



# Media Reality Check

A Twice-Daily Analysis of Network Convention Coverage  Tuesday Afternoon, August 15, 2000

## Good Afternoon!

Welcome to the Media Research Center's continuing examination of Democratic convention coverage delivered by fax, e-mail, and posted on our Web site. This edition concentrates on this morning's TV coverage.

Tomorrow morning, MRC will present a complete wrap-up of tonight's prime time coverage.

For the complete collection of these issues, including those published during the Republican convention, please go to <http://www.mrc.org> and click on "Campaign 2000." You'll be able to access issues as regular HTML files or view them as Adobe Acrobat PDF files.

Don't miss the video clips posted each day to illustrate the documented bias. Check the MRC home page and the "Campaign 2000" page for the latest.

### Media Reality Check Staff:

**Publisher:** L. Brent Bozell III

**Editor:** Brent H. Baker

**Senior Editor:** Tim Graham

**Afternoon Editor:** Rich Noyes

**Media Analysts:** Geoffrey Dickens, Jessica Anderson, Paul Smith, Brian Boyd, Brad Wilmouth, Ted King

**Communications Director:** Liz Swasey

**Research Associate:** Kristina Sewell

**Web Operations:** Andy Szul, Eric Pairel, Brandon Rytting

**Intern:** Ken Shepherd

### Contacts:

To update your fax number or to be added to the e-mail distribution list, please e-mail:

cyber@mediaresearch.org  
Or, call: (703) 683-9733

## No Questioning of Clinton's View of Self, History, and GOP Journalists Applaud "Rock Star" President

Last night, Bill Clinton was bumped from prime time by his wife. This morning, CBS and ABC bumped him from the top of their shows in favor of a trapped Russian submarine. NBC led with Clinton – correspondent Claire Shipman called it "a very successful evening" for the President.


"It was classic Clinton," Shipman told viewers. "The show started half an hour late but the room full of revved-up Democrats hardly noticed. Cheering for a full five minutes as the President took a rock star-like televised walk through the back corridors and in to the convention hall."

"It is not easy to make a recitation of issues and perceived accomplishments into a rip-roaring political speech," acknowledged ABC's Charles Gibson. "But the President had the most supportive of audiences, willing to cheer everything: the budget surplus, welfare reform, job creation, you name it. The Democrats want to do that: emphasize issues and prosperity."

None of the journalists this morning questioned Clinton's version of the history of the past eight years. Instead, they expressed "awe at his political skill and how much he loves to do what he does," as ABC Political Analyst George Stephanopoulos gushed on *Good Morning America*.

"Bill Clinton, walking alone out there, the energy, the empathy," Tim Russert said on *Today*. But he had less kind words for Hillary's speech. "Very pedantic, very sing-songish, and it's not her strength. She's much better in a town-hall-type setting," he advised.

Mrs. Clinton cancelled this morning's scheduled interviews, so ABC ran a conversation taped yesterday with an empathetic Peter Jennings. "He's leaving the greatest thing in his life and you are about to meet the challenge of the biggest thing, certainly, in your political life," Jennings asked. "What if he needs you?"

He can always catch the shuttle to New York. 

## Quote of the Morning

"In a macro-political sense, do you think the Gore preoccupation with morality is a frightening turn for the party?"

— CBS's Bryant Gumbel to *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner, in an interview shown on the August 15 *The Early Show*.

## Inside

2 Bryant Gumbel Opts For Porn Over Gore

2 *Today* Celebrates "Genius Day"

3 They Criticized Quayle, Didn't They?

## Genius Day at NBC

NBC's *Today* featured two politicians Tuesday morning who should feel lucky Matt Lauer didn't pull out a foreign-policy pop quiz.

Lauer asked Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura about the Reform Party, and he channeled Ross Perot: "I look like a genius today, don't I?...Is it dead? Yes, I believe it is. I think this is the final straw. And, who knows, maybe that was Pat Buchanan's ultimate motive to do it. You know, remember something. These two parties never want to see the rise of a third party, and **it's not beyond my belief that Buchanan was sent to the Reform Party to destroy it.**"

But at least he didn't stumble over Buchanan's name.

Rep. Patrick Kennedy tried to push for more rank-and-file Democrats to vote. "I mean, the fact of the matter is if we don't show up and vote, the right wing shows up to vote and that's what's so worrisome," Kennedy told Lauer. "In '94 we had the lowest turnout in the history of the country and **look who got elected Speaker, Dick--uh, uh, you know, Newt Gingrich.**"

"You're getting rave reviews for your efforts for the DCCC [Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee]," Lauer told the congressman. "Is that perhaps your strength, as opposed to the legislative process and that part of being a congressman?" □

## Flap Over Playboy Mansion Fundraiser "A Lot About Nothing" CBS Star Gumbel Chooses Porn Over Gore

**B**ryant Gumbel has never been shy about taking a strong stand. Two days after attending a media party at the Playboy Mansion, Gumbel took up the cause of *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner after the Gore campaign pressured Rep. Loretta Sanchez to remove her Hispanic Unity USA fundraiser from the playground for sexual swingers. Gumbel first interviewed Sanchez:

■ "You went along with being pressured to move the event out of the Playboy Mansion - because the party asked you to. But in your heart do you think they're wrong?" When Sanchez didn't say no, Gumbel replied: "So I'll take that as a yes, that **philosophically they made a lot about nothing.**"

■ "Do you not think it somewhat hypocritical for the Democratic leadership to compel you to move the fundraiser when Al Gore has accepted \$1,000 from Hugh Hefner as a campaign contribution, \$500 from [his daughter and Playboy CEO] Christie Hefner as a campaign contribution?"

