



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Department of Justice

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July 7, 1961

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, California.

Dear Governor Brown:

Pursuant to your request of recent date, I am reporting herewith on the John Birch Society.

The cadre of the John Birch Society seems to be formed primarily of wealthy businessmen, retired military officers and little old ladies in tennis shoes. They are bound together by an obsessive fear of "communism," a word which they define to include any ideas differing from their own, even though these ideas may differ even more markedly with the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Khrushchev. In response to this fear they are willing to give up a large measure of the freedoms guaranteed them by the United States Constitution in favor of accepting the dictates of their "Founder." They seek, by fair means or foul, to force the rest of us to follow their example. They are pathetic.

AN APPROACH TO THE BIRCH SOCIETY -- COMEDY?

Many writers and spokesmen, dealing with the Birchers, have dismissed them with ridicule.

Arthur Krock, in the New York Times of April 7, 1961, suggested that, "Ridicule is becoming a lost art in American public controversies. For no citizens, however well-meaning, have made their movement and its followers a more vulnerable target to destruction through ridicule than have the founder and some of the prominent members of the John Birch Society."

Krock went on to point out that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had caused the emasculation of the old Liberty League by making the general public laugh at it. When the Liberty League's membership was published, with its glittering galaxy of multi-millionaires, President Roosevelt publicly inquired with an innocent air, "just what liberties the DuPonts and General Motors had lost."

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Attorney General Robert Kennedy stated that the Birch Society is "ridiculous, and I don't think anybody should pay much attention to them," and William Mauldin, in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, lampooned the Birch Society with a cartoon entitled, "Malice in Wonderland."

Founder Robert Welch stated during his recent California appearance that, "I do not like Chief Justice Earl Warren. He has taken the lead in converting this country to democracy." Arthur Caylor, in the San Francisco News - Call Bulletin, wrote that less excitement over the Birch Society is indicated ever since Birch has charged Chief Justice Warren "with bringing this country to the brink of democracy." He added that, "Anybody who starts out to fight Communism in America by calling democracy 'mob rule' can assure himself of a future filled with futility."

Columnist Al Capp, in the Los Angeles Mirror, suggests: "There must be some other branch of the Federal Government, some mental health set-up, which keeps its eye on groups that start off being just ridiculous, like the Nazi Party, or the old Bolsheviks, but which in time become dangerously lunatic as they did. People like that are ridiculous, it's true, and good for a laugh at a press conference. But once the nuts get organized, they can take over the asylum."

Senator J. W. Fulbright of Arkansas inserted in the Congressional Record, under date of April 18, 1961, an article which indicated similar fears, but it considers the Birch Society "more a nuisance than a peril."

The Fulbright article states that "these people don't need condemnation, they need help. They need, each of them, a quick course in American history, a heart-to-heart talk with a trustworthy friend, and then, perhaps, a good long rest."

The Fulbright piece suggests that the members of the Birch Society have acquired some kind of a political "virus, and have simply gotten together to share its misery."

... OR TRAGEDY?

Other writers and spokesmen see in the Birchers a deadly menace.

Many segments of organized religion, for example, have been deeply disturbed over Birch charges of Communist infiltration.

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As a result, some organized religious groups have taken unprecedented stands against these irresponsible attacks.

The leader of the United Presbyterian Church, Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, urged members of his church to "get off the defensive and in every church begin the attack that our nation needs to be protected from those who in their fear of Communism would destroy American freedom."

In striking out at Welch and the Birchers, Blake said, "The old lies are being actively circulated by the same people who were McCarthy's stooges a few years ago but are now organized into typical totalitarian cells. . . His argument to trust him is that he (Welch) has a 'nose for Communists.' I don't think his nose is very accurate if he calls President Eisenhower a Communist." Following Blake's address to the sessions of the Los Angeles Presbytery on May 8, the delegates unanimously passed a resolution alerting their membership to slanderous accusations and charges of Communism in the church."

In a recent appearance in California, Welch told an audience that 7,000 Protestant ministers in the nation "can fairly be called Communists or Communist sympathizers. Protestant ministers do not become Communists, but Communists do become Protestant ministers," he said.

