



Episode 1,279: The John Birch Society: A Conversation With Its President Emeritus

Guest: Jack McManus

WOODS: This is a big book you've got here, and it's detailed. It is strictly chronological, just having section after section of this year, this year, this year, this is what happened. And it really does have the feel of somebody who was not simply an eyewitness, but a participant, of course. On the cover, I see you with Robert Welch. When was that picture taken?

MCMANUS: That picture was 1978, and I'd like to mention about it that a lot of people who have seen the picture, asking, "What were you laughing about?" And what had happened is I had just returned from meeting with some raucous college students in the Boston area, and I demanded combat pay. Robert Welch kind of laughed. I laughed myself. I never got the combat pay, but I made the point.

WOODS: Indeed, Indeed. Well, you should get combat pay with the conservative movement. I do want to ask a little bit later about the relationship between the society and conservatism, Inc. It's probably been about as cordial as my relationship with conservatism, Inc. But let's get back to the very beginning. Tell me about the creation of the society. What gap did Robert Welch think he was filling that no other institution was performing?

MCMANUS: Well, first of all, he had run for political office in Massachusetts. He lost but, he learned as he traveled through the state, that the American people, even the best of them, had a very poor understanding of what made America great and the foundation that was given to us by our founding fathers. So he was determined at that point to begin an educational crusade to fill in the gaps that these people had and never had gotten from the schools that they had gone to. So education was always his strong suit, his idea. It eventually led to him forming the John Birch Society, which is and always has been an educational institution.

WOODS: And before we go further on Robert Welch, who is John Birch, after whom the society is named?

MCMANUS: John Birch was a Christian missionary from the state of Georgia. He went to China in 1940. He was there when World War II broke out, and he was doing his missionary work as a Baptist preacher. In early 1942, the famous Doolittle Raid over Tokyo, let the Japanese know that they were not going to get away with having bombed Pearl Harbor and killed so many Americans. Doolittle and his crew and the other crews in the planes that dropped the bombs on Tokyo were instructed that you can't get back to where you started your flight from, it's too far away, so you are instructed to fly to China, and when you run out of fuel, abandon the

plane, bailout, and good luck. Well, the good luck that occurred included Jimmy Doolittle being rescued by John Birch and brought into safety in the American-held part of China.

Well, it turned out that John Birch was immediately sought after by General Claire Chennault, the famous head of the American Flying Tigers. He wanted him to be an intelligence gatherer. Well, Birch said, "I'd like to be your chaplain," and Chennault said to him, "I don't need a chaplain. I already have one. I need you. You could speak the Chinese language. You live amongst the Chinese people. I need you as an intelligence gatherer." So John accepted, was named a lieutenant in the United States Army, Fourth of July of 1942, and he served with amazing distinction for the remainder of the war, but then was killed by Chinese communist forces ten days after the war had ended in August of 1945.

Well, Robert Welsh heard about this, did some investigation, visited with the parents of John, and eventually wrote a little book in 1954, entitled *The Life of John Birch*. And when time came for Welsh to start his long-desired educational organization, he asked the parents if he could use their son's name as a symbol. They happily said yes. And that's how we became the John Birch Society.

WOODS: All right, I knew a little bit about that story, but I didn't know all those details, so I'm glad I asked you. When did you get involved with the society?

MCMANUS: Well, I was a conservative, and I was a reader of William Buckley's *National Review* magazine in the years 1960, '61, '62, and so forth. And I had been led to believe by the media, even by clergymen that the John Birch Society that had been discovered was a danger to America. And so I decided that I was going to investigate the John Birch Society and make sure it didn't have any impact in the community where I live. Well, lo and behold, after examining the society and finding out that I had been betrayed by William Buckley, I joined the society itself. And I'm not the only one that ever did that. Many, many of our finest members were former enemies, who, once learning the truth about the society, joined and became members. Some of our writers, some of our speakers, a lot of our chapter leaders across the country had been former enemies. So I finally joined the John Birch Society in 1964. I joined the staff in 1966 when I was asked to take on a position, and from 1966 until now, I could say I'm still a staff member of the John Birch Society.

WOODS: But you were the president of the society for a long time, isn't that right?

