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CBS News Demanded Gingrich Scuttle His Book Deal, But CBS Made Book Deal with Sen. Hillary

## Nets Neuter Newt, Puff and Enrich Hillary

**O**n February 1, 1995, CBS reporter Eric Engberg attacked Newt Gingrich's \$4.5 million book deal with HarperCollins. Engberg suggested the embattled new Speaker ought to surrender: "Speaker Gingrich, who could end the controversy by scuttling the book deal, is standing fast."

Gingrich had already given away his advance, but that didn't stop Engberg: "When Gingrich tried to end the controversy by turning down the advance, he failed to disclose he had met with Murdoch. When that came out, Gingrich did not reveal that Murdoch's top lobbyist was also at the courtesy call and that they discussed a big regulatory problem facing Murdoch's Fox TV network, the jewel of his media empire. It's a high-stakes case."

Dan Rather introduced that story: "More tonight about whether Australian-born-and-centered communications billionaire Rupert Murdoch is trying to buy influence with politically connected authors."

A February 1995 *MediaWatch* study found 27 network evening news stories on the Gingrich book deal from December 22, 1994 to February 2, 1995 — seven each for ABC, CBS, and NBC, and six on CNN's *World News*. The networks first reported the book deal on December 22. "We'll hear more about this one," CBS reporter Bob Schieffer promised. Schieffer was still hammering Gingrich about it in July (see box).

Now Simon and Schuster has announced an \$8 million book deal with Senator-Elect Hillary Clinton. Simon and Schuster is now an arm of the CBS conglomerate. Will CBS and the other networks show the same ethical ardor in suggesting that Hillary's book deal looks like "buying influence with politically connected authors," and demand she forego any advance, and then despite that move, continue to demand more congressional investigations until every conversation between Mrs. Clinton and her corporate

benefactors is parsed for every possible political impact? Don't count on it.

CBS news reader Julie Chen touched tangentially on the topic on December 15: "Book publishers are lining up to pay millions for Hillary Clinton's White House memoirs. Some say that creates an ethics problem for the future senator. Members of the House were barred from accepting book advances after then Speaker Newt Gingrich got a big money book deal six years ago."

Reporters pounced on the Gingrich because he tried for months to get the media to cover a September 24, 1997 *Washington Post* story on Speaker Jim Wright's book deal, which led to Wright's resignation in 1989.

Of the 27 book deal stories, six mentioned the case of Speaker Wright, either by comparing Democratic attacks on Gingrich to Gingrich's attacks on Wright, or by noting that both stories involved book deals. Gingrich's comparison of his deal to Al Gore's \$100,000 advance for *Earth in the Balance* made it into only two stories.

For CBS, what goes around comes around. When Gingrich gave up his advance, CBS *Face the Nation* fill-in host Rita Braver asked Bob Dole on January 1, 1995: "You don't think he'll be called The Four-and-a-Half-Million Dollar Man anymore?" The man behind Hillary's book deal is agent Bob Barnett, Braver's husband. — *Tim Graham*

### ***CBS Hammered Newt's Deal for Months***

**"Until the Ethics Committee announced on Friday that they were indeed going to call you and Rupert Murdoch, there had been charges, most of them from Democrats, that the whole thing was being dragged out, that the Ethics Committee had taken no testimony under oath, that they had subpoenaed no documents. Eric Engberg, of CBS, had reported that they hadn't even gotten a briefing from any relevant agencies. Do you think the Ethics Committee has been dragging its feet on this? And would you like to tell them to speed up to at least clear up all of this?"**  
— CBS *Face the Nation* host Bob Schieffer to Newt Gingrich, July 9, 1995.

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