



# Media Reality ✓ Check

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Rather in '99: "I Remained an Independent Reporter Who Would Not Report From the Left or the Right"

## 20 Years of Liberal Spin From Gunga Dan

Five years ago, Dan Rather told the *Los Angeles Times* "you can sooner expect a tall talking broccoli stick to offer to mow your lawn for free" than expect to find him still in the anchor chair after the year 2000. But he's still there, and on Friday, two full decades will have passed since the idiosyncratic Rather succeeded Walter Cronkite as anchor of the *CBS Evening News*, now the nation's third-rated evening newscast. To mark the occasion, this special 2-page *Media Reality Check* documents a few of the many liberal outbursts that have animated Rather's tenure:

■ **Republicans favor sleazy fundraising.** "Republicans kill the bill to clean up sleazy political fundraising. The business of dirty campaign money will stay business as usual....Good evening. Legislation to reform shady big money campaign fundraising is dead in Congress. Republican opponents in the Senate killed it today." (*CBS Evening News*, February 26, 1998)

■ **Hillary Clinton is a genius.** "I hear you talking and, as I have before on this subject, I don't know of anybody, friend or foe, who isn't impressed by your grasp of the details of this [health care] plan. I'm not surprised, because you have been working on it so long and listened to so many people." (Interview with Hillary Clinton, *48 Hours*, September 22, 1993)

■ **Justice Souter is a right-wing woman-hater.** "Senator Simon, is there any doubt in your mind that [Souter's] views pretty well parallel those of John Sununu's, which means he's anti-abortion or anti-women's rights, whichever way you want to put it?" (*CBS Evening News* interview with Democratic Sen. Paul Simon, July 23, 1990)

■ **The Clintons are terrific!** "If we could be one-hundredth as great as you and Hillary Rodham Clinton have been in the White House, we'd take it right now and walk away winners....Tell Mrs. Clinton we respect her and we're pulling for her." (To President Clinton, via satellite, at a CBS affiliates meeting, referencing new co-anchor Connie Chung to the *Evening News*, May 27, 1993)

**"The new Republican majority in Congress took a big step today on its legislative agenda to demolish or damage government aid programs, many of them designed to help children and the poor."**

— *CBS Evening News*, March 16, 1995

■ **No need for proof before alleging GOP dirty tricks.** "Al Gore must stand and deliver here tonight as the Democratic Party's presidential nominee, and now Gore must do so against the backdrop of a potentially damaging, carefully orchestrated story leak about President Clinton. The story is that the Republican-backed special prosecutor, Robert Ray, Ken Starr's successor, has a new grand jury looking into possible criminal charges against the President growing out of Mr. Clinton's sex life." (*CBS Evening News*, August 17, 2000, the final day of the Democratic convention. The next day, a Carter-appointed federal judge revealed he had inadvertently leaked the news)

■ **Competitors to CBS News are morally inferior.** "It is not just Congress that is taking a sharp turn to the right. The surge to the right on Capitol Hill is making waves all over the country on openly politically partisan, and sometimes racist, radio." (*CBS Evening News*, January 4, 1995)

■ **Hillary Clinton should run for President someday.** "I would not be astonished to see Hillary Clinton be the Democratic nominee in 2000....Hillary Clinton is the Person of the Year in that, you talk about a comeback kid — she makes her husband look like Ned in kneepants in terms of comeback from where she was early in the Clinton administration. You know, you add it all up, and you can make the case that Hillary Clinton might, might — mark the word — be the strongest candidate for the Democrats." (Interview with CNN's Larry King, December 3, 1998)

■ **Castro really cares about the Cuban people.** "While Fidel Castro, and certainly justified on his record, is widely criticized for a lot of things, there is no question that Castro feels a very deep and abiding connection to those Cubans who are still in Cuba and, I recognize this might be controversial, but there's little doubt in my mind that Fidel Castro was sincere when he said, 'Listen, we really want this child back here.'" (CBS News live coverage of the Elian raid, April 22, 2000)

(Continued on Page 2)

