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After Years of Disparaging Ex-President's Critics as Cynical Haters, Media Now Notice Bill's Bad Side

Finally Discovering Clinton's Dirty Deeds

Like nearsighted umpires who don't find their eyeglasses until after the game is over and the cheating team has hauled their trophies (and a truckload of furniture) up to Chappaqua, liberal journalists have finally found the Clinton scandal beat.

"It's not the usual critics who make this Clinton scandal different; it's the usual supporters," CBS's Jim Axelrod noted during Monday's *Evening News*.

He meant Democrats like New York Senator Charles Schumer, who bravely condemned as "wrong, wrong, wrong" the now-powerless former President's pardon of an anti-American billionaire fraudster whose ex-wife gave more money to the DNC than even some Chinese generals.

But Axelrod could have been talking about his colleagues in the press — the media have only now found their voice after nine years of ignoring evidence, minimizing charges, and smearing those who accused Clinton of unethical or criminal conduct.

■ Back in 1993, the *CBS Evening News* didn't show viewers a single second of more than ten hours of taped interviews reporter Scott Pelley conducted with Arkansas state troopers who alleged that Gov. Clinton used them to procure women for adulterous affairs. **"We just felt, not to sound pompous in any way, but it didn't rise to the level of something that we wanted to put on the *Evening News*,"** Pelley later told political scientist Larry Sabato.

■ CBS and NBC refused to cover sexual harassment allegations made against Clinton by Paula Jones in February 1994, while ABC's *World News Tonight* offered a brief report and no follow-up for months. **"I would much rather that this story didn't exist,"** ABC's John Donvan confessed on CNN's *Talkback Live* back in September 1997. **"I think there are Clinton haters who would like to be able to use this issue to hurt him...I would much rather be talking about much larger issues."**

■ Remember the Reagan years, when the media howled that any "appearance of impropriety" was a serious

ethical breach? That standard was forgotten in the last eight years. "So a couple of White House aides helped [potential anti-Clinton witness] Webster Hubbell find work, and he did find work, some of it with Democratic donors," NBC's Jodi Applegate remarked in April, 1997. **"It may not look**

good, but is there any proof anything was done wrong?"

■ The media defined the Lewinsky scandal as mainly about sex, not law-breaking; some even found it sexy: In 1998, *Good Morning America*'s Lisa McRee told a guest, "Women who've been polled seem to put it behind them as well, and are willing to move

on and forget about it. Is that because Bill Clinton's been such a great President whom they elected in great part, or **is there something I want to say almost sexy about a man who can get away with things over and over again?"**

■ Perennial apologist Eleanor Clift insisted Clinton couldn't possibly have raped Juanita Broaddrick. **"Where is this going to go except among all the Clinton haters and the right-wing conspiratorialists? It's great fodder, but you know, you proved the guy's a cad, you're not going to prove he's a violent criminal,"** she told the rest of the *McLaughlin Group* in February, 1999.

So former Clinton spokesman Joe Lockhart was probably stunned when NBC's Katie Couric grilled him Tuesday morning. **"It's interesting that you blame the Republican attack machine,"** she lectured. **"Doesn't President Clinton have to take responsibility for some of his actions here?"** After nine years of loaning their airwaves to Clintonites who ran down all of the President's accusers and enabled him to avoid responsibility for his actions, it's a marvelous coincidence of timing that the first Clinton (non-sex) scandal that finally got the watchdogs' attention didn't begin until January 20, 2001. — *Rich Noyes*

After nine years of minimizing charges, blaming accusers and ignoring evidence, it's a marvelous coincidence of timing that the Clinton scandal that finally got the media's attention began on January 20, 2001.

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; Brent Baker, Rich Noyes, Editors; Jessica Anderson, Brian Boyd, Geoffrey Dickens, Paul Smith, Brad Wilmouth, Media Analysts; Kristina Sewell, Research Associate; Liz Swasey, Director of Communications. Look for The Best *Notable Quotables* of 2000 in print and video at www.mrc.org