

McCarthy Hearing Excerpts



The following are excerpts from the closed-door Joseph McCarthy hearings of 1953-54, unsealed in May 2003 by the United States Senate.

- Feb. 18, 1954, New York City.

McCarthy and his chief counsel, Roy Cohn, demanded that Lt. Col. Chester T. Brown discuss how an Army dentist, suspected of being a communist, had been promoted and then honorably discharged.

Cohn: Did you submit to him at any time a questionnaire, or did your office submit to him at any time a questionnaire, concerning his status in the Army?

Brown: I cannot answer that question. It is classified.

Cohn: You cannot tell us whether or not you submitted a questionnaire?

Brown: I am not permitted to tell you, sir.

McCarthy: On what grounds? May I say something to you, sir, and to the others of you offices. I will listen to communists refuse to answer; I will listen to no Army officer protecting a communist, and you are going to answer these questions or your case will come before the Senate for contempt and I intend to shove it all the way through.

... I think, may I say this, that any man in the uniform of his country, who refuses to give information to a committee of the Senate which represents the American people, that that man is not fit to wear the uniform of his country. And in my opinion he is in the same category, Colonel, as the traitor whom he is protecting.

Brown: May I say, sir, as a soldier, it is my duty to obey my military superiors.

- Sept. 1, 1953, New York City

Cohn and McCarthy question Marvell Cooke, who had been assistant managing editor of the People's Voice, a Harlem newspaper, in the 1940s.

Cohn: Are you a member of the Communist Party?

Cooke: I refuse to answer. I invoke my privilege of the Fifth Amendment.

Cohn: On the ground your answer might tend to incriminate you?

Cooke: I do.

McCarthy: Incidentally, what do you have under your hand?

Cooke: The New York Post. I am through with it. You may have it if you would like it.

McCarthy: I don't care for it, thank you. (The New York Post was considered a liberal newspaper at the time.)

• May 26, 1953

McCarthy and Cohn question composer Aaron Copland about his associations with communists.

McCarthy: Have you ever been a communist sympathizer?

Copland: I am not sure I would be able to say what you mean by the word "sympathizer." ...

McCarthy: Did you ever attend a communist meeting?

Copland: I am afraid I don't know how you define a communist meeting

Cohn: What was your view of the Hitler-Stalin pact -- 1939 to 1941?

Copland: I don't remember any specific view of it

Cohn: Do you feel communists should be allowed to teach in our schools?

Copland: I haven't given the matter such thought as to come up with an answer.

Cohn: In other words, as of today you don't have any firm thought?

Copland: I would be inclined to allow the faculty of the university to decide that.