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Birch Society Member in Congress

Hiestand Viewed as Having Written

His Political Epitaph Over Issue

very close and his desire to run again for the presidency is obvious.

The first member of Congress to admit his membership in the far right, semi-secret John Birch Society is Representative Hiestand, an extremely conservative Republican from what has long been a safely Republican district in Los Angeles County.

The society's announced aim is to fight communism. In doing so it uses Communist techniques such as "front groups," loaded questions and more-or-less secret cells with particular attention to college campuses.

Its founder, Robert Welch, has charged that former President Eisenhower, Chief Justice Warren, former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and CIA Director Allen Dulles were secret Communist agents or sympathizers. Mr. Hiestand now says that an honest investigation would dispel charges that the society is "dictatorial or Fascist" and he wants the House Un-American Activities Committee to make it.

His colleagues from California marvel that he would admit his membership in the society as one of its major critics has been the very conservative Republican Los Angeles Times. The Times ran both a long expose of the society and a strongly worded editorial on the front

page signed by Otis Chandler, publisher.

United Press International, however, in a special report, had said that the society listed Mr. Hiestand as a member of its "Committee of Indorsers." He apparently decided to beat his political enemies to the punch by admitting it.

UPI also states flatly that "there is no public accounting of either money or membership." Such secrecy is not against the law, as witness the Ku Klux Klan, but American public opinion has frowned on it in political societies. Hence, the view in the California delegation here that Mr. Hiestand has written his political epitaph.

The fact that California is gaining eight new House seats by reason of its population increase and that Democrats at long last are getting a chance to do the reapportionment won't help him, either.

What most interests Democrats, however, particularly the experts in the tangled maze of California politics, is what they think they perceive as a power play centering around the John Birch Society, directed by Richard M. Nixon. The former Vice President's connections with the Los Angeles Times are

The controversial society is particularly strong in California, a famous breeding ground of off-beat organizations. Presidents of the State's colleges find its campus calls just as troublesome as Communist calls were for a long time and occasionally still are.

The society also is said to be multiplying in the South where Mr. Nixon and Republicans generally have great hopes.

Democrats are certain that few Democrats, certainly few in such key States as California, are attracted to the John Birch Society. Putting it another way, they figure the society as a hair shirt for Republicans in the same way leftwing organizations have been for Democrats. Certainly Republicans in key States cannot afford the label.

Democrats, therefore suspect that the current outcry represents a considered effort by Republicans, including Mr. Nixon, to rid themselves of the John Birch coloration before the elections of 1962 and 1964. If some Republicans, as Mr. Hiestand, have to be sacrificed in the national Republican interest, Democrats regard Mr. Nixon as just the cool operator to figure out the tactics and put them into operation.

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