

MEET THE PRESS

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GUEST: Senator Everett Dirksen, Republican of Illinois

PANEL: May Craig, Portland, Maine Press Herald
Richard Wilson, Cowles Publications
John J. Madigan, Newsweek
Lawrence Spivak, Regular Panel Member

Deena Clark, Moderator

ANNCR: Now Ladies and Gentlemen, Meet the Press, the Peabody Award Winner produced by Lawrence Spivak. Ready for this spontaneous, unrehearsed press conference of the air are four of America's top reporters. Their questions please remember, do not necessarily reflect their point of view. It's their way of getting a story for you. Here now is the moderator of Meet the Press, Deena Clark.

CLARK: Good evening and welcome once again to Meet the Press. Our guest tonight is Senator Everett M. Dirksen, Republican from Illinois. As Chairman of the committee to elect Republican Senators, he played an important role in the election last Tuesday. Senator Dirksen was a member of the committee that investigated the Army-McCarthy controversy. In the debate which opens tomorrow on the Watkins Committee censure report, he is certain to be Senator McCarthy's most powerful defender. Now Senator Dirksen, if you're ready, I think Mr. Madigan has the first question.

MADIGAN: Senator Dirksen, as Chairman of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, you were charged with leading your party in a successful fight to retain control of the Senate. You and your party failed. Why?

DIRKSEN: Well there might be many reasons, although I wouldn't call it a failure as a matter of fact, Mr. Madigan.

MADIGAN: You lost control. Why did you lose control?

DIRKSEN: That's quite true, but if you look at the bi-elections since 1914, the losses in both Senate and House were so far below the average that I would not call it a failure, although I was a little frustrated I don't mind admitting, in not maintaining control and gaining a few extra seats.

MADIGAN: What factors did you fail on in trying to hold control?

DIRKSEN: That would require a recital I suppose of all the reasons why a candidate fails in a given state. That would involve the personality of the candidate. It would involve the gripes that people have. It would involve the stay at home vote of which there were a great many. It would involve local conditions. And probably a great many other reasons. And then of course, the inevitable tendency to change even after an administration has been in office for only 2 years.

MADIGAN: Specifically you as one of the great defenders of Senator McCarthy, do you believe that the mishandling of the McCarthy issue by the Republican Party was part of the cause of the failure?

DIRKSEN: While I never regarded it as an issue in the campaign, I will say this, based upon conversations in some 20 states where I campaigned, that it was a factor after all.

MADIGAN: Is it true that the Republican high command disregarded some of your advice on the McCarthy issue?

DIRKSEN: I'm not so sure about that because I'm rather modest about giving advice for one thing. I do make suggestions sometimes. And I thought of course that Senator McCarthy might have materially aided the cause in some areas if he had campaigned. But it must be remembered of course that he was in the hospital part of the time, he was immobilized in preparation for what is going to happen some time beginning this week in the Senate.

MADIGAN: Did you not suggest to Republican Chairman Leonard Hall that they handle the case differently and make use of McCarthy's talents?

DIRKSEN: Well I suggested it would be beneficial if his talents and generally his influence were utilized.

MADIGAN: Did not Hall refuse you, explain that the White House didn't want it either?

DIRKSEN: No, I don't think so. In every case of course, I think it was left to Senator McCarthy. And when these requests came for him to appear in a given state, insofar as I'm concerned, those were always transmitted directly to him. Because those were after all requests given from a community that felt he could do some good there.

SPIVAK: I'd like to get down to the big meeting that starts tomorrow. On July 30, 1954 in a Senate speech, you had this to say: That you would "stand up for Senator McCarthy when I think there is what appears to be something in the nature of a conspiratorial effort to liquidate and to destroy him." Do you think there is a conspiratorial effort to liquidate and to destroy Senator McCarthy?

DIRKSEN: Well Mr. Spivak, as I draw on memory now and particularly on the rather lengthy speech I made in connection with that matter on the Senate floor late at night, as I read the list of those who were demanding that something be done about McCarthy, it would almost appear if you use the word conspiracy not quite in its legal sense, but rather as a coalition for the purpose of achieving a single objective. Then I would say that that statement still stands.

