



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on March 7, 2017

Use of Term “McCarthyism” Is Unfair — to Joe McCarthy

The American Left has long thrown around the pejorative term “McCarthyism,” defining it as making unfair accusations, but in recent years its use has expanded across the political spectrum to include political conservatives and Christian leaders. The one person who has been the most unfairly smeared with this continued use of the derogatory expression is the person for whom it is named — Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin (shown on left).



With the Left hurling accusations that President Donald Trump conspired with the Russians to interfere in our recent presidential election to the detriment of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, at least one news person — Chris Wallace of Fox News — has invoked the term to describe the actions of those attempting to link Trump with the Russians. Even President Trump himself has made one of his nocturnal tweets, using the term McCarthyism to describe his political opponents.

On *Fox News Sunday*, host Chris Wallace interviewed Democratic Senator Chris Coons of Delaware, who has been vocal in his charges that there was collusion between Trump and the Russians. Wallace noted that Coons had suggested that there exist some FBI transcripts that “provide very critical insights” in this alleged collusion.

Coons responded, “I don’t have, and I don’t know of, any conclusive proof one way or the other about whether there was collusion between senior levels of the Trump campaign and Russians officials.”

Wallace then said, “I want to play the clip of what you said on Friday, which is different.”

In the clip, Coons said, “There are transcripts that provide very helpful, very critical insights into whether or not Russian intelligence and senior Russian political leaders, including Vladimir Putin were cooperating, with colluding with the Trump campaign at the highest levels to influence the outcome of our election.”

At the conclusion of the clip, Wallace commented, “Senator, we’re talking here about the president of the United States. *Isn’t there more than a whiff of McCarthyism* for you as a U.S. senator to say there are transcripts out there that provide insight into whether or not there was collusion, but you don’t even know whether they exist?” (Emphasis added.)

While Wallace expertly demonstrated the dishonesty of Senator Coons in asserting that some transcripts exist that show Trump campaign collusion with the Russians, when Coons doesn’t even know whether they exist, he unfairly smears the late Senator McCarthy to make that point.

And President Trump did the same with one of his own inimitable tweets: “Terrible! Just found out that Obama had my ‘wires tapped’ in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. *This is McCarthyism!*” (Emphasis added.)

The term “McCarthyism” was first used in the pages of *Daily Worker*, an official newspaper of the American Communist Party. While it would be odd that a communist newspaper would even care that



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McCarthy was destroying the reputations of folks who were *not* communists, it is not surprising that the *Daily Worker* would hate a U.S. senator who exhibited amazing energy and zeal in fighting communist infiltration of the U.S. government. What it is more puzzling, and even disgraceful, is the darts and arrows cast at McCarthy by non-communists and even *conservatives*, who should know better.

Writing in *Human Events*, M. Stanton Evans, author of the definitive book on McCarthy, *Blacklisted by History*, responded to the use of the communist-coined term of “McCarthyism” by conservatives. “How ironic, then, to have conservative spokesmen at talk radio shows, the blogosphere or Fox News robotically utter liberal falsehoods about McCarthy.” Evans speculated that these conservative commentators give no hint that they “know anything about the subject.” Evans lamented that it “was painfully clear that the talkers knew nothing of McCarthy, but were simply reciting in half-remembered phrases the standard liberal line about him.”

It is almost certain that Chris Wallace and Donald Trump are likewise uninformed about the real record of Joe McCarthy. From their comments, however, a similarly uninformed person could conclude — incorrectly — that McCarthy was on a crusade to smear innocent folks as members of a monstrous communist conspiracy, and maybe even put them in federal prison. Actually, his goals were always quite narrow. His efforts concentrated on getting communists out of sensitive positions in the U.S. government. Unless one believes a person has a right to a government job while spying for a hostile foreign power, this seems rather commendable. Furthermore, he was troubled that the Truman administration had not taken action to rid the government of these communist spies. And yes, there were multitudes of communist spies in sensitive positions inside the U.S. government, such as Alger Hiss, and the atomic spies, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg.

Conservative journalist John T. Flynn noted that it was clear what McCarthy wanted to accomplish. “McCarthy was not persecuting radicals or even Communists. His aim was at only Communists and spies *inside the American government*.”

In a 1987 article in *The New American* magazine, James Drumme offered his definition of what McCarthyism was all about. “McCarthyism was a serious attempt to remove from positions of influence the advocates of communism ... and persons who would prevent the removal of those who give aid and comfort to the enemies of America.”

Drumme added why he believed McCarthy was so feared and hated. “Communist conspirators and their friends do not fear those who denounce communism in general terms; they do greatly fear those who would expose their conspiratorial activities. That is why they hated and fought Joe McCarthy more than any other public figure in this century. That is why they have preserved his name as a club to hold over the head of anyone who dares to expose communism.”

Writing in *The Web of Subversion*, James Burnham reviewed the statistics of the so-called terror of the McCarthy Era, and found the number of persons killed was zero; the number of persons wounded or injured was zero; the number of persons tortured was zero; the number of persons arrested without a warrant was zero; the number of persons held or imprisoned without trial was zero; the number of persons evicted, exiled, or deported was zero; and the number of persons deprived of due process was also zero.

Yet, Trump, Wallace, and others continue to join with progressives and radicals in smearing the name of a patriot — a man who dedicated his life and career to saving America from communist subversion. Some are almost creative in how they use the term “McCarthyism.” For example, a renowned theology



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professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Albert Mohler, once wrote a column about what he termed “Moral McCarthyism.” Mohler, who is truly a brilliant and dedicated evangelical theologian, was using the term to describe those who are attacking traditional standards of morality. “Instead of asking if people are members of the Communist Party, the question will be: ‘Are you now or have ever been one who believes that homosexuality (or bisexuality, transsexualism and so on) is anything less than morally acceptable?’”

While Mohler has a legitimate concern, it is not fair to besmirch a dead patriot in order to make his point, however legitimate. Again, it is likely that Mohler has little idea of what McCarthy, who died in May 1957, actually did or did not do.

Some might argue, however, that the ends justifies the means — if smearing McCarthy advances a good cause, what is the big deal?

Perhaps the late Medford Evans (the father of M. Stanton Evans, quoted above) put it well: “The restoration of McCarthy ... is a necessary part of the restoration of America, for if we have not the national character to repent of the injustice we did him, nor in high places the intelligence to see that he was right, then it seems unlikely that we can or ought to survive.”

Steve Byas is the author of History’s Greatest Libels, in which he devotes one chapter to a much longer defense of Joseph McCarthy.



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