MCMANUS: That's true. I started off as a field coordinator for five New England states. I was then asked to come in and take a position at the headquarters, which then was in Belmont, Massachusetts, a Boston suburb. And then I became the public relations director, and in 1991, I was named president. I served as president of the society until January 1st of 2016, when I became president emeritus. I'm not a young man anymore, and some of the responsibilities were lifted from me, but I still do a lot of speaking and writing and radio and television interviews wherever possible.

WOODS: All right, so how would you describe what the Birch Society is trying to tell the American public? What are they trying to warn Americans about? What is their number one concern? And maybe it's changed over the years, I don't know.

MCMANUS: No, it hasn't. It's the same right from the beginning. The concern is that a powerful clique, we call it a conspiracy, has been working for decades, even a couple of centuries to convert our country into simply a province of a new world order, which means world government. And of course, the United Nations is involved. That is the main goal of the John Birch Society, to expose that conspiracy.

But along the way, to teach Americans what it was that our founding fathers gave us. I like to say that America became great not because of what government did, but because of what government was prevented from doing by the Constitution. And going back over and reading the history of our country and understanding the wisdom that was involved in creating the United States of America, I can certainly see and I want others to realize the great gift that we were given by our founders. And the turning away from it that has been engineered by a powerfully-based, conspiratorial group that has great impact in our government and our media, our educational system, and so on. And we think that all of this is demonstrable for anybody who would take the time to look at the evidence that we can provide. And once having done that, we would hope that they would help us reach many more Americans.

WOODS: All right, so now I think we're pinpointing kind of where the rubber meets the road here, because there are a lot of people who would agree with much of what the Birch Society has to say. I mean, basically, the Birch Society wants a strict construction of the Constitution, which would mean, obviously, a much, much more limited government than we have now. And I remember from when I first learned about the society and its activities, the different voter guides that would be distributed by the society that would judge different politicians on the basis of their fidelity of the Constitution. You'd lay out a series of votes, and then you put a checkmark or an X next to each vote by each politician, so that you'd have a sense of how faithful to the Constitution each person was. And I think a lot of people would say that's a great service.

I think the difficulty is the idea of the conspiracy. And of course, you know that that's the difficult point. And I remember you telling me once: Tom, if it weren't a conspiracy, then you would think occasionally, if only by accident, they would accidentally do the right thing. Like the odds would be that they would just occasionally, in spite of themselves, by accident do something decent. And that never happens. How could you be so consistently bad unless you were trying to be?

So how do you — I mean, that's — I mean, I get that. But I guess the issue with the society is everybody brings up Robert Welch and Dwight Eisenhower. So can we address that?

MCMANUS: Yes, we can. Shortly after the society had been formed, Robert Welch, first of all, had shared a copy of a manuscript he had written about President Eisenhower. And this, of course, was the time when Eisenhower was still president of the United States. We're talking about the late '50s, and it was not what you'd call a flowery appreciation of a president. It was a condemnation of him for his deeds and for his positions and for the people he surrounded himself with, and so on, and the harm that he was doing to our country.

Well, the manuscript got into the hands of a reporter for the *Chicago Daily News* and then began a blistering attack on Robert Welch and the society that he had founded for saying that Eisenhower was a communist. Robert Welch never really explicitly said that he was a communist. He said that he was helping the communists, that he had communists in government and wasn't doing anything about it, and so on. It's a 300-page manuscript.

Well, the society really took a hit for quite a while because of that book, and finally, Robert Welch was able to publish it in defense of what he had said. And immediately, a cloak of secrecy descended upon the existence of the book. Robert Welch had sent a letter to bookstores throughout the United States, thousands of them, saying that this controversial book, that has probably become the most controversial book of our time, is now available, and here's how you can get one. He sold less than a thousand books. And a kind of a cloak had been covering over the fact that the book existed and the fact that it wasn't now available.

Nevertheless, the book was published by the society, by Robert Welch, and it had all of a sudden drawn a lot of people into the John Birch Society. But the attacks on the society continued. Not just the fact that Robert Welch had indicated that Eisenhower was doing more harm than good and had surrounded himself with communist Asians. The entire book goes into his political leanings. You know, one interesting and telling fact about Eisenhower is that a biography of the man was written by a man named Joseph Fels Barnes at Eisenhower's request. And Joseph Fels Barnes was a communist. There's no doubt about that.

