

Extremism in Public Policy—The John Birch Society

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

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OF NEW YORK

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES
Monday, July 17, 1961

Mr. JAVITS. Mr. President, the activities of the John Birch Society reminds us that the principles of a free society can be eroded from the extreme right as well as the extreme left. Jeopardizing the confidence of Americans in their tried and proved leaders, is a serious way to undermine the very foundations of our Government.

This warning is contained in an address by Representative PAUL A. FINO, delivered at the commander's banquet during the 31st Annual Convention of the Department of New York, Jewish War Veterans, June 10, 1961. I ask unanimous consent that his remarks before the Jewish War Veterans, the Nation's oldest active war veterans organization, be printed in the Appendix of the RECORD.

There being no objection, the address was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

(Speech delivered by guest speaker, Congressman PAUL A. FINO, of New York, on June 10, 1961, at the department commander's banquet.)

Mr. Chairman, Corrie Schneider, National Commander Isidore Feuer, Incoming State Commander Hy Miller, National President Bertha Krause, Rabbi Gordon, distinguished guests and ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed an honor and a privilege to address the 31st Annual Convention of the Department of New York, Jewish War Veterans. I look upon you as men of tried and true patriotism, formed and disciplined by military training, and tested in the fires of battle. As men reared in the Jewish tradition of intellectual skepticism and moral conviction, I look to you to discriminate carefully and effectively between those organizations whose words and actions are calculated to promote the safety and well-being of our country, and those organizations whose announced patriotic aims are frustrated and stymied by their words and actions.

It is not enough for a man or an organization to claim anticommunism as a patriotic goal. No less an authority than J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, has recently devoted a special message to the topic of irresponsible words and actions under this label, and the danger they bring to us. This message appears in the FBI law enforcement bulletin for April, 1961. I strongly recommend that all citizens read it and take its message to heart.

Much of what Mr. Hoover says in this urgent message seems to me to apply directly to certain characteristics of the John Birch Society, though he does not mention this or any other organization by name. Pointing out that the Communists need, in order to take over a country, "a people shaken with fear, hysteria, and confusion," Mr. Hoover

goes on to say: "Above all, however, is the danger of irresponsible counteraction by citizens who lend impetus to communism through inept attempts to fight this insidious menace."

The FBI director, surely one of the Nation's foremost authorities on this Communist menace and how to meet it, quotes Lenin's direction to his followers, urging them to take advantage of "every, even the smallest, rift among the enemies." He sees this technique as a part of the Communist attack upon America today. "There exists today in our land," Mr. Hoover says, "a vital rift which the Communists are exploiting. Unfortunately, this involves certain people across the country who engage in reckless charges against one another. The label of 'Communist' is too often indiscriminately attached to those whose views differ from the majority. Those whose lives are not led according to what one segment of society might decree to be the norm are too frequently challenged as Reds."

The founder and present head of the John Birch Society has denied responsibility for certain much-publicized reckless charges, made in his so-called private letter, entitled "The Politician." In this privately circulated work he accused President Dwight D. Eisenhower, his brother, Milton Eisenhower, and Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA, of being either conscious or unconscious agents of the Communist Party. He claims that, since he made these accusations privately, and before the formation of his society, the society cannot be saddled with the onus of whatever slander may be involved.

But the accusations are of a piece with the consistent attitude and behavior of the John Birch Society. "Attributing every adversity to communism is not only irrational," says J. Edgar Hoover, "but contributes to hysteria and fosters groundless fears." The Blue Book of the John Birch Society, and all other writings of Robert Welch, and publications of the society, are full of similar accusations of men and organizations. Mr. Welch is particularly fond of the type of accusation that goes like this: "So-and-so, whether he knows it or not, is helping the Communist conspiracy to take over this country." Every administration since 1933, every political party and most of the minor ones—all come under the same condemnation. In the Blue Book, for example, he says of Americans for Democratic Action: "The ADA, whether a lot of its members know it or not, is the same as an arm of the Communist Party. Its weight can be thrown and is thrown, time after time, with never an exception, in support of Communist objectives. It has the benefit of the direction of a dark system of that body which runs all the way to the top."