SPIVAK: Senator, do you think that this move could have gotten under way if it didn't have the backing of many important Republicans? As I remember, it was started by a Republican. Isn't this really a Republican move?

DIRKSEN: Well a Republican as such could accomplish very little. It's when you put organized effort behind it and as you so well know, the CIO, the Daily Worker, the Communist Party of America, the National Committee for an Effective Congress, and perhaps other organizations, were all driving toward the same goal.

SPIVAK: And do you say here that they were the ones who influenced the Republicans in the Senate to start this business?

DIRKSEN: Oh I didn't say that

SPIVAK: I'm asking that question.

DIRKSEN: You must remember that I said on the Senate floor that the distinguished Senator from Vermont was a very honorable man, but I pointed out that all these various organizations were getting in bed with him in his effort to bring about a censure of the junior Senator from Wisconsin.

SPIVAK: Now Senator, you were on the McCarthy-Army committee. Who was responsible for starting that? Weren't Republicans responsible for that?

DIRKSEN: Definitely not. That matter of course grew out of a committee discussion where finally behind closed doors, if the whole truth must be told, one Republican along with the three Democrats on the committee, felt that that matter should have been ventilated in every possible way on TV, radio and on the front page. And it's an open secret that the junior Senator from Illinois who is participating in this function today, resisted it as best he could, but having failed in the effort and knowing we were going out of the door with a 4 to 3 vote, I simply said the committee couldn't do it, and therefore we just as well ventilate the thing first as last. But I was absolutely opposed to it from the beginning, and I indicated my opposition by repeated attempts to bring that hearing to a close some time after it started, along toward the middle, and even before it closed.

SPIVAK: As you know, there were many rumors to the effect that the White House was behind the Army-McCarthy hearings, the start of that hearing. And there also had been rumored that they're behind this move to censure. Is the leadership involved in this move to censure Senator McCarthy?

DIRKSEN: Do you mean the leadership on the Hill or do you mean the leadership in the Executive Branch?

SPIVAK: Let's divide them. The leadership first of the Executive Branch.

DIRKSEN: I have no evidence. I know of nothing that would indicate that the Executive Branch took a hand in the matter.

SPIVAK: What about the leadership on the Hill?

DIRKSEN: So far as the leadership on the Hill is concerned, I think everybody acts as an individual in the matter. If you're speaking now about the impending action on the proposed censure resolution.

WILSON: Senator Dirksen, are you the leader of the forces in the Senate who opposed the censure of Senator McCarthy?

DIRKSEN: I'm afraid that word leader is not very well applied. I can only say that as a member of the United States Senate, I have spoken my piece, I sought to defend him. I think this censure is a mistake, and I am prepared to say so on the Senate floor with what feeble talent and energy and vigor I possess.

WILSON: I was trying to get at the point of whether or not there had been any meetings or discussions leading toward the organization of a group of people who would defend Senator McCarthy.

DIRKSEN: Not that I know of. I presume those who are friendly to the junior Senator from Wisconsin will certainly have a discussion of the matter as soon as it gets definitely under way.

WILSON: I believe Senator McCarthy has forecast that he will not get more than about 19 votes in the Senate and therefore he will be censured. Do you agree with that?

DIRKSEN: Well, I would rather not speculate on what the Senate will do because it would be like a lawyer speculating on what the jury is going to do before he's made his case.

WILSON: Do you think therefore, that there is a good chance he will not be censured?

DIRKSEN: I wouldn't know. It's unpredictable like the outcome of any action of this kind where you're dealing with 96 different personalities.

WILSON: In other words, you really think the members of the Senate are open-minded on this question.

DIRKSEN: Well I sincerely hope so.

WILSON: How will the election affect the action of Senators on this?

DIRKSEN: Well, I doubt whether it will affect it very much. I know of no reason why it should.

