

SEN. TRENT LOTT'S RACIST FRIENDS

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WASHINGTON — When the Senate convenes in January, its first order of business should be to review Majority Leader Trent Lott's fitness to serve as guiding light of the world's most deliberative body. You heard it right. Before the senior senator from Mississippi sits in judgment of anybody, most of all the President, Lott's colleagues ought to pass fresh judgment on him.

The need for a closer look arises from recent articles by *Washington Post* reporter Thomas Edsall on Georgia Republican Rep. Robert Barr's keynote address to the Council of Conservative Citizens, a white "racialist" group that, among other things, publishes anti-black screeds capable of making bigots weak in the knees with delight. And Barr isn't alone. Lott and the council have kept company, too.

Barr's link with the council was first disclosed by Harvard Law Professor Alan Dershowitz during the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment hearing. Barr initially screamed like a stuck pig, claiming he knew nothing about the council's alleged racist and anti-Semitic agenda. He only schmoozed it up with council members at their meeting, said Barr, because the group enjoyed the blessings of other big-name Southern conservatives, including Trent Lott, whom the council presses to the bosom as one of its own.

Lott, now at the peak of his GOP legislative career and recognizing a banana peel when he sees one, demonstrated the public relations smoothness that helped get him where he is today by swiftly denying through a spokesman any council membership. Lott has "no firsthand knowledge of the group's views," said the spokesman. Would that those words had been uttered under oath.

No sooner had Lott freed himself from the group than the head of the council's national capital branch, Mark Cerr, embraced the senator as an active member who had spoken to the group in the past. And guess what? *The Post* next produced a copy of the group's newsletter, *Citizens Informer*, with who else but Lott on the front page delivering a suck-up speech to a council gathering in Greenwood,

Miss., in 1992. Lott told those staunch proponents of preserving the white race from immigration, intermarriage and "the dark forces" that are overwhelming America that the council "stand(s) for the right principles and the right philosophy."

Lott spokesman John Czarnecki told me last week that the '92 event was just another case of a politician delivering a stump speech to a local group of unknown political pedigree — no big deal. What's more, after being confronted with evidence of the 1992 speech and the group's views, Lott renounced the council and said he won't truck with the likes of them now or henceforth forevermore.

Well, not so fast.

If, as it is now being argued in Lott's behalf, the majority leader is not comfortable with xenophobic, race-baiting bigots, when did he first grow suspicious and really start keeping his distance from the group? Because contrary to claims that he participated in the council event in '92 because he didn't know any better, they seem to have been keeping company for some time.

On my desk is a copy of a page from a 1997 *Citizens In-*



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Should the Senate review Trent Lott's links to a white supremacist group?

former, the group's Web site and its other documents speak for themselves:

■ "Given what has come out in the press about Mr. Clinton's alleged (sexual) preferences, and his apparent belief that oral sex is not sex, one wonders if perhaps Mr. Clinton isn't America's first liberal black President. ...

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former with a smiling Trent Lott pictured meeting in his Washington office with council national officers William D. Lord Jr., president Tom Dover and CEO Gordon Lee Baum. Lord and Baum were also in the '92 photo. And who is Lord? *The Post* reports Lord was a regional organizer for the Southern-based segregationist Citizen Councils. In the '60s, white Citizen Council members shared the Ku Klux Klan's views on civil rights but tended to speak and dress better and not slink around after dark in white hoods.

So much could be said about the Council of Conservative Citizens. But let's let *Citizens In-*

His beliefs are actually a result of his inner black culture. Call him an Oreo turned inside out." (H. Millard, 1998)

■ "*Life* magazine, the glossy photo album of folksy liberals, has been enlarging depraved miscreants like John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King into national heroes for decades." (1998)

■ "The most important issue facing us is the continued existence of our people, the European derived descendants of the founders of the American nation. As immigration fills our country with aliens, we risk being displaced and, ultimately displaced entirely." (1995)

■ "A Formal Protest of the (Arthur) Ashe Statue unveiling ceremony will be held on the site of a Confederate Fortification with Battle Flags. ... Those with Confederate battle flags will assemble behind the statue. ... Come early and dress formal (coat and tie). No racial slurs please." (Richmond Chapter, June 30, 1996)

■ "Black rule in South Africa a total failure." "The increase of crime and barbarism in South Africa is nothing more than the emergence of the African ethos, so long submerged by strong pre-de Klerk National Party governments." (*Citizens Informer*, Winter, 1997-98)

■ "The Jews' motto is 'never forget, and never forgive.' One can't agree with the way they've turned spite into welfare billions for themselves, but the 'never forget' part is very sound." ("A Southern View," *Citizens Informer*, 1997)

■ "Our liberal establishment is using the media of television to promote racial intimacy and miscegenation. ... All of the news teams on the major networks have black and white newscasters of opposite sexes." (*Citizens Informer*, 1998)

And as for Trent Lott's view of the council before the *Citizens Informer* article appeared in Edsall's story? A 1995 council promotional mailer quotes Lott: "America needs a national organization to mobilize conservative, patriotic citizens to help protect our flag, Constitution and other symbols of freedom."

Trent Lott's column regularly appears in the *Informer* newsletter (including its most recent issue in 1998) along with the publication's offensive racial columns and articles. However, Lott's spokesman said it would be wrong to associate his boss's noncontroversial and business-like column, which is widely distributed, with the repugnant views and materials published by the council. Fair enough.

But has Lott really kept his distance from the council — or are the ties long-running and cozy? And if the relationship is ended, when did he do it, and how clean is the break? Before hearing the case against Bill Clinton, the Senate and the country need to hear Republican majority leader Trent Lott's case for himself.