



Written by [William S. Hahn](#) on December 9, 2015

## Happy Anniversary John Birch Society!

It was 57 years ago at the Indianapolis home of Miss Marguerite Dice when businessman Robert Welch began his marathon two-day lecture that launched The John Birch Society. There were 11 friends and business associates present and they listened intently as the philosopher-historian and great lover of America told them during 17 hours why they should join with him in an organization designed to preserve the American dream. Most agreed on the spot to be the Society's first members and the organization was born on December 9, 1958.



A child prodigy who had read a nine-volume history of the world at age seven and asked for more, Welch was a great student of history and world affairs. As early as 1939, he wrote that the country he was born into, loved so intensely, and was under attack from within was being “converted into a carbon copy of thousands of despotisms that had come before.” His concerns mounted after World War II when he went to England to study the inroads being made by the socialist takeover of that nation. He discovered that England was being victimized by a conspiracy, not by any unfolding of historical forces that no one could stop. When he returned to America, he saw the same conspiratorial influences at work within our shores.

After a try at politics and authorship of a few books and a small magazine, he decided that an organized educational program was the best answer to America's ills. He named the Society after John Birch, a legendary Army captain who served as an intelligence specialist with U.S. forces in China throughout most of the war against Japan. Birch, killed by Chinese communists only days after the struggle against the Japanese had ended, was the subject of Welch's small 1954 book, [The Life of John Birch](#).

In his founding presentation, subsequently published as [The Blue Book of The John Birch Society](#), Welch outlined three major problems facing our country: communism, collectivism and the rise of amorality. The Society quickly became known as an opponent of communism and most Americans thought that was its sole focus. But Welch and the organization he created have always targeted any form of total government, including not only communism but socialism, fascism, Nazism, and total government under any label. As for his concern about the rise of the amoral man, he worried about the loss of faith among so many who had adopted self-promotion as their only goal. These were persons who ignored the great rules of conduct handed down by the Ten Commandments and other religious proscriptions. Persons who had cast aside morality were, he claimed, easy recruits who would work to bring about the conspiracy's aims that have always included a world rule by a few and virtual slavery for everyone else.

Far from a purely negative stance, the Society has always praised the system of government created by America's founders. Welch stressed spreading knowledge about the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution as the basis of the best form of government ever created. He wanted their sound principles restored and even spread worldwide through the power of persuasion. He created a motto for all members to promote that summed up the organization's long-range goal: “Less government, more responsibility, and — with God's help — a better world.”

The Society began to form chapters of ten or more persons in communities throughout the nation. Once



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its potential for awakening the sleeping American giant had been discovered, the organization became the target of a smear campaign that labeled it secret, fascist, subversive, racist, anti-Semitic and anything else that already had a bad smell. None of those labels had any basis in fact but the major organs of the mass media (that Welch said was largely controlled by the conspiracy he sought to expose and rout) repeated the slurs and had many Americans believing that the Society should be shunned.

Welch pleaded in vain for Congress to investigate his Society and the work it was doing. He said he never had anything to hide and was, therefore, completely willing to open to scrutiny all aspects of his creation. Finally, a California state senate committee took him up on his offer and spent two years exhaustively looking into every aspect of the organization's work. In 1963, its official report concluded that the Society had succeeded in attracting many Americans who believed it to be "the most effective, indeed the only organization they could join in a national movement to learn the truth about the Communist menace and then take some positive concerted action to prevent its spread."

The California senate committee ended its 62-page report noting that its investigation had been requested by the Society that "had been publicly charged with being a secret, fascist, subversive, un-American, anti-Semitic organization." Completely exonerating the organization from such vilification, the Democrat-led committee concluded, "We have not found any of these accusations to be supported by the evidence." That should have stopped the intensive smear campaign against the privately-run Society, but it didn't.

The Society's potential to rouse many Americans into an educational army designed to stop our nation's slide into centralized dictatorial government, and then into world government, has never been fully realized. Through its 50-plus years, the organization has achieved numerous successes such as blocking passage of the little-understood Equal Rights Amendment, impeding the plans of those who seek a constitutional convention that would invite destruction of the document, and prevention of a duplicate of the sovereignty-destroying European Union known here as the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas. Its reports on the voting records of all members of Congress have stimulated millions to become aware of the stark difference between the fancy rhetoric and dismal performance of many elected officials.

Mostly, the Society claims success in awakening many Americans to the worth of our nation's marvelous system of government and the many threats that have been mounted to alter or abolish it. Campaigns such as "Get US out of the United Nations," "Support Your Local Police (from federal takeover)" and "Abolish the Federal Reserve" have not succeeded fully, but the potential for success in each grows as the Society's Websites, books, magazines, pamphlets, DVDs and speakers reach more millions every year.

Asked about the organization's efforts in 2009, President John McManus who has held staff positions in the Society since 1966, stated, "We're still on the same course and there are increasing numbers of Americans who have begun to realize that we have never deviated from our determination to rescue this country from the grip of a conspiracy intending to destroy it." He insists that full adherence to the Constitution's limitations would lead to the federal government being "twenty percent its size and twenty percent its cost." He frequently quotes Robert Welch's closing comment from the Society's 1958 founding meeting: "All we must find and build and use, to win, is sufficient understanding."

McManus then added: "Membership in our organization is open to anyone of good conscience and humane ideals regardless of race, ethnic background or religious persuasion. Those who join The John Birch Society know that we mean business every step of the way. We intend to leave for our children



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and generations yet to come the marvelous heritage of freedom and good will given our nation by its founders more than 200 years ago.”

*This article, slightly modified, was originally published on December 9, 2009.*



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