



Media Reality Check

A Twice-Daily Analysis of Network Convention Coverage  Thursday Afternoon, August 3, 2000

Good Afternoon!

Welcome to the Media Research Center's latest examination of Republican convention coverage delivered by fax, e-mail and posted on our Web site. This edition concentrates on coverage from Thursday morning.

Tomorrow, a final edition will look at tonight's evening news and prime time convention coverage.

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Couric Amazed: "Mild-Mannered Dick Cheney. Who Knew?" "Nasty" Speech, "Religious Right" Assailed

At least NBC showed the entire speech Wednesday night. This morning, *Today's* Katie Couric called Dick Cheney's speech to the Republican convention "nasty" and commented to Tim Russert, "Mild-mannered Dick Cheney. Who knew?" Russert was forced to remind her that one of Cheney's most stinging lines ("It's time for them to go") matched word-for-word a put-down of Republicans from Al Gore's 1992 convention address.

A review of the July 17, 1992 *Today* show revealed no complaints about Gore's negativity following that speech. Instead, NBC's Margaret Larson called Gore "impassioned," while reporter Kenley Jones joshed that Gore would have to restrain himself so he wouldn't upstage Clinton.

But that was then. "After days of syrupy rhetoric," David Bloom intoned, "Cheney's attack was like throwing red meat to the lions and Republicans on the convention floor loved it." Bloom also warned that "a focus group of swing voters...did react negatively."

"Despite promises from Republicans to avoid a night of partisan attacks," added David Gregory, "Cheney let loose, directing shot after shot at Bill Clinton and arguing Al Gore would forever remain in his shadow."

Today also took aim at the "religious right." Lisa Myers accused social conservatives of toppling New Jersey Gov. Christie Todd Whitman. "Four years ago," Myers asserted, "Whitman was one of the Republican Party's biggest stars. Today, her strong pro-choice views have isolated her from many in her party....This one-time darling of the party is something of an outcast, considered politically radioactive because of her strongly pro-choice views on abortion."

Interviewing Whitman, Myers told her, "You've been demonized really by the religious right. Does that upset you?" Despite her thesis that Whitman's career had been torpedoed, Myers still proclaimed that "many political observers" think Whitman would be "an ideal" presidential or vice presidential candidate in the future. □

Quote of the Morning

"[Cheney] went straight for the jugular.... After days of syrupy rhetoric, Cheney's attack was like throwing red meat to the lions, and Republicans on the convention floor loved it."
— NBC's David Bloom on Cheney's convention speech, Today, August 3.

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- 2 CBS's *The Early Show* Once Again Promotes *Survivor* Show

Survivor Is Talk of CBS's Convention News

"I know a secret about you," CBS's Jane Clayson told Marvin Bush on Thursday's *Early Show*. **"You're one of the biggest *Survivor* fans at this convention."** Even in their convention coverage, CBS's crack team of journalists couldn't resist promoting their prime time summer hit.

"I've got to ask you if you watch *Survivor*," Clayson asked "The Rock," the WWF wrestler who spoke at the convention last night. New York-based anchor Bryant Gumbel talked to Gervase Peterson, voted off the island on last night's episode. "I met a lot of people this week, Colin Powell and John McCain," Clayson grumbled to Gumbel, **"but I've got to tell you, I'm so jealous of you meeting Gervase."**

Poor, Sheltered GOP

ABC's Michel Martin seemed smugly satisfied when she told *Good Morning America* anchor Antonio Mora about plans for two Spanish-language speeches at tonight's convention. **"I think part of the agenda here is to show people in this hall what it's like to be a minority, something which few of them have ever experienced,"** she told Mora.

One wonders what other cultural experiences Martin might schedule for delegates before they hop in their jewel-encrusted limousines to return to their gated mansions. □

"Charlie, You Make A Good Political Strategist."

Stephanopoulos Touts Gore's Advantages

ABC's Charles Gibson seemed incredulous that Dick Cheney would question Bill Clinton's record, and he told former Clinton aide George Stephanopoulos, now an ABC analyst, that **"I would think the Democrats would throw that right back at him."**

Discussing Cheney's speech during the first half-hour of Thursday's *GMA*, Gibson turned to Stephanopoulos. "Well, one line that he delivered I want to ask you about. 'Does anyone,' he said, 'Republican or Democrat, seriously believe that under Mr. Gore, the next four years would be any different from the last eight?' **Well, I would think the Democrats would throw that right back at him: 'Yeah, it would be the same as the last eight – prosperity, full employment, no international problems.'**" (None at all?)

"Charlie, you make a good political strategist," Stephanopoulos assured him. **"I was talking to the Gore campaign last night. They see that line, and another line where Cheney talked about the last eight years as a 'wasted opportunity,' as a real wedge for them to come in and say 'what are you talking about, wasted opportunity? The Dow has tripled, we've gone from deficit to surplus,' and that this will give Al Gore a chance to talk about the economy, a new chance to talk about the economy."**

"If you look over the course of history, the person in Gore's position has never lost."

– George Stephanopoulos, *Good Morning America*, August 3, 2000

An hour later, leading a roundtable discussion with Stephanopoulos, the *Weekly Standard's* Tucker Carlson, and another former Clinton aide (former press secretary Dee Dee Myers), Gibson again declared the Clinton presidency to be a policy success. **"We have a stock market, as George pointed out earlier, that has tripled over the Clinton administration, we have nominal full employment in this country, we don't have any foreign policy crises, things seem to be humming along,"** Gibson asserted, asking, "Has the party presented a reason to change, other than talking about integrity in the White House, or do they think that's enough?"

Later Stephanopoulos told him that the insiders in the Gore camp were "pretty complacent." He told Gibson, **"If you look over the course of history, the person in Gore's position has never lost.** Five percent economic growth, a President with 58% approval ratings last month, it's never happened before, and they think eventually – they're kind of Marxists on this, not in the pejorative sense – just that the basic structure of the economy will carry them along."

Stephanopoulos offered the same spin right after Cheney's speech last evening. "How do you convince the country it's time for a change when the average voter says 'Hey, I've never had it so good?'" he asked Jennings. "It's a tough argument to make, but without that substance, [the Republicans'] convention bounce could collapse like a bad soufflé when the Democrats strike at their convention." A fair analyst would talk about the GOP's advantages at the Democrats' convention. We'll see. □