
Interview: Eugene McCarthy

‘The DLC Are Democrats Who Are Really Reactionary Republicans’

Sen. Eugene McCarthy gave the first part of this interview—on his fight against a sitting President’s war policy with the aid of a national youth mobilization in the 1967-68 Presidential campaign—for publication in EIR’s April 11 issue. This second part of the interview was conducted by Nina Ogden for EIR on April 10, on who made the Democratic Party a “hollow party,” and whether that can be reversed, and the party of the disenfranchised can be revived.

EIR: We last talked on March 8, before the war against Iraq officially started. Now, yesterday, Rumsfeld and the other chickenhawks made a formal announcement that they have won the war. But the fighting is still going on.

McCarthy: Bush’s Administration reminds me of the Romans at the end point of their empire, who went and attacked Africa, because they needed something they could have a big celebration about when they returned.

EIR: Bolton, Rumsfeld, Cheney, they were all boasting.

McCarthy: Was Cheney’s wife, Lady Macbeth, with him when he emerged from the crypt, where, they say, he’d been keeping a low profile?

EIR: They were threatening Syria, Iran, and North Korea—that they’d better stop harboring terrorists and get rid of weapons of mass destruction.

McCarthy: This is pretty bad. They’re pretty full of themselves. The people around Bush have no understanding of history.

The propaganda in the press creates the rush to war. I read one article in the *Washington Post* before the war started, which had eight paragraphs, and seven of them mentioned “weapons of mass destruction.” I would say that we were using “pretty much weapons of mass destruction” ourselves.

EIR: After talking endlessly about weapons of mass destruction, they just started saying “WMD.”

McCarthy: We’re destroying the whole country with “PMWMD” then. One hundred million people demonstrated to stop the war before it even started. They haven’t found one chemical or biological or nuclear weapon and they still went ahead.

Sy Hersh has a good article in the *New Yorker*.

EIR: He was your Presidential campaign’s first press secretary, wasn’t he?

McCarthy: Yes, he was.

The article exposes Cheney’s conflict of interest, and not only Cheney’s.

EIR: I believe Hersh documents about \$75 billion already awarded to companies connected to members of the Defense Policy Board—Perle and all the others.

McCarthy: The advisors to the Pentagon are giving the Pentagon advice about giving their companies billions of dollars. These are creatures of both parties. I was thinking about Sam Nunn, the so-called Democrat, one of the founders of the Democratic Leadership Conference. He went from being head of the Senate Armed Services Committee to being an arms merchant when he left government. He was like Henry Jackson: a force, but not for the good.

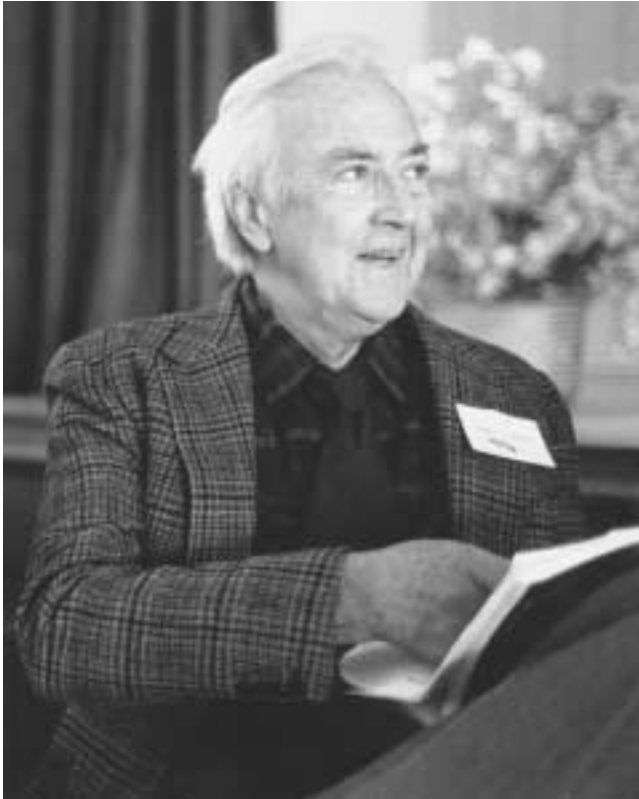
It’s bound to go this way when the military-industrial complex is in place—not only as a military institution, but also as an economic, diplomatic, and social one.

