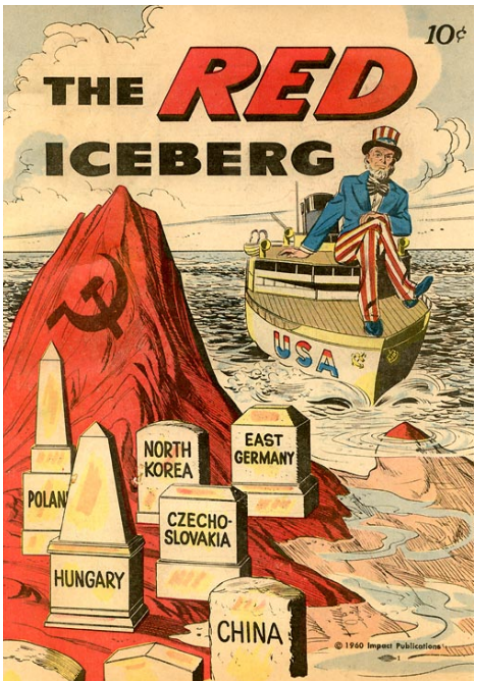
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American History DBQ
The Fall of Senator Joseph McCarthy







Historical Background and Context: During the late 1940's and into the 1950's one of the great fears of American society was the possible worldwide domination of Communism. During this time of national paranoia, a number of people used the fears of the people to make false accusations and claims in the name of national loyalty. Sadly, Civil Rights were at times trampled by the efforts of individuals such as Joseph McCarthy to expose people who had Communist sympathies in America. McCarthy, the junior Senator from the state of Wisconsin, would first gain national fame by stating in a speech at Wheeling, West Virginia that he had a list of names of Communist Party members working at the State Department in 1950. People around the nation were willing to believe him, at least, at first. However, as time went on American citizens and politicians began to question whether McCarthy was acting appropriately and wondering how much damage he was doing to the American people himself, all in the name of exposing Communists. Ultimately, the antics of Senator McCarthy will backfire and he will face a great amount of public criticism and condemnation himself.

Document 1: Excerpt from a speech given by Senator McCarthy in Wheeling, West Virginia on February 9th, 1950

The reason why we find ourselves in a position of impotency is not because our only powerful potential enemy has sent men to invade our shores . . . but rather because of the traitorous actions of those who have been treated so well by this Nation. It has not been the less fortunate, or members of minority groups who have been traitorous to this Nation, but rather those who have had all the benefits that the wealthiest Nation on earth has had to offer . . . the finest homes, the finest college education and the finest jobs in government we can give.

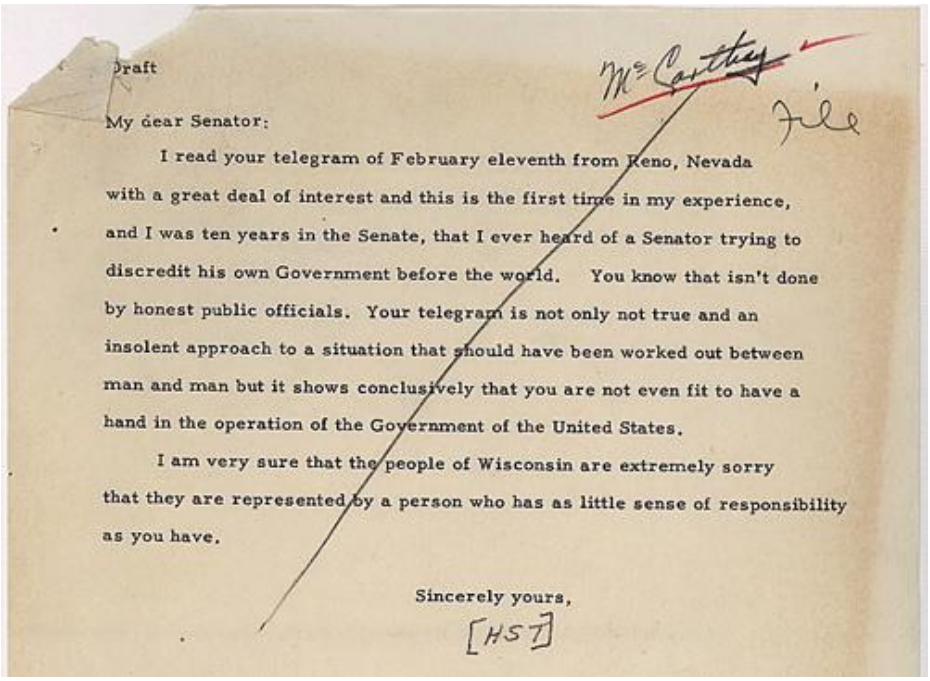
This is glaringly true in the State Department. There the bright young men who are born with silver spoons in their mouths are the ones who have been most traitorous. . . .

