



Campaign 2000

Media Reality Check

Expert Documentation of the Latest Liberal Media Bias ☆ Thursday, June 8, 2000

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Veep's Renters Go To TV Station to Force Plumbing Repairs, But Big Media Flushes Another Gore Gaffe

Al Gore's Tennessee "Tempest In a Toilet"?

Chicago Tribune columnist John Kass jokingly called it "a tempest in a toilet." That seems to be the media reaction to the news that a family renting a house within sight of Al Gore's Carthage, Tennessee home were so upset they went to Nashville CBS affiliate WTVF-TV to get landlord Gore or his property helpers focused on their broken toilets and other problems. Tracy Mayberry called Gore a "slumlord" on TV, prompting Gore to call and promise to put the Mayberry family up in another house while the home is repaired.

The story broke on Saturday morning with an Associated Press dispatch. *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* ran the AP story inside their Sunday papers. NBC's *Sunday Today* aired a few seconds and CNN's *Inside Politics* spent 38 seconds on it Monday afternoon (neither had video). With the exception of Fox News, there has been no other national coverage. ABC's *Good Morning America* even interviewed Gore on Tuesday morning without a landlord question.

After Gore initially pleased Mrs. Mayberry with his pledges to fix his rental property, she complained and talked about threatening to sue Gore in yesterday's *New York Daily News*, saying Gore property manager Charles Elrod "told me I'm a nasty housekeeper."

The networks' apathy on this story stands in sharp contrast to the treatment of President Bush, including a false *New York Times* story that Bush seemed impressed by a regular supermarket scanner, and network needling over his decision to appear like a man of the people in November 1991 by buying socks at J.C. Penney.

Mrs. Mayberry said she didn't believe Gore when he said he had no idea of his property's plumbing problems. Is she right to be skeptical? Consider the *Washington Times* story of October 29, 1992: "The family farm where Sen. Al Gore said he learned his environmental values has been the site of

a large open dump — filled with pesticide containers, aerosol cans, old tires, used filters filled with waste oil, and unrecycled cans and bottles — for several years." Reporter Michael Hedges found the dump "appears to violate state and federal statutes, according to environmental officials." Network coverage? Zero.

Two days later, the *Times* quoted Gore's response when he was asked about the story by a caller on C-SPAN. Gore said the paper was "claiming that on my father's farm there is a trash dump that they don't like. Well, it was extremely misleading, like a lot of things in that particular publication, and it's just untrue."

But after Gore refused to give local reporters a look at the dump on the family farm, the *Times* reported that WTVF, the same CBS affiliate that aired the Mayberry story, flew a

helicopter over the land and broadcast footage of the dump, as the *Times* had reported it.

CBS didn't use that footage, either. Perhaps they didn't like stories that seemed like late-campaign cheap shots. But on October 26, 1992, *60 Minutes* awarded a segment of its air time to Ross Perot so he could charge that George Bush conspired to ruin his daughter's wedding, which is why he decided to leave the race earlier that year. Lesley Stahl explained: "Even as he's making this charge, Perot acknowledges he can't prove it. And we haven't found any proof either." Some candidates are fair game for any attack. Others can flush away damaging stories. — *Tim Graham*

If This Was Bush, Imagine the Fuss

"If this had been a Republican, people would have been crying 'slumlord.' That would be the headline: 'Slumlord.' And a man who doesn't take care of the little people..." — National Public Radio *Talk of the Nation* host Juan Williams on *Fox News Sunday*, June 4.

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; **Brent Baker**, **Tim Graham**, Editors; **Jessica Anderson**, **Brian Boyd**, **Geoffrey Dickens**, **Ted King**, **Paul Smith**, **Brad Wilmoth**, Media Analysts; **Kristina Sewell**, Research Associate; **Liz Swasey**, Director of Communications. See the FNC video of the Mayberry home at www.mrc.org/news/biasvideo.html