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Anatomy of the Radical Right

JOSEPH B. ROBISON

A NEW SURGE OF STRENGTH, EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION and large membership on the part of the extreme political right has placed our democratic institutions under heavy fire. It is necessary therefore to assess the recent upsurge—to measure its goals, its strength and its methods—and to consider the steps needed to counteract it.

Fundamentally, the radical right rejects and combats broad and effective application of the constitutional principles of freedom of expression, the elimination of racial and religious discrimination and segregation and, frequently, preservation of the constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion and separation of church and state. There has probably never been a time in American history that these liberties were wholly understood and accepted by the people. In every generation, the fight for their preservation has been waged—against the Alien and Sedition Laws in 1798, against the Know Nothing Movement of the 1850's, against the Ku Klux Klan of the 1870's and the 1920's—always proving that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

The most extreme of the rightist groups—the lunatic fringe—has never been entirely eliminated. But it has operated at a low level during the past two decades. However, there is evidence that it is now moving into a more advantageous strategic position, primarily because of the emergence of a strong rightist organization—the John Birch Society. The formation of this group has changed the nature and strength of the threat from the right.

The basic assumptions of the Birch Society are (1) that America is all-powerful and could have its way in all parts of the world; (2) that when it fails to do so, it must be because of treason at home; and (3) that since it has met with setbacks, there must be such treason. In the July 1960 issue of the Society's Bulletin, the founder and leader of the Birchites, Robert H. Welch, warned that there was "treason right within our government and the place to find it is right in Washington."

What are the objectives of the Birch Society? To begin with, it condemns the Supreme Court anti-segregation decisions and all forms of what it calls "enforced integration." It describes the integrationist movement in the South as "Communist-contrived." A major plank in its current program is the demand for the impeachment of Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren, who wrote the opinions for the unanimous Court in the desegration decisions of 1954 and 1955.

The Birch program has been described as aiming at repeal of the Twentieth Century. It advocates ending the income tax, social security, the National Labor Relations Act and TVA. It opposes such new proposals as federal aid to education. It is against all "foreign entanglements" and consequently asks for United States withdrawal from the United Nations, the International Labor Organization and similar consultative bodies. It also demands withdrawal from the "useless and costly" NATO and cessation of foreign aid.

IN ESSENCE, what the John Birch Society and its allies have done is to lump together all the institutions and social advances to which the rightist groups are hostile and brand them as being the product of Communist machinations. Hence, Birchers find a Communist taint in most of the established groups in our society. It denies the integrity and patriotism not only of the Democratic Party but also of the Republican Party, not only of labor unions and the National Council of Churches of Christ but also of the Chamber of Commerce and the American Medical Association, not only of former Presidents Truman and Roosevelt but also of former President Eisenhower and his brother Milton, of John Foster Dulles and his brother Allen.

In the Birch credo, a long record of anti-Communism on the part of the fancied "enemy" is irrele-

Mr. Robison *is assistant director of the AJCongress Commission on Law and Social Action.*