

Notable Quotables

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A bi-weekly compilation of the latest outrageous, sometimes humorous, quotes in the liberal media.



Bringing Political Balance
to the Media

THE BEST NOTABLE QUOTABLES OF 2001 The Fourteenth Annual Awards for the Year's Worst Reporting

Welcome to the Media Research Center's annual awards issue, a compilation of the most outrageous and/or humorous news media quotes from 2001 (December 2000 through November 2001). To determine this year's winners, a panel of 41 radio talk show hosts, magazine editors, columnists, editorial writers and media observers each selected their choices for the first, second and third best quote from a slate of six to nine quotes in each category. First place selections were awarded three points, second place choices two points, with one point for the third place selections. Point totals are listed in the brackets at the end of the attribution for each quote.

A list of the judges, who were generous with their time, appears on the back page.

The MRC's Kristina Sewell distributed and counted the ballots. Brent Baker and Rich Noyes put together this issue.

Join us in Washington, DC on January 17 for the *Dishonor Awards of 2002: Roasting the Most Outrageously Biased Liberal Reporters*. For information on what will be a fun evening, go to the MRC home page or call (703) 683-9733.

Swiss Press Corps Award for Remaining Neutral in War Coverage

✓ "The Pentagon as a legitimate target? I actually don't have an opinion on that, and it's important I not have an opinion on that as I sit here in my capacity right now....I can say the Pentagon got hit, I can say this is what their position is, this is what our position is, but for me to take a position this was right or wrong, I mean, that's perhaps for me in my private life, perhaps it's for me dealing with my loved ones, perhaps it's for my minister at church. But as a journalist I feel strongly that's something that I should not be taking a position on. I'm supposed to figure out what is and what is not, not what ought to be."

— ABC News President David Westin at a Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism event on Oct. 23 shown four days later on C-SPAN. [83 points]

Runners-up:

■ "We all know that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter and that Reuters upholds the principle that we do not use the word terrorist....To be frank, it adds little to call the attack on the World Trade Center a terrorist attack."

— Steven Jukes, global head of news for Reuters News Service, in an internal memo cited by the *Washington Post's* Howard Kurtz in a Sept. 24 article. [67]

■ "To Western ears, calls for blood-soaked martyrdom are an alien concept, but consider the way things are for millions of Muslims of all ages: If you were born into grinding poverty where upward mobility isn't even a dream, and have little to sustain you in life beyond religion, you too

- might find yourself screaming for the new Messiah with a \$5 million price on his head....Everywhere you go in the world you will hear some version of the words 'we are a freedom-loving people,' but like beauty, freedom is a perception that lies in the eye of the beholder, and we ignore other nations' versions at our peril. The most dangerous perception of all may be that one's own side has an exclusive claim to either the truth or patriotism."
- — CBS News foreign correspondent Allen Pizzey on CBS's *Sunday Morning*, October 14. [39]
- ■ Reporter Dan Harris: "According to al-Jazeera, U.S. attacks on a village near Kandahar killed 93 civilians on Tuesday, including 18 members of one family. There has been no independent confirmation. Across the border in the Pakistani town of Quetta, five people arrived today at a hospital with injuries they say they suffered in another U.S. attack....This boy is one of the injured. His uncle says he had heard American radio broadcasts promising civilians wouldn't be targeted, but he says his village was nowhere near any Taliban positions. Abdul Jabar is the doctor in charge."
- Harris to Jabar: "How do you feel when you see these kids?"
- Jabar: "I feel very sad."
- Harris: "Angry?"
- Jabar: "Yes. My sympathies are with the Afghans."
- Harris: "Angry at the United States?"
- Jabar: "Yes."
- Harris: "Everyone we spoke with at this tiny hospital said the ongoing raids have made the population here and across the border angry at the U.S. and supportive of the Taliban."
- — ABC's *World News Tonight*, October 23. [28]

To watch, via RealPlayer, many of the broadcast quotes in this issue, go to: <http://www.mrc.org>

Media Hero Award

✓ “What an exhilarating moment it must have been for her — the first First Lady in history to be elected to public office. There, for all the nay-sayers to see, was the woman who had finally come into her own, free at last to be smart, outspoken, independent, and provocative, all qualities she had been forced as First Lady, to ‘hide under a bushel.’ Still she was voted one of America’s most admired women. Just wait. You ain’t seen nothin’ yet.”

