

'Biting Off More...' Continues from Front Page

More and more we are snookered by industry in their quest to make a buck. **Green-washing** has spawned its own industry, creating programs and certifications that enable gross polluter producers to cleanse their soul with groovy rhetoric and a measure of misdirection.

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, the use of **Resin Identification Codes** in conjunction with a recycling symbol—the familiar triangle of three chasing arrows—constitutes a misrepresentation of claims. Even though the **RIC** is meant to identify a product's unique plastic resin type, consumers generally understand it to represent a universal recycling symbol. A report found that 68% of Americans assume any product with the resin code and recycling symbol is recyclable.

When the plastic industry co-opted the recycling symbol to label their plastic resins, they began a decades-long misinformation campaign to convince Americans that all plastic packaging is recyclable. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Ah, truth, like trust, morally immutable yet ever contentious.

A lack of both leads to dangerous disingenuousness - adding to the cognitive dissonance of determining what is real and true that is damaging young minds daily.

Spurred by the impacts of global warming in Montana, 16 young people are suing the state of Montana for failing to protect them against climate change.



The first of the lawsuits brought by young people in the U.S. to go to court. Their lawsuit hinges on Montana's Constitution, which guarantees its citizens the right to a clean and healthful environment. They claim that Montana's state energy policy (which was recently repealed, likely due to the lawsuit) and the state's methods of environmental review are unconstitutional. The state, they claim, by prioritizing the extraction and use of fossil fuels despite the warnings of decades of science, is breaking its own laws.

Over the last decade, youth-led legal actions relating to climate change have been filed in every American state. This was the first allowed to go to trial when its proceedings began in June. Plaintiffs will appear in a courtroom in Helena before the First Judicial District Court. There will be no jury because judges decide constitutional issues. The lawsuit has stretched out three years already. The oldest of the plaintiffs was 18 when it began. She graduated from college last month.

There are 250,000 people under the age of 20 in Montana, more than a 5th of the state population. The 16 young plaintiffs in this lawsuit see themselves as representing the fears and anxieties of a generation: a generation tired of swallowing bull shit.

Open up, and swallow that.

- A GREENFUSE RE-MIX

McCarthyism, Then and Now And the (True) One-Party State in America

If you're of a certain age like me, you undoubtedly have an earlier vision of just how ominously mad Washington's politics can get. And I wasn't even thinking of the time in 1968, when Richard Nixon slipped by the Joe Biden of that moment, Hubert Humphrey, winning the presidency with less than 50% of the vote, thanks to his "Southern strategy" and a third-party run by segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace. Nor did I have in mind the Watergate Hearings five years later that revealed Nixon's bugging of the Democratic National Committee's headquarters, among many other crimes.

In fact, Washington has long been a stranger and more ominous place than one might imagine. I didn't live through the era that, in his recent book, historian Adam Hochschild called *American Midnight*, the moment during and after World War I when President Woodrow Wilson and his associates cracked down on dissent of almost any sort. They even banned publications they didn't like from the mail and managed to put a former presidential candidate for the then-popular Socialist Party, Eugene V. Debs, in jail for years.

Still, young as I then was, I do remember one of those earlier mad moments in American politics. It was April 1954 when what came to be known as the Army-McCarthy hearings hit television screens nationwide. At that time, long before anyone had even dreamed of social media, TVs — black and white ones, of course — were changing lives and habits across the country. The star, if you want to think of him that way, and the most distinctly Trumpian figure of his moment and perhaps any other moment before The Donald, was Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy. He shot to fame in 1950 by claiming he had inside information that 205 members of the State Department — yes, 205! — were card-carrying members of the Communist Party.

Before that spring of 1954, McCarthy had the Trumpian time of his life holding endless Senate hearings to denounce public figures of every sort as communists. He made life a living hell for a stunning range of Americans. And then, with the all-too-hot Korean war at an end and the Cold War becoming ever more frigid, McCarthy, who had had a field day, went one step too far. In 1953, with the help of his chief counsel Roy Cohn (who, I'm sure you won't be surprised to learn, would later become a guiding light for one Donald J. Trump), began holding hearings investigating supposed communist influence in the Army and, in response, the military, you might say, did him in.