Responding to that accusation, a group of 137 Southern California ministers published a statement assailing this blanket accusation. Said the leading ministers of Southern California:

"Our churches, schools and other traditional institutions in the United States, as well as many of our beloved statesmen, educators and clergymen, have been subjected to vicious attacks by blanket accusations and by unsupported charges.

"In the present world situation it is all too easy for persons of good will to be 'conned' into taking positions and supporting methods which are actually destructive of the valid ends they seek.

"Any group or individual, however well intentioned, that promotes a program of hatred, suspicion and distrust of our free American institutions, and that indulges in the irresponsible labeling of people and institutions, is unwittingly serving the cause of those who would destroy these institutions."

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ROBERT WELCH - "FOUNDER"

Robert Welch, an embittered candy maker of Belmont, Massachusetts, and a former member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Manufacturers, founded the John Birch Society in December of 1958 with the publication of his "Blue Book of the John Birch Society." This 179-page document blueprints the purposes and structure of the John Birch Society. All references following, unless otherwise noted, are to the Blue Book. The Blue Book is not to be confused with "The Politician," which was a "personal letter circulated to friends" and is now withdrawn from circulation. "The Politician" contains Welch's most widely quoted statement: that President Eisenhower is a "dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy."

"The John Birch Society will operate under completely authoritative control at all levels." (p. 159.) "Those members who cease to feel the necessary degree of loyalty can either resign or will be put out before they build up any splintering following of their own inside the society." (p. 161.) "We shall have short cuts for eliminating (differences of opinion) without going through any congress of so-called democratic processes." (p. 162.)

At the apex of this authoritarian heap is the "Founder" (always with a capital F). "I want no other title than that of its Founder . . ." (p. 158.) "(I) offer myself as a personal leader in this fight and ask you to follow that leadership."

These quotations from the "Blue Book" demonstrate the totalitarian character of the John Birch Society. They also cause one to speculate about the recent attempts of some prominent Birchers to disassociate themselves from some of Welch's more exotic statements. So far as can be ascertained, none of these attempts have met with excommunication from the Birch Society. One concludes therefore that either Welch has authorized the deviation or that he feels it is not material.

Since publishing this book, Welch has devoted his time primarily or exclusively to recruiting for the John Birch Society. Apparently, in his talks throughout the country he makes virtually the same speech which he made in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara during his recent visit to California.

Press accounts of his talk in Houston late in April indicate the identical line, and in some instances the precise

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expressions and phrases used in California. The New Deal was "foreign, phony and a failure." The Communists "engineered the defeat of Robert Taft in the contest for the 1952 Republican nomination for President, at which time President Eisenhower was nominated by the Republican Party."

Welch also cascades down the tomb of the late Joe McCarthy, defending not only McCarthy's anti-Communism, but, he says, "Indeed there was nothing wrong with McCarthy's methods from the point of view of the patriotic American."

In Houston, as in other communities, he declined a press conference and would not submit to questioning by members of the press or television corps. He particularly scorned representatives of newspapers that have been critical of him.

Welch also sees himself in the role of a martyr. "In this fight against vastly entrenched evil," he says, "some grow tired, some grow old, and some like myself grow bold." His whole approach, states the newspaper, The Texas Observer, suggests a "flight to amorality."

According to a number of editorial writers, wherever Robert Welch makes his speeches, he loses rather than gains popular support. Part of his difficulty stems from this refusal to submit to the normal interrogation by newspaper reporters.

As a result of his recent tour through Texas, Troy Martin, publisher of the Canyon (Texas) News, a conservative newspaper circulated in a conservative area of Texas, wrote the following editorial:

"Even some of the staunchest members of the John Birch Society have expressed doubt in the leadership of the Society since Bob Welch, its top man, made an appearance at Amarillo Saturday. We cannot approve of this man who believes that he is the only man alive ready, willing and able to lead the fight against Communism. Welch sneers at democracy and in his blue book labels it a perennial fraud. He says a Republican form of government has many attractions under certain favorable conditions. Welch looks with suspicion upon labor, management, religion, government, newspapers, and in fact about everyone except Bob Welch. I do not believe that the American people yet have to choose between Fascism and Bolshevism. We must understand once and for all that there is little actual difference

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between Fascism and Bolshevism. Both are headed up by a type of latter-day nobility bent upon exploiting an enslaved people. We must fight Communism but we must also beware lest we nurture something as bad."

