
Interview: Sen. Eugene McCarthy

What Happened to The Baby Boomers?

This is the third and final part of a series of interviews with Senator McCarthy, conducted by Nina Ogden in March through May 2003. The previous installments appeared in EIR, April 4 and May 2.

Here, Senator McCarthy discusses how the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, the Kennedy brothers, and other tragic events of the 1960s led to the destruction of the power of reason and optimism, and destroyed the promise of the Baby Boomer generation.

EIR: We heard the interview WTOP radio [in Washington, D.C.] did with you yesterday, and what you said was very interesting, given the open fight breaking out against the chicken-hawks' "permanent war" coup.

McCarthy: I said that the warhawks in this country have been the terrorist threat to the world since they dropped nuclear bombs on Japan, and they have been continuing their terrorism, with their threats of using clean or dirty, large or small nuclear weapons. I said our 9/11 against other nations, is our threats of pre-emptive nuclear war.

EIR: With Newt Gingrich's ranting against the State Department and Richard Armitage saying that Gingrich is off his medication, the fight is breaking out into the open.

McCarthy: Imagine the AEI giving Gingrich a platform!

EIR: Gingrich's outbursts are like those of the infamous other Senator McCarthy—Joe McCarthy. I believe you were the first to debate him.

McCarthy: In 1952, when he was a particularly strong force in Washington, by virtue of his activities as chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Government Operations Committee and of his special campaign against Communists—real or imagined—in the Federal government, he was considered to be a politically dangerous opponent. I thought it necessary that someone challenge his position and power. That is why I said "yes," when Theodore Granik, then the moderator and producer of the television program "American Forum of the Air," invited me to debate Senator McCarthy on his program.

EIR: I suppose this was when you were still in the House of Representatives.

McCarthy: Other Congressmen had turned Granik down. I

was sure that one confrontation would not stop him, but could start the process of challenging him. Harry MacArthur, the television critic for the *Washington Evening Star*, wrote after the debate, "The fallacy of Senator McCarthy's invincibility in debate was exploded on Ted Granik's 'American Forum of the Air.' The technique for dealing with him in TV discussion—or maybe any other discussion for that matter—was demonstrated by another and different McCarthy, Representative Gene of Minnesota."

EIR: In discussing the Baby Boomers, Lyn [Lyndon LaRouche] has often said that their parents' cowardice in dealing with Joe McCarthy's witch-hunt contributed to their children's problems.

McCarthy: Their silence in the face of the witch-hunt allowed the institutions of government to be victims of the Cold War. The most obvious manifestation of this was the intimidation, by Joe McCarthy and his two or three active supporters, in the Senate. Both the Senate and the State Department retreated in the face of their challenge.

At the same time, the influence of the military over foreign policy increased. American military missions were set up in many countries and were used increasingly as instruments of foreign policy; and as that grew, diplomatic and even strategic considerations received less and less attention. The disposition to consider military action as the solution to nearly every problem became dominant.

EIR: Gingrich is singing the same tune. Just substitute the words "9/11" or "terrorist" for the old Cold War lyrics.

I want you to know about the press release we're getting out, which says that according to the FEC's own figures, not only is Lyn number four in total dollars raised among Presidential candidates; he is the first among all the candidates in the number of individual contributions.

McCarthy: Good for him! Now, what about the networks? What about the press? After 1968 they decided to black me out. In 1992, although I qualified by number of petition signatures, the *New York Times* wouldn't cover me. I talked to them and said, I don't get it. Who are you getting your marching orders from? What's your rationale? But they wouldn't say. In 1976 I sued to get included in the debates. I said that the fairness doctrine of equal time wasn't being honored on the Presidential level. They derived a new way to keep me out of the debates. They got the League of Women Voters to sponsor the debates, so they could say they only wanted the two candidates. Bob Strauss set it up to eliminate me from the political debate. I said to him, "Bob, you are the only one who could have done this. You've set the Democratic Party up for destruction and destroyed the political virginity of the League of Women Voters at the same time."

EIR: It's interesting that many of the people we've discussed, who would certainly be called hawks—Bush "41,"



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Eagleburger, Sam Nunn, and also Bob Strauss—have recently come out against the neo-con chicken-hawks’ policies.

McCarthy: It is interesting. Maybe they decided it would not be a great advantage to have a bomb named after them. I call the atom bomb Truman dropped on Japan “The Harry.” Or maybe they’re atoning for their past sins.

EIR: You know, Lyn did a webcast on Thursday [April 24] for two hours with college newspaper editors from around the country.

McCarthy: Good—this is a good way to get outside the control of the media monopolies. It’s a new way to reach the students.

EIR: One of the things he talked about with the students is a matter you and he have discussed quite a bit—what the successive shocks of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the JFK assassination, Dr. King’s assassination and so forth did to demoralize the Baby Boomers—their parents’ generation.

