

# Birch Society Chapters in 34 States; Others Scheduled

Editor's note: Following is the second of three dispatches about the semi-secret John Birch Society, an organization that has created controversy across the land because of its methods of fighting Communism. A UPI special reporting team, headed by Barbara Bruden, is in the New York bureau, reports today on the society's doctrine, membership and various views on its operations.

## By BARBARA BRUDEN UPI Correspondent

At the start of 1961 the John Birch Society had organized one to 100 chapters in each of 34 states and the District of Columbia, according to its founder, Robert Welch of Massachusetts.

Still to be organized: Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah and Vermont.

"The John Birch Society is to be a monolithic body," Welch said in a blue book of the organization's doctrine.

"A Republican form of government or of organization has many attractions and advantages, under certain favorable conditions. But under less happy circumstances it lends itself too readily to infiltration, distortion and disruption. And Democracy, of course in government or organization . . . is merely a deceptive phrase, a weapon of demagoguery, and a perennial fraud . . ."

"The John Birch Society will operate under completely authoritative controls at all levels . . . no collection of debating societies is ever going to stop the Communist conspiracy."

### Hoped for Million

He hoped for 1 million dedicated members to fight the forces of evil with "evangelical fervor."

Paul H. Talbert, Los Angeles insurance executive who is one of the society's council members, estimated recently that it might have 100,000 members by the end of 1961, its third year.

Welch said he wanted to raise a million dollars from sources other than dues during the society's first year "and even that amount is an awfully small drop in the bucket, against what either the direct Communist propagandists or the Reutherite labor bosses are spending against us."

There is no public accounting of either money or membership. Dues are \$24 a year for men and \$12 for women; life memberships are \$1,000, either sex. Appeals for additional voluntary contributions accompany virtually all mailings to members. Welch has said he draws no salary. There are 28 full-time employees at headquarters and the society is reported to be the largest single source of revenue for the Belmont, Mass., post office next door.

Another 35 salaried persons

work around the country as coordinators of member groups, and an additional 100 persons work full or almost full time as volunteers.

Welch frankly has borrowed the Communist technique of setting up "front" groups for specific purposes. He acknowledged that another technique he advocates — the use of loaded questions to smear a suspect he can't prove is a Communist — is "mean and dirty."

Chapters operate at widely different levels of secrecy. In North Dakota, meetings are announced on local radio stations and everybody's welcome. The North Dakota organization, with about 400 members in 19 chapters, was active in a proposal to outlaw the federal income tax which was approved by the state's lower house but killed in the state senate.

In Dallas, Tex., a 32-year-old business member of the society wouldn't give his own name for publication, however, and explained: "most of our members in Dallas are little people, just like I am. Most of these folks could not take a sustained smear attack. If it came along, they would probably be thrown out of their jobs. For that reason, the thing has been kept pretty quiet. There are no real millionaires in Dallas in it as far as I know."

He estimated there were 20 chapters in Dallas and said he'd heard there were 100 in Houston. Chapters are generally made up of 20 members.

### No Rule of Thumb

There is no rule of thumb in Welch's book for members to determine on their own who is or who isn't a Communist, or Communist dupe.

"There are ways of sizing up both individuals and organizations in this battle which come only with experience, a knowledge of the interlocking pieces and personalities and a feel for the way the Communists work," says the "blue book."

"And while of course I can make mistakes too, I know from the way my opinion of various characters, formed independently, has then proved to coincide with the opinion of J. B. Matthews . . . that I have a fairly sensitive and accurate nose in this area . . . so we do not intend to be frustrated by indecisions of this nature."

Matthews is an associated editor of Welch's "American Opinion" as well as the standard by which he checks his nose for Communists. He resigned as chief investigator for Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy's Senate committee in 1953 after appearance in "The American Mercury" of Matthews' article stating that clergymen were "the largest single group supporting the Communist apparatus" in this country.

The "most important activity" of the John Birch Society at the moment is its campaign to impeach Chief Justice Earl Warren.

In the view of the society's founder and leader, Robert Welch, the Supreme Court's school decision and all the racial troubles in the South have been brought about by Communists to foment civil war. "Civil Rights" is a Communist slogan, "an exact parallel to the slogan of 'Agrarian Reform' which they used in China," he has told members.

