (Chicago: Henry Regnery Press, 1954), p. 166.

²Ibid., p. 284.

is a privilege, not a right, and the security of the country must come before the legal rights of the individual." Furthermore, they say, McCarthy had a duty to publicize his charges because the public has a right to know what is happening, even though some innocent persons may be hurt in the process.³

On the other side of the fence stands New Yorker editorial writer, Richard Rovere: "There has never been the slightest reason to suppose that McCarthy took what he said seriously or that he believed any of the nonsense he spread. . . . What he lusted for was glory."⁴ To substantiate the argument, Rovere recalls an incident that occurred shortly after the Tydings committee hearings. McCarthy, he says, delivered a speech on the senate floor on a day when only five senators, six or seven reporters, and a handful of tourists attended. In his speech McCarthy developed a convincing case against an alleged Communist in the state department. But when the speech received only nominal mention in the press, he dropped the case.⁵

Critics are not persuaded by the argument that McCarthy contributed to the fight against Communism in the United States. In fact, they say, he substantially detracted from the fight. The New York Times, editorializing on a McCarthy speech, said flatly that his claim as the nation's

³Ibid., p. 272.

⁴Rovere, op. cit., p. 46.

⁵Ibid., p. 158.

number one anti-communist was "completely unsupported by facts. He came late into the anti-communist picture and when he did, he came in destructively." The Times then devoted four paragraphs to documenting the contention that by 1950 most of the "constructive anti-communist work" had already been done.⁶

Discounting the merits or debits of McCarthy's anti-Communism, it is a fact that his list of Communist subversives or security risks fluctuated wildly. As mentioned earlier, there is still no agreement as to the number he cited at Wheeling on February 9, 1950. Some say he claimed the knowledge of 205 Communists in government. McCarthy later insisted he had said there were 57. In any case, in Reno and Salt Lake City three days later he said there were 57. That number gave way to 81 on the floor of the senate on February 20; to 10 in the open Tydings committee hearings; to 116 in the executive sessions; to 121 in the closing phases of the investigation; to 106 in a senate speech on June 6.⁷

When challenged, McCarthy tended to maintain the offensive with a counter charge, leaving the original question unanswered. Thus, when subcommittee chairman, Senator Guy Gillette, wrote to McCarthy on October 1, 1951, requesting his attendance before the subcommittee on

⁶New York Times, November 11, 1954, p. 30.

⁷Rovere, op. cit., p. 130.

privileges and elections to answer charges made by Senator William Benton, Democrat from Connecticut, the Wisconsin senator dodged the issue. On October 4, he replied in a letter to Gillette:

Frankly, Guy, I have not and do not intend to even read, much less answer, Benton's smear attack. I am sure you realize that the Benton type of material can be found in the Daily Worker almost any day of the week and will continue to flow from the mouths and pens of the camp followers as long as I continue my fight against communists in government.⁸

When the Watkins committee made its report public, recommending McCarthy's censure, he answered, as has been noted, by accusing three of the select committee's members of prejudice and by accusing the entire committee of doing the Communists' work.

None of the above should be interpreted as an argument that McCarthy was either a patriot or a demagogue. It is meant to establish that he was indeed a controversial figure. As such the American press was obligated to cover his activities with extreme caution and care. But was the press primarily responsible for McCarthy's meteoric rise to fame?

Although probably not primarily responsible, the press at least contributed a vital helping hand in bringing McCarthy to the attention of the public and in keeping him

⁸U. S., Congress, Senate, Hearings Before A Select Committee to Study Censure, p. 23. The reader can wonder how McCarthy knew Benton's charges constituted a "smear attack" if, as he said in his letter, he did not even intend to read them.

there. In reporting his affairs, newspapers were faced with the difficult task of keeping a balanced picture of the situation. Alan Barth, editorial writer for the Washington Post, has pointed out that although there is an element of truth in the stricture that the press built up McCarthy and made him a power by keeping his name incessantly in the headlines, it leaves out of account the realities of daily journalism:

No responsible newspaper could ignore sensational charges made by a U. S. senator or fail to report them simply because it believed them to be untrue. That would be an unwarranted interjection of editorial bias into the news columns. But the purpose of good reporting must be to give readers a focused picture of the world around them, to keep that picture balanced and proportioned.⁹

The Wall Street Journal noted with despair on July 29, 1953, that "many writers and commentators cannot do a piece on any subject, however remote from Mr. McCarthy, without dragging in some gratuitous comment, pro or con, on the senator. It's almost a compulsion neurosis."

Wallace Carroll, then Washington news editor of the New York Times, writing in the Nieman Reports of July, 1955, said that McCarthy used the press to further his own ends. "Senator McCarthy was able to exploit our rigid 'objectivity' in such a way as to make the newspapers his accomplices."

⁹Alan Barth, Government by Investigation (New York: Viking Press, 1955), p. 194.

The Associated Press Managing Editors Association spent some time, at its 1953 convention, in discussing the problems of reporting McCarthy. Its Washington Study Committee examined the problem and came up with some interesting conclusions. First, it acknowledged that there was a great interest in the activities of Senator McCarthy but stated that "whether newspapers have unwittingly been responsible for whipping it up is a matter of opinion."¹⁰ Second, it concluded that he wouldn't get nearly as much publicity if there were three or four more senators with half his sense of showmanship. Finally, it said that there was too much "rehash" on too many McCarthy stories and recommended that the Associated Press "continue to keep McCarthy in perspective. Don't go off the deep end. Call the shots as you see them."¹¹

At its 1951 convention, the APME admitted that it had, at least on one occasion, aided McCarthy in distributing false information. In the words of W. W. Reynolds, chairman of the Washington Study Committee,

Senator McCarthy . . . issued a red-hot handout early in 1951. The AP carried it without checking. The Milwaukee Journal looked up the record and stated that the handout consisted of half-truths and even untruths. But the damage had been done and the AP had aided McCarthy in spreading an

¹⁰Associated Press Managing Editors Association, Blue Book (New York: Associated Press, 1953), p. 36.

¹¹Ibid., p. 24.

unbalanced story. Care must be taken that news statements be put in proper perspective, no matter what the source.¹²

Unfortunately, this was more easily said than done. McCarthy's statistics were so voluminous and his figures tended to vary so frequently that it was virtually impossible for the reporter to check out every inconsistency. As Barth put it, "I seldom have time to run through his speeches. I can't afford to hire a full-time specialist to keep up with what McCarthy has said . . ."¹³

The press, whether it wanted to or not, was obligated to report every charge McCarthy made. He was, in Walter Lippmann's words, a United States Senator in good standing at the headquarters of the Republican party. "When he makes attacks against the State Department and the Defense Department, it is news which has to be published."¹⁴

McCarthy's charges could have been kept in perspective if contradictory statements had been made from other men of equal status. But neither President Truman nor President Eisenhower chose to lock horns with him, and the only senator willing to consistently cast a vote against him prior to 1954 was Senator Fulbright. Hence, McCarthy's statements remained largely unchallenged by his colleagues.

