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Campaign 2✪✪✪ Media Reality Check

QUICK TAKE

Thursday, September 21, 2000 ✪ www. mrc.org ✪ Contact: Katie Wright (703) 683-5004

REPORTERS SHOULD DEMAND TO SEE THE PROOF

WILL TV LET GORE GET AWAY WITH PHONY "PROFITEERING" CHARGES?

Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

Vice President Al Gore today repeated his politically-motivated charge that oil companies are "profiteering" at the expense of U.S. consumers. The TV networks let Gore get away with that bogus claim back in June, when the public was outraged by sharp gasoline price increases in Chicago and Milwaukee. On the defensive, the Clinton-Gore EPA launched a showy investigation into oil company pricing, only to be embarrassed weeks later when an internal Energy Department memo showed that the EPA knew its own environmental regulations were to blame for the price spike. (*The Washington Times*, July 14, 2000.)

Back in June, the naive networks treated the Clinton-Gore investigation seriously. "The White House has now put the oil industry on notice," CBS's Bob Orr warned on June 12. "If any evidence of price gouging surfaces, regulators will come down hard."

Gore says oil industry profits have risen in the past year, but that's hardly proof of gouging and he fails to add that oil prices were at historic lows in 1999 — so low, in fact, that Energy Secretary Bill Richardson implored OPEC to cut back its production to boost prices.[1]

Rich Noyes, Director of MRC's Free Market Project, comments that "Until the networks either ask Gore to back up his claims, or investigate the truth for themselves, they're allowing themselves to be used by a presidential campaign that's made business-bashing one of its main themes."

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[1] "According to former Saudi Arabian oil minister Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, the United States, through Energy Secretary Bill Richardson, played a significant role in the OPEC-plus producer agreements to cut production that led to oil price recovery earlier this year." — *The Oil Daily*, September 17, 1999.