In his bulletin for March he urged them to write "more letters to the same congressmen . . . the same letters to more congressmen" and to the newspapers to prepare the way for undisclosed "specific actions" to come. "There is plenty of evidence that we already have the pot of the Warren impeachment boiling," he said. "What we need now, by adding more fuel and blowing on the fire, is to give that pot a head of steam that will be looked at as a chance by anybody who might want to sit on the lid . . ."

### Looking Askance

Congressmen, recently made aware of Welch's old accusation that former President Eisenhower was a Communist, are already looking askance at what they describe variously as a "trickle" or a "flood" of "Impeach Warren" mail.

Republican Whip Sen. Thomas H. Kuchel of California, who said he had received about 200 such letters since October, described the campaign as "contemptible and vicious."

"One may, if he chooses, disagree on occasion with decisions of the Supreme Court, the votes of a member of Congress, or on a position which the American President takes," Kuchel said. "That is part of our right of free speech. But to attempt to heap slime and abuse on any public figure poses an extremely dangerous problem for self government in this country."

Rep. Ken Hechler (D-W. Va.) told the House on March 13 that the desks of many of its members "have been flooded for the past few weeks by a great deal of junk mail which malleously and unfairly reflects on the integrity of our great Chief Justice of the United States, Earl Warren."

"I would like to know who is paying for all of these mimeographed and duplicated letters and cards . . ."

Rep. Edgar W. Hiestand (R-Calif.) is listed by the society as a member of its "committee of endorsers." Hiestand said he has been a member of the society for several years.

"It is a society of individualists dedicated to fighting Communism," Hiestand told United Press International. "They make up their own minds. They are violently an-

ti-Communist. That is the one thing we have in common."

Hiestand said "a lot of prominent people have been misled by misinformation" and he is considering putting into the record a "well documented" reply to charges against the organization.

Rep. Gordon Scherer (R-Ohio), a member of the House Un-American Activities Committee, also listed as an endorser, said he was not a member of the society, but "I look with favor on it."

The Senate Internal Security subcommittee is replying to inquiries with a form letter over the signature of its chairman, Sen. James O. Eastland (D-Miss.). It reads: "The John Birch Society, about which you asked, is known to be a conservative anti-Communist organization officially. We are happy to state that it seems to be from our records, a patriotic organization. Very truly yours . . ."

All Senators are not so sure, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) told the Senate: "Something ought to be done to lay the facts before the American people so they can judge this organization for what it is."

### Brown Asks Report

In California, Gov. Edmund G. Brown said on March 21 that he has asked state Attorney General Stanley Mosk to look into the organization and report to him.

"Unless they violate a law, they have a right to speak," Brown said.

Welch telegraphed Brown the following day demanding a full-dress investigation by the state Senate's Un-American Activities committee and promising "a dozen or a hundred or a thousand of our members in California will gladly testify."

Paul H. Talbert, Los Angeles insurance man who is a member of the society's council, said that if any members plead the Fifth amendment "we would just love to find out just who these infiltrators are so that we can get rid of them."

Talbert said, "we all believe in loyalty oaths, preservation of the Connally amendment, restoration of the investigative powers of the FBI and any other government committee for the purpose of investigating subversion . . ."

"What is happening to cause supposedly reputable newspapers to refer to us as Fascists, Neo-Fascists, Silver Shirts, Red Shirts, Black Shirts, Subversives, and even to compare us with the Ku Klux Klan?"

Stirred To Protest  
Congress was stirred to protest by the John Birch Society's campaign against Chief Justice Earl Warren. But it is the society's attack on the nation's churches that apparently has brought it to the attention of more communities — than any of its other activities.

It is an attack that has been made for years by some religious fundamentalists and economic conservatives who see as both heresy and communism the preaching of a "social gospel" which attempts to apply biblical teachings to current secular and political problems.

The people of Arizona are getting two barrels at the moment. It is one of the Birch Society's "biggest" states. And it is receiving similarly concentrated attention from the American Council of Christian Churches, a fundamentalist group which has been waging a hot war of words for many years against the larger National Council of Churches. The division has been intensified by controversy over the House Committee on Un-American Activities' motion picture, "Operation Abolition," which is being promoted by the Birch Society, among many others, and which the national council of churches, also among others, has recommended not be shown without presentation of serious questions about its accuracy.

The Rev. Carl McIntyre, a defrocked Presbyterian minister who is a spokesman for the American council, devoted his nation-wide radio program on two successive weeks to the situation in Phoenix, replying to a defense of the national council issued by 122 Phoenix clergymen.