— End of “On My Mind” ABCNews.com commentary by ABC anchor Carole Simpson, January 7. [82 points]

Runners-up:

■ “He’s only the most important political leader alive in the world today, historically speaking....If you look over the course of our lifetimes, who was the most, well, you go back to Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt....If I look back over my lifetime, who is the world leader who changed things the most, and I don’t actually think it is a close call.”

— *Newsweek’s* Jonathan Alter on Mikhail Gorbachev, April 27 *Imus in the Morning* on MSNBC. [47]

■ “Five months into the Great Electricity Crisis of 2001, the aura of impending disaster is receding, at least for now, from Sacramento and the rest of the Golden State. To be sure, [California Governor Gray] Davis still keeps the lights low and the air conditioning tepid in his capital offices, and when I saw him there it was like glimpsing Churchill in Whitehall during the blitz....In a way, the energy crisis is a blessing for a man such as this: a dramatic event that imperiled everyone in the nation’s largest state and that called for a detail freak with an iron butt.”

— Howard Fineman’s July 25 “Living Politics” column, posted on *Newsweek’s* section of MSNBC’s Web site. [45]

■ “Today is the day the Senate may pass that patients’ bill of rights, which would guarantee your right to sue your HMO. When that happens, one big winner out of Washington will be one of the bill’s key Democratic backers, North Carolina’s newcomer John Edwards. He is said to have the combined political skills — are you ready for this? — of Clinton and Kennedy, Kennedy and Clinton together, and also to have a very good shot at the White House.”

— Diane Sawyer, *Good Morning America*, June 29. [24]

Pushing Bush to the Left Award

✓ “Arsenic in the water. Starting up the Cold War. Make as much carbon dioxide as you like. Laugh about it. Bush has set himself up as a huge target. And the arsenic is going to be the equivalent of what your boss [Newt Gingrich] did with cutting school lunches.”

— *Newsweek’s* Eleanor Clift, addressing Tony Blankley, on the *McLaughlin Group*, March 24. [52 points]

Runners-up:

■ “George W. Bush was so indifferent to the world that in the years before he became President he made only two overseas trips, both for business, neither for curiosity. No wonder he wants to break the missile treaty, alienate

• NATO, ignore global warming and reinstall Russia and China as enemies: Those foreign countries scarcely exist in his imagination. Why go to Australia when you have the Outback Steakhouse right here at home?”

• — Movie reviewer Roger Ebert in a July 24 *Chicago Sun-Times* op-ed. [48]

• ■ “Last week the Bush administration went beyond conditions, proposing to ax a Clinton administration regulation that forces the meat industry to perform salmonella tests on hamburger served in school cafeterias. Given the heightened interest in the health of cattle right now, the move wasn’t exactly well timed....

• “What happened to the compassion that was supposed to go with Bush’s conservatism? The campaign prepared us for some of this — candidate Bush made plain his intention to drill in the Arctic wildlife refuge, not a bad political calculus given America’s preference for SUVs over caribou. But no one thought his team would choose slaughterhouses over schoolchildren, even if only for a day. What connects these decisions is a preference for folks he knows: his oil-field buddies (mirrors of himself), corporate executives and captains of industry, from the Halliburton honcho to the Terminix franchisee.”

• — Margaret Carlson’s “Public Eye” column in the April 16 *Time* magazine. [34]

• ■ “The Bush White House packaged in its first week an image of the President as a uniter. But Mr. Bush’s message has often been at odds with the mission: The Ashcroft nomination, new restrictions on abortion counseling, plans for school vouchers, an in-your-face attitude that has Democrats reluctant to let down their guard.”

• — Reporter John Roberts on the *CBS Evening News*, January 26. [33]

• ■ “George W. Bush’s rhetoric is very inclusive. He means to be inclusive, and he’s used very soft rhetoric in trying to reach out to minorities. But the fact is he’s proposed no federal programs for minorities. He hasn’t talked about using the federal government to broaden the safety net.”

