

The original documents are located in Box D6, folder “Ford Press Releases - Birch Society/Extremism, 1965” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Press Conference: September 30, 1965

THE JOINT SENATE-HOUSE LEADERSHIP
Transcript of comments on John Birch Society

QUESTION: (Not clear)

DIRKSEN: Well, Bill, let me give you my estimate of the situation. First, and let me emphasize this with as much vigor as I can -- that the John Birch Society is NOT a part of the Republican Party. It never was and I don't suppose it even pretends to be.

Secondly, let me say that in the American political scheme I do not believe there is any place or any room for any organization which operates on a secret basis to achieve political goals. Way back in Lincoln's day, as you remember, they had the "Know Nothings" and if you asked them a question, asked them what they stood for, the answer was: "I know nothing."

Third, let me say that it's rather curious that General Walker, who supposedly is a member of this group, ran for office in Texas -- not on the Republican ticket -- but on the Democrat ticket -- and got 100,000 votes.

Fourth, we have never been encumbered with any group like the Americans for Democratic Action. Now, if you want to talk about extremism, well, you can put your teeth into that. We do not believe in extremism, we got out a moderate platform in 1964, and we stand by it.

And finally, let me say, that insofar as I'm familiar with what the John Birch Society is seeking to do -- and frankly not a single piece of their literature has ever gone across my desk. So I don't know exactly what they do stand for. But I read in the press they're against the United Nations.... the Republican Party isn't; they have demeaned some of the Republican leaders like the late John Foster Dulles, like President Eisenhower and others, and tried to put on them an ideological tag that is at complete variance with a whole tradition of the Republican Party. We EMPHATICALLY reject that sort of thing and we stand on our platform, but I make it abundantly clear that they are NOT a part of the Republican Party. They never have been -- and in my judgment they never will be.

QUESTION: (Not clear)

FORD: I would subscribe wholeheartedly to the observations and comments of Senator Dirksen. I would like to point out in addition, however, that the Republican record in the House and in the Senate on such issues as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 -- the Voting Rights Act of 1965 -- the Republican Party supported those two legislative proposals very substantially. And if I understand correctly, the John Birch Society is opposed to BOTH of those laws that are now on the statute books. The legislative record of the Republican Party in the House and in the Senate is in substantial conflict with the views of the John Birch Society, a monolithic organization that takes its orders from the top and therefore there is no place for that organization in the Republican Party.



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REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE

1625 EYE STREET, NORTHWEST, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006

NATIONAL 8-6800

NEWS

FOR RELEASE

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FRIDAY NOON E.S.T.
November 5, 1965

STATEMENT ON EXTREMISM BY REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CHAIRMAN
RAY C. BLISS AT A NEWS CONFERENCE IN ALBUQUERQUE, NEW
MEXICO, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1965

When we talk about extremism, we should look both to the radical left and to the radical right.

It is quite obvious to me that the radical left is attempting to throw a smoke-screen around its own activities by slanderously charging all conservatives with extremist views.

While the Republican Party has been exhorted to repudiate radicals who do not speak for and who do not lead or influence the Party, the Democratic National Committee has helped finance and promote the Group Research, Inc. smear list which includes such noted Americans as former President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Some leftist-oriented Democratic groups in this country have urged unrealistic disarmament, concessions to Moscow and Peiping, withdrawal from Vietnam and recognition of Red China. These groups on the radical left are guilty of extremism of the most dangerous variety -- extremism which challenges American foreign policy and may cost American lives by encouraging Communists to greater aggression.

One of my major concerns in the matter of extremism of the radical right is that honest, patriotic and conscientious conservatives may be misjudged because of irresponsible radicals such as Robert Welch, who has accused General Eisenhower of being "a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy."

On this point I am joined by our two most recent Republican Presidential nominees, Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon, as well as Republican leaders in Congress and in Statehouses across the land.

-more-

Therefore, I ask all Republicans to reject absolutely and without reservation any resort to slanderous irresponsibility.

I ask all Republicans to reject membership in any radical organization which attempts to use the Republican Party for its own ends, or in any organization which seeks to undermine the basic principles of American freedom and constitutional government.

I also call upon all Republicans to reject absolutely and without reservation organizations which condone violence and violation of the law, whatever their motives.

Our country will be well served if the Democratic Party takes the same position toward ALL extremists.



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Our country will be well served if the Democratic Party takes the same position toward ALL extremists.



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FOR RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following resolution on extremism, offered by Senate Minority Leader Everett M. Dirksen and House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford, was approved unanimously by the Republican Coordinating Committee December 13, 1965:

The Republican Coordinating Committee endorses the position of Republican National Committee Chairman Ray C. Bliss that all Republicans should reject membership in any radical or extremist organization including any which attempts to use the Republican Party for its own ends or any which seeks to undermine the basic principles of American freedom and constitutional government.

At a news conference following the action, Senator Dirksen, Representative Ford and Governor Robert Smylie of Idaho said it was the sense of the Coordinating Committee that the resolution endorsed and approved the full statement on extremism issued by Republican National Chairman Ray C. Bliss at a news conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, November 5, 1965.

A copy of the Bliss statement is attached.



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Senator Everett Dirksen, minority leader of the Senate, offered the following Resolution on behalf of himself and House minority leader Gerald Ford, and moved its adoption. The motion to adopt was seconded by Governor Robert Smylie of Idaho. The Resolution was unanimously adopted.

The Republican Coordinating Committee endorses the position of Republican National Committee Chairman Ray C. Bliss that all Republicans should reject membership

-- in any radical or extremist organization including any which attempts to use the Republican Party for its own ends or any which seeks to undermine the basic principles of American freedom and constitutional government.

December 13, 1965