

it is undermining his support among the white working class, perhaps his most crucial voting bloc.

**I**N 1968, SOME white, working-class voters deserted Democratic presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey over their opposition to the Vietnam War. But their reasons for opposing the war were different from those of the antiwar protesters. They didn't object to the war's immorality, but to its futility, the waste of lives and resources on a battle that could not be won, at least not in the manner in which it was being fought.

The same distinction prevails today. Many voters in Martinsburg don't object to the invasion but to the occupation. Like Terry, they think the military should have gone in, captured Saddam Hussein, then left. They don't like the idea of sending troops and funds to rebuild Iraq. Don, a construction worker wearing a Chicago Bears cap, says, "I don't think it is helping us at all. We are sending all our resources and money out there."

But, as these West Virginians have learned that the Iraqis didn't possess weapons of mass destruction and were not allied with Al Qaeda, they have also begun to wonder whether the war was necessary at all. That has created a special kind of resentment in a state that has the third-highest percentage of National Guard troops mobilized for the war and where almost everyone knows someone serving in Iraq. Asked about Bush and the war, Shirley, a housewife holding a garage sale in front of the Moose Lodge, responds, "I have just one thing to say: Bring my son home."

Still, Bush is not getting routed in Martinsburg. In a Saturday walk around the town's blue-collar neighborhoods, about one-third of those interviewed expressed support for the president and the war. Their support seemed to hinge on the belief that, by invading Iraq, the military was also fighting Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. Richard, a landscaper, says, "They are all tied to the same string. That's why the Iraqis are fighting us."

One person was critical of the war but still supportive of Bush. "I think we have another Vietnam getting started," says Jim, who runs a lawnmower repair business out of his yard. "We should have done it and gotten out of there." But he still prefers Bush to Kerry. "At least I know where George stands," he says. "You listen to Kerry, and you don't know which side of the fence he stands on."

For the most part, however, people in Martinsburg seem to reflect the national polls, which show a close correlation between support or opposition to the war and support or opposition to Bush's presidency. Says Brenda, who, as a hair stylist at J.C. Penney, hears political arguments all day and who opposes the war herself, "Nobody is in the middle on this issue." This division among white, working-class voters is bad news for Bush. With the rest of the nation closely divided, Bush needs to win big with this demographic. If support for the war among the white working class continues to erode, so will Bush's chances of reelection. ■

## The Confederacy's new face. Lost Cause

BY JASON ZENGERLE

FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA

**O**N A SATURDAY afternoon not long ago, Walt Hilderman was standing in a soggy horse pasture here—a .75-caliber musket in one hand, a Confederate flag in the other. He was participating in a reenactment of an 1865 Civil War battle called the Skirmish at Gamble's Hotel.

A retired police captain with bowed legs and a drooping silver moustache, Hilderman wore the rebel-gray uniform well. In fact, if you forgot he had been swigging from a bottle of Coke shortly before the battle, it wasn't hard to picture Hilderman fighting some 140 years earlier. As he and his fellow Confederate reenactors repulsed a Union charge—just as the real Confederate forces had done in Florence in 1865—Hilderman fired his gun, waved his flag, and let out the occasional rebel yell. After the Union reenactors surrendered, Hilderman fell in with the other men of his North Carolina infantry regiment and marched to the company's camp. "Who are we? Tarheels!" they shouted as they went. "What do we do? Kill Yankees!"

Hilderman, who grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina, was raised on tales of his great-great-grandfather's service in the Confederate Army. "Ever since I was a young boy, I've identified with the Confederate soldier," he says. In 1963, when Hilderman was only 14, he participated in his first Civil War reenactment. Now, in his fifties and recovering from cancer, Hilderman still manages to kill Yankees at reenactments eight weekends per year.

But, in the real world, Hilderman spends most of his time these days battling his fellow Confederates. A member of the nation's leading Confederate heritage group, the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), Hilderman is running to be the organization's commander-in-chief on the platform that the SCV's current leadership is rife with racists and right-wing extremists. As Hilderman sees it, the SCV is supposed to honor and preserve the memory of the Confederate soldier through activities like reenactments and cleaning Confederate gravestones. But lately, Hilderman says, the leadership of the 31,000-member organization has taken the SCV in a more political direction, aligning it with extremist groups like the neo-secessionist League of the South and the white supremacist Council of Conservative Citizens (CofCC). Now, according to Hilderman, local SCV camp meetings are more likely to feature anti-government diatribes and odes to the unique "Anglo-Celtic" nature of the South than plans to commemorate Robert E. Lee Day. "We start carrying a lot of extra



baggage that the promotion of the Confederate soldier's image doesn't need," Hilderman says. "It doesn't make a difference to my great-great-grandfather, who was wounded on Kennesaw Mountain in 1864, what the immigration practices of the United States are in 2004."