In assessing patriotism most Americans would feel the need for differentiating between a paid agent of the Soviet espionage apparatus on the one hand and an American who believes in fluoridation or mental health programs or the UN or federal aid to education -- or all four of these -- on the other hand. Not so Mr. Welch. He and the Birchers angrily lump all these together under the blanket accusation of treason. There are no grays for Mr. Welch, he offers all of us the alternatives of agreement with him or treason. He concludes accordingly that the press, radio and television are dominated by Communist influence. (p. 35.) ". . . it is clear that treason -- and a willingness to close one's eyes to treason which is itself treasonous -- were widespread in our high army circles." (p. 6.) The Communists presently control the Hawaiian Islands. (p. 20.) ". . . the trouble in our Southern States has been fomented almost entirely by the Communists." (p. 29.) American foreign aid was planned by Communists to advance Communism. (p. 32.)

THE PRINCIPLE OF REVERSAL

As a substitute for hard thinking on the issues some Americans have adopted the formula that, "if the Communists are for it we ought to be against it and vice-versa." Welch has ruined this formula by the addition of his principle of reversal. This Alice in Wonderland concept has it that many of the things the Communists profess to be for, they are really against. They only say they are for it so that we will be against.

For example, Welch characterizes UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold as "one of the most contemptible agents of the Kremlin ever supported by the American taxpayers." When Khrushchev waxes frenetic about Hammarskjold, Welch explains that Khrushchev only does so because he wants us to defend Hammarskjold, thus keeping him at his post.

Welch tells us that many American organizations generally supposed to be anti-Communist are really Communist. "Some of them have no more harmful purpose than merely to drain off, into innocuous wastefulness, money and effort which might otherwise

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find its way into really patriotic and anti-Communist activities. Others are primarily designed to offer protective coloration to Communists who can thus get themselves publicized as active in anti-Communist organizations." (p. 160.)

A last and perhaps even more bizarre example of the principle of reversal:

Welch believes that the real reason the Russians sent Sputnik aloft was because they wanted us to increase our defense spending! (pp. 33-34.) "Although our danger remains almost entirely internal, from Communist influences right in our midst and treason right in our government, the American people are being persuaded that our danger is from the outside, is from Russian military superiority. And under the excuse of preparing to match that military might, or defending ourselves from this threat of outside force; in other words, under the guise of fighting Communism, we are being stampeded into the biggest jump ever towards, and perhaps the final jump right into socialism and then the Communist camp." (p. 32.)

This results in a "heads they win, tails we lose" proposition of hideous proportion. If we increase American military might to resist Russia, we are playing into Russian hands. If we reduce American military might, we are playing into Russian hands. It is no wonder then that Welch and his Birchers are so frantic in their self-induced terror. Thus, Welch concludes: ". . . that, unless we can reverse forces which now seem inexorable in their movement, (we) have only a few more years before (the United States) will become four separate provinces in a world-wide Communist dominion ruled by police-state methods from the Kremlin." (p. 9.)

IF IT WALKS LIKE A DUCK

The duck formula is another device which has occasionally been used as a substitute for thinking about the issues. This canard (no pun intended) was effectively shot down by the gentleman who rose to ask: "If it walks like a doctor, talks like a doctor and looks like a doctor, would you let it operate on you?" Nonetheless, the temptation to play Welch's game in reverse by pointing out the similarities between the John Birch Society and the Communist Party is irresistible. Thus, one notes:

1. Standard Communist strategy for countries marked for take-over is to sow in those countries seeds of doubt and suspicion against the government and leaders. Here the John Birch Society "Founder"

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has accused a former President of the United States, a former Secretary of State, the Chief Justice of the United States, the Chief of CIA and other top-ranking government leaders with treason. Thus does the John Birch Society do the work of Communists.

