

Reds Everywhere

John Birch Founder Would Repeal the 20th Century

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United Press International

Residents of Santa Barbara, Calif., were in for a surprise when they stepped out into the bright and blowy morning of Feb. 26 to pick up their Sunday newspapers. In that quiet and beautiful city of about 60,000, a respected fellow citizen had discovered what he felt was an outrage.

"The editor and publisher of The News-Press is in his 85th year," began a two-column editorial on the front page.

"His entire life has been spent in this community. . . . He lived when conditions were rugged. When West was West and men were men. He lived during periods when if a man or a group of men openly by word of mouth, or the printed word, called our President and others at the head of our Government, traitors, they were made to answer. Such slanders often called for a visit from a courageous and irate group which brought with them a barrel of tar and a few feathers . . ."

TAKING A STAND

Thomas More Storke, rancher and citrus grower, owner of a newspaper since 1900, briefly by interim appointment a U. S. senator, regent of the University of exposure of such persons, even thru "mean and dirty" techniques, Mr. Welch said, is one of the most effective means of shocking the American people awake in time to save themselves from communism. He also advises members to set up front groups, to infiltrate community organizations and to engage in directed letter writing to promote specific campaigns of his ultra-conservative society.

"The News-Press condemns the tactics that have brought anonymous tele-

The John Birch Society is a semi-secret organization with a noble aim: Fighting communism. But its methods have stirred controversy in many U. S. cities. A UPI special reporting team was assigned to assist Barbara Bundschu, New York staff correspondent, in researching and investigating the organization, its purposes, operations and opposition across the nation.

phone calls of denunciation to Santa Barbarans in recent weeks from members of the John Birch Society or their sympathizers," Mr. Storke's editorial said.

"The News-Press condemns the pressures on wealthy residents who fear and abhor communism, to contribute money to an organization whose leader has said that 'for reasons you will understand, there can be no accounting of funds.' . . ."

WHAT is the real nature of this relatively new group on the American political scene? Political scientists would classify it as it is, in itself, an authoritarian society. Mr. Welch does not say the United States should have a similarly authoritarian form of government. But he is far from completely sold on the form we now have. And as for the political concept of a democracy, he regards it frankly as a "weapon of demagoguery, and a perennial fraud."

The U. S. Senate on March 12, 1954, passed a resolution that killed 10 days after V-J day by Chinese communists. He was 27 when he died.

Robert Welch never heard of Mr. Birch until after his death, but he has researched and written his life story. Mr. Welch has memorialized Mr. Birch as "probably the first American casualty in that third world war, between communists and the ever-shrinking free world, which is still being waged against us." And when he came to found a communist-fighting organization, he

called it the John Birch Society.

In Mr. Birch's name, members of the society are asked to write letters to congressmen and others, operate in "front" organizations and thru established community groups such as PT-As and Chambers of Commerce to push campaigns conceived by Mr. Welch as anti-communist. These include movements to impeach Chief Justice Earl Warren, to repeal the income tax law, to rout the social gospel from the churches, to oppose the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, foreign aid, the United Nations and cultural, or any other, exchanges with Russia.

Mr. Welch also is a native Southerner, born in North Carolina. He was reared in what he now calls "the intellectually restricting bonds of the unusually narrow Southern Baptist Fundamentalism." He spent four years at the University of North Carolina, two at the Naval Academy and two at Harvard Law School before going into the candy business. He is the founder of the society and of which he is editor.

The message and aim is: "less government, more responsibility and a better world."

Mr. Welch quite literally wants to repeal the 20th Century. But unlike many who share this desire, either politically or nostalgically, he views its trend toward "collectivism" not simply as a mistake but as a sinister conspiracy to change the economic and political structure of the United States so

that this nation can be merged with the Soviet Union without a fight.

FOOL'S PARADISE

"You have only a few more years," he told his listeners at Indianapolis. "We are living . . . in such a fool's paradise as the people of China lived in 20 years ago."

"The danger is almost entirely internal," Mr. Welch said, "from communist influence right in our midst and treason right in our government."

The idea that the nation must mobilize its resources to combat the external danger of Soviet military might and Sputnik supremacy is, in Mr. Welch's view, a part of the communist plot. "In other words, under the guise of fighting communism, we are being stamped into the biggest jump ever towards, and perhaps the final jump right into, socialism and then the communist camp."

THE Los Angeles Times, in an editorial signed by Publisher Otis Chandler on March 12, saw an implication of sedition in Mr. Welch's statements. And, like many others, it deplored the identification of conservatism with extremism.

"The Times believes implicitly in the conservative philosophy," the editorial said. "It has challenged all these men and most of these institutions (which Mr. Welch attacks) on the soundness of one or more issues. The society, surrounded and supported by Mr. Welch's rich, flowing language and ideas, their absurdity is well concealed."

"The man is a marvelously gifted demagogue . . ."

"There is another factor apart from the magic of Robert Welch that lends power to the movement. . . . Both Mr. Welch and his people are genuinely afraid . . ."

(TOMORROW: The society's doctrine and membership.)