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## Background to the News

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# Confederate masonic ties of Judge Sentelle

by Edward Spannaus

On Aug. 5, a special judicial panel headed by federal appeals court judge David Sentelle abruptly dumped Whitewater independent counsel Robert Fiske, and replaced him with former Bush administration official and Republican activist Kenneth Starr. A few weeks later, it was disclosed that not long before, Sentelle had lunched with two old friends, both outspoken opponents of President Clinton, North Carolina senators Jesse Helms and Lauch Faircloth. Sentelle is in fact a protégé of Helms, who sponsored Sentelle's two nominations to the federal bench—as a district judge in 1985, and as an appeals court judge in 1987.

The little-publicized brawl that broke out around Sentelle's 1987 confirmation hearings sheds a lot of light on what lies behind the Sentelle-Helms connection, and opens up a new line of investigation of the British authorship of the assault on the U.S. presidency which goes under the name of "Whitewatergate." This is because the 1987 confirmation hearings for Sentelle for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia were the first and last instance in modern times that the question of a federal judge's membership in a masonic organization became an issue. Following the Senate vote on Sentelle, various masonic senators rose to denounce the proceedings as "extraordinary," "astounding," and as "a galling and ponderous exercise."

Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.), from the state where the Southern Jurisdiction of Scottish Rite Freemasonry was founded, declared his fervent wish that "the question about Masonry being raised to keep one from becoming confirmed is finally settled, and that will be the end of it, and we will not hear any more on it."

### 33rd degree uproar

At the recommendation of Helms, President Reagan nominated Sentelle for the appeals court seat on Feb. 2, 1987. At his April 1 hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sentelle admitted under questioning by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) that he belonged to masonic lodges in North Carolina that had no blacks or women as members. Leahy pointed out that white Masonry does not accept black members, nor does it recognize black Masonry.

The Sentelle nomination did not get to the Senate floor

until Sept. 9, 1987, because of holds placed on it by Sens. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) and Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.). After the vote confirmed Sentelle by an 87-0 vote, Simpson noted that objections had been raised because Sentelle was a Mason, "which was one of the most extraordinary things I have ever seen raised in my time in the Senate."

After naming all the Presidents, senators, etc. who have been Masons, Simpson boasted that he holds the 33rd degree in Masonry, as does Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.V.). "Let us not hold matters from going forward ever again on some basis of membership in Freemasonry," Simpson proclaimed. "This is a galling and ponderous and very unbecoming exercise. What next—Knights of Columbus, International Order of Odd Fellows, various orders and lodges throughout the United States. I hope we will not see that. . . . Let not Masonry be sullied in the judicial selection process anywhere again in this fine country and especially in this body."

Byrd said that when he had first heard that the objections to Sentelle were that he was a Mason, "I was determined that the Senate have a vote on it. I think the Senate should take a stand and I am proud to be a Mason. . . . I think that should clear the record for once and for all, and I hope that this ugly head of prejudice against Masons will not rear itself again."

Helms, a 33rd degree Mason, thanked Byrd for having been determined to get the vote on Sentelle. He asserted that he was "aghast" that a question of Sentelle's membership in a masonic lodge had even become a matter of discussion, let alone an issue.

Thurmond said that he was "astounded" that the question was raised in the Judiciary Committee. "I commend the majority leader [Byrd], who is a 33rd degree Mason, and Bob Dole, who is a 33rd degree Mason. I happen to be one."

Those Democratic senators who were pressing the issue—Simon, Leahy, and Metzenbaum—had stated during a session of the Judiciary Committee that they were not objecting to any Mason, but they were concerned about the specific North Carolina lodges to which Sentelle belonged, which had no blacks among their 14,000 members.

In fact, the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite was always a traitorous conspiracy against the United States, formed by Tory British sympathizers after the American War of Independence. The Southern Jurisdiction was the core of the Confederate treason which sought to split the United States on behalf of Great Britain, and it gave birth to the Ku Klux Klan in the period immediately following the Civil War. Its Grand Commander from 1859 to 1891, Albert Pike, was a founder of the Klan and served as its Chief Judicial Officer. It was Pike, whose statue still blasphemously stands in Judiciary Square in Washington, D.C., who declared, "I took my obligation to white men, not to negroes. When I have to accept negroes as brothers or leave Masonry, I shall leave it."

Those senators who questioned Sentelle's membership in the Southern Jurisdiction Masonry were certainly on the right track. They just didn't pursue it far enough.