

ap. 1 - 63

Birch Leader In Santa Cruz Gives View Of Secret Group

By Wally Trabing

What is the John Birch Society up to in Santa Cruz county?

I put several questions to Richard Hodge, 29, who heads the Birchers' activities in the county and got back several answers.

Hodge is a branch administrator with "a large missile and space company in the county." He is married and has two children and resides at 310 Tanner Heights in Santa Cruz.

A registered Republican, he said the county membership is evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats.

Here are his answers to the written questions:

1. When was the first Santa Cruz chapter organized and about how many members are there at present?

"The first chapter was organized in July, 1961. At the present time there are four chapters and each chapter is comprised of from 10 to 20 members each." (He did not wish to give the exact membership.)

2. When and where are the meetings held?

"The meetings are held the first and third Fridays of every month and are conducted in the homes of various members."

3. How are new members brought in?

"When a person expresses an interest in the society, we invite him to a formal presentation.

"This consists of a film and a talk by a salaried staff coordinator of the society. If, after reading the Blue Book, they agree with us and our program, we ask them to become a member."

4. Does any local chapter or its members engage in letter writing and telephone campaigns against teachers, preachers, or any others in Santa Cruz county whose view the society feels is pro-communist?

"Absolutely not. There is nothing in any of the bulletins which we receive from headquarters which are directed to us, asking us to engage in this type of activity.

"This is quite obvious when it is understood that the bulletins are written in Belmont, Mass., and they would have no knowledge of any local activity.

"Furthermore, and most important, is that we are not trying to pinpoint any pro-communist in this county for the reason that it doesn't really matter.

"We feel it is much more important to educate the general public as to the aims and programs and purposes of the Communist conspiracy.

"Then, an individual is much better equipped to defend himself from the Communist propaganda which, in many instances,

unsuspecting people are promulgating.

"We feel it is much better to be armed with the knowledge of Communism rather than to try to pinpoint individual persons who are promoting the party line."

5. Are there any crackpots in your organization who might write anonymous letters or make phone calls at night to persons?

"Any person caught doing such things will be expelled from our organization. We are trying to build the quality of the members, and I do not think we have any such people in our chapters."

6. Is there anything secret about the organization or its method of operation?

"Absolutely not. Our entire program is available to anyone who wishes to find out about the society. The Blue Book sells for \$2 and is available to anyone who writes Belmont 78, Mass., and requests a copy.

"The Blue Book may also be checked out at the Cabrillo college library, or purchased locally at the Freedom Book shop in the Palomar Arcade. Dues are \$2 per month for males and \$1 for females.

"The monthly bulletins which are sent to members are available to anyone at the Freedom Book shop."

7. What is the purpose of the John Birch Society?

"We feel that today our generation is rapidly dissipating and abandoning, rather than improving, the material, political, and the spiritual assets of our marvelous legacy.

"We are determined to do everything honorable, within our power, to save for our children this wonderful country and humane civilization which we ourselves inherited.

"We are attempting to create an understanding among our fellowmen, in order to instill within them a resistance to the program of the collectivist.

"At present the Communist conspiracy is the greatest danger that we face from those who would collectivize and direct the efforts of others through big government. We hope to build that necessary resistance with everything mortal man can put into the effort, while there is still time.

"Then, if we can destroy the Communist tyranny, we will drive on toward our higher goals of less government and more individual responsibility in which we can create a better world for all."

8. How does each local chapter contribute to the ideals of the society?

"Each chapter and the membership, by putting into action the outline and suggested program of the home office, transforms words into deeds.

"The chapters meet and discuss the programs. For instance, on a project such as 'Cuba Free—in '63,' the local chapters can pool resources to sponsor a public education program in the community.

"Another example would be the local posting of bulletins regarding the impeachment of Earl Warren."

9. How rigidly are the members bound to follow the dictations of Robert Welch, the national leader?

"The society is a voluntary organization and each month in the bulletin Welch asks each of us to review the program of action, and if we agree, go ahead and carry it out.

"If there is anything in it which is against our own con-

science, then, by all means, don't do it. Welch is quite sincere in making this admonition to the membership."

10. How does Welch communicate with the sub-leaders and members?

"Each state has a major coordinator and then the state is broken up into areas with area coordinators.

"Underneath these are section leaders and then comes the chapter leaders.

"Welch and the executive council communicate directly with each member of the society by the monthly bulletins. They list the agenda for the coming month and give us indications of our past actions in prior bulletins."

11. Do you believe there are dedicated Communists in Santa Cruz county?

"I have no way of determining whether or not a person is a Communist in that most members went underground in 1948. It is the function of the FBI to concern itself with this."

12. What are the chapters' interest in so-called Communist activities in the county?

"Since many of the members subscribe to magazines and newspapers of the Communist Party from New York, San Francisco, and Moscow, we only feel it is of interest to watch the local area to see how fast the reaction time is from the time a program is laid down in Moscow by the Communist Party, to the time that this program becomes evident in the Santa Cruz area."

13. Do the local chapters go along with all activities sponsored by the main board in Massachusetts—like calling Eisenhower, Dulles, etc., Red?

"First of all the main board or executive council has never called Eisenhower, Dulles, or anyone else (except Khrushchev) a communist.

"What you are referring to is a letter written by Welch some four years ago before the society was ever founded, in which he reviewed the record of the former President.

"After reviewing the record he said the conclusions one might come to were that Eisenhower was a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy, or that he was simply riding the political tides of the times, or that he had been duped by the conspiracy.

"In 1958 the executive council of the society repudiated this letter of Welch's and said that it had no part or parcel in the John Birch Society.

"If anyone is interested in the background, he can buy this let-

ter by writing to Welch in Belmont."

14. How dangerous do you think is the threat of Communism in our county?

"Our county is linked to our state and our state to our nation. Our nation faces a grave crisis at this particular moment in history.

"The Communists have really never conquered a country openly.

"Most of those countries going under to the Communist conspiracy were taken over from the outside, with a few dedicated Communists infiltrated into offices of the government, labor unions, schools and churches and were able to influence large segments of the society so that the powers of government were turned over into their hands.

"I feel the fate of this county lies squarely with what happens in the entire United States.

"Lenin set up his plan for global conquest in three states; the first, the control of eastern Europe. This has been accomplished. The second would be the masses of Asia. This is practically done. The third would be the encirclement of the U.S. This is in the process today."

Deputies Search For Lost Angler

Marysville (P). — Sheriff John Dower directed a search Sunday for T. James Tiner, who failed to return from a fishing trip to Jack's Slough.

Tiner, 55, is a heavy equipment operator. Dower said Tiner's fishing pole was found on the slough bank at Marysville's northern limits.

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