We’ve talked about the violence against the students in Chicago at the 1968 Democratic Convention and against the “McCarthy kids” immediately after that convention.

McCarthy: They were beaten bloody to the ground. Of course this was a generation whose moral courage had been tested, in the South and on their campuses, by racial discrimination and the war in Vietnam. They faced clubs, police dogs, tear gas, mace, and bullets. But they were still organizing. They were still optimistic.

We underestimate the effect on the spirit of young Americans when their government is fighting a war not for liberty,

but against the poor, the backward, and the helpless. In a society, the youth are the leavening force. When the cause of the young was beaten to the ground in Chicago—when they were beaten bloody at their own convention—they were being eliminated as the leavening force. Their discouragement and failure caused anxiety, mistrust and fear.

EIR: You and Lyn have discussed the problems of the “Me Generation.” In Europe they are known as ‘68ers. In France I think they’re called the “Bobos.”

McCarthy: The scriptural promise of the good life is one in which the old men see visions and the young men dream dreams. But the young now do not dream dreams but live nightmares of moral anxiety, and great apprehension. That is what those few years of tumult brought about. I said, at a meeting of Concerned Democrats in Chi-

cago in December of 1967, a couple of days after I decided to enter the Democratic primary elections, that John Kennedy set the spirit of America free, and that honest optimism was released. I contrasted the new programs of promise and dedication, like the Peace Corps and the Alliance for Progress, and the promise of equal rights for all Americans that were our spirit as we entered 1963, before the President was assassinated. But what was the spirit of 1967? What was the mood of America and of the world toward America? It was a joyless spirit—a mood of frustration, of anxiety, of uncertainty.

EIR: In our first interview you spoke of the sense of political helplessness which you aimed to change, to restore a belief in the processes of the American system. You said that you wanted to counter the frustration and cynicism you found on the college campuses.

McCarthy: After the ‘68 primaries, top people in the Democratic Party said, “We can’t let McCarthy have any influence in the party.” Look at what they got instead.

EIR: The end to the Bretton Woods system through the Nixon, or should we say the Kissinger Administration, Watergate—

McCarthy: Alienation, frustration, cynicism. The Party in the coming years took some things from the cause of the young: voting rights for Black people, a moral stance against the war, the right to vote for those between 18 and 21 years of age, certain other political and party reforms. But the youth lost what I experienced in the campaign in New Hamp-

shire in the early months of 1968, where they came like the early Spring, with a sense of purpose and with a promise of change.

EIR: At a California youth cadre school we had over the weekend, one young man asked why Lyn objects to what he called issue-based politics, and whether people just weren't taking the right approach to the right issues. Lyn answered that that approach reminded him of dividing people into a zoo, where each animal has its own cage—its own single issue. Sometimes the animals have related issues. So you no longer have a national policy, what you have is people squabbling over single-issue scraps.

McCarthy: We have to deal with problems that are the concern of every citizen. In my campaign I spoke about the injustices in our country—against Blacks and against others—not to get their votes on their issues, but to get all of the people to respond, not to distract people from the common problems of us all. Some of the Black Nationalist militants in Washington, D.C. accused me of not talking about the problems on their streets when I addressed their meetings. I told them that they know what the problems are on their streets, I don't have to make speeches to them about that—I have to talk about the problems facing our Black citizens when I'm speaking in New Hampshire or Wisconsin, so that we all are involved in solving the most serious problems in the country.

Some of my campaign staff didn't agree with my approach on this. This was one of the reasons, I think, that our first press officer, Sy Hersh—who is doing good work now exposing the current administration in the *New Yorker*—left the campaign.

EIR: I know that this "single-issueism" is something you've always objected to. We've discussed it a number of times in terms of your objections to some of Bobby Kennedy's advisors, who set up many separate interest groups.

McCarthy: This is a difficult situation to talk about, because of the assassination of Bobby Kennedy on the night of his California primary victory. And that, of course, brings to mind the tragic assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King just two months before, on April 4.

Bobby had too many advisors. And he listened to them too much. Some of Bobby's advisors were more interested in having power, or being in the presence of power, than they were in the policy; or in some cases, in Robert Kennedy himself. He was badly advised by those who urged him not to enter the primaries before I decided to enter. He was badly advised by those who persuaded him to become a candidate under the conditions in which he then entered the primaries, in March 1968. I never believed that victory in all primaries would assure my nomination. When Bobby first announced that he would not enter the primaries, I felt that if he maintained the standby position which he then held, he would come into the convention with great strength

and would probably be nominated.

