

October 14, 1987

Dear Editor:

Under the singularly appropriate headline, "Attack positions, not persons," Bruce Ivins, in common with a few others who do not like what I have written about Roy Meachum, does exactly what he says should not be done - he attacks me personally without attributing even a single factual error to me.

With a Meachum-like trick, he suggests that readers "Read the whole piece."

How many people does he really believe saved and can refer to the papers of a week ago or, what would be necessary for understanding, Meachum's column of two weeks ago?

Events have overtaken all of us and what we have written can be measured by those events. So I invite Mr. Ivins to go back to the Meachum column I addressed, published in the Post October 2, and compare it with my commentary on it, ^{with} ~~and both~~ developments in the Senate's consideration of the Bork nomination to the Supreme Court and with what has since been published about it, particularly the vote in the Senate Judiciary committee.

Having been so free and unfaithful to reality in his flacking for Meachum, who somehow seems entirely unable as well as unwilling to defend himself, I also challenge Mr. Ivins: produce a single inaccuracy in what I wrote. Just one!

In return I issue a dare to him: pick out what you regard as any unfair opinion I offered about Meachum's column, that one or any other I have addressed, and I'll respond with precise fact to explain it.

I don't really care about Mr. Ivins' personal attack on me and I was entirely unworried and undeterred when, without mentioning my name, Roy Meachum threatened a libel suit. I do suggest, however, that personal attacks, entirely out of context and without mention of the undisputed fact in what I wrote, are the ultimate in bankruptcy in any kind of controversy. It is also unmanly.

If Mr. Ivins is more than a flack for Meachum, I suggest that he might select from what he himself quoted of what I wrote, pretending that I had offered opinion only when that is not true, what I described as "venomous," "ridiculous" and unfactual in Meachum's "Dark days" column. If Mr. Ivins will put his reputation where his mouth is, I'll put mine on the specifics ⁱⁿ ~~of~~ the fact I'll provide.

Make my day!

And if he does not, that will say more than enough to put him where he belongs.

Sincerely

Attack positions,
not persons

10/14/87

Mr. Harold Weisberg's article in the Oct. 8 *Frederick News-Post*, "More dark days: This time it's Meachum," really takes the cake. I would hazard that many readers, myself included, sensed that the main purpose of the article was not to criticize Roy Meachum's position concerning Robert Bork's nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court. I am sorry to say that the primary reason for the article appeared to be to attack Mr. Meachum himself.

Never in the *News-Post* have I seen so much invective hurled at one individual in such a small space. Was it malicious? False? Defamatory? Here are just a few tidbits — judge for yourself: "... Roy Meachum's ignorance, prejudices and contempt for fact and reality." "... Meachum just makes it up as he goes..." "... Meachum's standard copout..." "The rest of this newest Meachum mishmash ranges from the venomous to the ridiculous." "... the self-portrayed, omniscient Meachum..." "... Meachum's propaganda and self-promotion." Wow! All this and more in just one, little article! (For those who believe that the quotations have been improperly taken out of context, I encourage you to read the whole piece.)

I have disagreed with more than one column by Roy Meachum, and I'm sure that other individuals have disagreed with some of his articles. In our zeal to contradict, however, it hardly seems necessary to resort to calumny and character assassination. Perhaps all of us, letter writers, columnists, even Mr. Meachum and Mr. Weisberg, should direct our attacks toward positions, not persons.

BRUCE IVINS
Frederick



Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick MD