That should, by the way, be a lesson for the McCarthyites of this moment, too. No matter who you are or what positions you take, the one step too far in American politics isn't calling your president a "liar," it's trying to turn your guns (such as they are) on the most preeminent (and preeminently funded) political force in America: the Pentagon. And oddly enough, that remains the strangest and least told story around. Yes, on January 6, 2021, a still-president of the United States tried to turn the American political system into a one-party state featuring his own Trumpublican Party and white nationalist militias. But the true version of the one-party state in this country in all these years remains the Pentagon.

It hasn't mattered in the least that, since World War II, the most wildly overfunded military on the planet hasn't won a significant war of any sort, despite fighting and losing a number of them or, at best, in Korea and perhaps Iraq, tying them. Nothing, not defeat as in Vietnam and Afghanistan, or anything else

has ever stopped it from being massively overfunded by whatever administration is in power or whatever party controls Congress. That turns out not to be a choice in American politics. Even the implosion of the Soviet Union that left this country, at least briefly, without a significant enemy on the planet never resulted in a "peace dividend" when it came to lowering "national-security" spending. And, of course, since the 9/11 attacks that funding has simply gone through the roof.

That's a story all too little noticed by most Americans in Joe McCarthy's time as in our own. Recently, however, I once again came across a figure from the McCarthy era who did indeed notice, but bear with me as I slowly wend my way toward him. I came from a liberal Democratic family in New York City. My mother was a professional caricaturist. (She worked under her maiden name, Irma Selz.) That was so rare then that, in a gossip column I still have, she was referred to as "New York's girl caricaturist." While there were men aplenty in the world of cartooning then, there was just one of her. (Well, okay, there was also Helen Hokinson of the *New Yorker*, but you get the idea.) In the 1930s and 1940s, my mom had done mainly theatrical caricatures for every paper in town from the *New York Times* and *Herald Tribune* to *PM* and the *Brooklyn Eagle*. In the 1950s, as that way of life disappeared (Al Hirschfeld aside), she found work doing her caricatures to accompany articles in the *New Yorker* and, above all, in the *New York Post*, which was then a liberal rag, not a Murdoch one.

The *Post*, curiously enough, had her do caricatures of just about every political figure of that moment, nationally and globally, and ran them as if they were photos, even sometimes on its front page. Its editor James Wechsler took on Joe McCarthy in its pages and was then called before his Senate committee in blistering testimony in which he was attacked as a communist sympathizer. In April 1954, the *Post* assigned my mom to cover the televised Army-McCarthy hearings and, for that purpose, bought our family its first black-and-white TV.

McCarthy, with his patented sneer and smile, was distinctly the Trump of that moment and, memorably enough, his was the very first face I saw on a TV screen in my house. Walking in from school, book-bag in hand, at age nine, I found my mother on a chair in the dining room, her giant pad of drawing paper balanced on her lap, the TV plugged in, and on it *that* face.

Believe me, it was the thrill of a lifetime! Until then I had to go to a neighbor's house for *Superman* or any other show I wanted to see. Now, it was all mine. And that sneering-smiling face looking at me from that small black-and-white TV screen seemed completely recognizable — like the face of every belligerent 1950s dad I then knew. In fact, I always wanted to write a piece called "Hooray for Senator McCarthy" to catch my mood in that moment toward the man who wrecked so many lives but got me "my" TV.

And like Trump, even after Joe was a total loser — censured by his Senate colleagues in 1954, he would die a few years later, possibly of drink, a broken man — his fans among the voters remained with him. In the wake of that censure, in fact, a Gallup poll found that 34% of all voters still approved of him. (Sound familiar?)

Then as now, his was hardly the only belligerent face in the room. (Think, for instance, of FBI head and fellow monster J. Edgar Hoover.) Almost 70 years later, of course, the belligerent faces no longer have to be male, not in Washington's most recent version of McCarthyite politics.