¹²Associated Press Managing Editors Association, Blue Book (New York: Associated Press, 1951), p. 15.

¹³Barth, op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁴Rovere, op. cit., p. 57.

There were a few newspapers that fought McCarthy from the outset of his political career. The Wisconsin senator contended that these papers distorted the news against him. In his book, McCarthyism: The Fight For America, he complained bitterly about his coverage by the liberal press. The job of the wire service reporters, he said,

. . . was to present facts without any editorializing or distortion. In my opinion, they thus differed from men employed by papers such as the St. Louis Post Dispatch, New York Post, Milwaukee Journal, and the Washington Post. . . . I, of course, knew the left-wing elements of the press would twist and distort the story (of the Tydings committee hearings) to protect every communist whom I exposed, but frankly I had no conception of how far the dishonest news coverage would go.¹⁵

McCarthy was one of forty-four senators who signed a manifesto in 1951 criticizing Truman's orders for government news secrecy as a violation of press freedom. On the other hand he encouraged advertising boycotts of publications adversely critical of him, notably Time magazine, the Milwaukee Journal, and the Madison Capital Times.¹⁶

His attacks on several papers won him few friends among newspaper editors and very possibly alienated many others. Northwestern University journalism professor,

¹⁵Joseph R. McCarthy, McCarthyism: The Fight for America (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1952), pp. 3-4.

¹⁶Charles LamMarkmann, The Noblest Cry: A History of the American Civil Liberties Union (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 241.

Curtis MacDougall has stated that "perhaps McCarthy would have enjoyed press popularity longer had he not taken out after newspapers and newspapermen who were adversely critical of him."¹⁷

But is it the duty of the press to establish either friends or enemies on its news pages? When such a practice exists the newspaper performs a disservice to its readers. The duty of the press is rather to be objective. But objectivity can be achieved only by being skeptical of friend and foe alike, by taking nothing for granted or at face value. In the words of Alan Barth,

. . . there is, to be sure, no simple formula for the achievement of genuine objectivity. One obviously indispensable ingredient, however, is an unrelenting skepticism, a disposition to challenge and probe and scrutinize every handout, every public statement, every accusation.

There is nothing in the canons of objectivity that requires newspapers to treat with even-handed indifference the dredged-up reminiscences of professional witnesses and the denials of their victims.¹⁸

How, then, can the performance of the press be judged? MacDougall provides a hint:

Properly to evaluate any journalistic performance, the original purpose of the freedom of the press clause in the first amendment to the Constitution must be borne in mind. On one hand, the founding fathers wanted to prevent any governmental interference with or censorship prior to the publication

¹⁷ Curtis D. MacDougall, Newsroom Problems and Policies (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963), p. 87.

¹⁸ Barth, op. cit., p. 194.

of news in the public interest. On the other hand, freedom of the press also was intended as a positive instrument to bolster the chances of success for an experimental government of, by, and for the people. It really was the "right to be informed" that was being protected. . . . Thus, freedom of the press is a means to an end, not primarily an end in itself.¹⁹

The First Amendment of the Constitution, in other words, carries with it an obligation on the part of the press to responsibly inform the public of the day's events. The Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press, which studied the American news media after World War II, in explaining the first of five requirements of a free and responsible press, points out that it must provide "a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning." In so doing, the reporter must be careful and competent, and must identify fact as fact, and opinion as opinion. The Hutchins Commission then goes to the nub of the matter: "It is no longer enough to report the fact truthfully. It is now necessary to report the truth about the fact." In summarizing its requirements, the committee points out that

. . . the information provided must be provided in such a form and with so scrupulous a regard for the wholeness of the truth and the fairness of its presentation, that the American people may make for themselves, by the exercise of reason and of conscience, the fundamental decisions necessary to the direction of their government and of their lives.²⁰

¹⁹Curtis MacDougall, Interpretative Reporting (4th ed., New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 27.

²⁰Commission on Freedom of the Press, A Free and Responsible Press (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 21.

Two other requirements of a responsible press espoused by the Hutchins Commission are pertinent to this discussion. First, publishers "can and should assume the duty of publishing significant ideas contrary to their own, as a matter of objective reporting . . ." And newspapers, in their editorial pages, should assume a point of view in controversial issues in order to "present and clarify the goals and values of the society."²¹ Advocacy on the part of the editors may aid the reader in forming his own opinions and may alert him to possible bias in the paper's news pages. The publication of divergent viewpoints allows the reader to decide for himself what is best.

A yardstick for evaluating the performance of the individual newspaper in reporting the McCarthy censure has been established. Judgment should depend upon the extent to which the paper: (1) Presented all pertinent information in a meaningful context; (2) Provided community leadership by taking a clear and definite stand on the proposed censure; and (3) Presented authoritative opinion which differed from its own point of view.

²¹Ibid., p. 29.

CHAPTER III

PRESS COVERAGE

The United States Senate met in extraordinary session on Monday, November 8, 1954 to consider the Watkins committee report recommending censure of Senator McCarthy. The Milwaukee Sentinel opened its coverage of the debate on the front page under the headline: "McCarthy Hopes for GOP Chiefs' Aid." Two stories were carried under the headline. The first, written by a staff reporter, described the sendoff of the "Wisconsin Caravan," a group of McCarthy supporters who were driving from Kenosha to Washington to protest the pending senate censure. The story did not give the number of people in the caravan, but noted that about a hundred people attended a pro-McCarthy rally before the sendoff. The other story, with a Washington dateline, was attributed to the International News Service and it reported that McCarthy had declared Sunday he expected "Democrats and liberal Republicans to 'go down the line' in voting to censure him but doubted that the GOP leadership would support censure." The statements had been made during a televised interview in which McCarthy had denounced the proceedings as a "lynching bee" and he had said the

charges were motivated by self-interest. The story also reported that McCarthy predicted he would be censured but for political reasons. Finally, it summarized the charges against the Wisconsin senator.

Sentinel editors left no doubt as to their stand on the censure. In an editorial entitled, "Up Curtain," the newspaper commented, "We are treated--if that is the verb--today to the opening of another act in the stale Washington farce of Investigating Joe. It will be over in maybe two weeks, if we are lucky." At least, said the editors, McCarthy would have a chance to "slug back," a chance that was denied him by the Watkins committee. McCarthy had had no chance to defend himself before the select committee, the editorial said, and Senator Johnson had been prejudiced against him. "We thought the Watkins committee deliberations were a waste of time and we have an idea the present proceedings will be the same."

The Wisconsin State Journal, in a story combined from United Press and Associated Press, featured a front page story beneath a two column headline, "Senator Doubts GOP Leadership Will 'Go Along.'" The story reported McCarthy's statement that he doubted Republican leaders would sanction censure, but that the resolution would still pass.¹

¹Wisconsin State Journal, November 8, 1954, p. 1.