EIR: Many members of the House and Senate spoke up strongly before the war. Senator Daschle, for instance; but once the war started, they weakened and caved in, in the name of “unity.”

McCarthy: Tom Daschle would be less weak if the Democratic Party leadership were less weak.

The intimidation tactic of so-called “unity” was used against those who opposed the war in Vietnam and against our campaign.

When I entered the race [in 1967] in New Hampshire, and the Administration said, “Let us have no dissent, let us have no disunity,” I said I thought the time had come to divide the Party if it were not already divided. I thought the issues were important enough to the country that one had to run some risks. We should have been running the risk of further division, for ours was the party which in 1948 had raised the issue of civil rights, and said we were prepared to go down on this issue because it was so important to the nation. What changed was the leadership of the Party, which had itself dissented—moved away from the long-standing principles of the Party—and misread the overwhelming mandate it received in 1964, when the Democratic Party won the greatest election victory



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of any party in the century up to that time. The year 1964 had been one of triumph for Democrats. We mourned the loss of a great leader, but we were committed to carrying out the program of John F. Kennedy, to achieving objectives he had charted.

But since 1964 there had begun an erosion of spirit. Many people voted Republican in 1966 because they were losing faith in the Democrats.

If Barry Goldwater had been elected in 1964 and pursued the course of ever-widening escalation in Vietnam, Democratic unity would have been greater than ever before. The confusion of the Party derived from the fact that a Democratic administration was following a Republican foreign policy. The Senators on the Foreign Relations Committee were not the dissenters. The dissenters were in the Administration.

EIR: Dissenters from the FDR legacy like the pro-war candidate Lieberman from the DLC [Democratic Leadership Conference] now.

McCarthy: The Democratic Leadership Conference is made up of Democrats who are really reactionary Republicans. Much as I hate to quote George Wallace, there really “isn’t a dime’s worth of difference” between them. You don’t

have any political dialogue or debate; one is just an echo of the other one. John Quincy Adams said our nation had to avoid the mere struggles for power. But that’s what we’re seeing between the two parties now, just a struggle for power. Lyndon Johnson said that if you can control the TV people, the newspaper people, and the wire service people, you can control both political parties, and that’s what we have now. Look at these “embedded” reporters. The news media and the two political parties have become part of the military-industrial complex. They rule out open debate or a test of policy at the polls. There are no political elections, just struggles for power.

When I was in Minnesota last month I talked to Professor Disch of the University of Minnesota about the problems of the two-party system and forming a third party.

EIR: Isn’t that what the people of Minnesota did when they got Ventura in as Governor and you had all those squabbles about the Reform party?

McCarthy: The people who started it weren’t bad. They felt that the country was not being well governed by Republican or Democratic politics. But what was lacking was an image of what the mission of their government should be. But, how can we complain? A whole generation has never seen such a thing!

EIR: Can’t the Democratic Party be changed, in the way you tried to change it in 1968, and Lyn [Lyndon LaRouche] is trying to change it now?

McCarthy: I would hope so, but I doubt it. After 1968, the great fear of the Establishment was that a President might be elected on the basis of a political dialogue of the American people. There was great psychological warfare against me. You know there was great psychological warfare against Lyn.

They changed the rules of campaigning. The press was closed. The Federal Election Commission denied political freedom and set up the process by which those corporations which make up the military-industrial complex have become the dominant force in American politics.

The sacrifice the Democratic Party has made to the Democratic Leadership Council is the loss of its soul. The Party can no longer articulate what principles it stands for; it cannot hold together Congressional coalitions because it no longer has the principles with which to do this; it can no longer inspire the young; it can no longer lead the people toward ends that require selflessness and sacrifice. To co-opt or out-manuever is different than to lead.

