

Notable Quotables

May 27, 2002 (Vol. Fifteen; No. 11)

A bi-weekly compilation of the latest outrageous, sometimes humorous, quotes in the liberal media.



Bringing Political Balance
to the Media

Bush "Knew" About 9/11 Plot

"We begin with the news from the White House that President Bush knew that al Qaeda was planning to hijack a U.S. airliner and he knew it before September the 11th."

— CNN's Judy Woodruff on *NewsNight*, May 15.

"On *World News Tonight*, the White House admits President Bush knew before September that Osama bin Laden was plotting to hijack planes. Was there enough information to make a difference?"

— Peter Jennings introducing *World News Tonight*, May 16.

"This is interesting news that we get now, and it may put the President under a lot of heat today as the public learns that he knew, through his daily CIA intelligence briefings, that bin Laden had potential terror attack plans under way....It also calls into question what happened when Andy Card, Andrew Card, the White House chief of staff, that morning went and whispered in the President's ear, as the President was talking to a group of school students in Florida. Was the President really surprised?"

— Charles Gibson's introduction and question to White House correspondent Terry Moran on ABC's *Good Morning America*, May 16.

"Good morning. What did he know and when did he know it? The Bush administration admits the President was warned in an intelligence briefing last summer of the possibility that Osama bin Laden's terrorist network might hijack American planes, raising more questions about whether the attacks on America could have been prevented."

— NBC's Katie Couric introducing the May 16 *Today*.

Reality Check:

Host Gordon Peterson: "So *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are all falling for a fake and bogus story. Is that what you're saying?"

Newsweek's Evan Thomas: "That's exactly what I'm saying....It's not the *Times* and the *Post* so much. It's all of us. The media beast was so happy to have a scandal here, that we jumped up and down and waved our arms and got all excited about it...."

NPR's Nina Totenberg: "Nobody in the political establishment said, 'What did they know and when did they know it?' That was us in the media."

Thomas: "It was us."

Totenberg: "It really was us."

— Exchange on the May 18 edition of *Inside Washington*.

Assigning Bush "Blame" for 9/11

"This is a big problem for the President. The luster is gone from him as a war President and as a leader. His credibility, his priorities are in question....What we learned this week is the President is not entirely blameless."

— *Newsweek's* Eleanor Clift on the May 18 *McLaughlin Group*.

Eager for Another Watergate

"Every President seems to struggle through a credibility gap at some stage, such as Richard Nixon with Watergate, Ronald Reagan with Iran-contra, and Bill Clinton with the Whitewater affair. What did he know, and when did he know it? Now it's George W. Bush's turn to answer Washington's favorite question."

— Kenneth T. Walsh and Kevin Whitelaw in the May 27 edition of *U.S. News & World Report*.

Clintonite Now on "Lie" Patrol?

"They've been very careful with their words and I think, for the most part, the White House has not lied here. They're right when they say there was no specific threat as to time, place, location, all of that....[But] in Ari Fleischer's briefing on Thursday, when they were first talking about the memo, they kept saying this was mostly about foreign sources, mostly about attacks that could occur overseas and then two days later we learn, well, actually the paper was entitled 'Attacks in the United States.' Again, they didn't lie, but there was a misimpression left."

— ABC's George Stephanopoulos on *This Week*, May 19.

Ruing Bush's Insults & Hard Line

White House correspondent Terry Moran: "The President today took a hard rhetorical line on Fidel Castro, hurling insults at the Cuban leader."

President George W. Bush: "-a relic from another era who has turned a beautiful island into a prison."

— ABC's *World News Tonight*, May 20.

Problem Is Embargo, Not Dictator

"Former President Jimmy Carter today became the first U.S. President to visit Cuba since Fidel Castro took power in 1959. Mr. Carter's private visit comes amid new debate over the U.S. trade embargo that has fueled a bitter feud between the U.S. and Cuba for 40 years."

— ABC's Carole Simpson on the May 12 *World News Tonight/Sunday*.

CNN Touts Castro's "Successes"

"There are a lot of stories about the struggles Cuban people face here. Stories about the lack of things, the lack of cars, the lack of human rights, the lack of certain foods. But if you go asking Cubans, and even if you look at statistics from international groups, you'll find there are some areas where Cubans have made successes.