• — ABC News reporter Linda Douglass during the roundtable on *This Week*, December 23, 2000. [33]

Poisoning the Planet Award for Portraying Bush as Destroyer of the Earth

• ✓ “Remember when Ronald Reagan tried to save a few pennies on the school lunch program by classifying ketchup as a vegetable? Last week the Bush administration went further, axing a regulation that forced the meat industry to test hamburgers served in school for salmonella. Imagine, Mad Cow Disease among children, K through 12. The day it hit the papers the proposal was quickly withdrawn. [If the Bush administration keeps trying to kill health and safety regulations at this pace, soon we won’t be able to eat, drink or breathe.”

• — “Outrage of the Week” from *Time* magazine’s Margaret Carlson, April 7 *Capital Gang* on CNN. [69 points]

Runners-up:

■ “Around the world, the anger runs as deep as the flood waters being blamed on the global warming the Kyoto treaty was supposed to fight. President Bush says he’s putting American economic interests first in rejecting Kyoto, and in Britain, where they’re having their wettest winter ever, they sadly agree....Others point to severe weather conditions around the planet — flooding for the second consecutive year in Mozambique, drought and famine in the Sudan — and they say the U.S. is substantially to blame. With only about four percent of the world’s population, the United States famously produces about twenty-five percent of the world’s harmful greenhouse gas pollution.”

— **Mark Phillips on the March 29 CBS Evening News. [36]**

■ “Fairly or unfairly, critics of President Bush’s environmental policy believe the only green policy he’s displayed is the color of big business money. Today the President made moves to change that image, upholding a new rule on industries pumping lead into the environment. So, is the Bush push really getting the lead out, or just blowing smoke?”

— **Dan Rather on the April 17 CBS Evening News. [36]**

■ “President Bush insisted today that he was not caving in to big money contributors, big-time lobbyists, and overall industry pressure when he broke a campaign promise to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. But the air was thick today with accusations from people who believe that’s exactly what happened.”

— **Dan Rather on the CBS Evening News, March 14. [29]**

■ **President Bush:** “I think the message is getting out. There are some issues, like the environment, some accuse me of not being environmentally sensitive, which is ridiculous.”

Matt Lauer: “So you can look me in the eye and say that you are a President committed to cleaning up the environment?”

— **Exchange on NBC’s Today, April 25. [27]**

Picking the Lockbox Award for Denouncing Bush’s Tax Cut

✓ “Adios, surplus. When retired boomers dine on dog food, will they say thanks for that \$600?”

— **Newsweek’s “Conventional Wisdom” box, assigning President Bush a “down” arrow, Sept. 3 issue. [52 points]**

Runners-up:

■ “Democrats, collaborating on a smaller tax cut proposal, have vowed to fight the Bush plan, targeting it as a budget buster that caters to the rich....On the Republican side, Mr. Bush faces a different problem. Already they’re talking up adding more tax cuts to his plan. And then, there’s the lobbyists who wonder why Mr. Bush gave nothing to corporate America. Critics charge the bill could eventually top \$3 trillion....Bob McIntyre of Citizens for Tax Justice can’t forget the last time Congress went on a tax cut spree in 1981. America is still paying the bill.”

— **CBS White House correspondent John Roberts in a February 5 CBS Evening News story which cited a critic but not a supporter of Reagan’s tax cuts. [36 points]**

■ “On Capitol Hill, the Republican-controlled House voted mostly along party lines tonight to pass President Bush’s federal budget blueprint. This includes his big tax cut plan, partly bankrolled, critics say, through cuts in many federal aid programs for children and education.”

— **Dan Rather on the March 28 CBS Evening News. [33]**

■ “President Bush tonight outlines his cut-federal-programs-to-get-a-tax-cut plan to Congress and the nation. Democrats will then deliver their televised response, which basically says Mr. Bush’s ideas are risky business, endangering among other things, Social Security and Medicare.”

— **Dan Rather, February 27 CBS Evening News. [33]**

■ “The Bushes held their first state dinner. POTUS served buffalo meat, wore cowboy boots and welcomed Clint Eastwood. Meanwhile, the rest of America priced horse meat.”