So the facts that are in the book — it's called *The Politician* and is still available, by the way. The facts that are there have never been disputed. Nobody's ever found an error. Nobody's ever been able to point to something that Robert Welch wrote about Eisenhower that turned out to be false, that he'd erred, that he had made a mistake, or that he had deliberately covered over history and come out with a smear job. No, the book is not a smear job. It's a factual recording of Eisenhower's efforts, and those efforts were very damaging to our country. And that's not well known, but to people who have read *The Politician* by Robert Welch, they are known, and it has drawn many people to the John Birch Society.

WOODS: As you know, Bill Buckley, if I'm remembering this correctly, famously said, "Eisenhower is not a communist. He is a golfer." So in other words, so as to make what the society was saying seem preposterous.

MCMANUS: Well, yeah. I mean, Buckley went after the society, distorted what was in the book, distorted what the society was publishing at the time. And I have to confess that I was originally persuaded by Buckley that Robert Welch was dangerous. And I finally ended up meeting some members of the Birch Society, and they started feeding me with information that was available to anybody at the time. I started reading what Robert Welch had said, not what Buckley had claimed that he said, and I became very angry. I didn't like being duped, and I had been duped. And I'm not the only one who was ever in that circumstance, being misled by William Buckley.

I eventually wrote another book. The book is probably 10, 12 years old now or maybe more, a book about Buckley, called *The Pied Piper for the Establishment*. Whenever it was needed by the establishment — and by that that term, I mean the conspiracy that we've already talked about. Whenever it was needed, some members of the establishment would go to Buckley and say, well, look, we need you to back this initiative of government or this policy or this statement or so forth. And he always complied. So he was leading people astray. He literally kept millions of Americans who were concerned about our country from examining the John Birch Society. And in that regard, he's the greatest enemy we ever had. And I make that clear in the book I've written about the history of the John Birch Society.

WOODS: I have a friend I'm sure you don't know named Michael Malice, who has a book coming out next year called *The New Right*, and he basically thinks of Bill Buckley as like

Satan for the right wing in America, so that's an interesting area of overlap between the two of you. Now, tell me, what was the Birch Society's position on the Vietnam War?

MCMANUS: The Birch Society's position was simple: remove the restrictions on our forces and let them win the war and then bring the troops home. That was never done. We had campaigns, long, enduring campaigns of gathering signatures on a petition, that said, simply, stop helping communists. We were in fact supplying both sides in that war and holding back the ability of our forces to win the war. I eventually was able to gain copies of the restrictions on our forces. Barry Goldwater, a senator from Arizona, had finally pried them out of the State Department, the rules for engagement they were called, and published them in the Congressional record. And to read the restrictions on our pilots, on our troops, on our forces everywhere that were forced on them by our own government is just criminal.

And it certainly was part of the conspiracy. The Vietnam War turned out to be the only war at that time that our nation had ever lost. And we did lose. We finally shut it down and left after 50,000 had died and many more had been wounded and communism took over Vietnam. So the study of that particular incident, the war in Vietnam, is to me a very clear evidence of conspiratorial activity at the top of the American government.

WOODS: The easiest thing in the world would have been just don't get in the war. Just say it's none of our business and don't get in the war. If you wanted to see, let's say, communism be victorious, why wouldn't you just not get in the war? I don't see — it seems to kind of convoluted for them to go to all that trouble if what they really wanted was simply the victory of communism. You could have that by not going in the war.

MCMANUS: Well, that's true, but there were other aspects of the whole situation that have to also be considered, one being that it was a war that was never declared by Congress, which was required by the Constitution, and therefore it was a war that was not going to be won. The supplying of both sides was most indicative, and that was being used by the Birch Society to have the American people begin to realize that their own congressmen and one or two of their senators were not backing the troops, were not helping in this crusade to stop the communist takeover of Southeast Asia.

WOODS: Well, the thing is, I want to primarily focus on the history of the society and not just have a conversation about the Vietnam War, but it does seem to me that, after all those resources were expended and the communists were victorious, it doesn't really seem clear to me that it really made any strategic difference for the US, that maybe it would have been better to save the money and maybe not have had the cultural revolution of the 1960s. I mean, maybe a lot of things would have turned out better if we had followed the framers, the founders, and just minded our own business. What's wrong with that line of thinking?