Before announcing my own political intentions, I tried to determine Bobby's plans. I was assured in private conversations I had with him, and by his own public statements, that he would not run. I still believed in late 1967 that he could make the strongest challenge, but I believed that if he were to come into the campaign later, after I had committed myself, the whole effort to change policies would be weakened by conflict and division. Friends of the Kennedys, such as Richard Goodwin and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., volunteered to work in my campaign or endorse my candidacy, because they were sure that Bobby had decided not to run in the primaries of 1968.

EIR: It seems that Bobby was torn between the advisors who said he should run and those who said he should wait until the next election. The so-called experts did not expect thousands of students campaigning for you in New Hampshire, and the so-called experts did not expect you to come within 230 votes of winning the first primary against a sitting President. Theodore White said, in discussing your campaign, "The embattled President led the mystic Senator by only 230 votes in what was supposedly one of the most patriotic and warlike states of the union."

McCarthy: When I returned to Washington the day after the New Hampshire election, I met with Bobby, at his request. He had told reporters earlier that day that he was reassessing his position as to whether he would run. He said, "I think the election in New Hampshire has indicated a good deal of concern in the Democratic Party about the direction the country is going in." A few days later, when I was campaigning in Wisconsin, he announced that he would enter a number of primaries. It was towards the end of the Wisconsin primary that President Johnson announced, on March 31, that he would not run for re-election.

I received 56.2% in Wisconsin. I began to feel like a relay runner, who after each lap had to face a different runner: starting in New Hampshire and Wisconsin when I ran against President Johnson; and then in Indiana where I would run against Senator Kennedy; after which, I was sure Vice President Humphrey would certainly get on the track.

There were a number of disagreements I had with Bobby's advisors. They put together 26 different committees for Bobby—Polish, Italian, Blacks, even Irish, and whatnot. I used to say in campaign meetings, "I saw where one potential candidate had 26 separate campaign committees of various kinds of Americans. I knew that Howard Johnson had 28 varieties of ice cream, but did not know that there were 26 varieties of Americans who could be combined for political purposes. I do not really have but one variety: a constituency that is a constituency of conscience. And, I think, a constituency of hope and trust in the future."

I think our student movement reflected that hope and trust. They had their own logistics, staff, and campaign. They in-

spired other students, of course, who joined them, but they also inspired the adults they canvassed, who saw them acting in such a way that these older voters once again had faith in the next generation.

EIR: One of your student coordinators told a reporter who came to your headquarters in New Hampshire, in 1968, “Study in the universities is irrelevant. The war is on our minds. The rhetoric of the government is outmoded. We aren’t the see-you-in-Chicago crowd. That crowd isn’t with us, they want to tear it all down.”

McCarthy: I tried to contact most of the student leaders throughout the country, asking them *not* to send students to the Democratic Convention in Chicago. We could have had 100,000 people at the demonstrations, but we knew there would be trouble there, so we wanted to limit it. There were 10,000 instead of 100,000.

EIR: How did you know in advance that there would be trouble?

McCarthy: Well, the police were already putting up barbed wire. And the police had proven how brutal they were in the riots after Dr. King’s assassination.

EIR: We forget about the violence on the campuses and in the cities, at that time. This was a great matter of concern for Dr. King, who saw operations against non-violent demonstrations, by Stokely Carmichael and others. George Wallace was running an independent campaign, pumping up the racist vote, talking about “crime in the streets” and “law and order.” And this was exploited by Nixon in his Southern Strategy. Of course, we found out later about the FBI Cointelpro operations that instigated the chaos on the streets and on the campuses. And in local and national elections, the candidates were running after the law-and-order issue.

McCarthy: Well, unfortunately it became a campaign siren song. Bobby talked about being the “nation’s chief law-enforcement officer.” Hubert [Humphrey] made it one of his three “great issues” in his acceptance speech. “We need a nation of law and order,” he said. They fell right into it; and of course it defined the issues in the arena of the Republicans; and Nixon won.

EIR: And for those who did come to Chicago, your worst expectations were realized.

McCarthy: I first saw it from the windows of the hotel, 23 stories up. It was like the Battle of Cannae. The demonstrators were trapped by Hannibal’s double-envelope movement. They were trapped between the police and the National Guard. It was like a ballet in Purgatory.

EIR: Four years before that convention, you nominated Hubert Humphrey for Vice President at the 1964 Democratic Convention in Atlantic City. That was the convention where

the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party challenged the all-white Mississippi delegation. It could have been the end of the power of the Dixiecrats, had not some Democrats gone along with the Southern Strategy.

McCarthy: In advance of that convention, thinking that we might have a confrontation with conservative strength, I wrote a book entitled *The Liberal Answer to the Conservative Challenge*. But when the Republicans nominated Sen. Barry Goldwater, his positions were so extreme, they offered little challenge.

