



Tell the Truth! 2004

Media Reality ✓ Check

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Vol. 8, No. 41
www.mrc.org

Expert Documentation of the Latest Liberal Media Bias ☼ Thursday, October 7, 2004

Friday's Debate Moderator Loved July's Democratic Convention but Scolded "Icy" Tone of VP Debate

Charlie Gibson, ABC's Liberal Question Man

Four years ago, town-hall style debate moderator Jim Lehrer approved mostly liberal-leaning questions for undecided voters to ask of Al Gore and George W. Bush. This time around, ABC's Charles Gibson will reign over the debate featuring citizen questions, and his record as a questioner on *Good Morning America* shows his embrace of liberal policy positions, disdain of harsh rhetoric from candidates, and a warm spot for Democratic theatrics:

■ **Ruining Costly Tax Cuts.** On January 21 of this year, the morning after President Bush in his State of the Union address asked Congress to extend his tax cuts, Gibson confronted White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card with the standard liberal complaint: "The President last night called for making the tax cuts permanent. Is that, in a sense, making deficits in the hundreds of billions of dollars permanent?"

■ **George W. Bush's "Obscene" Fundraising.** Gibson's *Good Morning America* bent over backwards to promote John McCain during his run against Bush in 2000, hosting him far more than all of his GOP primary rivals combined. Gibson seemed especially infatuated with McCain's efforts to further regulate free speech, inviting the Senator to condemn Bush's superior fundraising in an October 12, 1999 appearance: "You have been pushing campaign finance reform for quite some time....Given the fact that it is so important, what does it say about the system when one candidate raises more than \$50 million? Is that obscene?"

■ **Clinton Too Conservative.** In a June 2, 1999 town meeting, Gibson scolded President Clinton for being timid on gun control: "The polls have shown that this country

would accept registration of firearms, and yet we don't do that and we're not fighting about regulation of guns. We regulate every other consumer product out there." A year later, on the May 12, 2000 *Good Morning America*, Clinton returned to hear Gibson tell him his efforts weren't sufficient: "By my count, we have more states rejecting new gun control legislation than have passed it. We have 15 states that have passed prohibitions on cities suing gun manufacturers. That hardly seems like progress."

Saddam Wasn't Good for Children, Either

"I grew up in the Vietnam era, which is probably one of the signal events of my life and I think affected everybody of my generation. And we used to have a little framed sign hanging in our bedroom, my wife and I, that said, 'War is not good for children and other living things,' and I believe that. So I don't like covering war and I hate to see them occur."

— Gibson on CNN's *Larry King Live*, July 2, 2003.

■ **No Compassion on the Right.** "Bush is using this term 'compassionate conservative' as he campaigns, which is an interesting juxtaposition of two seemingly contradictory terms," Gibson complained to *New York Times* columnist William Safire back in November 1999.

■ **Jazzed by Democrats.** After the first night of the Democrats' convention this year, Gibson was stirred: "People were juiced like I don't think I've seen at a convention ever before. This place really was moving last night." Four mornings later, after Kerry spoke, Gibson led the cheers: "For those who doubted John Kerry could pull off a stirring speech, doubts dispelled. For those who doubted John Kerry could unite a traditionally fractious party, doubts dispelled."

■ **Upbraiding Any Negativity.** Gibson might react badly if Bush decides to go after Kerry's dovish Senate record. Just Wednesday, the morning, after the VP debate, Gibson was displeased with the negative tone. "Icy last night. It was icy in that room, two guys sitting side-by-side, throwing bombshells at one another," he grouched.

— Rich Noyes

Read the Media Research Center's complete analysis of tomorrow's presidential debate at www.mrc.org.
To schedule an interview with an MRC spokesman, please contact Tim Scheiderer at (703) 683-5004