— **Summary of previous week’s events according to Newsweek’s “Conventional Wisdom” in the magazine’s September 17 issue. [29]**

■ “That’s what’s pernicious here, is seizing on this as a way to get a tax cut...he could create something self-fulfilling, talk down the economy because he wants to use that as a tool to get a tax cut that we don’t really need and is a bad idea.”

— **Newsweek Assistant Managing Editor Evan Thomas on Inside Washington, December 23, 2000. [26]**

Carve Clinton Into Mount Rushmore Award

✓ “Throughout his eight years in office, President Clinton warned us that the next great menace was international terrorism....He also brought unprecedented prosperity to our nation, and because of that, President [Bush] can use the surplus Mr. Clinton left behind to pay for many of the nation’s needs in this time of crisis....This lecture series is about the human spirit. To me and millions of others, President Clinton has always personified that. He is the man from Hope, and that is what he has given us, hope. We miss him. Thank you, Mr. President.”

— **Former UPI White House reporter Helen Thomas introducing Clinton at Oct. 9 Greater Washington Society of Association Executives lecture shown on C-SPAN. [80 points]**

Runners-up:

■ “Now, the return of the Prodigal Son. The, you know, the man who left office disgraced, burdened down by at least three major scandals that I can think of, got a hero’s welcome today, and I couldn’t be happier....After impeachment, after Pardogate, after the fake stories about their pilfering of the White House, Bill Clinton’s appearance today in Harlem must have been the feel-good event of the season for the former President, and he soaked up the sunshine and love.”

— **Geraldo Rivera discussing Bill Clinton’s “heroic re-emergence” at the opening of his new Harlem offices, on CNBC’s Rivera Live, July 30. [40]**

■ “Elvis, the first rock star. Clinton, the first rock star President....Clinton had a talent for convincing anyone

listening to him that he was speaking only to them, just as Elvis convinced someone in the 100th row that he was singing only to them. Presley drew on black culture for inspiration. Clinton draws on black culture for solace.”

— **CNN political analyst Bill Schneider, prompted by the August “convergence” days apart of Bill Clinton’s birthday and the day Elvis died, August 16 *Inside Politics*. [31]**

■ “In every family there are people and situations you would just as soon keep from others. So, when you express shock and outrage at Bill and Hillary’s brothers’ involvement in the pardon controversy, consider what your own relatives might do if you possessed the power of the presidency.”

— **Carole Simpson, anchor of ABC’s *World News Tonight/Sunday*, in her ABCNews.com “On My Mind” commentary, February 24. [29]**

Good Morning Morons Award

✓ **Bryant Gumbel:** “At the risk of starting an argument, are you a believer in global warming?”

Mark McEwen: “Absolutely.”

Jane Clayson: “Of course.”

Julie Chen: “Yeah.”

Gumbel: “So am I....And you wonder what it’s gonna take. I mean, is it gonna take some kind of a real catastrophe? I mean, does an iceberg have to come floating down the Hudson before somebody stands up and goes, ‘Oh, yeah?’”

— **Exchange during *CBS Early Show’s* co-op time at 7:25 am on April 18. [55 points]**

Runners-up:

■ **Charles Gibson:** “Have you ever — it just occurred to me — have you ever, in the first hundred days, consulted or called former President Clinton?”

President Bush: “No, I haven’t.”

Gibson: “To talk to him?”

President Bush: “No, I have not.”

Gibson: “Don’t feel the need?”

— **Exchange during taped interview aired on the April 25 *Good Morning America*. [47]**

■ “So, I’m getting less chips, paying the same amount of money. Is that legal for them to do this?”

— **CBS’s Julie Chen questioning Carol Foreman Tucker of the Consumer Federation of America about companies charging the same price for smaller snack food packages, January 3 *Early Show*. [38]**

■ “You and I are fortunate enough to be basically laughing about this right now, about pennies right now, but isn’t it somewhat elitist to claim pennies have out-lived their usefulness when so many are struggling to make ends meet and we argue about pennies on the minimum wage?”

— **The *Early Show’s* Bryant Gumbel to Republican Rep. Jim Kolbe, who wants to eliminate the penny, July 17. [32]**

■ “After pepperoni pizza and banana milkshakes once, I dreamed about Bill Clinton.”