Mind you, I don't want you to think that politics in that other age (or in ours) was simply a hell on earth. There were indeed some truly admirable figures in that world. Take, for instance, I.F. Stone, known far and wide as "Izzy." He was not just a progressive but worked for a remarkable range of outfits, ranging from *PM* and the *New York Post* to the *Nation* magazine. From 1953 to 1971, however, he produced a memorable one-person publication, *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, that made him, in his own way, famous. In the process, he seemed to socialize with almost every progressive in America (and plenty of people who weren't). But never with me. Yes, in the 1960s, I read that weekly of his fervently and I was almost 45 years old when he died in 1989. Still, no such luck.

So, I recently did the second-best thing and read D.D. Guttenplan's superb biography of him, *American Radical, The Life and Times of I.F. Stone*. I was reminded, among so many other things, that the worst of times for numerous Americans, politically speaking, could be the best of times for others.

And I'm not just thinking of Joe McCarthy or, in our present over-the-top moment, Congressional representative Marjorie Taylor Greene. In this country, the worst of times was invariably not so when it came to the Pentagon. McCarthy, of course, found this out to his dismay when he tried to take on the Army.

Even in the 1960s, as it was losing the Vietnam War disastrously, somehow the Pentagon always managed to reign supreme. As Izzy would write in his weekly after young antiwar demonstrators ("The whole world is watching!") were beaten by Mayor Richard Daley's police during the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, "*This is the way it is done in Prague. This is what happens to candidates who finish second in Vietnam. This is not the beginning of the police state, it IS the police state.*" And he added tellingly, "*When a country is denied a choice on the most burning issue of the time, the war in Vietnam, then the two-party system has become a one-party rubber stamp. The Pentagon won the election even before the votes are cast.*"

And strangely enough, all too little has changed since.

In 1973, when the Watergate hearings on then-President Nixon began, I was living in San Francisco, working for a small progressive news service, and there was no question that I had to watch them. So, I bought my first TV, also — though the color TV era had begun — black and white. (Money was short in those days.) And there I watched the remarkable Senator Sam Ervin, Jr., who had played a role in McCarthy's fall, take on Nixon's crew as the head of the Senate Watergate Committee.

And now, having seen several versions of all-American madness in my lifetime, from Joe McCarthy to the present Kevin McCarthy update, I wonder what sense (or, for that matter, nonsense) Izzy would have made of this world of ours in which the Pentagon still rules a one-party state (concerning its own affairs anyway). What if you could bring Izzy Stone back from the dead and fill him in on the Trump years? What if you could tell him about a one-of-a-kind former president who, having lost his reelection bid, encouraged his followers to take over the government by a *coup d'état* and even possibly hang his own vice president?

What if you could tell him that, no matter the McCarthyism of this moment, the Pentagon and the military-industrial complex that goes with it still reign supreme, despite more lost wars; that the latest Congress ponied up close to a trillion taxpayer dollars (\$858 billion to be exact) for that military and undoubtedly closer to \$1.5 trillion for the whole national-security-state?

What if you could tell him that all of this was happening in a world of such extremes that even he might have been shocked? What if you filled him in on the planet's floods and mega-droughts, its rapidly melting snow and ice, its soaring temperatures and ever fiercer storms? What if you told him, in a world where California could experience both a mega-drought and record flooding rains at the same time, where one-third of a country could find itself suddenly underwater, that the fossil-fuel companies at the heart of this crisis were (like the Pentagon in its own way) making record fortunes off it? What if you told him that, even in his moment, Exxon's scientists already understood with remarkable accuracy what was going to happen to us in the distinctly overheating 21st century?

Izzy Stone died in 1989 and had no way of knowing any of this. In an era in which Joe McCarthy is back with us (even if in his Trumpian form) and the Pentagon still rides high, Izzy, you're missed. Believe me, you are!

Tom Engelhardt
tomdispatch.com