MCMANUS: Well, that point of view is easy to make today but back during that period, it was not. You have to realize that the Korean War, we had sent forces there, again, not under a declaration of war. That was 1950 to '53, to stop communism. Communism was taking over country after country after country, and this had to be stopped. And that was the thinking that went on within the Birch Society. If you had pinned Robert Welch down at the time and asked him would it have been better had we never gone into Vietnam, after years of the agony that we went through, he might well have said yes. But the way to get out of Vietnam after having been there is to win the war and then bring the troops home. That's what he said.

WOODS: All right, well, I raised the Vietnam thing simply because the story of Buckley has gone something like this, that — the way I've heard the society treated is that the society was full of crazy people who needed to be purged, but Buckley didn't really purge them for that. He purged them because of their dissent on Vietnam. But is that really an accurate description of what happened?

MCMANUS: Well, it is to a degree, but there were many other issues that Buckley made that were used by him, false issues used by him to besmirch the Birch Society, make people think that it's just a bunch of loonies, even dangerous people, and so on.

I'll give you an example. The John Birch Society's magazine at the time was called *American Opinion*. It's now called *The New American*. And the *American Opinion*, every year its summer issue would be to go around the world and to discuss the percentage of communist control over a particular country that experts within the society and around the world had come up with. So we would say, for instance, that the United States, the political and economic decisions being made by our government were 50 to 70% in favor of the communist position. So Buckley took that and he said that the John Birch Society and its magazine had claimed that 50 to 70% of the country of the United States of America was now in the hands of communism. That's not what the magazine said. And he made a big point about that on several occasions. He would distort what was being said by the society. He would make up false claims about the society. And he had quite an audience. He did a lot of harm, as I've already mentioned.

WOODS: Well, he did the same thing to Murray Rothbard and numerous other people who just were not in his orbit. Even when Rothbard died, he wrote a vicious obituary. Even in death, he couldn't be generous and say, "Well, look, I had intense disagreements with Rothbard, but he's a brilliant economist."

MCMANUS: Buckley had, one of his staff was a man who eventually became a very close friend of mine, a man named Joe Sobran. Joe Sobran worked under Buckley for about 20 years until Buckley betrayed him, stated that he had tinges of anti-Semitism and some other charges and so on, and cut him loose, sent him adrift. And Joe Sobran spent the rest of his life scratching around, trying to stay alive. But my book on Buckley that I wrote, finally I got a copy of it into the hands of Joe. And then I went and visited him in the hospital just before he died, and he showed me the book that he had read and he had Post-it notes sticking out of — I don't know, there must have been 30 to 50 of them, and lop-eared pages where something — I said, "Well, Joe, you read the book." He said, "Jack, I read it twice, and I have to say congratulations to you. I wish I'd had this information when I was working for that rascal."

WOODS: Wow, very interesting. Now, what was it like — it seems to me the Birch Society was demonized very early on, so it would be hard for a politician to be associated with it or, let's say, a Republican Party chapter. So my impression is that the Birch Society just worked directly with the public, just went past all these intermediary institutions that might have wanted to stay away from them and just went directly to the public to give them their literature and try to spread their ideas. Is that more or less correct?

MCMANUS: Correct, yes, absolutely. The Birch Society never had any intention of expecting the media to help out. In fact, after the society was formed, when Robert Welch met with 11 friends in Indianapolis in December of 1958 and they formed the society, he announced that he's not going to go to the local press with a press release announcing the formation of this

new organization; he's just going to go about reaching out to the American people. And reach out he did. The society grew quite dramatically. But during the period when we were being lambasted, you couldn't think of an adjective, a nasty adjective that wasn't used against the John Birch Society. Anything went, and it was repeated over and over again in the media by people who didn't know better and some people who did know better but did it anyway.

But we find out later that all of the attacks on the Birch Society were actually helping us reach more of the American people. And when that situation finally dawned on the string pullers behind the scenes, all of a sudden, there was no more mention of the society. There was no more condemnation. There was no more vilification. There was no more laughing and insulting adjectives thrown at the society and so on. And we went into a period of doldrums that happened in the mid '60s. And it's been pretty much that same way ever since. We will occasionally have somebody in the media come and do a story about the society in a local newspaper.

And of course, I traveled the country for years and did an awful lot of interviews with radio and television and also did a lot of radio interviews over the telephone. And the responses were huge and always good. I can remember spending three hours one night with Larry King, and it was quite a jousting, I guess you could say. We jostled with each other for three hours. But I think we got well over a thousand letters sent to the Birch Society after that program, asking for more information. And that continued to happen. I would go on C-SPAN and we'd get lots of inquiries about the society. So the attacks on us were no longer being leveled at us, but we managed to continue and continue to grow the society.