I have here in my hand a list of 205 . . . a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department. . . .

1. According to Joseph McCarthy, who is responsible for the "impotency", or the inability of the United States to defend itself from Communist aggression?

2. What is contained on the list that McCarthy claims to have? Why is this information so dangerous to the safety of the United States?

Document 2: Photocopy of a draft from President Truman in response to McCarthy's earlier telegram. It should be noted that although the Truman response was prepared, it was likely simply filed and never actually sent to Joseph McCarthy.



Draft

Mr. Carthy

File

My dear Senator:

I read your telegram of February eleventh from Reno, Nevada with a great deal of interest and this is the first time in my experience, and I was ten years in the Senate, that I ever heard of a Senator trying to discredit his own Government before the world. You know that isn't done by honest public officials. Your telegram is not only not true and an insolent approach to a situation that should have been worked out between man and man but it shows conclusively that you are not even fit to have a hand in the operation of the Government of the United States.

I am very sure that the people of Wisconsin are extremely sorry that they are represented by a person who has as little sense of responsibility as you have.

Sincerely yours,

[HST]

3. What reasons are stated by President Truman that indicate that he believes that McCarthy acted in an improper manner?

4. Based on the tone of this telegram, what does the word "insolent" mean in context?

5. Why does Truman state that he is sure that the people of Wisconsin must be "very sorry" about electing Joseph McCarthy?

Document 3: Excerpt from a speech given by Senator Margaret Chase Smith titled the "Declaration of Conscience" on the Senate floor on June 1, 1950.

I think that it is high time that we remembered that we have sworn to uphold and defend the Constitution. I think that it is high time that we remembered that the Constitution, as amended, speaks not only of the freedom of speech but also of trial by jury instead of trial by accusation.

Whether it be a criminal prosecution in court or a character prosecution in the Senate, there is little practical distinction when the life of a person has been ruined.

6. What are the two rights or freedoms that Senator Smith instructs the members of the U.S. Senate to remember?

7. Based on her statement, why are these protections provided by the U.S. Constitution?

Document 4: Excerpt from a speech given by Senator Margaret Chase Smith titled the "Declaration of Conscience" on the Senate floor on June 1, 1950.

