

Klan

front of his Asheville home. "They've tried to identify us with David Duke and people like that, and anybody who speaks out against affirmative action and quotas and immigration, they're automatically tagged with that dirty brush." But critics point to anti-Semitic postings on the group's Web site, and to Informer columns like this from Patterson last fall: "Western civilization with all its might and glory would never have achieved its greatness with-

out the directing hand of God and the creative genius of the white race. Any effort to destroy the race by a mixture of black blood is an effort to destroy Western civilization itself." Baum noted that the Informer has a disclaimer, "like all newspapers." "It was there; we can't lie. We did not endorse it," he said. "Our people don't walk in lock step. Organizing conservatives is like herding cats." But Dick Harpootlian, chairman of the South Carolina Democratic Party, offered a different animal analogy: "Birds of a feather flock together."

"If David Duke and those kinds of folks are showing up at those meetings, they obviously have some interest in them," he said. "There's a fight for the heart and soul of the Republican Party. Is it the party of Lincoln or the party of extremes? So far, the extreme's winning." U.S. Reps. Robert Wexler, D-Fla., is calling on members of Congress to denounce the Council of Conservative Citizens. "They can hide behind whatever curtain they want to hide, but we know what they are," Wexler said in a telephone interview.

He has been joined in that resolution by Democratic Rep. James Clyburn, South Carolina's only black congressman. Baum said the debate has devolved into a kind of '90s McCarthyism, where guilt by association is the order of the day. "Really, Trent Lott's involvement wasn't other than what he would do with any larger constituent group," Baum said. "I mean, to us it's sending a signal that any political figure should not meet with conservatives. I mean, they did this with the Christian Coalition; they did it

with the pro-life movement. They've tried to demonize them." The Council of Conservative Citizens meeting last Saturday in Columbia was supposed to be open. But when members learned an Associated Press reporter planned to attend, the executive board voted to close the partition. "They're all afraid," Bell said. "People are afraid they'll lose their job if their name comes out." But Wheeler exhorted the back-room crowd to "look at our duty. ...

"The war for the hearts and the minds of the people must be won before the political war can be won."

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