WOODS: I read *The New American* from the early '90s onward pretty consistently, and even though I wasn't sure I was on board with all of the analysis, I thought by and large, I want the same goal these people want. I want the federal government to be much smaller. I mean, that was my view in the early '90s. And so like I actually met — let's see. I met a guy named Paul Galvin in the early '90s, and he was the one who showed me the magazine. This is before the internet. Where am I going to get my information? And now this guy sends me this magazine, where they're keeping an eye on all the politicians and they're ranking them with a numerical ranking of how well they're being faithful to the Constitution. I thought that was a reasonably good metric to use. Then I met you, I don't remember exactly when, maybe 2004 or '05, something like that.

MCMANUS: Could be, yeah.

WOODS: Yeah, so I followed along, as I say, even though I wouldn't say I am on board for everything — I mean, I may have different views on some questions, and I'm not very — I mean, I respect patriotism. I respect people's love of country and their love of where they live and where their roots are. There's nothing wrong with that. That's totally normal. But for me, I'm just not very Pledge-of-Allegiance-y, flag-y, just because I see the way this is manipulated and used, and plus the Pledge of Allegiance was written by the very sort of person the John Birch Society is warning us against. So I tend not to go down that kind of road.

MCMANUS: What's interesting about the Pledge of Allegiance is that, within it, it talks about the republic for which the flag stands.

WOODS: Yeah, that itself — yeah, that's the one good thing, I guess.

MCMANUS: Yes. And, of course, we've made a very big distinction about the founding fathers of the United States condemning democracy over and over again and very, very, very bluntly and in very strong terms. Our country is supposed to be a republic, the rule of law, not a democracy, the rule of a mob. And we're constantly being encouraged to believe that whatever the mob wants, we have to have. If the mob votes for this, then we have to go for it, and so on. Well, anybody who studies the Constitution of the United States would know that, if it were truly enforced and adhered to, that the federal government would be 20% its size and 20% its cost. We wouldn't be involved in a lot of the things that we shouldn't be involved in and so on. So we have defended the Constitution. That's one of our great victories, is to have persuaded state legislators all across the country not to go for a constitutional convention, which could very easily end up destroying the Constitution itself.

WOODS: It's my understanding that Ludwig von Mises was a member of the editorial board of *American Opinion* magazine, the precursor of *The New American*. Am I right about that?

MCMANUS: That's correct, yes.

WOODS: Do you personally happen to know how that came about?

MCMANUS: No, that happened before I was aboard. I never really asked them about it or questioned it. I was glad to see it, because I've read some of Mises' materials, and I became quite friendly with Murray Rothbard, too. You've mentioned him. I asked Murray one time if he would come and speak at a John Birch Society event, and he said, "Yeah, I'd be happy to do that." So he gave me his phone number, and within a couple of weeks, I called him and invited him to the next council dinner we had. And he checked quickly, and he came back and he said, "I can't do it. I'm already booked for that weekend. How about the next one after that?" I said, "I'll be back in touch." And then he went and died on me.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, that happened to a lot of us.

MCMANUS: We became fast friends, however. I was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, and so was Murray.

WOODS: Ah, okay. All right, well, that's a nice link. The other thing I want to know is: are there politicians over the years you have supported or the society as a whole?

MCMANUS: We have never backed anybody for election. We don't take positions. We don't tell people to vote for this one or that one. We feel, as far as the Birch Society members are concerned, that for us to tell them to go and vote for this one or that one would be an insult. They already know. They don't have to be told who's good or who's bad, and so on. So there have been I think as many as eight or ten members of the House of Representatives who have been members of the Birch Society. The last was congressman Larry McDonald of Georgia, who was elected to the Congress as a Democrat. See, Democrat versus Republican never meant much to us, and it still doesn't mean much to us today. What we're looking for are people who believe in the American system, and if they're Democrats, it's okay; if they're Republicans, it's okay. It doesn't matter.

