

Otepka and the Birchites

The disclosure that Otto F. Otepka received \$22,000 from a fund with extreme right-wing associations should be enough to kill his nomination to the Subversive Activities Control Board. After this, Senators of conscience cannot vote to confirm Mr. Otepka in a \$36,000 job where his work, if any, will be to judge the loyalty of American citizens and organizations.

The far right doubtless will cry "guilt by association," the charge long made by civil libertarians against the likes of Mr. Otepka, but there is a crucial difference here. Mr. Otepka's link to Birchites is no youthful indiscretion of many years ago but an activity carried on as recently as last summer.

As a free American, Mr. Otepka has the right to join the John Birch Society or associate with its activists. Evidently he violated no law in accepting money from Birchite sources to meet legal costs of his unsuccessful fight for reinstatement as the State Department's chief security evaluator.

But his warped concept of Americanism disqualifies Mr. Otepka from sitting in judgment on subversion. The evidence is overwhelming that the Senate should reject this nomination. And Congress should follow up by burying the S.A.C.B., a useless relic of an American era best forgotten.

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