This is a typical example. Welch talks a lot about the smear technique, objecting to its use by liberals, and advocating its use by rightists. A smear may be defined as an accusation definite enough to hurt, but indefinite enough to be impossible, or almost impossible, to disprove.

Robert Welch sees the Communist conspiracy in efforts to break the segregation pattern in the South, to seek foreign aid, in the United Nations, and in every international organization dependent upon or affiliated with the United Nations. His reading lists of recommended books include violent attacks upon such other aspects of the Communist conspiracy as income tax, fluoridation of water supply, Federal aid to education, and the National Council of Churches. One of the major efforts of his organization has been a letter-writing campaign to urge the impeachment of the Justice Earl Warren, as a tool of the Communist Party. He has associated himself with his anti-Communist efforts with J. P. Matthews, who won his chief fame as the author of wild and

unfounded charges of Communist infiltration of the Churches, and has himself recommended Bundy's notorious book, "Collectivism in the Churches," and quoted at length its fantastic statistics.

The one aspect of the usual extremist rightist pattern that is missing from Welch's statements, from the proclaimed attitudes of the John Birch Society, and from the record of his close associates, is anti-Semitism. However, many publications, which he recommends, in turn recommend books and magazines expressing the most violent anti-Semitism, and identifying the Communist conspiracy with a Jewish plot to win world domination. This is an association, if one remove, and I am far from claiming that Welch and his society should be blamed for it—but it behooves us to keep a cautious eye upon any authoritarian society that tends to interpret all world events in terms of secret conspiracies.

I am not denying, of course, that there is a Communist conspiracy, or that it is dangerous, or that it must be fought vigorously. I am protesting against this little-brained rhinoceros fury, that would charge anything that moves in the underbrush. I am protesting against the unthinking terror that would shudder away from Communist dictators, into the arms of Fascist and Falangist dictators. I am protesting against the manner in which these reactionary societies attack, by slander and innuendo, by smear and sneer, any and every attempt to form or maintain alliances with foreign countries, to alleviate distress or to spread employment and prosperity among our own people, or to build up the financial and military strength of the American Government.

Many magazines and newspapers have published thoughtful articles and editorials discussing the John Birch Society. Many Members of Congress, in each House, have made statements and speeches about the organization and its activities. Each has something to contribute, and I strongly recommend that you veterans make a thorough study of what has been said in favor of the society and its aims and methods, as well as what has been said in opposition. It is the American way to hear and listen to both sides before rendering a verdict. For my own part, however, I have heard both sides; I have read the Blue Book; I have read many of the monthly bulletins of the John Birch Society; I have heard and read statements in favor of the society on the floor of the House of Representatives and on the radio, in the newspapers and the Congressional Record. I am convinced that the just verdict on the John Birch Society is contained in the resolution on the subject issued last month by the board of directors of Freedom House. This resolution was reprinted in the Congressional Record of May 9, 1961 (on pp. 7064-7065), and I hope that every one of you will get hold of this statement and read it thoughtfully.

The essence of this statement is contained in a five-point criticism of the society as weakening our defenses against communism, and as betraying the cause of true conservatism. I believe this is a well-ordered and valid analysis, and I quote it to you now with my own hearty concurrence:

"First, the John Birch Society is not fighting communism because no Communist operative was ever apprehended or diverted by its methods. Communist subversives do not leave trails for the telephone threatener, the student informer, the boycottor, or any of the other sneak warriors of Birchism. Catching Communist spies is a job for professionals—casting suspicion on the FBI and the CIA only makes the job harder and gives Communists a better chance to do their work.

"Second, the John Birch Society is not fighting communism because such tools as doubt, suspicion, and prejudice employed by