WILSON: In your own state of Illinois, is it not true that the candidate who seemed to be most favorable to Senator McCarthy was quite badly beaten?

DIRKSEN: Yes, but on the other hand, it must be said in all fairness that the winning candidate said he had a completely open mind on the matter and would listen to all the evidence and examine the testimony before he came to a conclusion.

WILSON: And also in New Jersey the apparent winner of the Senatorial race was openly strongly against Senator McCarthy. These things you do now think will affect the attitude of Senators.

DIRKSEN: Well now we have to be very careful. Senator Case of New Jersey indicated that he would oppose the election of Senator McCarthy to a chairmanship or would vote to deny him his prerogatives as such. But I don't believe that he ever passed on this question of the impending resolution.

WILSON: I thought both candidates in New Jersey were agreed that McCarthy ought to be censured.

DIRKSEN: I have never seen anything from Senator Case to indicate that he ever took a stand on the censure resolution.

CRAIG: Senator, do you think that the Watkins Committee was stacked against Senator McCarthy as he says it was?

DIRKSEN: I would certainly not be inclined to think that any Senate committee was ever stacked.

CRAIG: That's not a direct answer.

DIRKSEN: The direct answer then would be that it was not a stacked committee. But I would say of course, and I'm talking now as a lawyer, with respect to one member of the committee, if he were on a jury that were impaneled and the time had come to exercise a challenge on a juror, I think I would have exercised my challenge with respect to one member.

CRAIG: Are you speaking of Senator Johnson?

DIRKSEN: Yes.

CRAIG: Explain to me this, Senator McCarthy also says that this session beginning tomorrow is going to be a lynching bee. Do you agree with that?

DIRKSEN: I of course am not responsible for the terms and descriptive adjectives that are used. I couldn't imagine that the Senate ever would be a lynching bee. I'm a member of the Senate and I have a high regard for its dignity and its probity. So I shall never want to demean the body of which I'm a member. I don't always agree with the conclusions that they reach.

CRAIG: Do you think the investigation made by the Watkins Committee was a fair investigation?

DIRKSEN: Insofar as I know, it was fair except in one sense, and that was this: Had I been the Chairman of the committee, I would have permitted Senator McCarthy to make his whole case; and I think along with everything else, I would have asked the complaining and prosecuting witnesses like Senator Flanders and Senator Fulbright and Senator Morse, I would have asked them to come before the committee and I would have suggested that they also subject themselves to cross examination. If you're going to get the whole truth, then of course that's the only way to get at the bottom of the matter and that wasn't done in this case.

CRAIG: I've been waiting for a long time to get a member of the McCarthy investigating committee here, particularly a Republican, to ask him why they didn't ride herd on McCarthy and prevent for instance the Cohn-Schine incident and several other things which finally came to the crisis?

DIRKSEN: Of course, once a committee votes to have an open hearing under TV lights and over radio and elsewhere covering this whole question of undue exercise of influence with respect to the Army, then you get into the whole field of motive. Obviously you couldn't stop it.

CRAIG: I didn't ask you that.

DIRKSEN: What did you ask?

CRAIG: I asked you why you didn't prevent McCarthy from getting into all that trouble, prevent the Cohn-Schine incident from ever occurring at all. You were on the committee.

DIRKSEN: Well, I had no knowledge of the matter for a long time as an individual member of the committee. The minute I had knowledge that there was some difficulty in that field, I went to the Chairman of the committee at once. It was very shortly thereafter, of course, that other things followed in sequence, including the celebrated chicken luncheon with Secretary Stevens and the visit with Counsellor Adams when he came to my office. All those things then quickly flowed out of the fact that for the first time we had knowledge that there was something in that field. Plus the fact that there were intimations by the Army that they were going to release the so-called chronology of charges.

CRAIG: Senator, you still have not gone far enough back. I asked you why you did not prevent it happening; long ago the Democrats on the committee tried to get the Republicans to make rules which would have curbed McCarthy and the Republicans voted against it. That was long ago before the Democrats ever walked out.