Later, Gumbel seemed even more irritated in a taped interview with Hugh and Christie Hefner. He never raised the idea that perhaps the fundraiser clashed with Gore picking "social conservative" Joe Lieberman and trying to distance himself from Clinton's sexual escapades.

■ "They said it would send the wrong kind of message. **What message do you think it would have sent, if any?**" Christie Hefner said this "family values" talk is "usually code for a party that excludes people, that is against gay rights, that is in favor of censorship and prayer in the schools."

■ Then Gumbel pleaded the Hefner case: "**I've run the numbers and over the years, the two of you, Playboy, have given roughly \$900,000 to a variety of Democratic candidates and causes. Should the money figure in this discussion? Do you feel betrayed?**" He added: "Isn't it that you've given money, and they have accepted the money gladly, and then seem at this point somewhat embarrassed by the association?"

■ Gumbel read with disdain a statement by DNC chair Joe Andrew: "His words: 'I think everybody understands the lifestyle represented by *Playboy* magazine and the Playboy Mansion. It does not reflect the values of working families because it reflects the lifestyle they do not think is appropriate.'"

■ Gumbel summed up: "**In a macro-political sense, do you think the Gore preoccupation with morality is a frightening turn for the party?**" Hefner agreed, but later explained that "the media rather universally is very supportive of all of this. They see the bully-boy tactics that are going on here." That would certainly apply to Gumbel.

Later, in an interview with Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. and Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley, Gumbel took up Christie Hefner's line: "We're seeing **the Gore-Lieberman ticket centering itself around what they're calling family values. And that frightens a lot of people because those are code words.** Is a take on morality out of step with what young people are about? Do young people want government involved in what they see as their social lives?" □

Watch Gumbel interview the Hefners about politics and morality.  
Go to [www.mrc.org](http://www.mrc.org) and click on "Campaign 2000"

## ABC's Charles Gibson Remembers Dumping on Dan Quayle Can Hollywood Accept Lieberman's Barbs?

Eight years ago at the Democratic convention, Bill Clinton ridiculed Republican criticism of Hollywood. This morning, ABC *Good Morning America* co-host Charles Gibson took an unusual stroll down Memory Lane when two entertainment writers assessed Hollywood and the Gore-Lieberman ticket.

When *Variety*'s Steve Gaydos said Lieberman's stands aren't costing the Democrats contributions, Gibson responded, "There's an irony in...that it was a Republican, Dan Quayle, who not too many years ago took on the entertainment industry when he criticized Murphy Brown and said you really can't represent a single woman having a baby as just another lifestyle...**The country went nuts when Dan Quayle did that. Now Hollywood is sort of yawning.**" Jess Cagle of *Time* suggested it was all partisan: "There was a big difference in that Dan Quayle was a Republican, you know, someone that Hollywood enjoys attacking, you know, there was an agenda there."

When Gaydos said he thought Lieberman might "inoculate" Gore, Gibson returned to his theme: "Quayle was vilified out here when that happened... Now is that fair — Quayle gets vilified and there is a yawn when Lieberman does what he does?" *Time*'s Cagle insisted: "**Tipper Gore merely wanted parental warnings [on album covers] and that's not a terribly unreasonable stance. The one thing that Lieberman has been successful in is advocating the V-chip....I don't know that Lieberman has really advocated censorship either.**" □

## Matt Lauer Gushes Over President's "Dramatic Solitary Stroll" Today Anchor Loves Democrats' Stagecraft

Two weeks after NBC's *Today* show derided the "made-for-TV image" of the Republican convention, host Matt Lauer seemed oddly enthused about Bill Clinton's theatrical entrance to the Democratic convention hall, even offering a nonplussed Tim Russert his own dream version of how he would have scripted Clinton's farewell.

Lauer even made the entrance, not the speech itself, the show's lead. "In case you missed it, this is how Bill Clinton arrived for his farewell speech," he enthused. "**In a dramatic solitary stroll that could have been scripted by the World Wrestling Federation, Clinton bounced through the bowels of the Staples Center in Los Angeles, finally arriving to the wild cheers of an adoring crowd that had twice helped elect him President of the United States.**"

"And, what about that entrance?" he asked of Russert a few minutes later. Russert said he thought the spectacle of the President walking alone, "was really eerie." Then Lauer offered his own script: "**I kind of thought they should have done it in reverse. At the end, they should have seen him walking alone down the hallway, riding off into the sunset.** But apparently the drama of that was too much."

"Matt," Russert finally told Lauer, "he's not going off into the sunset." □

## Ted's Lewinsky Logic

In his opening last night, ABC *Nightline* host Ted Koppel began with the boilerplate notion that Gore needs Clinton's positives, while finding "a way to disassociate himself from the President's extremely low personal approval ratings."

"It shouldn't be that difficult," Koppel explained. "Al Gore has been perhaps the most active vice president in American history, and **there's not a hint of scandal associated with Gore's personal behavior.**"

"So much for logic," Koppel quipped.

## Clinton Haters?

Unstated during coverage of the Democratic Convention last evening was that just two years ago many in the media publicly said that the country would be better off if Bill Clinton resigned from the presidency.

According to the *National Journal*, 169 newspapers and 40 media personalities advocated that Clinton leave the White House as a consequence of the Lewinsky scandal.

At the time, the dump-Clinton movement included columnists such as **Bonnie Erbe, Al Hunt, Morton Kondracke, Judy Mann, Clarence Page, Andrew Sullivan, and Garry Wills**, and newspapers such as *USA Today*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Denver Post*. □