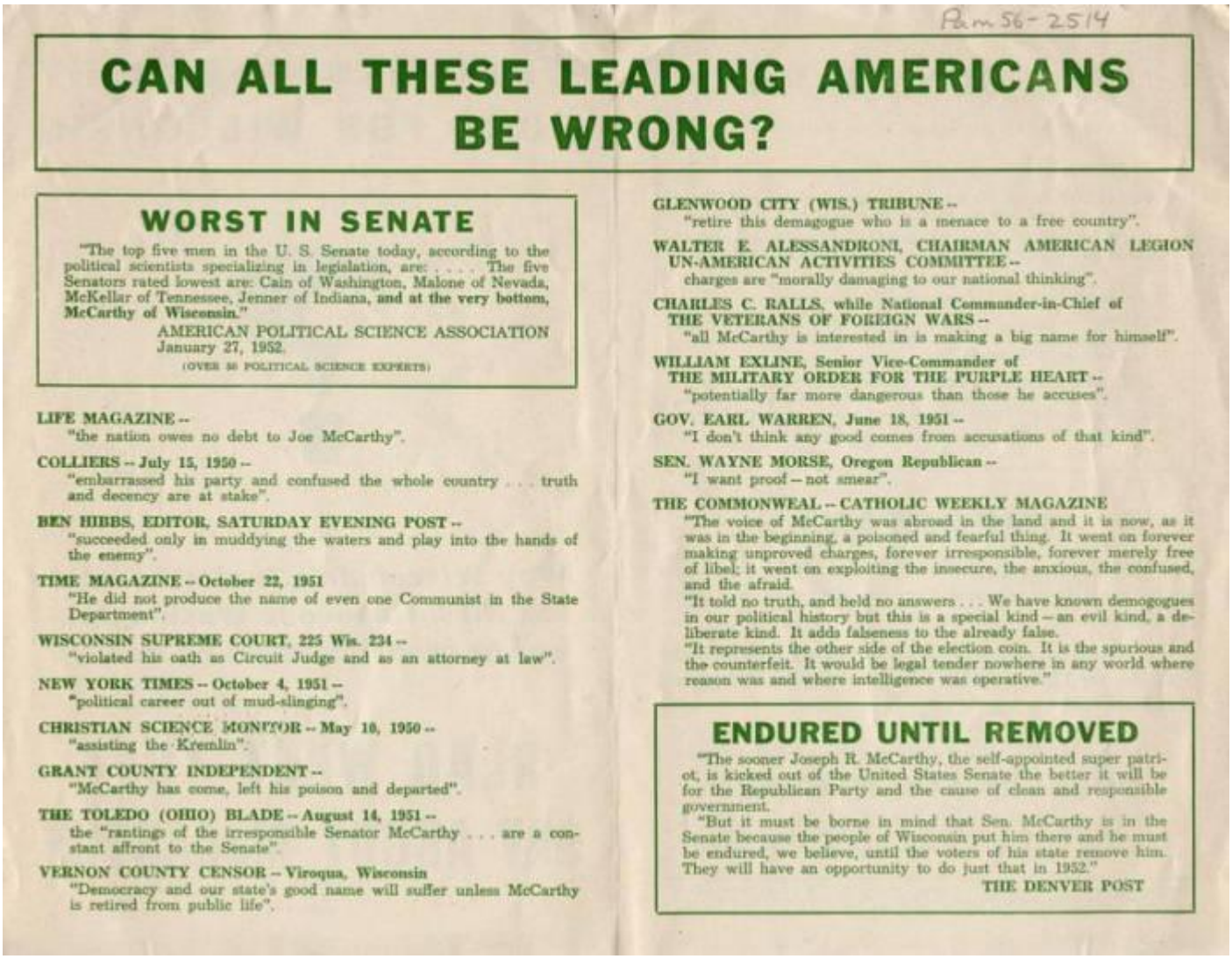
The American people are sick and tired of being afraid to speak their minds lest they be politically smeared as "Communists" or "Fascists" by their opponents. Freedom of speech is not what it used to be in America. It has been so abused by some that it is not exercised by others.

The American people are sick and tired of seeing innocent people smeared and guilty people whitewashed. But there have been enough proved cases, such as the *Amerasia* [2] case, the Hiss case,[3] the Coplon case,[4] the Gold case,[5] to cause nationwide distrust and strong suspicion that there may be something to the unproved, sensational accusations.

8. According to Senator Smith, what are the American people growing tired or.

9. Why is she concerned about the freedom of speech that all Americans should enjoy according to the U.S. Constitution?

Document 5: The inside of a political flyer that was printed during Joseph McCarthy's reelection campaign of 1952. This flyer was printed by the campaign of Leonard Schmitt, a Republican primary challenger who was running against McCarthy during this election.



