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Helms Isn't Up to Chairmanship

Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina has demonstrated in the two weeks since Republicans gained control of the Senate that he is not up to being chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

He crudely threatened President Clinton in a letter saying "the administration" would not get "full and fair" treatment before his committee if it did not postpone Senate action on a world trade agreement. That is *not* the position of the Republican Party in Congress.

Then Mr. Helms recklessly said on national television that he did not believe President Clinton is "up to" the job of commander in chief and implied that members of the joint chiefs of staff had said as much to him. Sen. Bob Dole, the majority-leader-to-be, and other Republican senators criticized the remark; Gen. John Shalikashvili, chairman of the joint chiefs, denied it was true.

If Senate Republicans want to demonstrate that they are more interested in governing than in bomb-throwing, they will deny Senator Helms the chairmanship and award it to Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana.

Senator Helms does not understand that "the administration" is his government. Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said he does not agree with all the president's foreign policy decisions and actions, but added, "We have to back whoever's president and do the very best we can to help him to do a good job." That is responsible and patriotic — and traditional — bipartisanship. Politics may not real-

ly stop at the water's edge, but demagoguery must. Senator Helms is not fit to follow in the footsteps of such respected Republican Foreign Relations chairmen as Henry Cabot Lodge, Arthur Vandenberg, Charles Percy — and Richard Lugar.

Senator Lugar was chairman of the committee from 1985 to 1987. He is a fair, intelligent, responsible, bona fide expert in many areas of diplomacy and national security. He is younger and more energetic than Senator Helms. He is more focused on foreign relations. He is more respected in the Senate and in the world. And he is exactly as senior on Foreign Relations as Jesse Helms.

Senator Helms was, however, elected to the Senate first, and under strict seniority rules is apparently entitled to be chairman. (He was already chairman of the Agriculture Committee in 1985, so there was no contest over Foreign Relations.) But seniority rules are not carved in stone. Rep. Newt Gingrich, the next House speaker, is promoting some non-senior House Republicans to chairmanships. And two senators — John Warner of Virginia and Ted Stevens of Alaska — dispute each other's claim of seniority on the Rules and Administration Committee. The Republican Caucus will have to decide that.

Republicans say they are ready to govern again. They say they are not prisoners of the old rules and prejudices. They can prove it and do their country a favor by naming Mr. Lugar, and not Mr. Helms, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

JESSE HELMS
NORTH CAROLINA

HELMS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3301

Statement of Senator Jesse Helms
Dictated from Raleigh, North Carolina
November 22, 1994

I made a mistake last evening which I shall not repeat. In an informal telephone interview with a local reporter, I made an offhand remark in an attempt to emphasize how strongly the American people feel about the nation's declining defense capability and other issues in which the President has been involved and for which he is responsible.

Of course, I did not expect to be taken literally when, to emphasize the constant concerns I am hearing, I far too casually suggested that the President might need a bodyguard, or words to that effect. (It's irrelevant to mention that he already has bodyguards.)

And let me say that President Clinton will of course be welcomed by me and other citizens of North Carolina and other states anytime he chooses to visit us.

The reporter asked my opinion, and I tried to be candid in my response: The President has serious problems with his record of draft avoidance, with his stand on homosexuals in the military, and with the declining defense capability of America's Armed Forces. (The Secretary of Defense recently acknowledged that three U.S. Army Divisions are not now combat ready.)

I reiterate that I now wish that I had engaged in a terse interview with the reporter. I did not. As has been my custom, we had an informal conversation from which he extracted an informal quote that should not have been taken literally, let alone published. I do not fault him. I fault myself. From now on, such contacts as I may have with the media will be entirely formal.

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Mark -

Per your
request -GT—
11-22-94