In a story from United Press, the State Journal also reported the departure of the Kenosha caravan. Included were a few facts that the Sentinel had omitted. The story revealed that the caravan consisted of only three cars, one of which broke down after traveling a few yards. The crowd at the rally was estimated at seventy-five. The story concluded with the reminder that the week before, the committee chairman of the America Club for Wisconsin had announced that several thousand persons would make the trip. "But only about a dozen filled the three cars," the story reported.

Also included on page one was a six-paragraph story by the United Press syndicated Washington Columnist, Drew Pearson. Pearson claimed new evidence of election irregularities by McCarthy in 1952. Two short wire service stories were carried on page two. The first reported a Catholic priest had charged that McCarthy's enemies had raised five million dollars to defeat him because of his religion; the second, that Roy Cohn predicted McCarthy would be censured.

The Drew Pearson article, which the State Journal mentioned in a United Press report, was carried in its entirety on the front page of the Madison Capital Times for November 8. Pearson said that a former associate of McCarthy's had just given highly revealing information regarding his operations. They included an attempt by

McCarthy to thwart the senate committee probing his finances in 1951, and efforts to defeat Democratic candidates in Utah, Montana, and Washington "by smearing them as communists." Pearson said that a former McCarthy aide named Harvey Matusow had told him that in 1951 he had whisked Mrs. Alvin Bentley out of the country to prevent her from testifying against McCarthy before the subcommittee on elections and privileges. Matusow said Mrs. Bentley had lent McCarthy \$7,000 to fight communism but that he had used the money to speculate in the stock market. The Capital Times published pictures of Matusow and Mrs. Bentley on the front page. The paper did not carry the story of the Kenosha car caravan, but on page eighteen it reported that a Gallup poll indicated a majority of Americans favored censure of McCarthy.

The Capital Times, the Milwaukee Journal and the Appleton Post-Crescent all carried the same Associated Press dispatch on November 8, reporting the morning's censure debate. Of the three, only the Milwaukee Journal reported the story of the Catholic priest's charges. The Capital Times was the only one of the three to carry the Drew Pearson "expose," and the Post-Crescent alone carried a David Lawrence article claiming the Watkin's committee report contained glaring errors.

The following day, both morning papers, the Sentinel and the State Journal, stressed in identical Associated

Press stories, Monday's stormy session in the Senate. Both papers lead with this statement: "The 'Joe McCarthy session' of the senate opened in an angry uproar before packed galleries Monday." The State Journal, on its editorial page, carried the same David Lawrence column that the Post-Crescent had carried Monday and headlined it, "Foes' Astonishing Errors May Help McCarthy." On its editorial page the Sentinel presented a political cartoon depicting a Democratic donkey wistfully eying an ax labeled "partisan politics" and captioned, "Ah, temptation."

The three afternoon papers, the Milwaukee Journal, the Capital Times, and the Post-Crescent, stressed the possibility of a filibuster against the resolution. All three stories originated from the Washington bureau of the Associated Press but the lead paragraphs differed. The Milwaukee Journal lead with, "Reports persisted today that friends of McCarthy might try to talk to death a resolution proposing his censure. McCarthy professed ignorance of nay such strategy." The other two papers began with identical leads that gave the story a slightly different connotation: "Senator McCarthy said today he wouldn't favor any filibuster to prevent a senate vote on the question of censuring him and would be surprised if one developed."

The Milwaukee Journal opened its editorial bombardment on November 9 with a flank attack, chastizing the priest who had charged McCarthy's enemies of hating him

because of his Catholic religion. The censure, said the editors, was not a religious issue. "Many Catholics and Protestants alike oppose McCarthy because of his un-American investigative techniques and his disgraceful behavior as a United States senator." The Post-Crescent apparently preferred to speak again through the voice of Columnist David Lawrence who commented in his syndicated piece that "changes just made in the Watkins committee report" made it "even worse" than it was in its original form.²

That night McCarthy released to the Washington press corps his undelivered speech charging that the Watkins committee was the "unwitting handmaiden" of the Communist party. The speech was a top story for newspapers published Wednesday morning, November 10. The morning Sentinel and the State Journal carried Associated Press accounts of Tuesday's developments, both leading with: "A revised resolution of censure and condemnation--aimed at Senator Joseph R. McCarthy--was filed in the senate today. McCarthy counterattacked immediately with a charge that the senate committee which drafted it was an 'unwitting handmaiden' of the Communist party."³ The State Journal made it immediately clear that McCarthy had not yet delivered the speech but had only released a prepared text to the press. The Sentinel editors, delayed this information until the fifth paragraph.

²Appleton Post-Crescent, November 9, 1954, p. 8.

³Wisconsin State Journal, November 9, 1954, p. 1.

While David Lawrence commented in the State Journal on the "shoddy job" the Watkins committee had done in studying the censure charges, the Sentinel editors leveled their second blast in three days against the special senate session. "During the session," the newspaper commented editorially, "the Watkins committee will press several charges against McCarthy. But the main objection to McCarthy is that he asked: 'Who promoted Peress?'" As long as McCarthy was investigating "little guys" he was a hero among Republicans and some Democrats. But the minute he came upon the Peress promotion, said the editors, "he hit the stuffed shirts, the heavy-laden army officers who are too lazy to read the papers that pass over their desks, the permanent bureaucrats who rubber stamp documents between coffee breaks, who promote without looking, who sign without reading, who give titles and honors without screening." The editorial concluded with the hope that the senate would have the courage to ask, "Who promoted Peress?" and to require the Army to answer.⁴

The debate on the resolution began in earnest Wednesday morning, as Senator Watkins explained to the senate the select committee's reasons for recommending censure. Afternoon papers played up the heated exchange that took place that morning between Senators Watkins and McCarthy. The Journal and the Post-Crescent mentioned McCarthy's prepared

⁴Milwaukee Sentinel, November 10, 1954, p. 18.

speech early in their stories. The Capital Times saved revelation of this fact until the end of its three column story. The Journal, however, was the only one of the five papers studied that printed the entire text of the speech.

The Milwaukee Journal also printed in Wednesday's editions, a front page cartoon depicting a man labeled "senate leadership" driving a carriage labeled "senate dignity." The horses drawing the coach were called "censure proceeding," and the cartoon itself was captioned, "Keep a tight Rein, Driver."⁵ The Post-Crescent carried on its editorial page a syndicated column by Joseph and Stewart Alsop speculating on the future of the GOP as a result of the proceedings; and this was accompanied by David Lawrence's daily criticism of the precedents set by the Watkins committee.

The sun set in the Capital Wednesday and McCarthy did not deliver the speech he had released to the press. Claiming at the close of the day's session that time did not permit, he nevertheless had the speech inserted in the Congressional Record. Of the five newspapers examined in this study, the Milwaukee Journal was the only one to call this fact to the attention of its readers.