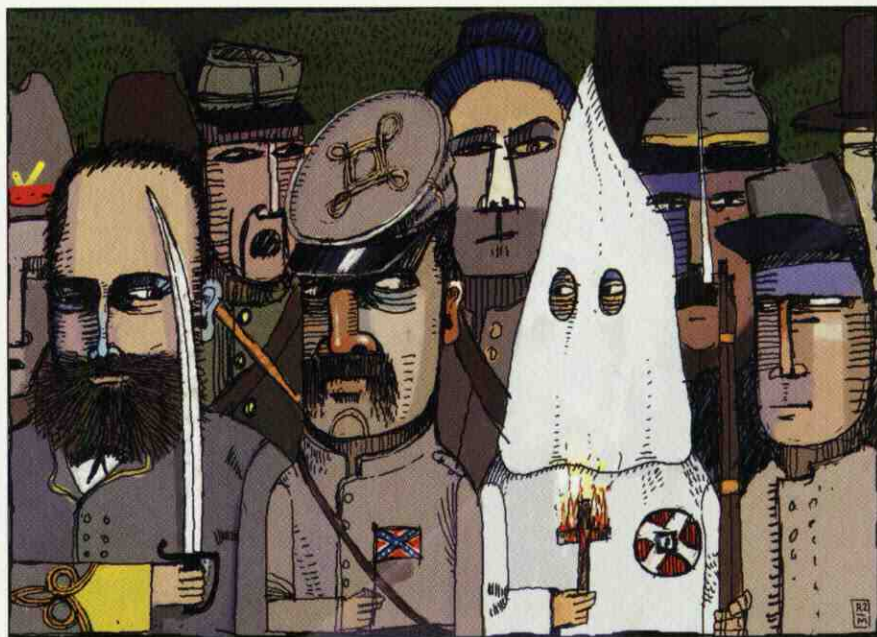
Two years ago, Hilderman and a dozen other SCV members formed a group called Save the SCV, dedicated to ending the organization's radical drift. Now, as one of three candidates running to be SCV commander-in-chief—the election will be held at the SCV's annual convention in Georgia from July 28 through July 31—Hilderman is hoping to wrest the organization from the forces he believes are destroying it. "The Sons of Confederate Veterans is our last, best chance to defend and promote Confederate heritage," says Hilderman, who is frustrated that the Civil War is often portrayed as a conflict between the freedom-loving North and the slave-loving South. "And, if the SCV goes over to . . . the extremists, then we'll lose the last firewall against people who want to destroy Confederate heritage."

But preserving that firewall is an uphill battle. Hilderman's anti-racism campaign has generated little enthusiasm inside the SCV. Currently, the only publicly identified member of Save the SCV is Hilderman: The men who founded the group with him have since left the SCV—having evidently concluded it was beyond saving—and those SCV members who support Hilderman's cause, he explains, are afraid to say so publicly for fear of retribution. Indeed, ever since founding Save the SCV, Hilderman has been routinely denounced as a traitor and a scalawag; on SCV-affiliated websites, he is portrayed wearing a Union uniform. "May God forgive your ancestors for having such vile and ignorant offspring," one outraged SCV member e-mailed Hilderman.

Yet, Hilderman is hardly the first person to accuse the SCV of racism. For years, liberal groups and some in the media have charged the SCV with bigotry, primarily on the assumption that anyone celebrating the Confederacy is condoning slavery. And the SCV—ardent proponents of the "Lost Cause" view of the Civil War, which holds, in part, that the South fought to defend states' rights, not the institution of slavery—has always rejected these charges, claiming that outsiders have misunderstood the organization. But now, even though the racism accusation is coming from inside the SCV, its rank-and-file members are refusing to pay it much heed. In other words, now that the SCV is in danger of actually becoming what its external critics have long—and often unfairly—accused it of being, the people who recognize that danger, people like Hilderman, appear powerless to stop it.

**T**HE SONS OF Confederate Veterans was founded in Richmond in 1896, at a time not only of renewed white supremacy in the South, as blacks lost the rights they had enjoyed during Reconstruction, but also of a new spirit of reconciliation with the North. "The unseemly things, which occurred in the great conflict between the states, should be forgotten, or at least forgiven, and no longer permitted to disturb complete harmony between North and South," the former Confederate general John B. Gordon—who led the SCV's forerunner, the United Confederate Veterans—urged his fellow Southerners. And the SCV—which, in its constitution, pledged to be a "strictly patriotic, historical, educational, benevolent, non-political, non-racial, and non-sectarian" organization—came to serve as a prominent symbol of that harmony. "The former Confederates and their children agreed that it was providential that slavery was abolished and the Union was preserved," explains University of North Carolina sociologist John Shelton Reed. "And, in exchange for that, they were allowed to honor their heroes and fly their flags."

