



Media Reality ✓ Check

A Regular Report on Major News Stories Distorted or Ignored ☐ www.mediaresearch.org

Conservatives Told to Dilute Their Agenda While Democrats Condemned for Downplaying Liberalism

Media: Both Parties Should Shift to the Left

Network reporters politely — albeit not cheerfully — acknowledged the Republican near-sweep that ended Tom Daschle’s days in charge of the U.S. Senate, and they credited vigorous campaigning by the President for the GOP’s success.

But some journalists actually suggested that the voters’ message yesterday was that both parties should become more liberal. While they blamed mushy moderation for the Democratic disaster, reporters warned Republicans to forget about a conservative agenda and hug the center if they wanted to maintain their new hold on congressional power.

The media’s unsolicited advice to both parties, from last night and this morning’s TV coverage:

■ **Diagnosis: The Democrats were too conservative.** “Did you run too close to the middle? There’s grouching already in the Democratic party that Democrats didn’t act like Democrats, they acted like watered-down Republicans,” CBS’s Harry Smith scolded Democratic boss Terry McAuliffe on this morning’s *Early Show*.

■ **Maybe a big government program would have helped.** “Do you think the Democratic Party has made a mistake pulling back from those grand initiatives like health care?” MSNBC’s Chris Matthews asked former Democratic Senator Bob Kerrey shortly before 11pm last night. When Kerrey reminded him that Democrats wanted taxpayers to pay for senior citizens’ drug bills, Matthews scoffed: “That’s pretty small bore, isn’t it?”

■ **Or maybe they were too frightened of President Bush.** “The knock on the Democrats tonight is that there was no consistent message, there were so many messages, and moreover you were intimidated by the President and you wouldn’t speak out on the economy, and you wouldn’t speak out on the war,” Peter Jennings lectured Democratic Senate campaign chief Patty Murray during ABC’s 1am EST (10pm PST) news special.

■ **Conservatives will be Bush’s biggest problem.** During CNN’s coverage early this morning, analyst Jeff Greenfield hoped Bush had the willpower to just say no: “His one

problem is going to be that the Republican base, movement conservatives, are now going to say to him, ‘You’ve got the power, now use it, now get the agenda done.’ And they may not want that agenda pushed quite as hard as the movement conservatives do.”

■ **Rewarding loyal conservatives would just be a cynical “payoff.”** CNN’s Paula Zahn warned Republican Senate leader Trent Lott this morning that “there are those out there who are saying...the President is going to have to be realistic about the amount of pressure put on him by the conservatives and religious right. What is your assessment of that? I mean, they are basically saying it’s payoff time.”

You Really Let Us Down, Tom

“Senator, you’ve got a President with big deficits, you’ve got an economy in the doldrums, you’ve got major corporate scandals, you’ve got a President talking about taking the country to war, which is never popular, and still you couldn’t beat him.” — Charles Gibson to Tom Daschle on Wednesday’s *Good Morning America*.

■ **Any conservative legislation would be divisive.** “The margin of victory is so narrow in so many of these races and it’s just a razor thin difference in some cases between the parties, does that give you a responsibility to govern from the middle or with the majority do you go all the way to the right?” CBS’s Smith asked Lott. His plea to

“govern from the middle” came just twenty minutes before Smith fretted to McAuliffe that Democrats had “acted like watered-down Republicans.”

■ **If Bush gets a swelled head, he could wind up getting a lot of people killed.** “Do you think there’s a danger of hubris?” Chris Matthews asked Kerrey on MSNBC. “If he does very well and he grabs the United States Senate tonight...is there a chance, in fact, a likelihood, that he might get a little bit overzealous about his power and maybe draw us into a war with greater alacrity than he should?”

Does anyone remember the last election night when media mavens faulted the Republicans for being too moderate or warned Democrats against fulfilling their liberal promises? Or do reporters really think both parties should lurch further to the left? — *Rich Noyes*

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; Brent Baker, Rich Noyes, Editors; Jessica Anderson, Brian Boyd, Geoffrey Dickens, Patrick Gregory, Ken Shepherd, and Brad Wilmouth, Media Analysts; Kristina Sewell, Research Associate; Liz Swasey, Director of Communications. Learn how you can help fight liberal media bias at www.mediaresearch.org.