For Thursday morning's editions, Sentinel editors pulled a parliamentary question by Senator Case, South Dakota Republican, from the bottom of an Associated Press

⁵Milwaukee Journal, November 10, 1954, p. 1.

dispatch and made it the opening sentence of a banner story. "Two-thirds Vote Issue Raised in Censure Fight," cried the Sentinel's eight-column wide banner headline. "A question was raised in the senate Wednesday whether a two-thirds vote would be required to censure Senator McCarthy for alleged contempt of an elections subcommittee in the 82nd Congress," the story began.⁶ The story then revealed that Senator Case had merely asked the senate parliamentarian, who took the question under advisement, if a two-thirds vote would be necessary to discipline a member for his actions in an earlier Congress. The question was left hanging, for the Sentinel, in subsequent issues, never informed its readers that the parliamentarian advised the senate Thursday that a two-thirds vote would not be necessary.

The State Journal carried the usual David Lawrence column attacking the select committee, and a Westbrook Pegler column entitled, "Let's 'Git Fer Home' or We Face A Pasting." The column generally followed the mood of its lead sentence, which declared, "Whoever says Joe McCarthy's fight against treason in the national government of these American states has hampered the efforts of that government to unite Europe against communism is a liar."⁷

All three afternoon papers carried, in addition to accounts of the morning's debate, a story which noted that

⁶Milwaukee Sentinel, November 11, 1954, p. 1.

⁷Wisconsin State Journal, November 11, 1954, p. 8.

McCarthy's senior Republican colleague from Wisconsin, Senator Alexander Wiley, was in an uncomfortable political position because of the censure resolution. The Milwaukee Journal printed a James Reston news analysis surmising that McCarthy would "fight against censure by the senate with every weapon at his command and he is going to keep it up as long as he can." On the same day, the Post-Crescent carried another David Lawrence commentary on its editorial page.

The Sentinel reported Friday morning in a page one banner story from International News Service, that "Senator Case said Thursday the senate could shelve its censure action against Senator McCarthy if he would 'retract' his alleged insults of colleagues." A second front page story, as long as its banner story, was headlined, "Throng of 500 McCarthy Supporters 'Go Wild' at Sight of Him." McCarthy, it appeared, had been spotted by some feminine admirers as he passed them on his way to the senate chambers. "A gray haired woman in a pink hat kissed Senator McCarthy Thursday and hundreds who were lined up with her waiting to get into the senate galleries 'went wild.'" On an inside page the Sentinel reported a rally held Thursday night in Washington at Constitution Hall in McCarthy's honor. The State Journal also covered Case's compromise offer and the Washington rally, but did not mention the Capitol incident.

The Milwaukee Journal reported Friday that Senator Everitt Dirksen, Republican from Illinois, had revealed he was shaping a substitute resolution "in an effort to compromise the bitter fight over the Wisconsin Republican's conduct." The two other afternoon papers in the study began their stories with coverage of a speech by Mississippi's Senator John Stennis, who "told the senate Senator McCarthy has followed a pattern of throwing 'slush and slime' at all senators who criticize him." Both papers mentioned well into their stories that, "among Republican senators, there is increasing talk of compromise" but neither mentioned Senator Dirksen by name. Each of the three afternoon papers gave inside page coverage to the Constitution Hall rally.

The Sentinel, on Saturday, November 13, reviewing Friday's debate, played its eight column banner story with the statement from International News Service, that "Senator McCarthy was brought under bitter attack Friday by two members of the bi-partisan committee which has asked his censure, but the Wisconsin Red-hunter stuck to his charge that his critics were 'unwitting handmaidens' of the Communists." While McCarthy was being "bitterly attacked," the story said, "Senators Goldwater and Bricker spoke out in vigorous defense of McCarthy." Part of the Arizona senator's "vigorous defense" included the accusation that "all the discredited and embittered figures of the Hiss-Yalta period of American dishonor have crawled out from under their logs to join the efforts to get even."

The Associated Press lead, carried by the Wisconsin State Journal and the Milwaukee Journal, on Saturday, was a bit more even keeled than that carried by the International News Service: "Senator Joseph R. McCarthy was assailed as a spreader of 'slush and slime,' and defended as a victim of spiteful slanders, in the week's final session of the senate debate on the question of censuring him."

The Capital Times and Post-Crescent headlined their day's identical Associated Press stories in manners which reflected their differing editorial views on the censure resolution. "Deal on Joe Out After Monday," read the Capital Times headline. "GOP Chief May Try To Soften Censure Action," proclaimed the Post-Crescent. Both papers followed with identical stories that began, "Republican leaders reportedly set a Monday target date for efforts to soften a censure resolution against Senator McCarthy."

After Friday's senate debate, McCarthy flew to Milwaukee to attend a Saturday night birthday anniversary dinner in his honor at the Hotel Pfister. The Sentinel on Sunday allotted most of page one to the event. A front page banner headline screamed, "Censure Denounced As Gag at Huge Rally Here For Joe." Two related stories were placed under the banner. The first detailed the address delivered by the main speaker, Senator Goldwater. The story emphasized the enthusiastic support which was displayed for McCarthy at the dinner: "The throng, which

jammed the hotel's seventh floor Fern Room and adjoining halls as they have never been jammed before, greeted Senator McCarthy himself with one of the greatest ovations of his career and went wild thereafter at every mention of his name."

The second story covered McCarthy's speech at the dinner and explained, in folksy fashion, the welcome he received from the crowd: "With radio broadcast time coming up at 8:30, Toastmaster Taylor invited the crowd to put on a real demonstration for the benefit of the radio audience. When the time came, the diners really raised the roof while the senator and his wife stood up there happily, waving with clasped hands to the cheering throng."

On the second page, the Sentinel reported a press conference that McCarthy had held at the Pfister before the dinner. He referred to a statement made by Senator Watkins earlier in the week that he would no longer submit to directing questioning by McCarthy on the senate floor. "It is the most unusual, the most cowardly thing I've heard of," McCarthy said. "I expected he would be afraid to answer questions, but I didn't think he would be stupid enough to make a public statement."

The State Journal accented the press conference in a front page story reported by the United Press. The story's headline was reminiscent of a high school popularity contest: "McCarthy Calls Watkins' Rule 'Most Cowardly.'"

The story detailed both the statement at the press conference and the activities at the birthday dinner.

The Milwaukee Journal in its Sunday editions, reported the dinner in a front page story, detailing the Goldwater and McCarthy speeches and describing the atmosphere at the Hotel Pfister. With tongue in cheek, a Journal reporter quoted a McCarthy backer at the dinner: "I actually touched him," said one matron in a mink coat. 'That certainly was worth \$5.'"

The Sentinel and State Journal on Monday morning, November 15, reported in identical Associated Press stories that "efforts to compromise a censure resolution against Senator McCarthy appeared to be verging on collapse Sunday in the face of McCarthy's refusal to retract his attacks on colleagues." The State Journal, in another front page story, this one reported by the United Press, said that a nationwide drive was launched Sunday "to collect the signatures of ten million Americans in ten days on petitions urging the United States senate to reject 'Red-inspired' censure charges against Senator Joseph R. McCarthy." The same story was carried that afternoon by the Milwaukee Journal. Finally, the State Journal, on its editorial page, printed a David Lawrence column charging Senator Flanders with splitting the Republican party with his censure resolution.