## 20 YEARS OF DAN RATHER'S BIAS (cont.)

### ■ George W. Bush didn't really win the election.

"Good evening. Texas Governor George Bush tonight will assume the mantle and the honor of President-elect. This comes 24 hours after a sharply split and, some say, politically and ideologically motivated Supreme Court ended Vice President Gore's contest of the Florida election and, in effect, handed the presidency to Bush." (CBS Evening News, Dec. 13, 2000)

■ **Democrats are uncaring if they back conservative policies.** "You said this morning that the party's message will focus on the needs and cares of the people. Now, how do you reconcile that with a President who has just signed a, quote, 'welfare reform bill' which by general agreement is going to put a lot of poor children on the street?" (Question to Democratic Sen. Chris Dodd, CBS Evening News, August 25, 1996)

■ **Republicans are radicals and extremists.** "Some of your staff members, not by name, have been saying, 'Yes, the President thinks Bob Dole is a nice person and has been a pretty good leader in some ways but,' they say, 'he's been captured by extremists in the Republican Party, the radical part of the Republican Party, including Newt Gingrich. Is that what you think?' (60 Minutes interview with Bill Clinton, Aug. 18, 1996)

■ **Hillary Clinton is fantastic.** "Once a political lightning rod, today she is political lightning. A crowd pleaser and first-class fundraiser, a person under enormous pressure to step into the arena, this time on her own." (60 Minutes II, May 26, 1999)

■ **The Reagan years were unfair.** "Everyone knows the rich got richer in the 1980s. Now, a new study shows how dramatic the change was." (Reporting on a study by the Economic Policy Institute, a group founded by Dukakis and Clinton advisors, CBS Evening News, Oct. 29, 1992)

### Rather Greeted Both Parties With Liberal Spin:

"In the presidential campaign, the official announcement and first photo-op today of Republican George Bush and his running mate Richard Cheney. Democrats were quick to portray the ticket as quote 'two Texas oilmen' because Cheney was chief of a big Dallas-based oil supply conglomerate. They also blast Cheney's voting record in Congress as again, quote, 'outside the American mainstream' because of Cheney's votes against the Equal Rights for Women Amendment, against a woman's right to choose abortion — against abortion as Cheney prefers to put it — and Cheney's votes against gun control. Republicans see it all differently, most of them hailing Bush's choice and Cheney's experience." — CBS Evening News, July 25, 2000

"Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore officially introduced his history-making running mate today, Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut. History-making because Lieberman is of Jewish heritage and faith. The two started running right away. In their first joint appearance they gave a preview of the Gore-Liebeman fight-back, come-back strategy. Their message: They represent the future, not the past, and they are the ticket of high moral standards most in tune with real mainstream America." — CBS Evening News, August 8, 2000

■ **The impeachment case against Clinton amounted to a coup d'état.** "Is or is there not some concern of the public, concern in some quarters, not all of them Democratic, that this is, in fact, a kind of effort at a quote, 'coup,' that is you have a twice elected, popularly elected President of the United States and so those that you mention in the Republican Party who dislike him and what he stands for, have been unable to beat him at the polls, have found another way to get him out of office?" (Interview with former Republican Sen. Warren Rudman, CBS coverage of the start of the impeachment trial, January 7, 1999)

■ **Criticizing gays is as bad as fighting communism.** "Gays and lesbians are beaten to death in the streets with increasing frequency — in part due to irrational fear of AIDS but also because hatemongers, from comedians to the worst of the Christian right, send the message that homosexuals have no value in our society....In the post-cold-war era, gays have been drafted to replace communists as the new menace to the American Way: We're told gays corrupt youth and commandeer art and entertainment to win converts." (Writing in *The Nation*, April 11, 1994)

■ **I am not biased.** "I'm all news, all the time. Full power, tall tower. I want to break in when news breaks out. That's my agenda. Now, respectfully, when you start talking about a liberal agenda and all the, quote, 'liberal bias' in the media, I quite frankly, and I say this respectfully but candidly to you, I don't know what you're talking about." (Interview with Denver radio station KOA's Mike Rosen, November 28, 1995)

Courage. — Rich Noyes

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. To see RealPlayer video of many of these biased quotes from Dan Rather, visit [www.mrc.org](http://www.mrc.org).