EIR: When you nominated Humphrey for Vice President at that 1964 Democratic Convention, you spoke of Goldwater, as the nominee of the Republican Party, as one who “chose to stay in a world of his own: a world in which the calendar has no years, in which the clock has no hands, and which glasses have no lenses. In that strange world in which he lives, the pale horse of death and destruction and the white horse of conquest and of victory are indistinguishable.”

McCarthy: It sounds like current events again, doesn’t it?

EIR: It sounds like the Straussians in the Vice President’s office.

At the end of your 1964 speech nominating Humphrey, you called upon the Democratic delegates to “affirm America.” You said, “This is a time for all of us to enter the fabric of our own time and to accept the challenge of the history of the 20th Century, to declare and manifest our belief that the power of reason can give some direction to the movement of history itself.”

McCarthy: The policy of which the Vietnam War was a part, eroded that power of reason. Four years later, Hubert was nominated as the candidate for President in what his own people called “a sea of blood.” My brother Austin, who is a physician, and another doctor had to set up emergency stations to treat the students who were wounded by the police in Grant Park and in the streets.

What happened to Hubert when he was Vice President was pathetic. We didn’t know that Lyndon [Johnson] was making him beg and squeal. He was begging him not to dump him from the ticket. He grovelled and said he would say anything in support of the war to stay, on the ticket. When the LBJ tapes came out a couple of years ago, we found out the whole sad story.

When we stayed in the guest room at the Johnson ranch, not long after Lyndon was sworn in as President, my wife said, “You won’t believe this—all the pins in the pin cushions are arranged to read LBJ.”

Lyndon and Hubert were caught in a classic tragedy, but of course, the tragedy was that they did not know it.

EIR: Your name was placed in nomination [in 1968] by Gov. Harold Hughes of Iowa and seconded by the civil rights worker who became the young Representative from Georgia,



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Julian Bond. John Kenneth Galbraith also made a speech on your nomination. Galbraith said, “The American people have responded to Gene McCarthy’s counsel. My generation favors him. So, overwhelmingly, does the next generation, those who will be in your seats, our seats, four and eight years from now.

“For you, we, no more than other men, have been endowed with immortality either.

“I beg you to heed this simple fact. Democrats do not reject the will of the majority of the people. Politicians do not reject the will of the majority. Old men do not reject the young—not, at least, if they are wise. Above all let us try to be young. And let us, accordingly, nominate and elect Gene McCarthy.”

McCarthy: But after the convention was over, the young were rejected and beaten bloody. When the convention was completely over, the police, at five o’clock in the morning, raided the 15th floor of the Hilton Hotel—the floor where our young people were staying. The police and National Guard

burst into the 15th-floor lobby and began clubbing the young people. As soon as I was informed that there was more trouble in the main lobby, I went there and saw our young people bloodied from the beatings they received. I asked for the officer in charge. There was no answer. I began to direct the young people to leave the lobby. With the help of the Secret Service men who had been assigned to me, after the assassination of Senator Kennedy, I began to get the young people back to their rooms. Their rooms had been locked by hotel security. It took us almost an hour to get them to open the doors. In the 15th-floor lobby, I saw bloody carpets, a bloodstained bridge table, where some of the young people had simply been playing bridge before the police burst in. I saw my young supporters sitting on sofas and on the floor, shaking their heads in disbelief. We never turned up any reason for this massive police raid at five o’clock in the morning. This was an action without precedent in the history of American politics. Even attempts to put calls in to me were blocked by the hotel switchboard.

Most of the young people on the 15th floor had campaigned with me in one or more states across the country, and had been tested and proven. We had never had even one incident in any city, in any motel or hotel, from New Hampshire through California.

I had planned to leave Chicago about ten o’clock that morning, but we received warnings that the police planned more raids and also arrests on my young campaign workers, after my senior staff members and I were gone. I delayed my departure until all of our young people were out of Chicago or at least out of reach of the police. As our plane flew out of the airport, at about six p.m., our pilot said, “We are leaving Prague.”

EIR: Talking about this has been like presiding over an autopsy.

We’ve intervened for the past 35 years into what happened to the Baby Boomer generation.

McCarthy: As I said, top people in the Democratic Party told me later that they wanted to get rid of the McCarthy influence in the party. What they tried to stop, was what John Adams called a spirit of “public happiness.”

EIR: The young people of the LaRouche Youth Movement quote Ben Franklin, “Do you love truth for truth’s sake and all mankind.” They are inspiring their own generation—the “No-Future” generation—and giving their parents’ generation, who had been destroyed by the events we have been discussing, new hope.

McCarthy: Well, they have Schiller.

The ancient Celtic poet, St. Cadoc the Wise, said that no man can love his country unless he loves justice, and no one can love justice unless he also has a love of learning, and no one can love learning unless he has a love of poetry and song.