In Washington that Monday morning, Senator Watkins appeared before McCarthy's subcommittee on investigations, ostensibly to testify to any knowledge he had concerning the promotion and honorable discharge from the Army of the "accused Communist," Major Irving Peress. The two senators' inevitable clash was the lead story in the three afternoon papers in the study. In a related front page story, the Journal reported the morning's censure debate. After the story jumped to an inside page, the paper revealed that Senator Case of the select committee "formally withdrew support for one of the two counts on which the committee recommended censure of McCarthy." Case, the story reported, said he had changed his mind when he saw a letter that Secretary of the Army Stevens had showed him Saturday. The story reported that the letter was not made public. The Capital Times and Post-Crescent, evidently receiving the news too late for detailed coverage, inserted the information in a one-paragraph box within the lead Associated Press story reporting the Watkins-McCarthy clash.

Monday's Capital Times reprinted on its editorial page a New York Times editorial that scathingly attacked McCarthy and "McCarthyism." Post-Crescent editorials included opinions on the state's conservation commission, the disenfranchisement of Washington, D. C. citizens, and the evils of "junk mail," but the editors maintained their silence on the proposed censure of their home town senator.

Senator Case's reversal of opinion was front page news Tuesday in the two morning papers in the study. Beneath an eight column banner headline topping an International News Service story, the Sentinel reported that "Senator Case Monday broke with fellow members of the senate censure committee and said that because of 'new evidence' he will vote against any rebuke of Senator McCarthy on a charge he 'abused' Brig. Gen. Ralph W. Zwicker." Meanwhile, the Sentinel reported, Senator Ervin of the select committee spoke out strongly for censure. The Sentinel delayed until the end of its one-and-a-half column story to detail Case's reasons for withdrawing his support on the Zwicker charge.

The State Journal, in a story from United Press, also reported in detail Case's change of mind, stating in addition that "the other five members of the committee remained firm in support of the Zwicker count." On its editorial page, the newspaper printed a background story by staff writer Sanford Goltz, who traced the development of censure proceedings in the history of the senate. But the editors of the State Journal, like those of the Post-Crescent, kept their opinions of the present censure resolution to themselves. Editorials on Tuesday, November 16, were written about highway safety, peaceful co-existence, long-winded speakers, and the University of Wisconsin football team.

The Milwaukee Journal reported Tuesday afternoon in a front page story from Associated Press, that GOP leaders were still seeking to modify the censure resolution. Two senators, identified as Knowland and Bridges, "said Tuesday that efforts were underway to compromise or modify the resolution to censure Senator McCarthy. They talked of a possible test vote late this week or early next week." Further into its story, the Journal revealed Case's rationale for withdrawing his support of the Zwicker charge.

The Capital Times and Post-Crescent carried identical Associated Press stories, but played them differently. "Why Didn't Joe Face Fund Quiz?" asked the Capital Times headline. "Senator Watkins, noting Senator McCarthy has accused him of being 'cowardly' asked today why McCarthy didn't go before a senate elections subcommittee which looked into his financial affairs in 1951-52."⁸ The Post-Crescent headlined the same story, "Compromise Move Due on McCarthy Censure." In the eighth paragraph of the story a possible compromise by the senate committee was mentioned.

The Capital Times in its Tuesday editions moved syndicated columnist Drew Pearson from the editorial page to page one. Pearson claimed that a rabbi and anti-semites had joined forces in support of Senator McCarthy. On an inside page columnists Joseph and Stewart Alsop

⁸Madison Capital Times, November 16, 1954, p. 1.

speculated on how the senate would "line up" on the censure resolution. In an editorial, "The Defendant Is Trying and Accusing Plaintiff," the paper said it appeared that McCarthy was trying the senate rather than the senate trying McCarthy. "By his demagogic double-talk, his misrepresentations and his constant repetitions he is making a test of the honor and dignity of the senate appear to be a test of who is in the Communist conspiracy." But if McCarthy was a demagogue, his opponents were "spineless politicians," unwilling to maintain the dignity of the senate:

He knows he is dealing with a craven lot of politicians who, if they had the guts to stand by the traditions of the senate, would long ago have stopped him dead in his tracks.

It is said that McCarthy is deliberately inviting censure. He probably reasons--and justifiably--that it is an honor to be censured by such a crowd of craven, crawling politicians.⁹

While the three evening papers in the study were rolling their presses on Tuesday, in Washington Senator Watkins was concluding a stinging denunciation that had been interrupted by the noon recess. He ended by challenging his colleagues to censure McCarthy for his abusive treatment of the select committee:

Lastly, in our own presence, here in the senate, we have seen another example of the Senator's hit-and-run attack. Senators have seen what I have called to their attention, an attack on their representative, their agent. They have seen an attack made

⁹Ibid., p. 28.

on that agent's courage and intelligence. They have heard the junior senator from Wisconsin say that I am both stupid and a coward. I am asking all my colleagues in the senate . . . what are you going to do about it?¹⁰

Watkins' junior colleague from Utah, Senator Bennett, also a Republican, answered that pointed question near the close of the day's session. He announced that he would, at the appropriate time, propose an amendment to the resolution that would suggest "that the junior senator from Wisconsin has shown contempt for the senate by his personal attack on the chairman of the select committee and on the committee itself."¹¹

Four of the five newspapers on Wednesday published as the top page one story the new censure charge on the censure debate. The exception was the Post-Crescent, whose editors apparently believed that a speech by Senator Welker made Wednesday morning and reported by the Associated Press was of more importance: "Senator Welker, contending that Senator McCarthy has been the target of words just as harsh as he has thrown, held the senate floor today for a defense of the Wisconsin Republican against censure charges." Mention of Bennett's proposed censure was buried deep in the page one story.

¹⁰U. S. Congressional Record, 83d Cong., 2n Sess., 1954, vol. C, Part 12, p. 16059.

¹¹Ibid., p. 16071.

The State Journal on Wednesday, November 17, published on its editorial page a David Lawrence column claiming that the senate had prejudged the censure report of the Watkins committee. The Milwaukee Journal, on the other hand, editorially urged the adoption of new rules governing senate investigative committees regardless of the outcome of the McCarthy censure. "The abuse of General Zwicker and the slandering of Senator Hendrickson by McCarthy are only two incidents in a long list of name calling and maligning in which the Wisconsin junior senator has engaged from his 'foxhole of immunity' in the senate."

McCarthy was not seen in the senate chambers Wednesday, when his senior colleague from Wisconsin, Senator Wiley, announced he was leaving for Brazil that day to attend a conference in Rio de Janeiro and would not be present to vote on the censure resolution. But, said Wiley, he wished to make it clear that, even if present, he would not vote. He believed he should follow proper judicial procedure and disqualify himself from cases in which he had a personal interest. Since both he and Senator McCarthy represented the same constituency, he said, he had a personal interest in the resolution and could not properly vote one way or the other.