That agreement remained in effect for half a century—until the civil rights movement, when Southern blacks, who understandably didn't look kindly on Confederate heroes and flags, gained a political voice. But, even after Confederate symbols again became politically controversial—serving as symbols of hatred, in the eyes of many blacks, or of defiance, in the eyes of some whites—the SCV generally steered clear of politics. "The SCV was for history buffs and genealogy fans," says Reed, who has lectured to a number of SCV chapters over the years. "It really wasn't particularly political—at least no more so than your average country club." Indeed, to the extent the SCV did involve itself in politics, it was usually to distance itself from Confederate symbols' negative associations: In 1992, the SCV passed a





resolution condemning the Ku Klux Klan and “all others who promote hate.”

But the SCV’s apolitical nature began to change in the late ’90s, when the NAACP and other groups launched campaigns to remove the Confederate flag from state capitols in Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina. In response, some SCV members—calling themselves “the reform wing”—pushed for their organization to defend Confederate symbols aggressively; and in 2000, the SCV waded into the political debate over the flag, lining up alongside a host of extremist groups, such as the League of the South and the CofCC, to join a rally in defense of the flag at the South Carolina State Capitol. More often than not, those in the SCV’s so-called reform wing were sympathetic to the League’s and the CofCC’s far-right positions across the board, and soon, the SCV’s campaign to keep the Confederate flag flying morphed into a more general anti-government, anti-Northern crusade.

Since the SCV’s inception, camp meetings had begun with a Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag, but now some camps abolished the Pledge and removed the Stars and Stripes from meetings altogether. “What they were doing was, they were moving from a position of regional pride in the Confederacy and the fight of the Confederate soldiers to a position that was anti-American,” says Larry Walker, who quit his SCV camp in Charlotte in 2001, when it stopped flying the American flag at meetings.

The reform wing’s push came to a head in 2002, when a leading reform member of the SCV, Kirk Lyons, ran for commander of the largest of the SCV’s three geographic divisions, the Army of Northern Virginia. Lyons, a North Carolina lawyer who runs what he calls a “Civil Rights Law Firm for Confederate Southern Americans,” is the brains behind the dubious legal theory that “Confederate Americans” are a distinct “national origin” deserving of constitutional protection. In addition to a string of unsuccessful lawsuits against companies and school districts that ban Confederate symbols in office cubicles or on t-shirts, Lyons has a long history of associations with extremist groups: He has represented members of the Ku Klux Klan, and, in 1990, he married the daughter of a leader of the Aryan Nations. These associations prompted another North Carolina SCV member, Charles Hawks, to run against Lyons. As Hawks told his fellow SCV members, Lyons’s “alleged ties, whether real or perceived, to certain infamous organizations could be devastating to the SCV.”

When Hawks narrowly defeated Lyons at the group’s national convention in August 2002, it seemed the SCV had avoided calamity. “We withstood the fire,” Hawks declared after his victory. “We’ll be stronger. We’ll move on.” But, shortly after Hawks’s triumph, a South Carolina SCV member named Ron Wilson was elected SCV commander-in-chief by a margin of 47 votes. And, while Wilson wasn’t as strident as Lyons, his views about the SCV’s future direction—and politics in general—were nearly identical to Lyons’s. Under his leadership, Wilson vowed, the SCV

would “teach the truth and culture of Confederate heritage” and help correct a “drifting, wobbly American society” that has been sullied by “the homosexual agenda, abortion, and other Godless causes.”

After taking power, Wilson swiftly appointed to key national staff positions a number of SCV members who, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, also belonged to the League of the South and the CofCC. And the SCV became even more combative, taking its campaign to preserve Confederate heritage to courtrooms and statehouses. “How do you protect the Confederate soldier’s good name?” asks Lyons, who, while deprived of a major SCV office, remains a close ally of Wilson. “Polishing headstones and giving education seminars and going to reenactments doesn’t cut it anymore. . . . We’re at war.”

Those who resisted this call to war were dealt with accordingly. A few months after his election, Wilson stripped Hawks of his position as commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. And, over the course of the next two years, other moderates were systematically purged. About 350 members from North Carolina alone were suspended for publicly supporting Save the SCV. Many of them chose not to fight their suspensions and simply walked away. “I’m not going to struggle to be a member of a group where guys don’t want you,” says Gilbert Jones, an SCV member from Greensboro, who quit not long after he was suspended in November 2002. “They’ve gotten confused: Whereas the Confederate battle flag used to be the symbol of the cause, it’s now *the* cause.” He adds: “It was a great organization. But it’s gone down the crapper.”