Am 56-2514

CAN ALL THESE LEADING AMERICANS BE WRONG?

WORST IN SENATE

"The top five men in the U. S. Senate today, according to the political scientists specializing in legislation, are: . . . . The five Senators rated lowest are: Cain of Washington, Malone of Nevada, McKellar of Tennessee, Jenner of Indiana, **and at the very bottom, McCarthy of Wisconsin.**"

AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION
January 27, 1952.
(OVER 50 POLITICAL SCIENCE EXPERTS)

LIFE MAGAZINE --
"the nation owes no debt to Joe McCarthy".

COLLIERS -- July 15, 1950 --
"embarrassed his party and confused the whole country . . . truth and decency are at stake".

BEN HIBBS, EDITOR, SATURDAY EVENING POST --
"succeeded only in muddying the waters and play into the hands of the enemy".

TIME MAGAZINE -- October 22, 1951
"He did not produce the name of even one Communist in the State Department".

WISCONSIN SUPREME COURT, 225 Wis. 234 --
"violated his oath as Circuit Judge and as an attorney at law".

NEW YORK TIMES -- October 4, 1951 --
"political career out of mud-slinging".

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR -- May 10, 1950 --
"assisting the Kremlin".

GRANT COUNTY INDEPENDENT --
"McCarthy has come, left his poison and departed".

THE TOLEDO (OHIO) BLADE -- August 14, 1951 --
the "rantings of the irresponsible Senator McCarthy . . . are a constant affront to the Senate".

VERNON COUNTY CENSOR -- Viroqua, Wisconsin
"Democracy and our state's good name will suffer unless McCarthy is retired from public life".

GLENWOOD CITY (WIS.) TRIBUNE --
"retire this demagogue who is a menace to a free country".

WALTER E. ALESSANDRONI, CHAIRMAN AMERICAN LEGION UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE --
charges are "morally damaging to our national thinking".

CHARLES C. RALLS, while National Commander-in-Chief of THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS --
"all McCarthy is interested in is making a big name for himself".

WILLIAM EXLINE, Senior Vice-Commander of THE MILITARY ORDER FOR THE PURPLE HEART --
"potentially far more dangerous than those he accuses".

GOV. EARL WARREN, June 18, 1951 --
"I don't think any good comes from accusations of that kind".

SEN. WAYNE MORSE, Oregon Republican --
"I want proof -- not smear".

THE COMMONWEAL -- CATHOLIC WEEKLY MAGAZINE
"The voice of McCarthy was abroad in the land and it is now, as it was in the beginning, a poisoned and fearful thing. It went on forever making unproved charges, forever irresponsible, forever merely free of libel; it went on exploiting the insecure, the anxious, the confused, and the afraid.
"It told no truth, and held no answers . . . We have known demogogues in our political history but this is a special kind -- an evil kind, a deliberate kind. It adds falseness to the already false.
"It represents the other side of the election coin. It is the spurious and the counterfeit. It would be legal tender nowhere in any world where reason was and where intelligence was operative."

ENDURED UNTIL REMOVED

"The sooner Joseph R. McCarthy, the self-appointed super patriot, is kicked out of the United States Senate the better it will be for the Republican Party and the cause of clean and responsible government.
"But it must be borne in mind that Sen. McCarthy is in the Senate because the people of Wisconsin put him there and he must be endured, we believe, until the voters of his state remove him. They will have an opportunity to do just that in 1952."

THE DENVER POST

10. What seems to be the general theme of these printed opinions about the actions of Senator McCarthy?

11. What are some of the most notable charges or accusations made against Senator McCarthy in ***The Commonwealth--Catholic Weekly Magazine***?

Document 6: Excerpt from an exchange between Joseph McCarthy and Boston lawyer Joseph Welch. This exchange took place during the Army-McCarthy hearings after Joseph McCarthy began to insist that the military itself might be a haven for Communists. These hearings were televised across the nation and many Americans were finally exposed to the rude manner in which McCarthy had behaved over the previous years. This exchange took place on June 9, 1954. The following statement was delivered by Mr. Welch after Senator McCarthy incriminated a young associate of Mr. Welch, Fred Fisher, of possibly having Communist ties to a national television audience.