The cause of Senator McCarthy's absence was made clear the next morning. With an eight column banner headline, the Sentinel proclaimed, "McCarthy In Hospital;

Debate Censure Recess." According to the International News Service dispatch, McCarthy had injured his right elbow at the birthday dinner in Milwaukee the previous Saturday. An over-zealous admirer had apparently shaken his hand too vigorously, causing McCarthy's elbow to crash into the edge of a glass-topped table. In another front page story, the Sentinel reported that Senator Wiley would not vote on the censure resolution.

In an editorial entitled, "Case's Switch," the Sentinel returned to an often heard refrain:

The real issue before the senate becomes clearer as the walla-walla of speeches continues. It is brought into focus by the announcement of Senator Case that he has changed his position on the Zwicker point of the Watkins committee report. So the issue again is, simply, 'Who promoted Peress'?¹²

Thursday, November 19, was the first day the censure proceedings appeared as the principal page one story in the State Journal. The news reported by the Associated Press, was that McCarthy was hospitalized and that debate would, in all probability, be suspended. The story also reported, as did the Sentinel, that Senator Dirksen was preparing a substitute resolution that would soften the censure proposal. Wiley's decision not to participate in the vote on censure, reported by the Associated Press, was carried on page one of the State Journal in a separate story.

¹²Milwaukee Sentinel, November 18, 1954, p. 22.

The Milwaukee Journal gave greater importance than the two morning papers to Senator Wiley's announcement. Two stories appeared under the page one headline, "Wiley Will Avoid Vote on McCarthy Issue." The first story, written by Laurence Eklund of the Journal Washington bureau, reported that "Senator Wiley is ducking a vote on the McCarthy censure issue, which has put him on the hottest spot of his fifteen year career as a senator." The second story, from Associated Press, disclosed another development in the censure controversy: "Senator Edwin Johnson asked Thursday that the senate add to the McCarthy censure resolution a new section condemning the Communist Party in this country and urging continued investigation of it." McCarthy's hospitalization was not mentioned until the third paragraph of the story.¹³

The Journal editor did not delay in commenting editorially on Wiley's decision. A lead editorial on Thursday said that "Senator Wiley has an ingenious, if unconvincing excuse for not voting on the censure of our junior senator." The editors argued that Wiley had an obligation to vote one way or the other: "If Senator McCarthy has brought disrepute on the senate, that disrepute affects Senator Wiley just the same as any other senator. And he has just as much responsibility to have his vote recorded as has any other senator."¹⁴

¹³Milwaukee Journal, November 18, 1954, p. 1.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 24.

Both the Capital Times and Post-Crescent carried, with minor revisions, an Associated Press story reporting a proposal from Colorado's Senator Johnson that the censure resolution be amended to include a condemnation of the Communist party in the United States. The Capital Times included a full text of the amendment and inserted the news of Wiley's decision in the Johnson story. The paper also printed an editorial from a Munich, Germany paper, Sud-Deutsche Zeitung, which commented that McCarthy had lost the attention of the American people, and that no one was paying much attention to him any more.

Both morning newspapers examined in this study reported the next day that the censure debate had been suspended until November 29, when it was believed McCarthy would be sufficiently recovered to attend the sessions. Both papers also commented on Senator Wiley's announcement that he would not vote on the censure resolution. In an editorial, "Memo to Senator Wiley," the Sentinel informed the senior senator that the "average man" deplored his "decision to run out on [his] plain obligation to vote for or against the motion to censure Senator McCarthy." The editorial concluded with a plea to the senator to reconsider his decision. "None of us agrees completely on all issues, but all of us want to continue our pride in the courage and integrity of both of our Wisconsin senators!"

Editors of the Wisconsin State Journal, who thus far had declined to endorse or criticize the censure resolution for its Madison readerships, denounced Senator Wiley for taking a similar position: "If Alex Wiley thinks he solved any personal political problem by announcing he would not vote on the censure changes . . . he guessed wrong." The editors argued that he had a duty to vote and noted "by refusing to take a stand on the issue, Senator Wiley satisfies neither side."

The three afternoon newspapers published an Associated Press dispatch reporting that Alex Wiley's stand had angered Senator McCarthy's supporters and enemies alike. Both Republican and Democratic leaders in Wisconsin voiced bitter disappointment in his decision.

On Friday, November 20, the Capital Times and Post-Crescent carried the same Associated Press account of the censure developments, but the headline over the story in each newspaper gave readers decidedly different impressions. The story began, "Senators marking time in an eleven day recess while Senator McCarthy is treated for an elbow injury disagreed sharply today on whether they ever will reach a showdown on censuring him." The Capital Times headlined the story, "Fear Recess May End Chance of Vote on Censure." The Post-Crescent headlined the same story, "Senators Expect Vote on Censure by December 24." Neither headline was technically wrong, but both

were misleading and neither indicated the story's true contents.

That afternoon the Capital Times recorded its bitterest attack to date on McCarthy and the entire senate. In a lead editorial, "The Cowardly Stampede in the U. S. Senate," the newspaper charged senators with both cowardice and ambition:

Knowland, Nixon, Bridges, and the other compromisers will remain silent publicly because they put ambition above honor. . . . For the most part, the senators loathe McCarthy. . . . But for the most part, too, they are cowards. They are afraid to say what they think.¹⁵

The editors called on the senate to expel McCarthy and return him to the Wisconsin electorate. "We say to the senate: send him back to Wisconsin and force him into an election and the people of this state will see to it that he never again makes the senate of the United States reek with his moral squalor."¹⁶

In its second editorial, the Capital Times castigated Senator Wiley for refusing to take a stand on the censure. "It is typical of Wiley's whole political career that he collapses when the showdown comes," said the editors. Finally, the editorial warned that Wisconsin's senior senator would suffer politically for his decision, for "there is no such a thing as being neutral on an evil as monstrous as McCarthyism."

¹⁵Madison Capital Times, November 19, 1954, p. 31.

¹⁶Ibid.

During the eleven-day senate recess, two notable articles appeared in the five Wisconsin daily newspapers studied. First, the Post-Crescent, on Monday, November 22, ended its long editorial silence on the censure by joining the other four papers in denouncing Senator Wiley. In a commentary entitled, "Senator Wiley Runs For Cover," the editors said, "Senator Wiley has increased neither his stature nor his chances of winning re-election in 1956 by announcing he will abstain from voting on the McCarthy censure resolution." His excuse, to the Post-Crescent, was a weak one. A vote one way or the other would have made him political enemies, but would have won him respect. But his decision to abstain would win the respect to no one.

During the eleven-day senate recess the Hearst newspaper in Milwaukee engaged in journalistic irresponsibility in its news columns. In a front page eight column banner headline, the Sentinel announced on Tuesday, November 23, in a story from International News Service: "Operate On Joe's Elbow." The story began: "An operation to remove glass fragments from the right elbow of Senator McCarthy was performed Monday morning."