2. The John Birch Society is implacably opposed to the most effective of the free world's defenses against Communism. It is opposed to the Marshall Plan, the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and to increased military spending for the United States. Their opposition against these defenses is matched only by that of Khrushchev and Mao Tse-Tung. Who is allied with whom?
3. Domestically, the John Birch Society opposes civil rights, collective bargaining, and the social gospel of religions. In the nations which they rule, the Communists oppose these also.
4. The Birch Society believes in the organization of "fronts." "We would organize fronts -- little fronts, big fronts, temporary fronts, permanent fronts, all kinds of fronts." (p. 86.)

Some of these fronts have recently made their appearance here in California. The "Freedom Club" at the University of California at Santa Barbara is one prime example. In spite of the best efforts by the leadership of the John Birch Society to prevent any identification with the Freedom Club, it was very ably exposed as a front for the John Birch Society by the Santa Barbara News-Press and by local law enforcement agencies in Santa Barbara.

After Columbia Broadcasting System television commentator Grant Holcomb was repulsed in his efforts to interview Welch on a telecast from Santa Barbara, Holcomb was roundly abused in correspondence from a group which called itself, "The Committee against Nihilism." Letters berating Holcomb were sent to him and also to officials of CBS. This despite the fact that any objective observer of the attempt by Holcomb to interview Welch would concede that his performance was journalistically proper and polite.

Another new organization, apparently a Birch front, is called "Realtors for American Freedom," shortened to the initials "RAF."

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Officers and leaders of this RAF group boast of their use of the realtors association to assert political strength in Sacramento, and they relate to their membership that through an ex-Army colonel, they have access to FBI information on suspected Communists. The RAF group is attended by even greater secrecy than the Birch Society itself.

The use of "fronts" by the Communist Party is too well known to require documentation here.

5. One of the least appealing of Welch's teachings is his open espousal of techniques which he, himself terms "mean and dirty." (p. 96.) These tactics include the disruption of peaceful public meetings.

A particularly noteworthy series of such tactics have occurred in the San Fernando Valley area of Southern California.

On Saturday, April 22, four local clubs sponsored a meeting at a public school, at which a film and public discussion were planned. Seventy to eighty John Birch Society members invaded the meeting and broke into cheers and boos on signal, shouting the word "Republic" whenever a speaker referred to "democracy." The visitors interrupted and insulted the audience and speakers.

The following day, this performance by a similar group of invaders, seventy-two in all, disrupted a peaceful meeting of a club in Encino at the local community center. The Birch members were so vocal and abusive in their interruptions that it became necessary to call police officers in order to prevent physical violence.

Members of the Birch Society have indicated that they learn about these meetings by means of "infiltration" into legitimate political organizations, and that the invasion and disruption of peaceable assemblies of citizens is part of their program of action.

A particularly vicious piece of literature has been circulated by Birch Society members in the Manhattan Beach area, attacking the minister of the local Methodist church. Similar activities have been

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directed at school teachers and board of education members in many other California areas.

Again, infiltration into legitimate organizations and disruptive tactics have long been standard Communist practice.

6. The Birch Society is a monolithic authoritarian organization with the policy dictated from above and no dissent permitted in its ranks. The Communist Party is a monolithic authoritarian organization with policy dictated from above and no dissent permitted in its ranks.

Even the Russians apparently believe that Welch and the Birch Society are actively serving the Communist cause. The Literary Gazette of Moscow, under date of April 4, 1961, carried the following article in the Russian language:

"THE FUHRER WELCH AND HIS
JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY"

"The predictions of Lenin are materializing in the course of history. Lenin predicted that the Capitalistic society will strangle itself to death due to their economic and social system. This is exactly the way Lenin's predictions are coming true in the United States of America.

"Lenin said that the most ardent foes of Communism will eventually become frightened and suspicious of anybody that does not agree with them. In this manner these extremely nationalistic capitalists will actually work for the cause of communism by eliminating some of the largest obstacles on the road toward a world wide communist way of life.

"This was true in the past and history is repeating itself again. Several years ago an American Senator by the name of McCarthy performed a great service to world Communism and actually supported our cause by throwing suspicion of Communist affiliation on some very important personalities of the Capitalist world. He was so involved in this particular activity that instead of harming, he actually strengthened the Communist party in the USA.