***Mr. Welch**: 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 who works under you that you would like." He chose Fred Fisher and they came down on an afternoon plane. That night, when he had taken a little stab at trying to see what the case was 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 have always liked you, but if there is anything funny in the life of either one of you that would hurt anybody in this case you speak up quick."

12. What positive statements does R. Welch have about Fred Fisher?

13. What does Mr. Welch ask of Fred Fisher and Jim St. Clair during their diner conversation?

Document 7: The second half of Mr. Welch's statement towards Senator McCarthy after McCarthy implied that as associate of Mr. Welch had Communist ties.

***Mr. Welch**: Fred Fisher said, "Mr. Welch, when I was in 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 Republicans League in Newton with the son of Massachusetts' Governor, and I have the respect and admiration of the 25 lawyers or so in Hale & Dorr."*

I said, "Fred, I just don't think I am 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."

So, Senator, I asked him to go back to Boston.

Little did I dream you could be so reckless and 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 will do so. I like to think I am a gentleman, but your forgiveness will have to come from someone other than me.

14. Why does Mr. Welch tell Fred Fisher that he should return to Boston and not take part in the case?

15. What damage was done by the statements that were made by Senator McCarthy about Fred Fisher?

16. Why was Mr. Welch so shocked by the comments made by Senator McCarthy according to this statement?

Document 8: The following image is a political cartoon featuring Senator Joseph McCarthy holding some "documents". notice that the title, "I have here in my hand..." is a direct quote from his 1950 speech in Wheeling, West Virginia.



17. What are the documents that Senator McCarthy appears to be holding?

18. As you analyze this image, how does the artist suggest that McCarthy might be a little uncomfortable?

19. In what ways does the artist suggest that McCarthy might be guilty of some type of wrongdoing?

Document 9: The following is a section of Senate Resolution 301, the official censure of Joseph McCarthy.

Sec 2. The Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. McCarthy, in writing to the chairman of the Select Committee to Study Censure Charges (Mr. Watkins) after the Select Committee had issued its report and before the 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 that was to begin November 8, 1954, 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 (Mr. Watkins) was guilty of "the most unusual, most cowardly things I've ever heard of" and stating further: "I expected he would be afraid to answer the questions, but 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.

20. Based on his statements of November 4th how did Senator McCarthy describe Mr. Watkins?

21. What was Mr. Watkins guilty of according to McCarthy's quoted statements?

22. How did McCarthy characterize the Select Committee (said committee) and how did this committee imitate Communist methods, according to McCarthy?

23. According to the Senate Resolution, how did McCarthy's actions reflect upon the body of the U.S. Senate as a whole?

4. Excerpt from The Declaration of Conscience speech delivered to the United States Senate by Margaret Chase Smith on June 1, 1950.
http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources/pdf/SmithDeclaration.pdf

5. Anti-McCarthy Political Flyer
"What has McCarthy done for Wisconsin?" (Merrill, Wis. : Leonard F. Schmitt for U.S. Senator ... Campaign Committee, [1952]); Online facsimile at:
http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/search.asp?id=1121

6. Statement made by Joseph Welch to Joseph McCarthy during the Army-McCarthy hearings on June 9, 1954. Transcripts of the exchange were copied as heard by the television audience.
http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6444

7. Statement made by Joseph Welch to Joseph McCarthy during the Army-McCarthy hearings on June 9, 1954. Transcripts of the exchange were copied as heard by the television audience.
http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6444

8. Political cartoon titled "I have here in my hand..."
Library of Congress
Artist: Herb Block; Published May 7, 1954; Washington Post

9. Excerpt from Senate Resolution 301: Censure of Joseph McCarthy (1954)
http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=86&page=transcript