It is fine to be in touch with the mainstream of the American people, but it was the special mission of the Democratic Party to be in touch with the people who were not a part of the bond markets, or members of PACs—the millions of people who are frozen out of politics and the economy of the nation.

A Democratic Party that can win but forgets the disenfran-

chised people of the country is a hollow party that wins hollow victories. And that's what we have now.

We have become an American republic lacking republican virtues.

EIR: When you ran for President in 1976, I believe that it was as an independent.

McCarthy: I found that laws passed after our 1968 campaign had the effect of suppressing or limiting movements of protest or division within the two parties. I ran as an independent candidate, principally to establish a basis for a Supreme Court challenge to the Constitutionality of the 1975-1976 amendment to the Federal Election Law, and also to challenge exclusionary and discriminatory state laws and practice.

In 1976, a prominent newspaper publisher declared, "This is a two-party country," much as an editor of *Pravda* might have declared of the former Soviet Union: "This is a one-party country."

EIR: How did Lincoln make his decision to become the candidate of the Republican Party?

McCarthy: The parties had become chaotic and meaningless. And many new parties had proliferated—from the Abolitionist Party to the Know-Nothing Party. Finally, the Republican Party emerged, with a clear identity and leadership. I believe we may have to go through a similar process.

EIR: As you know, Lyn has spoken about Lieberman and McCain forming a "Bull Moose" party to get Bush to dance to the tune of their fascist policies. He has also spoken about both the Democratic and Republican Parties splitting over the war and the economy. As you know, the Democratic National Committee threatened our youth movement with arrest and ejected them from the hotel, when they went to the Young Democrats meeting in Washington.

McCarthy: They used their 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention gameplan.

EIR: But when the kids from the LaRouche Youth Movement in California went to the meeting out there, and the bureaucrats tried to vote to throw out all the LaRouche campaign members, they couldn't get away with it, because our members outnumbered their members.

McCarthy: That's exactly what we did in the merger of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and the Democratic Party in the caucuses for the 1948 election.

EIR: All I know about that is Hubert Humphrey's Red-baiting tactics.

McCarthy: That might have been what Hubert was doing, but that's not what I was doing. In 1944, Franklin Roosevelt urged us to merge the Farmer-Labor Party and the Democratic Party to create one stronger party. The functionaries

didn't want to merge. Some people might have said that the functionaries we were dealing with were socialists or communists or whatever. But they didn't carry copies of the Communist Manifesto—they carried copies of Roberts Rules of Order!

After the War, many veterans, who were going back to school on the G.I. Bill, began to get involved in politics. They'd fought for a better world and they wanted to make a better world when they came home from the War. I was a member of the faculty of St. Thomas College, which is in Ramsey County in St. Paul, Minnesota, then, didn't have primaries, but had caucuses, and we had large numbers of students and others who attended the caucuses. The Party functionaries tried to exclude our delegates, but we had so many more than they did. We went to court and won. One of the best examples was the case of the Holy Angels nuns. They were a cloistered community, and according to the rules of their order could not leave the convent. However, they believed very strongly in what we were doing, so they all gave us their absentee ballots to participate in the caucuses. But the functionaries took us to court, saying that the nuns' absentee ballots were illegitimate because they weren't physically unable to attend the caucuses. We answered in court that they may not have been physically unable to attend the caucuses, but that because of their vows they were *morally* unable to attend. And we won!

We won the whole fight. Our members were organizing for issues, and not just positions. So we won in the caucuses and in the courts. We united the Farmer-Labor Party with the Democratic Party and became, for some time, a strong party with a platform people believed in. And we did it through fighting at every level, and outnumbered the bureaucrats.

EIR: I see! That was your start in politics. That's how you were first elected to Congress in 1948, and where your optimism came from in 1968. That's what we can do now with the LaRouche Youth Movement, who are growing in numbers and also inspiring the older generation.

McCarthy: So, I see I've given you a little something to chew on.

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