The dispatch from Washington later explained how the news service accomplished this remarkable scoop. McCarthy, it seems, allowed no news reporters to interview him during his stay at Bethesda Naval hospital. On

Monday, however, he had allowed International News Service photographer Al Muto to take some pictures of him. The senator told the photographer that the doctors had operated on his elbow that morning and had removed some glass particles. McCarthy said another operation would be performed Tuesday.

International News Service editors either did not bother to verify the story with McCarthy's doctors, or worse, they ignored their denials. The Milwaukee Journal unmasked the frace Tuesday afternoon in a page one story, headlined, "No Operation On McCarthy." Bethesda doctors had removed "a small amount of fluid" from Senator McCarthy's elbow on Monday. The doctors stated, however, "'This is not considered technically to be an operation.'" The doctors announced further that no operations were anticipated.

In its editions for Wednesday, November 24, the Sentinel diverted readers' attention in a banner story, "Five Die in Storm Crashes." No retraction of the misleading news published Tuesday morning was ever printed. Sentinel readers were allowed to maintain their understanding that Senator McCarthy had undergone surgery on his elbow.

Senator McCarthy was released from the hospital Sunday, November 28, and the senate resumed debate the next day on its resolution to censure the senator. Four

of the five papers emphasized early in their front page stories of the censure proceedings that McCarthy said he would oppose any move by his friends to filibuster, and would ask that a time limit be placed on debate. The Milwaukee Journal, on the other hand, in a story filed by its Washington bureau, reported that "Senator McCarthy told the senate Monday that he would be the last to deliberately abuse his colleagues but said that he was not making an apology."

The next day the two morning papers and the Milwaukee Journal emphasized the news that the senate had consented to McCarthy's unanimous consent request to end debate Wednesday. The Sentinel injected a dash of color into its story, noting that McCarthy was "lustily applauded by the galleries as he strode into the chamber with his blue serge jacket draped over the white sling in which he carried his right arm . . ."

The Capital Times and Post-Crescent accented a side exchange that took place Wednesday morning between Senators Jenner and Flanders, then reported that a time limit had been formally placed on debate. Four papers, excluding the Capital Times, reported in separate stories a pro McCarthy rally Monday night in Madison Square Garden.

Special attention to a speech by Senator Mundt who claimed that "Reds the world over would exploit a vote to censure the Wisconsin Republican as a 'retreat in the

fight against Communist,'" was reported in a page one story from International News Service in the Sentinel for December 1.¹⁷

After carefully detailing Mundt's address, the Sentinel gave passing mention to speeches by Senators Lehman and Fulbright, who urged censure of McCarthy. The State Journal, on the other hand, began its story in this manner: "The last full day of debate in the McCarthy censure row ended Tuesday night with impassioned appeals and counter appeals in an all but empty senate chamber." First Lehman's, then Mundt's, and finally Fulbright's speech was reviewed. The State Journal also printed a David Lawrence article, which also had appeared in Monday's Post-Crescent. Lawrence contended that the censure debate was being conducted on an emotional rather than a logical basis. If the merits of the resolution were discussed logically, he said, McCarthy would be exonerated.

A new development in the censure debate in Washington occurred in the senate chambers Wednesday morning, December 1. Senator McCarthy charged that the subcommittee on privileges and elections had, during the course of its 1952 investigation, placed an illegal "mail cover" on his correspondence. All the senators on the subcommittee, on the floor of the senate December 1, not only denied knowledge of such a mail cover but also professed ignorance

¹⁷Milwaukee Sentinel, December 1, 1954, p. 1.

of the meaning of the term. In due course it was established that a mail cover meant a check, by postal authorities, on the return addresses of incoming mail. It was also discovered that such a check was not illegal.¹⁸

The Journal and Post-Crescent reported the mail cover incident in identical stories from the Associated Press. The article gave the reader the pertinent facts. It defined "mail cover" and reported Senator Hayden's statement that a check had been placed on McCarthy's mail, but without the knowledge of the subcommittee members, and that a mail cover was not illegal.

Mail covers did not take up all the senate's time on Wednesday, however. Thursday, December 2, lead stories in the Sentinel, the State Journal, and the Milwaukee Journal announced that the senate had censured McCarthy for his abuse in 1952 of the subcommittee on elections and privileges. The vote was sixty-seven to twenty.

The Post-Crescent that afternoon reported a new development in the continuing story. "The senate today tabled the second censure count against Senator McCarthy. This is the charge that McCarthy 'intemperately abused' Brig. Gen. Ralph W. Zwicker." But the Capital Times reported yet a later occurrence: "The senate today voted to condemn Senator McCarthy for his attacks on the special committee that recommended he be censured and for calling

¹⁸U. S. Congressional Record, 83d Cong., 2d Sess., 1954, vol. C, Part 12, p. 16268.

the extraordinary senate session a 'lynch party.' The roll call vote was sixty-four to twenty-three."

On the same day, Thursday, December 2, the senate voted sixty-four to twenty-two to adopt the resolution as a whole, thus formally censuring Senator Joseph Raymond McCarthy.¹⁹

The Milwaukee Journal called editorially once again for the adoption of procedural rules governing conduct of senate investigative committees:

It is not enough for the senate to censure Senator McCarthy for trampling underfoot standards of fairness and decency, as well as the dignity of congress. It is also the duty of the senate to set up rules to put an end to demagogic methods and to protect individual rights.²⁰

The State Journal and the Post-Crescent had, as of Thursday, December 2, recorded their opinions on the censure debate only once. Their lone editorials had castigated Senator Wiley for refusing to cast a vote in the proceedings. At Madison the State Journal published contained editorials on December 2 entitled, "What's Winter Without Snow" and "Taxes . . . Always Taxes." Other opinions were voiced on the stability of the economy and the advisability of one-way streets in Madison. Post-Crescent editorials for December 2 were entitled, "Our Asia Policy," "School Scholarships for the Needy," and "Haircuts For Crippled Children."

¹⁹U. S. Congressional Record, 83d Cong., 2d sess., 1954, vol. C, Part 12, p. 15922.

²⁰Milwaukee Journal, December 2, 1954, p. 24.

On Friday, December 3, the Wisconsin State Journal ended its silence. The whole censure proceeding, the editors said, was an unnecessary waste of time. "Certainly we must have more important things to do than work ourselves into a lather about a single member of Congress." Many senators had obstructed the senate's procedures more than McCarthy but had not been censured. Nor should he be censured for "name-calling" for his enemies had freely used intemperate language in referring to McCarthy. Finally, the senate had no right to censure a duly elected representative of the Wisconsin electorate. "He is responsible to the voters of this state and the voters of this state need no help in making up their minds about him. . . . Joe McCarthy is our business," the newspaper noted editorially.

