

In McCarthy Era, TV Networks Cowered;

McCarranism

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Body

To the Editor:

As Congress finally gets around to eliminating some of the last vestiges of the **McCarthy era** by repealing the anti-Communist provisions of the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act ("Landmark Accord Promises to Ease Immigration Curbs," front page, Oct. 26), it is a shame that you are rewriting the history of the period.

Senator Joseph R. **McCarthy** gave his name to the anti-Communist furor of the 1950's, but he bore little responsibility for most of the actual repression. He did not, as you state, lead the fight to keep out undesirable aliens. Nevada's powerful Democratic Senator Pat McCarran did.

But blaming individuals for the excesses of McCarthyism distorts reality. Most American politicians supported these measures. Only 10 senators voted to sustain President Harry S. Truman's veto of the 1950 Internal Security Act, which contained the immigration restrictions incorporated in the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act.

It was the misguided, but widely shared, conviction that the country's security required the restriction of individual rights that led to the excesses of the **McCarthy era**.

Such concerns still threaten our freedom. Since the Federal Government tends to invoke national security to justify incursions against individual rights, that the conference immigration bill allows the Secretary of State to bar aliens "under exceptional circumstances" is hardly reassuring.

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New York, Oct. 26, 1990

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