

stand the first camera there is from the Justice Department. Is that Mr. Meese operating the camera, or who is that?

I am just curious. I just want the record to note that I do not ever recall the Justice Department having a television training session that went on, but if they have that as a program, I just want to say hello to Mr. Meese and whoever else is there and move on. [Laughter.]

Do you have any objection to Mr. Meese? Are you sliding closer to me or further away? [Laughter.]

Senator KENNEDY. I do not know whether the Chair knows about it.

Senator DENTON. I have recognized Senator Kennedy, but I would ask that we consider that this is a hearing in the U.S. Senate and we are supposed to be objective about this hearing. I intend to be.

I am going to require order. I am not going to supervise a circus. I recognize Senator Kennedy.

Senator BIDEN. Excuse me. If the Senator will yield, the reason I dealt with it humorously is because I can find no reason why the Justice Department would be filming this, so I dealt with it humorously.

Now, if the Senator wants me to be real serious about it, I would like to ask the Justice Department before we begin as to why, for the first time, to the best of my knowledge, they are here televising or taping a session. I would be just curious to know.

Senator DENTON. Well, Mr. Bolton, the Assistant Attorney General for Legislative Affairs, I am just informed, is here. Perhaps he would care to answer that.

Mr. BOLTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Biden, the reason that we are doing this is because we have a number of nominees who will come before the committee who have never appeared before a Senate committee before; are unfamiliar with the procedures.

We felt that in order to give them some knowledge of what happens in a confirmation hearing that this sort of thing would be helpful, and that is the sole reason.

Senator BIDEN. Thank you.

Senator DENTON. Thank you, Mr. Bolton.

Senator Kennedy.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you.

The confirmation of nominees for lifetime appointments to the Federal judiciary is one of the most important responsibilities of the Senate mandated by the U.S. Constitution, and the examination by the Senate of a nominee's fitness to serve as a Federal judge is the last opportunity to determine whether the candidate possesses the education, experience, skills, integrity, and, most importantly, the commitment to equal justice under law, which are essential attributes of a Federal judge.

Once confirmed, a Federal judge literally has life and death authority over citizens that appear before him, with limited review of his decisions. Our Federal judiciary is the guardian of the rights

and liberties guaranteed to all of us by the U.S. Constitution, and the decisions of Federal judges are constantly shaping and reshaping those rights and liberties.

This committee has a duty to our citizens to carefully examine the qualifications of nominees for the Federal bench and to give our approval only to those who have demonstrated a personal commitment to the principle of equality for all Americans and a sensitivity to the long history of inequality which we are still struggling to overcome.

Mr. Sessions, as the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Alabama, comes to this committee with a record which, regrettably, includes presiding over the now infamous so-called Perry County voting fraud prosecutions.

In the *Perry County* case, the Government indicted three well-known and highly respected black civil rights activists on charges of voter fraud in assisting elderly black voters to vote by absentee ballot.

But for the efforts of the defendants 20 years ago, these black citizens would not have been allowed to vote. All three of the defendants were acquitted of all charges in the indictments, and some of the elderly blacks have responded to their experiences during the prosecution by vowing never to vote again. Mr. Sessions' role in that case alone should bar him from serving on the Federal bench.

But there is more, much more. We just received a sworn statement from a Justice Department attorney I know, which will be the subject of a good deal of questioning during the course of this hearing, who has worked on civil rights cases with Mr. Sessions over the period Sessions had been U.S. attorney.

Mr. Hebert has stated to the committee investigators that Mr. Sessions on more than one occasion has characterized the NAACP and the ACLU as un-American, Communist-inspired organizations.

Mr. Hebert reports that Mr. Sessions said these organizations did more harm than good when they were trying to force civil rights down the throats of people who were trying to put problems behind them.

Mr. Hebert has also stated that Mr. Sessions suggested that a prominent white civil rights lawyer who litigated voting rights cases was a disgrace to his race for doing it.

Mr. Sessions is a throwback to a shameful era which I know both black and white Americans thought was in our past. It is inconceivable to me that a person of this attitude is qualified to be a U.S. attorney, let alone a U.S. Federal judge.

He is, I believe, a disgrace to the Justice Department and he should withdraw his nomination and resign his position.

The CHAIRMAN. The distinguished Senator from Alabama, Mr. Heflin.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HOWELL HEFLIN

Senator HEFLIN. Mr. Chairman, as Senator Denton previously stated, he had made a lot of words of introduction at a previous time when Mr. Sessions was here. I, likewise, made introductory remarks of Mr. Sessions at that time.