But Larry McDonald was quite a force within the Congress. He served I think five terms, had his eyes set on a Senate seat, and the *Atlanta Journal* hated him. I mean, hated him, said

that there doesn't seem to be any way of stopping him in moving up the political ladder. Well, there was a way of stopping him, and he was aboard the Korean airliner on September 1st of 1983 that was attacked by a Russian fighter plane. And I believe the plane landed, but those people aboard that plane were never seen again. Larry McDonald is obviously deceased at this point. And it sent a shockwave through Congress, no doubt about it. Many of the members of Congress who had been looking to Larry McDonald — this was Democrats and Republicans — looking to him for leadership immediately decided that they weren't going to be as far out front as they had been in the past. If McDonald can be taken down the way he was taken down by a Soviet fighter plane, then that kind of a fate also was something that they had to fear. And it had a very calming influence on a lot of people who were becoming more and more concerned and more and more willing to stick their necks out in order to get the government of the United States back under control. That's all covered in my book, by the way.

WOODS: Well, of course, first of all, let me make clear that both this book and the Buckley book, we'll link to them at TomWoods.com/1279, of course. But given that during the Cold War, everybody was concerned about communism — I mean, almost any reasonable person was concerned about it. But today, okay, there's radical Islam, but it just doesn't seem to have the same global reach that communism ever did. So in this day and age, in the post-Soviet-Union day and age, how does the John Birch Society stay relevant when there now are a lot of grassroots American groups that seem to be saying similar things about the federal government? What are you guys doing that's different?

MCMANUS: Well, what we're doing that's different is we're publishing a biweekly magazine called *The New American*, that anybody who gets in touch with us would say that this is far and away the best of all of the material coming out of all of these different groups. Tom, you probably remember Howard Phillips?

WOODS: Yeah, sure.

MCMANUS: He became a rather close friend of mine, and every time I would get together with him, wherever we met, first thing he would say to me is, "Your magazine is the best, far and away the best. There's nobody even close to what you people are putting out with your magazine." So we were always glad to have that endorsement from that man. And we've gotten similar endorsements from others, and I think you even have said some nice things about the magazine itself. So we continue.

So how does the John Birch Society stay relevant today/ We simply say to people: look, the educational system of the United States is failing and it's costing billions. Something ought to be done about it. Or we tell people government is being operated with executive orders from the White House. Not as much today under Trump as it was previously. But all kinds of other issues that we talk about, and people begin to say, you know, you've got a point there, you've got a point there. And so we continue.

I mention in the start of my book ten issues: enormous indebtedness — I mean, our country could go down just from indebtedness — shrinking manufacturing base, porous borders, misuse of the military, Federal Reserve control of the economic life of our country — which is all terribly wrong — the United Nations itself constantly grasping for more and more power, huge numbers receiving handouts, people becoming dependent on government are certainly not going to vote for somebody who's going to take away that, Supreme Court has been a

horror show in recent years — we're hoping that it won't be so with some new changes that have been made.

So all of these issues are things that bring people to the Birch Society. I can remember a story to that was — I've done a half-an-hour program called "An Overview of Our America," and it goes into what the founding fathers intended and what has happened both economically and politically. It's only a half-hour long, and I would guess well over tens of millions of people have seen that half-hour video. In fact, it's been stolen by a couple of other groups who take the name of the society off it or don't show that part to their audiences, and they like the program, but they don't want to say it's a Birch Society program.

But my point is that when anybody gives us a chance to talk about America, where it should be, where it is, where it's going, then they listen. Then they become more interested in what the John Birch Society's solutions are. And our solution mainly is education. Wake the town and tell the people, and if the people understand that the freedoms that we take for granted are going to be eroded and washed away unless we do something and put some clamps on government power. And our people are constantly reaching out. We tell them, okay, reach 100 people, you'll really influence 10, and you'll maybe recruit 2 or 3. And then go for another 100. And our people do that. Our people are constantly reaching out to friends, neighbors, fellow citizens, wherever they can find anybody who will listen and is willing to take a little bit of time to get started doing some reading. We say that those who will not read have no advantage over those who cannot read. And that sometimes embarrasses people into to saying, "Okay, what have you got that I should read?" And we'll share a book, we'll share a pamphlet, we'll share whatever. And now we have a history of the John Birch Society that we can share with people.

WOODS: And that book is called *The John Birch Society: Its History Recounted by Someone Who Was There*. We're linking to it at TomWoods.com/1279. I have to ask — it's not distant history in the Birch Society, but I am curious about how the Birch Society has viewed the Trump phenomenon. How do you assess this situation? Is he an outsider or an insider, from your point of view?

