



Conventions 2000

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Media Reality ✓ Check

A Twice-Daily Analysis of Network Convention Coverage ★ Thursday Morning, August 17, 2000

Good Morning!

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

This afternoon a second daily issue will look at today's morning shows.

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

Unlike Cheney, Speech Not Described as Delivering "Red Meat" Lieberman "Tapped Into a Spirit in the Hall"

Political analyst Michael Barone reported on FNC Wednesday night that "by my count" Joe Lieberman's VP acceptance speech featured "35 positive lines about issues describing the Gore-Lieberman position" and "30 lines of negative attacks on the Republicans, some of them administered with kind of a fairly light deft hand." But unlike how the networks described Dick Cheney's speech two weeks ago, none used the term "red meat."

ABC: "Tonight the red meat, and the crowd here loved it," related George Stephanopoulos on August 2. Ted Koppel noted "how they wanted a little bit of red meat on the convention floor tonight and Dick Cheney gave it to them." Last night Stephanopoulos raved: "Once a generation, conventions create a political star — Mario Cuomo in 1984 with his shining city on a hill speech. I think Joe Lieberman might have done that tonight. As one delegate said to me, he really tapped into a spirit in the hall, by tapping into that rich immigrant experience."

CNN: On Cheney, Jeff Greenfield observed that "he leveled some very sharp words at Al Gore, words of steel wrapped in a tone of velvet. A soft-spoken dose of very red meat." Assessing Lieberman, Greenfield decided: "It was a speech, Judy and Bernie, pitched perfectly to television. Low key in tone. Somewhat sharp in the attacks on the enemies. He concluded with a phrase made famous by a Jewish-American writer Harry Golden, 'only in America,' watchword of American immigrants."

NBC/MSNBC: Tim Russert argued on August 2: "You could feel this audience, they've been pent up for three days, with the politics of happiness, niceties. They wanted to let loose a little bit. And Dick Cheney gave them, if not red meat, a little steak tartar at least." Brian Williams later referred to Cheney's "dose of red meat for this crowd tonight." Following Lieberman, MSNBC avoided the "red meat" phrase and Russert instead praised both VP candidates: "Sound, sober, steady leadership in Dick Cheney and Joe Lieberman, have been widely praised, because that's who they are." □

Quote of the Night

"I think he actually made a few good points and threw a few zingers at the Republicans, but he does it in such a conversational, gentle way that it's even more effective than Dick Cheney being kind of sneering and loud."

— *Time's* Margaret Carlson on Joseph Lieberman's speech, CNN's *Capital Gang*

Inside

- 2 Brokaw: Pro-Abortion Hardline Not Intolerant
- 2 Peter Jennings Hot for Karenna?
- 3 Must "Reassure" Not Really Conservative

Jennings Hot for Kareenna?

During the last minutes of ABC's coverage Wednesday night, Peter Jennings admired how the party "got its act together...They were running behind...and they got it all in."

He then listed the successes, adding special approval for Kareenna Gore: "There's the Lieberman speech, the beginning of the building of Al Gore's biography, an appearance by his very, very good looking, hard working, popular daughter, who as we said, has been a very important part of his campaign and whom the Vice President himself says often is an important advisor."

Kareenna: We'll All Be Hot Year-Round

After her remarks Wednesday night, CNN's Wolf Blitzer asked Kareenna Gore-Schiff what needs to be done to get "young people to support your father?"

Her reply showed she's just as much a far-out environmentalist as her father, offering this dire prediction to which Blitzer did not react: "I think that his message actually does resonate because young people have the most at stake really in this election. If Medicare and Social Security run out, it will be on us. If we wake up to find that abortion is illegal once more it will be younger women who pay the heaviest price. If we don't protect our environment, we'll be the ones buying bottled water and air filters and explaining to our kids what the seasons used to be like."

MSNBC Acceded to Democratic Base; Denounced GOP Base Pro-Abortion Position Okay with Brokaw

Two weeks ago MSNBC pressed Republicans about how pleasing their conservative base on such issues as abortion displayed intolerance which would scare moderates, but Wednesday night MSNBC questioned whether the ticket had gone far enough to satisfy the liberal Democratic base.

Wednesday of the GOP conclave Tom Brokaw grumbled: "Speaking of inclusiveness, in the platform it tolerates no other point of view except anti-abortion."

But last night after the address from Kareenna Gore, Brokaw did not complain about the Democratic hardline on abortion: "It certainly was the most emphatic statement that we've heard from this podium so far, on prime time television about a woman's right to choose...The Republicans didn't go near it last time around. They've been great defenders of course, of anti-abortion. They are determined to overturn Roe v. Wade. The delegation, or the official party line has been, even though the delegates in Philadelphia, when you poll them, more than half of them said, 'No, we think we probably ought to keep choice.' So these people think that they have, that they can make that an issue."

■ Interviewing Lieberman's son, Matt, Brokaw worried: "There are some people in this hall, as you know, who have not viewed him with suspicion so much but with some skepticism about his views on say, affirmative action or Hollywood values for that matter, or school vouchers."

