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McCarthy-Welch Exchange (*Point of Order* edition)

"Have You Left No Sense of Decency?"

delivered 9 June 1954 during the Army-McCarthy Hearings in Washington, D.C.



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Senator McCarthy: Mr. Chairman, in view of that request by Mr. --

Senator Mundt: Do you have a point of order?



Senator McCarthy: Not exactly, Mr. Chairman. But in view of Mr. Welch's request that the information be given once we know of anyone who might be performing any work for the Communist Party, I think we should tell him that he has in his law firm a young man named Fisher whom he recommended, incidentally, to do the work on this committee, who has been, for a number of years, a member of an organization which is named, oh, years and years ago, as the legal bulwark of the Communist Party, an organization which always springs to the defense of anyone who dares to expose Communists.



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I certainly assume that Mr. Welch did not know of this young man at the time he recommended as the assistant counsel for this committee. But he has terror and such a great desire to know where anyone is located who may be serving the communist cause, Mr. Welch. And I thought we should just call your attention to the fact that your Mr. Fisher, who is still in your law firm today, whom you asked to have down here looking over the secret and classified material, is a member of an organization, not named by me, but named by various committees, named by the Attorney General, as I recall. And he belonged to it long after it had been exposed as the legal arm of the Communist Party.



Senator McCarthy: Knowing that, Mr. Welch, I just felt that I had a duty to respond to your *urgent* request that "before sundown," when we know of anyone serving the Communist cause we let the agency know. Now, we're now letting you know that your man did belong to this organization for either three or four years, belonged to it long after he was out of law school. Now I have hesitated bringing that up, but I have been rather bored with your phony requests to Mr. Cohn here, that he, *personally*, get every Communist out of Government before sundown; therefore we will give you the information about the young man in your own organization. Now, I'm not asking you at this time to explain why you tried to foist him on this committee; that you did, the committee knows. Whether you knew that he was a member of that Communist organization or not, I don't know. I assume you did not, Mr. Welch, because I get the impression that while you are quite an actor, you play for a laugh, I don't think you have any conception of the danger of the Communist Party. I don't think you, yourself, would ever knowingly aid the Communist cause. I think you're unknowingly aiding it when you try to burlesque this hearing in which we're attempting to bring out the facts, however.

Mr. Welch: Mr. Chairman.

Senator Mundt: The Chair should say that he has no recognition -- no -- no memory of Mr. Welch recommending either Mr. Fisher or anybody else as counsel for this committee.

Mr. Welch: Mr. Chairman.



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Senator Mundt: Mr. Welch.

Senator McCarthy: I refer to the record, then, Mr. Chairman -- the

Mr. Welch: Mr. Chairman.

Senator McCarthy: -- the news story on that.

Mr. Welch: Under these circumstances, I must myself have something approaching a personal privilege.

Senator Mundt: You may have it, sir. It will not be taken out of your time.

Mr. Welch: Senator McCarthy, I did not know, Senator -- Senator, sometimes you say, "May I have your attention?" [McCarthy is consulting with and aide.]

Senator McCarthy: I'm listening. I didn't know....

Mr. Welch: May I have your attention?



Senator McCarthy: I -- I can listen with one ear and talk with [him].



Mr. Welch: Now, this time, sir --

Senator McCarthy: Okay.



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Mr. Welch: -- I want you to listen with both.

Senator McCarthy: All right, got it....

Mr. Welch: Senator McCarthy, I think until this moment --

Senator McCarthy: -- Good. Just -- just a minute. Let me ask -- Jim [Juliana], Jim, will you get the news story to the effect that this man belonged to the -- to this Communist front organization? Would you get the --

Mr. Welch: I will tell you that he belonged to it.

Senator McCarthy: -- will -- will you get the -- the citations, order the citations showing that this was the legal arm of the Communist Party, and the length of time that he belonged, and the fact that he was recommended by Mr. Welch. I think that should be in the record for Mr. Welch.

Mr. Welch: Senator --

Senator Mundt: The Chair recognizes Mr. Welch.



Mr. Welch: You won't need anything in the record when I finish telling you this. Until this moment, Senator, I think I never really gauged your cruelty, or your recklessness. Fred Fisher is a young man who went to the Harvard Law School and came into my firm and is starting what looks to be a brilliant career with us. When I decided to work for this committee, I asked Jim St. Clair, who sits on my right, to be my first assistant. I said to Jim, "Pick somebody in the firm to work under you that you would like." He chose Fred Fisher, and they came down on an afternoon plane. That night, when we had taken a little stab at trying to see what the case is about, Fred Fisher and Jim St. Clair and I went to dinner together. I then said to these two young men, "Boys, I don't know anything about you except I've always liked you. But if there's anything funny in the life of either one of you that would hurt anybody in this case, you speak up quick."