**W**ALT HILDERMAN, ALONG with the rest of his camp in Matthews, North Carolina, was suspended from the SCV in January 2003. But, because of a quirk in SCV bylaws, even suspended members are eligible to run for office. So, after being suspended, Hilderman not only refused to quit the organization, he launched a campaign to become its commander-in-chief.

Hilderman insists that the vast majority of SCV members are just like him—historically minded men who want only to honor their Confederate ancestors and who have no interest in extremist politics. But he acknowledges that, after years of being called bigots by external critics, many in the SCV are now simply deaf to any charges of racism—no matter who is making them. That the SCV’s current leadership has managed to cast the battle over Confederate symbols as part of a larger culture war—with Lyons proclaiming that he wants to stop “the ethnic cleansing of Dixie”—makes Hilderman’s task that much harder. “I’m a middle-aged white guy, a policeman, and a conservative, and I understand where guys like me are coming from in terms of getting their culture changed,” Hilderman says. “We see things we hold dear—religion, the sanctity of marriage, patriotism—being dragged through the mud. And the siege mentality that grips a lot of guys has been played on



by the leadership of the SCV.”

But Hilderman remains undeterred. Next week, he'll go to the SCV's national convention in Dalton, Georgia, to stand for election knowing that he faces almost certain defeat—and possibly worse. “I've got some security concerns,” he admits, “like getting spit on, getting hit in the face, or being run over in the parking lot in an unfortunate accident. . . . I just bring a bull's-eye with me.”

And what will Hilderman do after he loses in Dalton? Sitting in his tent at the reenactment in Florence, he pauses

a moment and fiddles with the buttons on his rebel-gray uniform before answering. “My basic fear,” Hilderman eventually says, “is that, if the SCV keeps going the way it's going, in fifty years, my great-great-grandfather and the hundreds of thousands of Southerners who fought in the Civil War will be regarded as nothing but racist, totalitarian Nazis. That's why I'm going to keep doing everything in my power to change the SCV—so that doesn't happen.” Like a true Confederate, it seems, Hilderman doesn't mind fighting for a lost cause. ■

## Treating protesters like terrorists. Force Multiplier

BY GWEN SHAFFER

**L**AST YEAR, NIKKI HARTMAN traveled to Miami to march alongside roughly 10,000 others protesting the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). It was about 4 p.m. on November 20 when she and her friend, Robert Davis, plopped down on a patch of grass downtown to watch a circle of dancers and musicians perform. Exhausted and sunburned, Hartman clenched prayer beads and began to meditate. Throngs of other protesters—mothers toting kids, teenagers, retired union workers—milled nearby, less than ten feet from a thick line of Miami police dressed in riot gear. Suddenly, the cops began banging their shields and charging forward. Apparently, a few protesters had set trash on fire and the police wanted to clear the area. Hartman, a

28-year-old artist from Tampa, and Davis fled. She doesn't remember hearing the police bark orders to disperse. But she does recall hearing popping sounds as officers fired tear gas and rubber bullets, seven of which slammed painfully into Davis's body. Hartman felt a sting and realized the side of her head was bleeding. The gash required a trip to the hospital and five staples to close.

Hartman is one of dozens of protesters seriously injured in clashes with Miami police during the FTAA meeting. The barrage of rubber bullets and pepper spray that rained down on her are only two of the “less lethal” weapons—many developed for military use—that local police now routinely deploy during political demonstrations. Tasers, concussion grenades, beanbag launchers, pepper balls, flash-bangs, and even medieval-sounding flying truncheons are standard accoutrements of law enforcement at these events. Miami Mayor Manuel Díaz calls these tactics “a model for homeland defense.” And, unfortunately, he's probably right.

**T**HE HARD-LINE APPROACH to protests began after the 1999 World Trade Organization meeting, where rioting activists blindsided Seattle police and caused \$3 million in property damage. But it was September 11, 2001, that blurred the line between squashing demonstrations and fighting terrorism. Indeed, a militarized police response like that at the FTAA protest would not have been possible without federal homeland security funding. Miami Police Chief John Timoney orchestrated the elaborate Miami offensive thanks to \$10 million in special funding, including \$8.5 million that Congress lumped into an Iraq appropriations bill. Following the clashes with the FTAA protesters, Miami Police Sergeant Robert Baker acknowledged that the department “brought in a lot of this ammo for the FTAA. . . . We don't normally keep a lot of it on hand.” Timoney rolled out armored personnel



Miami police spent millions on military-style weapons to contain FTAA protesters.

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