



Media Reality ✓ Check

QUICK TAKE

Monday, July 23, 2001 ☪ www.mrc.org ☪ Contact: Katie Wright (703) 683-5004

"HIGH ROAD" ANCHOR BASELESSLY SLAMMED GOP IN 2000 **CBS'S DAN RATHER CONDEMNS CONDIT** **NEWS AS "SPECULATION," BUT HE AIRED** **FALSE REPORT OF GOP DIRTY TRICK**

Dan Rather insists that his non-coverage of the scandal surrounding Democratic Congressman Gary Condit is a journalistic virtue, not head-in-the-sand foolishness. An article in Monday's *New York Times* quoted the *CBS Evening News* anchor's explanation of his own rules for good reporting: **"I've tried to stand for what I believe in — decent, responsible journalism....When rumors, gossip, speculation and all this other stuff begin swirling, and other people begin reporting it — frequently, I'm sorry to say, reporting it as fact — my question always was, and continues to be, what do we know on the basis of our own reporting?"**

On Thursday's *Imus in the Morning* radio program, Rather similarly claimed to be **"high road, hard news,"** but during last year's political campaign he presented his own speculation as news, baselessly accusing Republicans of detonating **"a carefully orchestrated, politically motivated leak"** on the last day of the Democratic National Convention. Here's how Rather began the August 17, 2000 *CBS Evening News*: **"Timing is everything. Al Gore must stand and deliver here tonight as the Democratic Party's presidential nominee, and now Gore must do so against the backdrop of a potentially damaging, carefully orchestrated story leak about President Clinton. The story is that Republican-backed special prosecutor Robert Ray, Kenneth Starr's successor, has a new grand jury looking into possible criminal charges against the President growing out of Mr. Clinton's sex life."**

In fact, the story about the Clinton grand jury probe was accidentally leaked to an Associated Press reporter by a federal judge appointed by Democratic President Jimmy Carter. But Rather's ignorance of the facts did not restrain his later prime time speculation about the **"Republican-backed"** prosecutor.

"You don't have to be a cynic to note that this has all the earmarks of a carefully orchestrated, politically motivated leak," Rather wrote at the time in a "Notebook" item for the CBS News Web site. While he now lectures the rest of the media about restraint, Rather has never apologized for the damage that his wild speculation may have caused to Ray or others. The *CBS Evening News*, however, did correct itself on Friday, August 18, 2000 — when Rather was enjoying a post-convention vacation.