

Letters to the editor

Senate Democrats should be ashamed

To the editor:

Before Brett Kavanaugh's nomination was even announced, the Senate Democrats, led by Chuck Schumer, swore that they would stop at nothing to derail Trump's pick for the Supreme Court, no matter who it was. Now we know what they meant by that statement.

They failed to stop Kavanaugh's progress in the usual Judiciary Committee hearings, so when it appeared he was about to be confirmed, they launched their underhanded attack.

Senator Dianne Feinstein had been given a confidential letter from Dr. Christine Ford weeks before. Then, against the wishes of Dr. Ford, Feinstein leaked the letter to the press at the last minute. This dishonest political tactic, and what they did thereafter, was a disservice to both Judge Kavanaugh and Dr. Ford. The approach immediately recalled the techniques originally developed by the infamous U.S. Sen. Joseph McCarthy.

I grew up in Walpole during the 1950s. One of our townspeople received national attention in those days. His name was Joseph Nye Welch. He was an attorney with the well-known Boston law firm, Hale and Dorr. It was 1954 and Welch was representing the

U.S. Army in one of the first nationally televised congressional hearings. It involved Sen. McCarthy. McCarthy, the year before, had investigated the Army to determine the level to which it had been infiltrated by the Communist Party. Now, the Army was accusing McCarthy and his staff of trying to unduly influence them for personal purposes.

A key moment in the hearing brought Welch into the national limelight. Sen. McCarthy, wanting to hurt Welch's credibility, brought up the name of one Welch's young associates at the Hale and Dorr law firm, noting that he had been a member of a communist organization. The young man, Fred Fisher, had joined the communist law organization as a student at Harvard Law School, and quit shortly after graduating. Welch was aware of Fisher's situation and purposely did not put him on the Army legal team because he was afraid McCarthy would bring the matter up during the hearings. He knew it could unfairly hurt Fisher's reputation. So, the Hale and Dorr senior counsel was greatly dismayed when McCarthy suddenly announced the young attorney's name.

Welch launched into an impassioned defense of Fisher on live, national television. "Until this moment, senator,

I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness ..." When McCarthy resumed his attack, Welch interrupted him: "Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?" The hearing room erupted in applause, and McCarthy's reputation was never the same.

The Army was just McCarthy's latest target. Others were the State Department, various universities and the film industry. His approach to those investigations was so notorious that it is now known as "McCarthyism". It is defined by Webster's dictionary as being "the use of tactics involving personal attacks on individuals by means of widely publicized, indiscriminate allegations especially on the basis of unsubstantiated charges."

The Senate Democrats learned well from the late senator from Wisconsin. By doing so, they have set in motion a new low in Senate confirmation politics. They should be ashamed. Unfortunately, they are not.

To Chuck Schumer: "Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?"

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