The Capital Times also ridiculed the censure to its Madison readers, but for far different reasons. "At best the censure votes against Senator McCarthy are an expression of a puny indignation for the colossal assault the Wisconsin demagogue has made on the dignity and honor of the senate almost from the time he arrived there in 1947." McCarthy openly invited censure to split and to gain control of the Republican party, the newspaper commented editorially. Abandonment of the "Zwicker count" was termed a "cowardly and lowly thing." Indeed, Joe McCarthy was the business of Wisconsin's voters, and the senate's duty was clear.

The senate must expel McCarthy and send him back to the people of this state to answer for the shame he has brought upon us. The senate can rest assured that if it does, he will never again make the senate of the United States a temple of moral squalor.²¹

The Milwaukee Sentinel, long a champion of Senator McCarthy, evidently no longer considered the promotion of Peress the over-riding question. In an editorial on Saturday, December 4, the paper ignored the merits or demerits of censure and discussed instead its effects on the Republican party. "The immediate effect of censure is that it splits the Republican party. . . . The split can't be healed by 1956 as it is too fundamental." The editorial mentioned the implications of censure on the "Communist conspiracy" but carefully avoided identifying the Sentinel with those who claimed the senate's action meant a Communist victory. "So far as Senator Joe McCarthy is concerned, the effect of the censure is regarded as a Communist victory and he will undoubtedly go to the country with that story."

The Post-Crescent officially ended its silence on censure on Friday. In a rather non-committal editorial, the paper observed that only one of the counts against McCarthy had any genuine merit. That was the charge that he refused to testify before the 1952 subcommittee. The senate was wise, however, in rejecting the "Zwicker count" as it "became obvious that McCarthy had at least some justification for acting as he did towards Zwicker." The

²¹Madison Capital Times, December 3, 1954, p. 24.

editors noted that "the senate's action was to a certain extent political in that not one Democratic senator voted against the resolution." The tragedy, the newspaper told its readers, was that McCarthy's crusade against Communism had slowed down and much of the responsibility for that fact rested with the senator himself. Finally, the editors voiced concern that the senator was coming under the influence of extremists. "McCarthy seems to be surrounding himself more and more with people who whisper to him that he can do no wrong. He is becoming influenced by extremists."

Of the five Wisconsin daily newspapers considered in the study, the Milwaukee Journal was the only one that seemed completely satisfied with the passage of the censure resolution. On Friday, December 3, the newspaper commented editorially, "It has taken the senate a long time to revive its waning dignity by censuring McCarthy. It is incredible that more than twenty senators voted against censure." The paper then singled out the senators who they believed deserved special praise for their "courageous fight for the right." Political affiliation was not mentioned because the subject of McCarthy was not considered a partisan issue. "On the issue of McCarthyism they ignored partisanship and stood as United States Senators and Americans insistent that dignity, decency and fair play be restored to American public life."

There was some confusion in the senate as to whether or not McCarthy had actually been censured. After the resolution had passed Thursday, Senators Bridges and Jenner pointed out that the text used the word "condemned" rather than "censured." They asked the vice president, presiding officer of the senate, if Senator McCarthy had indeed been censured. Nixon answered that they could attach any meaning they wished to the resolution. Later, reporters cornered McCarthy and asked him whether the senate's action amounted to "censure." He replied, "I wouldn't say it was a vote of confidence."²²

²²Milwaukee Journal, December 3, 1954, p. 1.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

On the whole, the five Wisconsin daily newspapers examined in the study did an adequate job in reporting the day-to-day developments of the censure debate of Senator McCarthy. Reactions of state political leaders were reported and all five papers informed their readers of Senator Wiley's dilemma and ultimate decision not to vote on the censure resolution.

But if the papers adequately reported the breaking news, they failed to put it into a meaningful context. Only the Milwaukee Journal and the Wisconsin State Journal printed background pieces detailing the history of censure resolutions in the senate. None of the papers sketched McCarthy's political career prior to the censure resolution. Although all five papers recorded the roll call vote on the resolution, only the Milwaukee Journal printed the text of the resolution as passed by the senate.

Senator Herman Welker, Idaho Republican, was frequently referred to as the "unofficial floor manager" of the forces who opposed censure. He spoke more frequently during the debate than any three senators combined. But

who was Herman Welker? What was his background? What was his relationship with McCarthy? About the only information newspaper readers were told was that he was from Idaho and that he was an unofficial floor manager, a term that neither the reporters nor the editors defined.

Since all five papers relied primarily on wire services for news on censure developments, day-to-day coverage was, for the most part, uniform. Contradictory headlines were occasionally placed, however, on identical stories, carried by different newspapers. The papers were generally conscientious about reporting the facts of the debate as the reporters saw the facts. But again, there were exceptions. Only the Milwaukee Journal mentioned that McCarthy's "handmaiden" speech was never delivered on the senate floor. The Milwaukee Sentinel reported that doctors had operated on McCarthy's elbow, and after it was obvious that no surgery had been performed, the paper did not retract the story.

The Wisconsin State Journal and the Appleton Post-Crescent treated their readers to a steady barrage of syndicated columnist David Lawrence, who was biased in his writing toward McCarthy. The Madison Capital Times countered with syndicated columnist Drew Pearson, who was biased against the senator. Editors of the five papers also included in their editorial pages a splattering of other columnists such as the Alsop brothers, James Reston, George Sokolsky, and Westbrook Pegler. Their opinions rarely

differed from the editors'. The Post-Crescent, the Wisconsin State Journal, and the Milwaukee Sentinel never printed columns to balance the David Lawrence slant, and the Capital Times never published syndicated columns opposing the Drew Pearson bias. In short, readers were denied a diversity of opinion in any one newspaper, although the five papers themselves differed drastically from one another.

Three of the papers editorialized extensively during the debate. The Capital Times printed eight opinions, although two of them were editorials reprinted from the New York Times and the Deutsche Zeitung. The Milwaukee Sentinel commented on the censure seven times; the Milwaukee Journal six times. The three papers left no doubt in the minds of their readers as to where they stood on the censure charges. At times the opposing opinions and charges voiced by the Capital Times and the Sentinel seemed shrill and strongly partisan.

The State Journal and the Post-Crescent each editorialized only twice; once to criticize Senator Wiley for keeping his views to himself, and once to comment on the passage of the resolution. Of the two, only the State Journal voiced a definite opinion on the senate's action. The Post-Crescent editorial of Friday, December 3, may have satisfied all of its readers or none of its readers. The editors said that only one of the counts against

McCarthy was justified. It was a shame, they said, that McCarthy's crusade against Communist was slowed, but it was really his own fault. Finally, the whole problem of McCarthy might be attributed to the fact that he was coming under the influence of "extremists." The reader was left puzzling over what the editors communicated since they tossed in a dash for everyone.

While the senate considered the fate of Joseph McCarthy the proceedings dominated the headlines of page one in the five Wisconsin daily newspapers. He was formally censured on Thursday, December 2 and the story carried through the following Monday. But within a few weeks' time, McCarthy's name vanished from the front pages. An era seemingly had ended.

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