DIRKSEN: Probably the only thing you could have effectively done so far as rules are concerned, was to require that with respect to hearings out of the District of Columbia, that you require the attendance of at least two members of the committee. That's one of the recommendations that has been made over and over again. That may have modified it some. But after all, we were only following a general pattern that has been followed by other committees including the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Un-American Activities Committee of the House. Ever since the Cristoffel case in the Supreme Court, the committees have held that one man constituted a quorum for the purpose of taking testimony under oath.

CRAIG: Could you not have prevented the Cohn-Schine incident if you had agreed with the Democrats when they wanted the approval of the full subcommittee before you hired counsellor and other employees?

DIRKSEN: When we had that meeting prior to the time that the Democratic members came back to the committee, it was agreed that there could be no hiring unless it was done by a majority of the committee.

CRAIG: But they asked you before they walked out and all the Republicans were against it.

DIRKSEN: Yes, but after all, this difficulty happened after they came back.

MADIGAN: Let's put it another way. Is it not a fact you didn't think McCarthy deserved to be curbed?

DIRKSEN: We simply followed the format that is followed by other committees.

MADIGAN: Is it not a fact you did not think Senator McCarthy should have been curbed?

DIRKSEN: As a matter of fact, I thought he was doing a pretty good job. The other thing is this and it must not be forgotten. When you're serving on 15 or 16 subcommittees of the Senate, and one subcommittee and this is a subcommittee, this investigating subcommittee goes off to New York or Boston or Cleveland or elsewhere to take testimony, it's so impossible oft times to disengage yourself with other work and consequently it's not uncommon for one man to take testimony. I took all the testimony on the appropriations for the District of Columbia. I think I was the only one present.

MADIGAN: Now that you're on record as saying he should not have been curbed, can we take it you will cross examine the people tomorrow such as Flanders and Morse and make them witnesses?

DIRKSEN: There will be no chance to cross examine. You don't follow the cross examinations technique on the floor. All you can do is say to a fellow Senator, you can ask him a question; he may answer; he may be responsive in his answer, he may not. But it is not regarded as cross examination.

MADIGAN: Have you heard a rumor to the effect that some Republicans were trying to work out a plan whereby Senator McCarthy would publicly apologize on the floor and they would hope to water down the resolution?

DIRKSEN: I haven't heard it.

MADIGAN: Would you be in favor of such a thing?

DIRKSEN: I wouldn't know, as a matter of fact.

MADIGAN: Could you conceive of Senator McCarthy ~~apologizing~~ on the floor?

DIRKSEN: He has not apologized up to this time. And if he has a deep and abiding conviction that he's right, he probably wouldn't apologize.

MADIGAN: And you believe he is right.

DIRKSEN: Well I can only say that my own language both in and out of the Senate is on the restrained and temperate side. I hold no brief for unrestrained language. I don't always throw the book at somebody where there is provocation like someone who lets his temper slip.

SPIVAK: I believe you've already said that you will vote not to censure Senator McCarthy.

DIRKSEN: That's correct.

SPIVAK: Are you so firmly convinced that none of the arguments that any of the Senators can raise, including the Watkins Committee can raise in the Senate, that is likely to sway you?

DIRKSEN: I doubt very much whether they'll sway me largely because I put this on a different level. I put Senator McCarthy aside for the moment and think of it in terms of curbing the freedom of a Senator in pursuit of his investigatory power. Once you put a limit on it, where do you stop? And how far can you go? What is your latitude from here on out before there is some danger that you might invite censure because you've gone too far with a witness. That is one thing that is involved. The second thing that's involved is this: I'm thinking in terms of headlines that will appear in countries all over the world. If the man who is regarded not only in this country but elsewhere in the world as the chief exposé of Communism is censured by his colleagues, what will it do with respect to the hunt that has been on? What will it do with respect to the crusade that has been on to ferret out Reds and pinks and follow travelers, particularly in government? I'd hate to see the headlines that will probably blossom on the press in many sections of the world.