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Mr. Welch: And Fred Fisher said, "Mr. Welch, when I was in the law school, and for a period of months after, I belonged to the *Lawyers' Guild*," (as you have suggested, Senator). He went on to say, "I am Secretary of the Young Republican's League in Newton with the son of [the] Massachusetts governor, and I have the respect and admiration of my community, and I'm sure I have the respect and admiration of the twenty-five lawyers or so in Hale & Dorr." And I said, "Fred, I just don't think I'm going to ask you to work on the case. If I do, one of these days that will come out, and go over national television, and it will just hurt like the dickens." And so, Senator, I asked him to go back to Boston. Little did I dream you could be so reckless and so cruel as to do an injury to that lad. It is true he is still with Hale & Dorr. It is true that he will continue to be with Hale & Dorr. It is, I regret to say, equally true that I fear he shall always bear a scar needlessly inflicted by you. If it were in my *power* to forgive you for your reckless cruelty, I would do so. I like to think I'm a gentle man, but your forgiveness will have to come from someone other than me.

Senator McCarthy: Mr. Chairman?

Senator Mundt: [inaudible]

Senator McCarthy: May -- may I say that Mr. Welch talks about this being cruel and reckless. He was just baiting -- He has been baiting Mr. Cohn here for hours, requesting that Mr. Cohn, before sundown, get out of any department of the government anyone who is serving the Communist cause. Now, I just give this man's record and I want to say, Mr. Welch, that it has been labeled long before he became a member, as early as 1944 --

Mr. Welch: Senator --

Senator McCarthy: Let -- let me finish.

Mr. Welch: -- may we not drop this?

Senator McCarthy: Let me finish.



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Mr. Welch: We know he belonged to the Lawyers' Guild.

Senator McCarthy: No, let me finish --

Mr. Welch: And Mr. Cohn nods his head at me. I did you, I think, no personal injury, Mr. Cohn?



Mr. Cohn: No, sir.

Mr. Welch: I meant to do you no personal injury.

Mr. Cohn: No, sir.

Mr. Welch: And if I did --

Senator McCarthy: No --

Mr. Welch: -- I beg your pardon. Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator.

Senator McCarthy: Let's, let's --

Mr. Welch: You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?



Senator McCarthy: I know this hurts you, Mr. Welch.



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Mr. Welch: I'll say it hurts!

Senator McCarthy: May I say, Mr. Chairman, as point of personal privilege, I'd like to finish this.

Mr. Welch: Senator, I think it hurts you, too, sir.

Senator McCarthy: I'd -- I'd like to finish this. I know Mr. Cohn would rather not have me go into this. I intend to, however. And Mr. -- Mr. Welch talks about any "sense of decency." It seems that Mr. Welch is pained so deeply, he thinks it's improper for me to give the record, the Communist front record, of the man whom he wanted to foist upon this committee. But it doesn't pain him at all -- there's no pain in his chest about the attempt to destroy the reputation and the -- take the jobs away from the young men who are working on my committee. And Mr. Welch, if -- if I have said anything here which is untrue, then tell me. I have heard you and everyone else talk so much about laying the truth upon the table. But when I heard the completely phony Mr. Welch -- I've been listening now for a long time -- he's saying, "Now, before sundown, you must get these people out of government." So that I just want you to have it very clear, very clear that you were not so serious about that when you tried to recommend this man for this committee. But the point is... --

Senator Mundt: The Chair would like to say, again, that --

Senator McCarthy: [inaudible crosstalk]

Senator Mundt: -- he doesn't believe that Mr. Welch recommended Mr. Fisher as counsel for this committee, because he has, through his office, all the recommendations which were made and does not recall any of them coming from Mr. Welch -- and that would include Mr. Fisher.

Senator McCarthy: Well, let me ask Mr. Welch. You -- you brought him down, did you not, to act as your assistant?

Mr. Welch: Mr. McCarthy, I will not discuss this further with you. You have sat within six feet of me and could ask -- could have asked me about Fred Fisher. You have seen fit to bring it out, and if there is a God in heaven, it will do neither you nor your cause any good. I will not discuss it further. I will not ask Mr. Cohn any more witnesses. You, Mr. Chairman, may, if you will, call the next witness.