



Campaign 2004 Media Reality Check

QUICK TAKE

Tuesday, March 23, 2004 ✪ www.mrc.org ✪ CONTACT: Katie Wright (703) 683-5004

ONLY FNC COVERED KERRY'S \$87 BILLION FLUB THE DAY HE SAID IT

KERRY GAFFES IN FRONT OF THE PRESS, BUT THEY DON'T NOTICE?

Over the weekend, pundits agreed that Democratic candidate John Kerry had hurt his campaign with embarrassing goofball statements. "John Kerry had a bad week," Ron Brownstein of the *Los Angeles Times* opined on NBC's *Meet the Press*. "He said a few things he probably wished he hadn't."

"It was a brutal week for John Kerry," MSNBC's Chris Matthews seconded on his syndicated *Chris Matthews Show*.

"[Howard] Dean is no longer here to put his foot in his mouth, and so he has transferred his foot to John Kerry's mouth," former ABC White House correspondent Sam Donaldson told Matthews.

But the comment that pundits found so "ludicrous" (Matthews' label) was initially deemed not worth mentioning by the liberal media. On March 16, Kerry was trying to condemn a new Bush-Cheney campaign commercial that took him to task for voting against a defense bill designed to aid U.S. troops in Iraq. "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion before I voted against it," Kerry lamely argued. The Bush campaign quickly incorporated Kerry's laughable defense into a new version of the same ad.

That night, the *CBS Evening News* and CNN's *Inside Politics* covered that Kerry event but chose sound bites that made the Democrat seem less of a parser; ABC and NBC skipped the whole story. Only FNC's *Special Report with Brit Hume* showed the quote that night, as reporter Carl Cameron charitably commented that "the Senator lapsed into apparent double speak."

ABC's *World News Tonight* finally mentioned the quote the next night, March 17, only after Vice President Dick Cheney cited it in a speech tweaking Kerry's record. The *CBS Evening News* has yet to put the gaffe on the air.

How can a quote be so bad that it ruins the Democratic candidate's week, yet fail to catch any of the liberal networks' attention? Maybe their reporters are only on the lookout for stories that punish conservatives.