■ Andrea Mitchell asked Senator John Kerry: "How do you feel about Lieberman? He is certainly less liberal than you, and there's been some criticism of some of his positions. Affirmative action, he's had to talk to the Black Caucus. Do you think he can embrace all of the party?"

In the only exception to the liberal mantra, Jim Miklaszewski asked Senator Paul Wellstone if "there is a danger" that if Democrats play "too far to the left...that they're not really going to attract" moderates? □

"Hollywood Has Caused Violence....Unleashed Charlton Heston" Screenwriter Avoids Responsibility

Wednesday night on MSNBC Tom Brokaw tried to engage screenwriter Joe Eszterhas (*Showgirls* and *Basic Instinct*) in a discussion about Hollywood's responsibilities: "You're a new parent....Do you think, possibly, some of your attitudes will change now that you're a parent and you watch Luke grow up?"

Eszterhas shot back: "I think in some ways the entire discussion is a red herring. Yes, Hollywood has caused violence. We have unleashed Charlton Heston on the world and he is the President of the NRA. In that sense we've caused a lot of violence. No one discusses it. You know we have two liberal Democrats, allegedly, who are making this the issue. What about tough gun control? When we take our movies abroad, there is no violence. Why? Is there something dark in the American soul? Baloney! The guns are controlled abroad, and they are not controlled here. The same movie in different countries and there's no violence there." □

Lieberman's Shifts Left Painted as Positive Move to Reassure Base Bush & Lieberman Pushed Left by ABC

ABC's *World News Tonight* on the Wednesday night of the GOP convention: George Bush is too conservative. ABC's *World News Tonight* on the Wednesday night of the Democratic convention: Joe Lieberman needs to assure Democrats he's not conservative.

Back on August 2, ABC dedicated an entire story to supposed proof of how George W. Bush's "much talked about compassion clashes with his record." The evidence listed by reporter Dean Reynolds defined compassion as supporting specific liberal policy prescriptions.

In a preview of the same points Democratic VP nominee Lieberman would make in his convention speech 14 days later, Reynolds scolded: "He is the candidate who talks of making health insurance available to all who want it, but has fought to limit federal insurance for children. Bush is the candidate who has proposed a huge tax cut as a way to help the working class, but more than sixty percent of the relief would go to the richest ten percent of Americans. And while he speaks of the need to protect the environment, Bush supports mostly voluntary efforts to do it."

Joe Lieberman is now backpedaling from his doubts about affirmative action and willingness to consider school vouchers in narrow circumstances. But

Lieberman is "trying to reassure hard-core Democrats that he is not as conservative as they think he is."

instead of looking at how the new positions disprove Lieberman is any centrist or highlighting how the hardline left's demands may turn off moderate voters, last night ABC's Linda Douglass offered an upbeat assessment of how he's "been working hard

to win over all of the Democrats' most important interest groups."

Douglass reported that "he spoke to groups of Hispanics, Asian-Americans, gays and lesbians, trying to reassure hard-core Democrats that he is not as conservative as they think he is. Some in the Black Caucus demanded that he explain past statements in which he has criticized affirmative action." She ran a soundbite from U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, whom she failed to label, and a clip of Lieberman proclaiming his allegiance to affirmative action, but she didn't call it a move to the left. She continued: "The Gore campaign has been calling other key groups trying to appease their doubts about Lieberman: teachers upset about his votes for school vouchers, Hollywood worried about his moral crusade against their industry. Some Democrats say Lieberman must make clear that on issues where he and Gore disagree, Gore's views will prevail."

She did caution that "many here say Lieberman should not go too far trying to paper over his differences with liberals in the party because his greatest asset is his image as an independent thinker and his appeal to swing voters."

She concluded by assuring Peter Jennings that the appeasement plan is working: "There are some signs that liberal doubters are starting to come around as they learn more about Lieberman. African-Americans, for example, Peter, were surprised to learn that he marched in Mississippi in the South during the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Tonight his mission will be to convince all of them that they can trust him, Peter." □

Bush Sucks, "Hear, Hear!"

Two MSNBC hosts enthusiastically approved of Ron Reagan Jr.'s rebuke to Reagan admirers upset by his claim that George Bush is unqualified. Appearing on MSNBC at just past 5pm ET on Wednesday, Reagan, a former Fox News reporter, charged: "On the basis of experience Al Gore is qualified to be President and I don't think George W. Bush is, neither by experience or temperament."

Brian Williams wondered about Reagan's old pals who see him hobnobbing with Democrats: "What would you say to those who are genuinely hurt that a family member of an icon" is now denouncing another Republican? Reagan replied: "Well, my father brought us up to follow our own hearts and our own opinions and that's what I'm doing. So if anybody really knows my father, they won't be upset at all. I can understand why some Republicans might be."

To which Chris Matthews applauded: "Hear, hear, good thought." Williams chimed in: "As they say on TV, good answer." Matthews agreed: "Well stated."

Right-Wing Democrats?

"This is the most conservative Democratic ticket in at least fifty years," declared CNN analyst Bill Schneider Tuesday night just after 7:30pm ET. If Schneider were consistent, in Philadelphia he'd have described George Bush as the most liberal GOP nominee in 24 years.