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"Now the Communist movement has gained unexpectedly a new supporter. His name is Robert Welch. This former candy maker went one step further. He has published a book which compares to Hitler's Mein Kampf, in which he outlines his program. Mr. Welch calls his book 'The Politician'.

"According to Welch, John Foster Dulles was a Communist agent, and his brother Allen Dulles, the child of American Intelligence, is, after Eisenhower, the second largest supporter of Communism in Washington. Eisenhower's brother, Milton, is actually the boss of the American Communist Party."

(There follow descriptions of "fronts and cells" of the Birch Society. Then, in conclusion:)

"This is the teaching of Robert Welch and his John Birch Society. Here is more proof that Lenin's teachings and predictions were correct."

Returning again to Alice in Wonderland thinking, we wonder whether the Russians say that Welch and the John Birch Society are proof that Lenin was correct because they want us to oppose Birchism. If so, we should support the Birchers and confound the Russians. On the other hand, applying the principle of reversal, perhaps they only say this to make us support the Birchers. If so, we should oppose the Birchers and confound the Russians. We can only conclude with Alice that "things are getting curiouser and curiouser."

BIRCHISM AND POLITICS

Although the Birch Society leadership has been scathingly critical of all existing political parties, there is the constant danger that it will become affiliated with an attempt to take over all or some part of one of the existing political parties.

The official Democratic Party, through its State Central Committee, is on record publicly repudiating the Birch Society. Most leading Republicans have taken a similar stand.

Despite the repudiation by Republican leadership, some Republican groups do give the Society the encouragement of a forum. Two Republican Congressmen from Southern California, Edgar Hiestand and John Rousselot, have admitted membership in the organization. After an original equivocal denial of his

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membership, Congressman Roussetot has become a most ardent advocate of the Birch Society and is frequently quoted in the press as making speeches in defense of it.

The fact of their membership in the Birch Society was not publicly known at the time these two Congressmen were elected. Whether these men subscribe to the dogma of the John Birch Society as laid down by Robert Welch in the Blue Book, whether dual membership in the John Birch Society and the Republican Party is intellectually compatible, are matters which their constituents may want to ascertain should either of these two Congressmen seek re-election.

Welch says: "We shall have to use politicians, support politicians, create politicians and help the best ones we can find to get elected. I am thoroughly convinced, however, that we cannot count on politicians, political leadership, or even political action except as a part of something much deeper and broader, to save us." (p. 124.) Elsewhere in the Blue Book Welch makes it clear that his distrust stems from the inability of politicians to swallow the entire Birch mystic since they must apply themselves to "extraneous" matters, i.e., they must get elected.

To date, Jelch and the Birchers have flirted alternately with the idea of creating a third party and with attempts to infiltrate the Republican Party. These flirtations have produced nothing more than a cold shoulder.

WHITHER BIRCHISM?

As is apparent, the entire Birch phenomenon is redolent with strong overtones of paranoia, with the "Communists" replacing the more conventional paranoid "they."

For the paranoid, life is a nightmare. Only he can see The Enemy. Only he understands the nature of the Peril. The more he acts upon his systematized delusions, the more he is cast out by his fellow man for his oddness. This only serves to feed and confirm his dark suspicions and moves him to ever more bizarre beliefs. As these beliefs become ever more bizarre, he is ever more the outcast. The circle goes round and round centripetally until swept into a vortex of fanaticism and despair.

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This, we predict, is the rock upon which the Birchers and their "Founder" will founder. Some examples:

A few weeks ago, newspapers carried a UPI story stating that a prominent Bircher, at a conservative convention in Chicago, had rejected Barry Goldwater for his "socialism." Early in May, Senator Gale McGee of Wyoming addressed the Senate of the United States and stated that the John Birch Society's White Book now accuses the United States Chamber of Commerce of having been "permeated with leftists" because its course of practical politics indicates that "liberals and internationalists" have the best chance of winning elections.

When such examples as Senator Goldwater and the United States Chamber of Commerce are cast out of the conservative camp, what leadership remains? Only Mr. Welch.