SPIVAK: Senator, I read through the Watkins report pretty carefully and the nub of their argument seems to be in this statement: When the personal honor and official conduct of the Senator of the United States are in question before a duly constituted committee of the Senate, the Senator in question owes a duty to himself, to the state, and to the Senate to appear promptly and cooperate fully when called by a Senate committee charged with the responsibility of the inquiry. This argument then is that he was in contempt of a Senate committee. Now, do you think the Senate has a right to judge a matter of that kind in contempt of its own committee?

DIRKSEN: I must point out that there is no such rule in the Senate today, and if that is regarded as a rule, then it is a rule made by the special committee under the Chairmanship of Mr. Watkins, and obviously it would be somewhat *ex post facto* in nature, I would say. But there is no such rule at the moment.

SPIVAK: You think then that it is perfectly all right for a Senator to say what he wants to about another Senator on the floor of the Senate and that the Senate itself has no power to act against him, or in a committee.

DIRKSEN: Indeed not. But the thing to which they refer there, with particular reference to unrestrained language, was language that was not recited on the floor of the Senate, and I'm thinking now of the language that was used with respect to Senator Hendrickson. When it comes of course to the invitation to appear before the Gillette committee, if I recall now, and I must refresh myself, those were all invitations, but the question is, is there a duty? If there is, there is no such rule that I know anything about.

SPIVAK: Senator, if they censure Senator McCarthy for what he has said up to now, what are they going to do about what he has said about the Watkins Committee and about the lynching bee itself?

DIRKSEN: That's another question, but the fact of the matter is that the Watkins Committee had jurisdiction only over those things that were presented on the Senate floor and presented to the committee as such. Anything that comes thereafter is necessarily in the nature of new matter which would have to be dealt with at some subsequent time.

SPIVAK: Do you believe that if you use the rule that the Watkins Committee is trying to set up, that many of you would be subject to censure?

DIRKSEN: I wouldn't know about that. But I know this, that as I think of the three specific substantive things that are involved -- the language that is used with reference to the Senator from New Jersey, the alleged conduct with respect to the invitation from the Gillette Committee, and finally in the language of the committee, the alleged reprehensible language used in the Zwicker hearing-- it just seems to me if you're going to deal with those and tie the hands of the members of the United States Senate, you do two things. You first of all abridge the complete latitude of the investigatory power, and of course you put a weapon in the hands of those who would like to put a barricade in the way of the exposure of Communism in this country.

WILSON: I think we've got it clear now that you are a defender of Senator McCarthy.

DIRKSEN: Well Mr. Wilson, I'd rather put it on different grounds. I'm thinking in terms of my prerogatives as a Senator and certainly other witnesses have been abused far more excessively than General Zwicker was abused. That's one thing.

WILSON: I want to take you into another field. Do you agree that the Republicans lost the election?

DIRKSEN: Lost the election -- well we lost control, but as I pointed out, our average loss was far smaller than in any bi-election except two since 1914.

WILSON: You would concede that much.

DIRKSEN: Yes.

WILSON: Do you think the defeat of the Republicans will have any effect on President Eisenhower's decision to run again or not to run?

DIRKSEN: That's a wholly speculative matter and I'd rather not speculate for the President.

WILSON: Do you think he ought to run? You're an old Taft Republican. I'd be interested to get your opinion.

DIRKSEN: I will say this, if the President runs, I'll be in his corner.

WILSON: Will you be in his corner for the nomination?

DIRKSEN: If he's a candidate for the nomination, I'll be in his corner for the nomination.

WILSON: Do you think the election tended to show that the Taft Republicans, and there are a great many of them, failed to play a very important part in Republican Party affairs?

Q DIRKSEN: Well, I don't quite know what you mean, Mr. Wilson. But if you mean participation in an election as citizens of the United States, it seems they have participated.

CLARK: I'm sorry to interrupt, but our time is up. Thank you so much, Senator Dirksen, for being with us.

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