



Tell the Truth! 2004

Media Reality ✓ Check

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Vol. 8, No. 44
www.mrc.org

Expert Documentation of the Latest Liberal Media Bias ☛ Thursday, October 14, 2004

Reporters Frown on Bush's Mention of Kerry's Liberalism, Calling It a "Tinny" Charge, a "Tired Horse"

TV (Again) Hails Kerry as Debate Champ

The network "snap" polls conducted after Wednesday night's debate declared John Kerry the winner, although ABC found Kerry only edged President Bush by a single point (42% to 41%). CBS resurrected its Web-based survey of 200 "uncommitted" voters to find Kerry was the winner in the eyes of 39% compared with 25% who picked Bush. But this time, at least, CBS's Anthony Mason pointed out how this group came to the debate giving "Bush lower approval ratings than the overall electorate." Sounds like CBS's dream panel. Last night's highlights:

■ **Disappointing Bill Kristol.** "It's a smashing victory for Bush," *The Weekly Standard's* Bill Kristol announced on FNC. "I think the mainstream media will have to acknowledge it." But the pundits on the other networks disappointed Kristol, either touting Kerry as the champ or refraining from picking a winner.

■ **Tax Cuts for the Wealthy?** Even though lower- and middle-income workers received a higher percentage reduction of their tax bills, ABC Political Director Mark Halperin was frustrated that Kerry did not cite misleading Democratic talking points. "The absolute dollar figures have gone to wealthier Americans. That's been one of the Democrats' main talking points," Halperin argued. "I don't think he hit that particularly hard."

■ **Who Cares About War, Terrorism and the Economy?** ABC added liberal PBS and NPR host Tavis Smiley to their pundit parade. Referring to Bob Schieffer's question about affirmative action, Smiley complained that "it took us four debates, into the last 15 minutes, to hear a discussion about

issues that matter to people of color....Tonight, at least, I finally got some conversation about things that matter to me as a voter of color." But as a liberal, Smiley probably enjoyed Schieffer's questions (see box).

■ **Bush's "Tired" and "Tinny" Charge.** *Newsweek's* Jon Meacham thought calling Kerry an out-of-the-mainstream liberal was unserious. "I think the 'liberal, liberal, liberal, liberal' seems a little tinny these days. I think it's a more serious time," Meacham said on MSNBC. On CNN, the *Boston Globe's* Nina Easton agreed, saying swing voters don't like "that tired horse of calling Kerry a liberal from Massachusetts."

■ **Disdaining Kerry's "Low Blow."** *Newsweek's* Meacham thought it was "jolting" and "out of bounds" for Kerry to mention that Dick Cheney's daughter is a lesbian. On FNC, Morton Kondracke agreed, calling it a "low blow." But MSNBC's Chris

Matthews fantasized about Kerry throwing some pro-gay rhetoric at Bush on the question of whether homosexuality is a choice: "I was waiting for John Kerry to come back to the President and say, 'When did you choose?'"

■ **Kerry's Bandwagon Rolls On.** ABC's Dean Reynolds professed confidence: "The candidate whose numbers have been moving in the right direction for the last 10 days has been John Kerry. This debate did nothing to stop that, and I think from the Kerry point of view, they'll be happy about the results tonight." They certainly couldn't complain about the networks' commentary.

— Brent Baker and Rich Noyes

Bob Schieffer's Liberal Debate Agenda

"The gap between rich and poor is growing wider. More people are dropping into poverty. Yet the minimum wage has been stuck at, what, \$5.15 an hour now for about seven years. Is it time to raise it?"

— Debate moderator Bob Schieffer to Kerry.

"You said that if Congress would vote to extend the ban on assault weapons, that you'd sign the legislation. But you did nothing to encourage the Congress to extend it. Why not?"

— Schieffer to Bush about 10 minutes later.

Read the Media Research Center's complete analysis of last night's Presidential debate at www.mrc.org.

To schedule an interview with an MRC spokesman, please contact Tim Scheiderer at (703) 683-5004