MCMANUS: Well, what he is is something different. He's a Trump magician. We were certainly pleased when the American people chose Trump over Hillary Clinton, but we know of problems with Donald Trump. He doesn't take advice. He's been a successful businessman, and he's using his successful business practices in government and so on. So he's done some good things, and he's done some things that we kind of wince and say, "Oh, my golly. Come on, Donald. Get with it, will you?" We've tried very hard to reach him, to influence him, and we think we've had a little bit of success but not what we would like. We do not consider him part of the conspiratorial apparatus, which we do think is something that can be said about Hillary Clinton and some of the other predecessors of Donald Trump in the White House. So our attitude is generally a positive one about Trump, but wishing that he would take on a little bit of the more savoir faire, I guess we could say. A good French phrase. I don't know too many French phrases, but I know that one.

WOODS: All right, well, I'm wondering about that, because if that's really true, if he really is kind of his own thing, and on the other hand, he's up against a wily conspiratorial force, why couldn't they have prevented his election?

MCMANUS: Well, I they probably thought they had prevented it. She won the votes. She won, what? 3 million more votes than he got? But they forgot about or they didn't pay attention to the fact that the president is elected by the electoral college, which of course, isn't a college. But anyhow, I don't know. The conspiracy that we believe exists is not all-powerful. It still has some gains that it wants to make, and one of them would be to destroy the electoral college. We don't want to see that happen. We'll defend the electoral college. I think it's a brilliant system put together by our founders. Again, those men are amazing. What they were able to perceive from studying history themselves and to incorporate much of it into the system that we were given way back in the late 1700s, it's simply amazing to go through it.

I like to quote Robert Welch, who, in 1934, he wrote an essay called "A Weight on My Shoulders." And in that essay, he said, "The country that I have been born into and have grown to love is being made over into a carbon copy of thousands of despotisms that have come before." He said that in 1934 when the Roosevelt administration was beginning to run the country with its alphabet agencies and so on. We survived the Roosevelt years. We survived the Truman years, the Eisenhower years, and so forth, always seeing government grow, however. And if government continues to grow, it will become all-powerful, and that's what we want to prevent in the John Birch Society.

WOODS: Well, very interesting material. And this history, whether you're a supporter or just an observer of the society, first of all, it's kind of like a history of the US, in a way, because you really are highlighting some of the key questions that were matters of controversy. But you're also getting a bit of history of, you know, let's say the American right-wing that's not highlighted. You don't hear the Birch Society talked about, except occasionally for purposes of derision. But they have been a significant force, with an awful lot of members doing an awful lot of things and publishing a magazine and spreading information and having Constitution camps, which I know that's branched off now. But all the same, all kinds of activities over the years. It's something — you know, it's a part of the history of dissident movements in the US. I like using the word "dissident" by the way, Jack, because it kind of takes away of semi-left-wing word and uses it for us. We're the dissidents now. And I'll just casually say, "Well, you know, dissident voices really need to be heard." And that gets under their skin, because they think, we're not trying to silence dissident voices. Of course you are. That's why you exist. So anyway, I appreciate you taking the time. Any final words?

MCMANUS: Well, I invite people to take a look at the Birch Society. That's easy to do. You can get us on the internet, JBS.org, or you can contact us at our headquarters in Appleton, Wisconsin. We're glad to hear from anybody. We continue to startle people by saying: you mean you people were onto this subject long before anybody else? Yeah. Yeah, we were. One of our main attitudes today is telling people about the United Nations and how we ought to get out of the United Nations. We're now in a war in Afghanistan for 17 years, and how many Americans realize that the United Nations is the director of that war via NATO, which is a United Nations subsidiary? Why can't we win in Afghanistan after 17 years? Ask the United Nations.

WOODS: Well, I wonder if it's a — well, again, here's a whole other episode. It may be what my friend Scott Horton calls a fool's errand, regardless. I don't think the United Nations was responsible for why the USSR couldn't pull off a victory there either, right?

MCMANUS: No, no.

WOODS: So it may just be a dumb idea to try it.

MCMANUS: It may be.

WOODS: Yeah, and it wouldn't be the first time they had tried a dumb idea. Anyway, TomWoods.com/1279 is where these links can be found, and Jack, thanks for this. This went way over the time I said it would, but I appreciate your patience. Thanks a lot.

MCMANUS: Oh, my pleasure, thanks. Maybe we can do it again sometime.