



Media Reality ✓ Check

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ABC, CBS, NBC Featured A Bribe British Leftist Lawmaker, But Now There's Nothing But Silence

Where's the Media on Saddam's Payoffs?

One of the most interesting post-war stories for liberal journalists — who love to deplore how Big Money distorts politics — ought to be the way the deposed Iraqi regime bought influence with politicians and journalists. Last week, the London *Daily Telegraph* began reporting that George Galloway, a Laborite member of Parliament and an anti-war voice featured by several American media outlets, received hundreds of thousands of pounds in the past few years from Saddam's coffers.

In the May 5 *Weekly Standard*, Stephen F. Hayes summarized the story and added that American politicians also received cash: Rep. Jim McDermott, so memorably featured from Baghdad attacking President Bush as a liar last fall on ABC's *This Week*, accepted \$5,000 for his legal defense fund from Shakir al-Khafaji, a Saddam supporter (and contractor with the Ba'athist regime) who arranged his Baghdad trip. Where are the national media on this developing storyline?

Although the *Telegraph* began reporting on documents showing Galloway's payoffs on April 22, it's been blacked out at ABC, CBS, NBC, as well as CNN, NPR, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. But the outlets most responsible to follow the money trail to Galloway and other anti-war voices are the outlets who promoted them on American airwaves.

■ **ABC** has publicized Galloway the most on American TV, starting on the February 13, 1991 *World News Tonight*, as he decried the Allied bombing of Iraq. On the August 12, 2002 *World News Tonight*, reporter John McWethy reported on his Saddam visit: "Galloway, who vehemently opposes U.S. efforts to overthrow the Iraqi leader, said he found Saddam Hussein to be quote, 'radiating a Zen-like calm.'"

The January 20, 2003 *Nightline* featured Galloway (see box), and on February 27, *Good Morning America* co-host Diane Sawyer highlighted a soundbite of Galloway's House of Commons remarks as "a wake-up call for me, listening

about the view of Americans." Galloway denounced how "this born again, right-wing, Bible-belting, fundamentalist, Republican administration in the United States wants war."

■ **CBS:** On the August 14, 2002 *Early Show*, then-co-host Jane Clayson interviewed Galloway, introducing him as "an outspoken supporter of Hussein." He protested: "I am an opponent of Saddam Hussein, but an opponent also, of the sanctions that have killed a million Iraqi children and an

opponent of the United States' apparent desire to plunge the Middle East into a new and devastating war." Clayson asked Galloway if "you feel used in any way" by Saddam, to which he said, "no...not remotely."

■ **NBC:** On September 24, 2002, an "In Their Own Words" segment on *NBC Nightly News* spotlighted

several British leaders debating Iraq, which included Galloway's take on Bush: "The British people have seen the President, heard the President, and they think they're estimating him just about right as not a man that we would want to be at the wheel of the car as we drive along the edge of a cliff with ourselves sitting in the back seat." On February 26, 2003, *Nightly News* also used Galloway's "born-again, right-wing, Bible-belting" crack.

No one faults the networks for featuring arguments from British anti-war leaders as Britain debated the war. But the new bribery revelations show Galloway was a tyrant-paid flack, not a sincere anti-war spokesman. Continued silence suggests journalists care more about protecting what's left of the anti-war activists' appeal than they do about investigative journalism in the war's aftermath. — *Tim Graham*

Saddam's Soft Hands...and Bags of Cash

"He greeted me with a handshake, which, again to my surprise, is surprisingly soft considering how many people that hand had dispatched, allegedly. I think he's quite a forbidding presence, too forbidding a presence to be charming. But he's interesting."

— Labor M.P. George Galloway describing his August 2002 deep-bunker visit with Saddam Hussein on ABC's *Nightline*, January 20.

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; **Brent Baker, Rich Noyes, Tim Graham**, Editors; **Geoffrey Dickens, Jessica Anderson, Brad Wilmouth, Brian Boyd, Ken Shepherd**, and **Patrick Gregory**, Media Analysts; **Kristina Sewell**, Research Associate; **Liz Swasey**, Director of Communications. You can still read "Grading TV's War News" at www.mrc.org.