"According to a United Nations study, Cuba's regular schools rank at the top in Latin America. Old mansions were converted to classrooms. Under pictures of gun-toting revolutionaries, children are taught Cuban history along with computer skills, English and all the basics. For a developing nation, the literacy rate is exceptional, at 96 percent according to the UN."

— CNN's Kate Snow, *Live From Havana*, May 13.

...Like Free Health Care for All

"Another success Cubans point to: health care. Beginning in neighborhoods like this one, inside a house or an apartment building, you'll find a community family doctor. In this doctor's case, he serves 550 patients. Other doctors serve up to 800 people, but the bottom line is every Cuban has a primary care physician.

"Doctors get to know their patients and even make house calls. They emphasize prevention and follow up. Again, according to the UN, 96 percent of one-year-olds are immunized. Life expectancy is just one year less than the States at 76. Cuba may not have the nicest facilities or equipment, medicine is sometimes in short supply, but everyone has access and the concept of paying is completely foreign."

— Snow in the same story.

Freedom Can Wait

"The day after Jimmy Carter's speech, no one in Havana's fruit market is demanding free elections. Carter told Cubans they have the right to change the Castro government....But at the market, Rolando Toledo is more interested in Carter's call to end the 40-year-old trade embargo....Most Cubans want better relations with the U.S. but don't see Carter's speech as a watershed event. For them, economic change is more urgent than political freedom."

— Andrea Mitchell on the May 15 *NBC Nightly News*.

Only the Government's Opinion?

"In North Carolina two men went on trial for smuggling cigarettes to allegedly help the group Hezbollah in Lebanon, which the government calls a terrorist organization. Their lawyer says it will be extremely hard to find an impartial jury."

— ABC's Peter Jennings, May 20 *World News Tonight*.

Objectivity, ABC-Style

"A Republican fundraising pitch is luring contributors by offering White House photographs of President Bush taken aboard Air Force One as thousands of people lay trapped in the rubble of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11."

— Lead of Marc J. Ambinder's ABCNews.com's May 14 story about Democratic charges that Republicans were misusing an official photo of Bush.

Ordinary Fundraising = Clinton's

"In Washington tonight, President Bush and company are about to break a record for raising campaign cash at a single gathering — the same President Bush who made fundraising in the Clinton White House a major campaign issue."

— Tom Brokaw on the May 14 *NBC Nightly News*.

True Caring = More Spending

"President Bush wants to campaign for the next six months as a champion of education, but he has a problem: He has proposed a budget that cuts, freezes and eliminates scores of school programs....White House figures show Bush's education budget is 2.8 percent higher than the current one, barely keeping pace with inflation. At the same time, states are facing deficits and schools are trying to juggle record enrollments, crumbling buildings, and rising numbers of pupils who have disabilities and difficulty speaking English. The proposal represents the smallest increase in education funds in seven years."

— Reporter Mike Allen in a May 9 *Washington Post* story.

Endorsing George's Objectivity

"If there's ever been a guy who's come out of an administration, who has made a cleaner break, and proved himself as a journalist than George Stephanopoulos, I don't know who it is."

— Peter Jennings in a radio interview with Bill O'Reilly shown May 15 on FNC's *The O'Reilly Factor*.

Rather's Rather Ridiculous Rant

"It's an obscene comparison, and I'm not sure I like it, but there was a time, in South Africa, where people would put flaming tires around peoples' necks if they dissented. And in some ways, the fear is that you'll be necklaced here, you'll have the flaming tire of lack of patriotism put around your neck. Now it's that fear that keeps journalists from asking the toughest of the tough questions and to continue to bore in on the tough questions so often. And again, I'm humbled to say, I do not except myself from this criticism."

— Dan Rather on the BBC's *Newsnight* program, May 16.

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PUBLISHER: L. Brent Bozell III

EDITORS: Brent H. Baker, Rich Noyes

NEWS ANALYSTS: Geoffrey Dickens, Jessica Anderson

Brian Boyd, Brad Wilmoth, Ken Shepherd, Patrick Gregory

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE: Kristina Sewell

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR: Liz Swasey

INTERN: AJ Feeney-Ruiz

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