

February 3, 2007

Dear Mr. Hirschhorn:

You likely didn't expect to receive any message from The John Birch Society. But since you mentioned us in your January 31 article "Healthy Political Faith," and that mention popped up on the electronic clipping service we use, we did receive what you wrote.

You are obviously concerned about the way our country is being led. Good for you. So are we. But you have bought into a characterization of our organization that many others have learned is neither accurate nor fair. Are we a "far, far, right-wing" group as you claim? What is "right-wing" anyway? We maintain that the political spectrum proceeds from zero government on one side (the right) to total government on the other side (the left). On the extreme left would be found Communism, Socialism, Naziism, Fascism, Dictatorial Monarchy, etc. On the extreme Right would be found Anarchists who want no government (a very dangerous attitude).

The John Birch Society believes in the U.S. Constitution. We strive for limited government where the government is restrained by law (the Constitution) and the people are restrained by freely accepted moral codes such as the Ten Commandments. That's what America's Founders established and relied upon. That's what we have been trying to maintain – and even reestablish – for the nearly 50 years of our existence. The reality is that we Birchers are constitutional moderates. But if you judge us according to the attitudes of most Americans today, we admit to being to their right, but not a far, far right. Instead, a place within the acceptable center.

Rather than simply defend our organization, however, I thought a few comments about your article might be worth my time, and might be considered by you. First, let me suggest that you cease referring to our nation's governmental system as a "democracy." The Founders avoided establishing a democracy (rule by a majority) very deliberately, and very effectively. They gave us a republic (rule of law). About midway into Madison's Federalist Essay #10, you will find a very sound condemnation of democracy. (My guess is that you have access to the Federalist Papers.) There is, of course, no mention of "democracy" in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, or the constitutions of any of the 50 states. Madison and all the Founders abhorred the very mention of democracy.

Your desire to see of constitutional convention surprises me. You certainly appear to be a patriot who wants the same for our nation as do Birchers. I fear, however, that you are quite wrong in believing that an Article V convention is a sound route to achieve a more responsive government.

There has only been one such convention in our nation's history. It occurred when delegates of the states were gathered together and given the assignment of revising (repairing?) the Articles of Confederation. That was the only task they were supposed to accomplish. But they acted as will any constitutional convention. With full authority that is

possessed by any such gathering, they discarded the Articles and produced an entirely new governmental system, the Constitution. Their meeting became a “runaway” convention. We might applaud what they gave us, but we must realize that they had no restraints. With this precedent in mind, thoughtful Americans for 220 years have chosen never to open up any opportunity for such a development again.

Numerous scholars, including several Supreme Court justices, have spoken out about the inability to restrain the delegates at any Article V convention, should one be called. I can supply the citations of these men should you care to have them. The simple truth is: There is no way to hold a convention in check once it is underway. There have been numerous state legislature calls for a “limited” convention, restricted to balancing the federal budget, restoring prayer in the schools, etc. But such limitations sought by those well-meaning people would not hold up.

As for the needed ratification of any convention’s decisions by the states following an Article V convention, be aware that what is stipulated in the Constitution’s Article V regarding this could also be altered or abolished by the convention. Everything in the current Constitution could be tossed, and whatever the conventioners would decide would replace it. A new convention could even decide not to bother having the states ratify what it produces. A constitutional convention has no limitations.

You may know that several states have recently become aware of this potential for serious mischief. They have, therefore, legislatively rescinded all calls for a convention issued by their state legislature. Other states have begun considering the same procedure.

So, you can see that The John Birch Society does fear an Article V convention. But we offer an alternative for those who believe the federal government has grown too large, too oppressive, too dictatorial, etc. Our suggestion is to have the people regain control of their federal government through the portion of the government closest to them, the House of Representatives.

Please look at Article I, Section 7 of the Constitution. It states that “All bills for raising revenues shall originate in the House of Representatives....” That’s power, and it was deliberately given to the people’s portion of government by the Founders. If the House will not originate a measure to fund such unconstitutional programs as foreign aid, education, housing, undeclared wars, etc., that’s it. There’s nothing the Senate, the President, the Supreme Court, or anyone else can do about it.

We tell anyone who will listen that the office of President has for a good while been controlled by Establishment forces that are committed to big government, internationalism, and accumulating all power in the Executive branch. We wish it weren’t so, but seeking to “steal” the presidency via a third party isn’t about to happen. You seemed to indicate agreement with this conclusion yourself.

Please reconsider your call for an Article V convention. Then, please begin to realize that 218 members of the House can wield enormous power by simply employing their rightful authority as it appears in Article I, Section 7.

Finally, let me say that I would be honored to hear from you. I would even be more than willing to share some of our Society's material with you if you care to see it. I especially would be delighted to send you a copy of a 30-minute video I produced entitled OVERVIEW OF AMERICA, a definition of the government established more than 200 years ago. You would be under no obligation whatsoever should you respond affirmatively to my offer.

You can find out a good deal about our Society at jbs.org. Please take a look.

I send my kind regards. - John F. McManus, President, The John Birch Society