

# Birch Society Threatens Capture of Young GOP, Leaders Claim

By DE VAN L. SHUMWAY  
United Press International  
Sacramento, Calif. (UPI)—On Jan. 24, President Harry Keaton of the 13,000-member Young Republicans Organization of California called a news conference.

What he had to say hit the California and national GOP right in their political hearts. "The Young Republicans of California face a power grab by the leadership of the John Birch society," Keaton said. "Evidence supporting this con-

clusion has steadily mounted for over a year." In the middle of February, former Kansas Gov. Fred Hall, who had migrated to California and become president of the 10,000-member California Republican assembly, launched his own campaign against the Birch society. "The Birch society is the closest thing we've had to a fascist party in America," he said. And he warned that the Birchers were threatening to take over control of his large

volunteer organization. **Major Issue** What precipitated those two changes—and the part of the Birch society in California politics—has become a major issue in the state. And it could have a large effect on who gets the nod for California's huge delegation to the Republican National convention next year. As a general rule, members of the Birch society and other strong conservatives favor Arizona Sen. Barry Goldwater for the GOP presidential nom-

ination. But other elements in the party lean toward New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller. Keaton's statement set the stage for a rough and tumble fight at the Young Republicans' 1963 convention in Fresno between GOP moderates and conservatives. **Three Compete** The major battle was over presidency of the organization between Kenneth Davis, 30-year-old Pasadena stockbroker representing the moderates, and two other candidates. One of these was Ronald

Garver, 31, of Los Angeles, who acknowledged membership in the Birch society. The other was Robert Gaston, 32, of La Canada, who openly encouraged support from the Birchers but was not a member himself. Casper W. Weinberger, a San Francisco attorney and chairman of the regular party's state central committee, for the first time took a strong position against Birch leadership. He said the election of a Birch-backed candidate to the

leadership of the Young GOP group would have a "very unfortunate effect" and would convince independent voters not to vote Republican. **Birch Liability** Davis put it bluntly: "The label is controversial. The Birch society can be a liability to the Republican party." But on the eve of the election Garver withdrew dramatically in favor of Gaston—which Keaton had warned would happen—and asked his supporters to do likewise. The roll call vote the next

day gave a narrow victory to Gaston, 189-170. He immediately charged the press had "greatly exaggerated" factionalism in the Republican party. Shortly afterward, officers of the 4,000-member College Federation of Young Republicans bolted the state organization and asked their members to follow them. President Harold Phillips of Burbank, Calif., said the "extreme conservative position" of Gaston was "not representative" of the young collegians. Virginia Savell of Los An-

gels, field representative for U.S. Sen. Thomas Kuchel, R-Calif., who campaigned vigorously for Davis, called the Gaston victory a "catastrophic defeat for the Republican party." **State to Suffer** Other reaction came quickly, too. California Gov. Edmund G. Brown, a Democrat, had this to say: "This state will suffer if moderate elements of the Republican party do not move—and move quickly—to close ranks against the Birchers and their iron age thinking." Thomas A. Lauricella Jr., newly elected president of the New York Young Republican club, called it a plain takeover by the Birch society and charged the Birchers "can do nothing but retard the progress of the Republican party in California and throughout the nation."

Josiah Beeman of San Francisco, president of the California Young Democrats, said his party would "wave goodbye to the Young Republicans as they move back to the 18th Century." And in Los Angeles attorney William King announced formation of a group calling itself the committee for responsible Republicanism. He said it would promote "moderate liberal Republican views."

It was in this atmosphere that Hall spoke out to warn that Birch-backed candidates were trying to take over his organization—the California Republican assembly. "We have sounded the alarm all over the state," said Hall. "If our delegates are here we should have sufficient strength to defeat them (the Birch candidates)." The conservatives had two major candidates for president—Harry Waddell, a 52-year-old retired Navy Commander from Salinas, and Fred Nagel, a Susanville rancher who had made an unsuccessful bid for Congress. And the night before the election, Nagel issued a statement throwing his support behind Waddell so that "responsible Republicans" could pull together "for the best interests of our party."

But Hall favored William Nelligan, 54, a San Francisco telephone technician and labor leader. And he predicted the moderates would win by 50 votes. Nelligan told newsmen that the assembly should not "provide the stage for the extremists to perform the dance of destruction for the Republican party."

Weinberger—still smarting from the Young Republicans setback—sent his regrets. Kuchel, who won re-election last November by 700,000 votes as a liberal Republican, sent a letter calling upon the large volunteer organization not to turn to the right. Former U.S. Sen. William F. Knowland was the keynote speaker at a Saturday night banquet—the evening before the election. And he surprised party regulars, fighting to retain control. "There are millions of dedicated conservatives who belong to no organization other than the Republican or Democratic parties," he said. "They are needed and have no intention of being liquidated from political activity." "Every time a conservative leader arises there is an attempted smear to tar him as a reactionary or a member of the Birch society. This is the guilt by association technique the liberals bitterly objected to during the investigations by Sen. Joseph McCarthy." At a news conference, Knowland said: "It's unfair to say that all members of the Birch society agree with (JBS President Robert) Welsh any more than all teamsters agree with (teamsters head Jimmy) Hoffa."

The next day, Feb. 24, came the election—and Nelligan won by a little more than 50 votes, 273-212. "It's the turning point against the conspiracy of the Birch society to capture control of our party," a joyous Hall told newsmen. What happens now? The record for the conservatives, including those who belong to the Birch society, is 1-1 in California's GOP for 1963. There is no other major party element with an election this year. But—and this worries party regulars—the conservatives have threatened to put up their own candidates next year in state assembly and state senate elections.

**Eagle Point School Election Slated**  
Eagle Point—Residents of the Eagle Point school district will vote on the extension of the school board to nine members at the election May 6. A petition carrying more than the required number of names to get the proposition on the ballot has been turned in to the Eagle Point school clerk. The signatures represent the Eagle Point, White City, Shady Cove, Elk Trail and Lake Creek areas, all of which are included in the school district. The reorganization law permits the change from a five to a seven or nine member board if the specified legal procedure is followed. This procedure includes the filing of a petition presented to the voters. If the voters approve the proposal at the May 6 election the nine member board would assume office one year from the election.

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**KANSAS OPPOSES** - Former Kansas Gov. Fred Hall, a migrant to California, has given a "verbal boot" to the Birch Society, terming it the "closest thing we've had to a Fascist party in America." Now head of a 10,000-member California Republican volunteer organization, he has warned that Birch Society adherents are threatening to take over its control. (UPI)

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