Received Questionnaire  
In Santa Barbara, members of the First Presbyterian church received through the mail a Birch Society "questionnaire" attacking its own church leadership and that of the national council. The Rev. Eugene Carson Blake, stated clerk of the Presbyterian church in the U.S.A. and a former national council president, flew to Santa Barbara to accuse the Birch Society in a sermon; his text "Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness . . ."

"If you let these propagandists have their way they will divide this church right down the middle between Communists and Fascists hating each other, labeling each other, and distrusting each other," Blake said.

At Amarillo, Tex., Brig. Gen. William L. Lee, retired commander of the Amarillo Air Force base is head of the local Birch organization. He denied the society has anything to do with the rumored circulation of a list charging five prominent local men are Communists.

Lee said there are no Communists in Amarillo. But he acknowledged that the society is stirring up friction in local churches.

"We have documented proof that the national council has

been infiltrated by Communists and some of these ministers just won't listen to us," Lee said.

"Until we can convince them that the national council has some Communist followers in it, there is going to be some friction." Church leaders in Amarillo have said they are fearful that congregations may be split into warring camps.

The Amarillo group has been less successful in another campaign. The public library refused to yield to its demand that it call off a "Great Decl-

sions" discussion series sponsored by the 42-year-old Foreign Policy association.

At Wichita, Kan., the society has moved to battle in policy matters in PTAs, the library and college. According to George H. Lewis, assistant professor of economics at the University of Wichita and director of the Kansas Council for Industrial Peace, they "virtually control the Wichita Chamber of Commerce and seem to have a dominant influence in the state chamber organization."

"One of their major objectives in the state is to destroy collective bargaining. They are preparing to push through some vicious anti-labor legislation during the next session."

### Members Undisturbed

Members of the society from coast to coast have professed themselves undisturbed by Welch's pre-society charge that President Eisenhower was not a dupe but a Communist.

"If he (Eisenhower) is one, he doesn't know it," said a Santa Barbara woman.

Spruille Braden, former U.S. Ambassador and a member of the society's council, said he didn't agree with the charge but that it in no way led him to question Welch's judgment on other matters.

"He may exaggerate sometimes," Braden said of Welch. "When you're in a barroom brawl no holds are barred. You don't fight by the Marquis of Queensbury rules."

Friday: Welch gives his opinion on Eisenhower, Taft, MacArthur and Goldwater: action of the opposition.

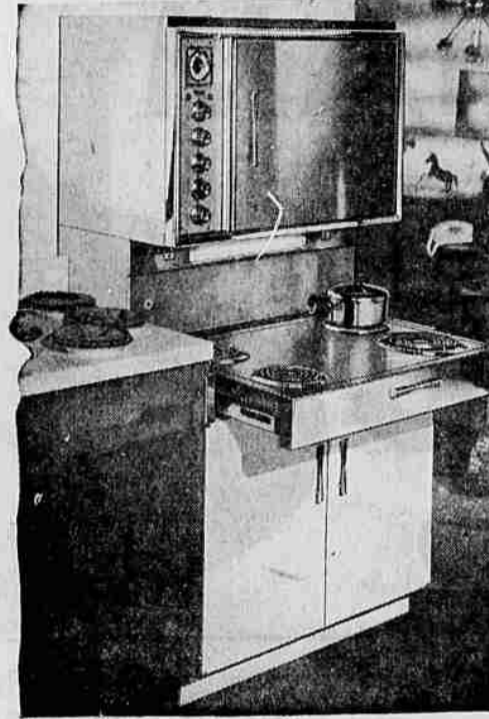
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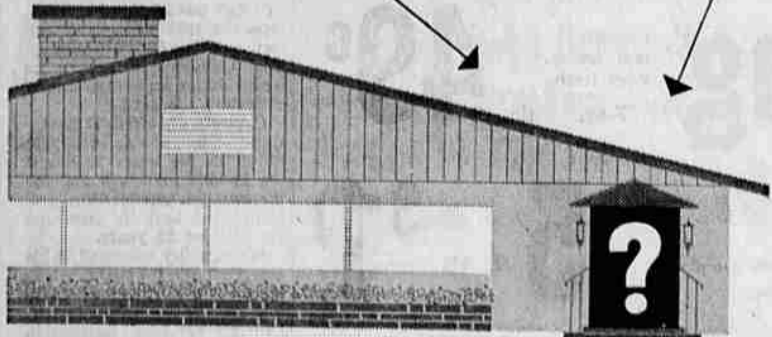
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