

Networks fail to report Republican ties to racist groups

A curious silence

David Walsh
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A significant aspect of the ongoing drive to oust Bill Clinton has been the virtual silence of the American mass media, particularly the major networks, on the links between leading Republicans in the House and Senate and extreme right-wing and racist organizations.

More than a month has passed since the *Washington Post* first revealed that Rep. Bob Barr (R-Ga.), a member of the House Judiciary Committee and one of the prosecutors in the Senate impeachment trial, was a keynote speaker at a convention of the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), a white supremacist group with ties to Ku Klux Klan and neo-fascist elements. Subsequently the even more intimate and long-standing CCC ties of Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, Republican of Mississippi, have been exposed. Governor Kirk Fordice of Mississippi, a considerable number of Mississippi state legislators, Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina and a number of other, primarily Southern, politicians have been linked to the organization.

This has received scant attention in the media, aside from a number of valuable articles written by Thomas Edsall in the *Washington Post*. The *New York Times* finally wrote on the subject on January 14, disingenuously describing the CCC as a "Pro-White" group. CNN has run a brief item on the connections.

The major television networks, from which most of the population gets its news, have been conspicuously silent. ABC News recently provided Barr the opportunity to refute the charges about his private life made by *Hustler* publisher Larry Flynt, while remaining silent on the far more serious matter of the Georgia Republican's ties to a fascist organization.

This decision to conceal these political connections from the American people is even more bizarre and telling in light of the effort by Republican House

prosecutors to posture as defenders of civil rights and women's rights. Central to this effort is the attempt, first made last Thursday by Rep. James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, to cast the Paula Jones sexual harassment suit as a civil rights case. In reality, the suit was politically motivated and funded by right-wing organizations. Last spring a federal judge dismissed Jones's claims as groundless.

Sensenbrenner went on to declare: "When an American citizen claims his or her rights have been violated, we must take those claims seriously. Our civil rights laws have remade our society for the better." He later called on the Senate to "follow the legacy of those who achieved equal rights for all Americans during the 1960s in Congress, in the courts, and on the streets and in the buses and at the lunch counters."

Republican Congressman Stephen Buyer of Indiana asserted that an acquittal of Clinton would represent a danger to existing civil rights legislation. He asked, "Are sexual harassment lawsuits ... now somewhat less important than our other civil rights laws? Which of our civil rights laws will fall next?" The other House prosecutors sounded similar themes.

No one in the mass media pointed out the absurdity of these dyed-in-the-wool right-wingers, political descendants of the Dixiecrats and segregationists, pledging their allegiance to "civil rights." Going along with this charade is part and parcel of the media's efforts to portray the Senate trial as a legitimate political undertaking. No commentators thought to bring up the connections of Barr, who was one of the Republican House members presenting the case against Clinton, and Lott, who is spearheading the effort in the Senate to remove him from office, to the Council of Conservative Citizens.

This group considers interracial marriage "white

genocide" and prints anti-Semitic diatribes in its publication, *The Citizen Informer*. "Western civilization with all its might and glory would never have achieved its greatness without the directing hand of God and the creative genius of the white race," wrote Robert Patterson, a CCC columnist last autumn. "Any effort to destroy the race by a mixture of black blood is an effort to destroy Western civilization itself." "There is still time," wrote Patterson in another piece. "The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 should be repealed!"

Founded in 1985, the CCC is the successor to the racist Citizens Council of America (CCA)--commonly known as the White Citizens Councils--which was founded to oppose school desegregation in the 1950s and was called the "white-collar Ku Klux Klan." One of the CCA's members, Byron de la Beckwith, was the assassin of civil rights leader Medgar Evers.

In a report issued in December the Southern Poverty Law Center was able to link 17 of the publicly known CCC members to various white supremacist and fascist organizations, including the Invisible Empire Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the Carolina Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the National Association for the Advancement of White People, the America First Party, and the National Alliance. A delegation from the CCC attended a rally held by the French neo-fascist National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen in September 1998. The CCC also has ties to the British National Front and its successor, the British National Party.

In 1995 CCC leader Gordon Baum attempted to recruit a man known as the head of security for the neo-Nazi Aryan Nations organization, Vince Reed, into his outfit. Reed, in fact, was an undercover agent specializing in work in terrorist organizations. According to Reed, Baum told him, "The power is not out there in the gun, it's inside Congress. You can battle for the rest of your life with guns and explosives, and you aren't going anywhere. We've got to do it from the inside."

This is a significant remark in the light of the current crisis in Washington. What the media are concealing from the American people is the fact that the Republican leadership in both houses of Congress is composed of extreme right-wing politicians who promote the policies of organizations like the CCC, policies that represent a grave danger to democratic

rights.



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