The Blue Book makes it clear that individual members of the Birch Society are to have no say in determining what Communism is, nor in who is a Communist. This will be done for them by Mr. Welch. (e.g., pp. 160-2.)

Each day piles up additional evidence of Welch's belief that he is the only true messiah to rescue America from her enemies. It is a short step from this to the assertion that anybody who opposes Welch opposes America. Since these delusions are not the result of reason but spring instead from emotional needs, there is no rational stopping point for them. With the passage of time, we predict that the Birchers will become more splintered and the internecine warfare more intense as they interpret normal differences of opinion between themselves as treason and thence attack their opponent as not only wrong but immoral as well.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND THE JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY

Having thus divested myself of some personal observations on the John Birch Society, I must hasten to add that they are just that -- personal observations. As Attorney General, I am the chief law officer of the State. It might therefore be assumed by some that I am officially passing on the merits or demerits of the John Birch Society, that I am permitting or proscribing the propagation of their dogma, or that I am "investigating" them to determine whether they should be silenced or put in jail. Such an assumption betokens an unfamiliarity with the United States Constitution. The Birch Society has equal right with the Prohibitionists, the Vegetarians, the Republicans, the Democrats, or, for that matter,

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with any American, acting singly or in a group to an expression of its views, and no official, no matter how highly placed, can say them nay. In America, preposterousness prevents the acceptance but not the expression of ideas.

As Attorney General, I have no greater right, but no less a right, to an expression of my personal opinion than any other Californian. This is the right of which I avail myself here. Accordingly, we have not conducted an investigation of the John Birch Society, nor do we intend to -- we are not "Birch Watchers." All of the material in this report has either been in the public press or was voluntarily submitted by interested citizens. One effort by Department of Justice employees to interview Robert Welch and obtain his version of Birch Society activities was met with a crude rebuff. This is in strange contrast to subsequent demands by Congressman Hestand and other Birchers for "an investigation."

Should there be violations of California law, as for example the disruption of public meetings, I am confident that local law enforcement will know how to handle the situation.

These, too, are parlous times for America. There is no minimizing the threat to our free institutions. The cold war goes on and a hot war, hot to the temperatures of fusion and fission, menaces the future. Under such circumstances a patient, day-by-day analysis of facts is rendered difficult. Temptation is great to stop thinking, assign all evil to the enemy, arrogate all virtue to ourselves, and comfort ourselves in righteous hatred. The Birchers have succumbed to this temptation.

From time to time I receive enquiries concerning various groups and organizations. Some are concerned with the John Birch Society, many are concerned with organizations generally thought to be closely allied with the Communist Party. These writers generally want to know whether the given organization is "all right." They want the imprimatur of the Attorney General to certain themselves.

While it might seem flattering to be the repository of such faith, it seems to me that these writers have failed to come to grips with their duty as citizens. That duty, as I conceive it, is for those persons to make the investigation for themselves, being more self-reliant and leaning less upon the label that somebody else affixes to a person or organization. Accordingly, I generally advise such persons to look into the organization, listen to the ideas espoused, see the people espousing them, and ask questions. Then they can decide whether to join or oppose the organization or simply stay home and watch television.

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Such a course of action is, of course, grounded in a firm belief in the superiority of democracy. Understandably, neither Welch nor the Communists brook dissention or the discussion which is its progenitor. Just as understandably, supporters of democracy welcome such discussion, for they know that a discussion which pits the philosophy of Birchism or Communism against that of democracy can only serve to strengthen democracy, and they know that strengthening democracy is the best weapon against Communism. If the day ever dawns when democracy fears to take on all comers in the field of competing ideas, then democracy will already have died.

Mr. Welch says: "Democracy is merely a deceptive phrase, a weapon of demagoguery, and a perennial fraud." * (p. 159.) A century ago, a giant of an American, Walt Whitman, writing on the same subject, said:

"Democracy, while weapons were everywhere aim'd at
your breast,

I saw you serenely give birth to immortal children,
saw in dreams your dilating form,

Saw you with spreading mantle covering the world."

Respectfully yours,

STANLEY MOSK
Attorney General

by

HOWARD H. JEWEL
Assistant Attorney General