



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on February 15, 2021

Dershowitz Right and Wrong on “New McCarthyism” Charge Against Democrats

Former Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz was right during his Sunday morning appearance on Fox News’ *Sunday Morning Futures* to accuse the “hard Left” of his own Democratic Party of having become the radical censors of free speech in America. But he was wrong to call it a “new McCarthyism.”

For there to be a *New McCarthyism*, there has to have been an *Old McCarthyism*, a reference to Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin.

“Common Cause, which purports to be a liberal, not a radical organization, has now demanded that Facebook keep Donald Trump off its platform,” Dershowitz said on the Fox network program. He noted that there are so-called liberals who are calling for Fox News “to be taken off the networks. I hated communism but I defended the rights of lawyers to defend accused communists.”



Alan Dershowitz (AP Images)

Dershowitz’s reference was to the attempts on the Left to ruin the careers of any lawyers or law firms who took on Trump as a client. “If any lawyer is the subject of this kind of McCarthyism, I will represent you pro bono, in front of universities and bar associations. I will dedicate myself that the new McCarthyism of the hard Left doesn’t become American culture.”

The efforts from the Left that Dershowitz describes are indeed concerning. Businesses that do not toe the liberal line are being kicked off Internet platforms. There are calls to drive non-liberal television networks off cable networks. College professors and students who dare to express thoughts not acceptable to the Left are being kicked off campuses. There exists a concerted effort to censor any expressions of beliefs anywhere that does not advance the agenda of the secular-progressives who are dominant in the media, academia, the popular culture, and even the corporate boardrooms of the country.

But calling it “McCarthyism” is a profound injustice to the late Senator McCarthy, who died in 1957. The myth is that McCarthy was terrorizing the nation for several years, causing private citizens to lose their jobs and smearing the reputations of untold numbers of “innocent” individuals.

The truth is that McCarthy had no interest in whether some leftist or even an outright Communist Party member worked for a private company. Not one single person went to jail because of McCarthy. McCarthy’s focus was always very narrow — he wanted to root out members of the American Communist Party and Soviet spies from working in the *government* of the United States, especially in



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sensitive positions.

Members of the American Communist Party were part of an organization whose loyalty was to a hostile foreign power — the Soviet Union — then under the totalitarian rule of one of history's greatest monsters, Joseph Stalin. Members of the Communist Party were dedicated to turning the United States into a carbon copy of the Soviet gulag. McCarthy did not believe any person should hold a sensitive position in the U.S. government whose loyalty was to a foreign totalitarian state, rather than to the nation's government that paid his salary.

And there were spies. Some influenced American foreign policy to turn China over to the Communists, a policy for which we are still paying a terrible price. One of President Franklin Roosevelt's top advisors, Alger Hiss, was a spy for Stalin. Atomic scientists Julius and Ethel Rosenberg turned over secrets involving the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union.

Some of the myths about McCarthy are downright absurd, such as the persistent assertion that it was Joe McCarthy who created the Hollywood Blacklist — in which actors, writers, directors, etc., in the motion picture industry were denied jobs because of their affiliation with the Communist Party — while he was chairing the *House* Committee on Un-American Activities. This one is rather easy to refute, considering that a *senator* would *not* be chairing a *House* committee. Additionally, the Hollywood Blacklist was implemented years before McCarthy made his initial public statements on Communist spies in the U.S. government during a speech to the Ohio County West Virginia Republican Women's Club in February 1950.

The term "McCarthyism" was first used by the American Communist Party, but it was picked up and used frequently by Democrats after that. Sadly, today, many Republicans and even some *conservatives* often use the term. These conservatives are probably just ignorant of what McCarthy actually did, but they use the term to decry the actions of those on the Left, much like Professor Dershowitz.

While Dershowitz and others who are right to raise the alarm about the Left's attempts to curtail free speech in this country, using the term "McCarthyism" is the wrong way to do it. The person most unfairly maligned in the entire so-called McCarthy Era was Senator Joe McCarthy.



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