— **Diane Sawyer talking with her *Good Morning America* co-host Charles Gibson about a study which claimed that Republicans have three times as many nightmares while they sleep as do Democrats, July 10. [27]**

■ “The American Civil Liberties Union is very concerned about your resolution. They are saying basically that those young people who choose not to participate are targeted for harassment. And the New York City school system has a lot of people, a lot of students and perhaps even teachers who are not American citizens, isn’t that correct?”

“But part of the thinking behind some of the criticism is that perhaps maybe an addendum to a renewing of, of a symbol of patriotism that perhaps the school systems across the country really should be thinking about renewing a lesson about tolerance?”

— **Questions from NBC’s Ann Curry to school board head Ninfa Segarra, about having the Pledge of Allegiance recited in New York City public schools, Oct. 19 *Today*. [24]**

Damn Those Conservatives Award

✓ **Bill Maher, host of ABC’s *Politically Incorrect*:** “I do think, if it turns out that this beautiful young girl is gone, I think, and he [Condit] is responsible in some way, you have to look to Ken Starr for a little bit of guilt.”

Larry King: “Why?”

Maher: “Because, you know, Ken Starr made it so that you, in the old days, you had an affair with somebody, and you know, okay, you had an affair. The press didn’t report it. They didn’t make a political criminal case of it. Now, it’s almost like you have to get rid of them.”

— **Exchange on CNN’s *Larry King Live*, July 27. [52 points]**

Runners-up:

■ “And we can’t let Justice Thomas pass on this. There’s no opinion of his in here, he doesn’t ask questions in court. Does he do anything besides vote and rubber stamp Scalia?”

— **Bryant Gumbel to CBS legal analyst Jonathan Turley on *Bush vs. Gore*, Dec. 13, 2000 *The Early Show*. [38]**

■ “This was an issue about voting rights. Yet, Justice Thomas voted with the conservative majority. His vote could have changed history. But it was not to be. He is firmly entrenched on the Court’s right....In five major cases involving civil rights and liberties, he voted against minorities every time, including rulings against job discrimination and voting rights. He’s only 52 years old and could conceivably spend another 30 years on the Supreme Court. If, during his tenure, President-elect Bush ends up making a couple of more appointments like Justice Thomas to the Supreme Court, I have heard many women and minorities say, ‘God help us.’”

— **ABCNews.com online column by *World News Tonight/Sunday* anchor Carole Simpson, Dec. 17, 2000, after the Supreme Court’s *Bush vs. Gore* ruling. [34]**

■ “The squeamishness of much of the press in characterizing Helms for what he suggests an unwillingness to confront the reality of race in our national life....What is unique about Helms — and from my viewpoint, unforgivable — is his willingness to pick at the scab of the great wound of American history, the legacy of slavery and segregation, and to inflame racial resentment against African Americans.”

— ***Washington Post* reporter David Broder, in an August 29 op-ed headlined, “Jesse Helms, White Racist.” [34]**

■ "It seems to me that the modern Republican Party and its moderate wing are in a sort of, to use the psychobabble of the era, in an abusive relationship...and the moderates are the enablers and the conservatives are the abusers and they just got used to doing it that way and suddenly one member said, 'I'm not going to take it anymore.'"

— NPR's Nina Totenberg on the defection of Senator Jim Jeffords, May 26 *Inside Washington*. [33]

■ "Liberals are going to miss him, he was so wonderfully odious. Remember that old *Time* magazine that had him on the cover with the dark shadows under the eyes and he's this dark and menacing figure? And it was very comforting to the East Coast media establishment to know that there was an evil guy out there that you could really fear."

— *Newsweek's* Evan Thomas discussing Senator Jesse Helms's retirement, August 25 *Inside Washington*. [27]

Selected Not Elected Award for Claiming Bush Is an Illegitimate President

✓ "If Bush is elected and it's proved on a hand count that Gore actually carried Florida (not to mention the popular vote), what will the country say? 'Ooops' isn't going to cut it....However agreeable and successful he turns out to be, the new President is doomed to be seen by many Americans as a bastard."

— Jonathan Alter, Dec. 11, 2000 *Newsweek*. [55 points]

Runners-up:

■ "Should five of our nation's nine Supreme Court Justices be imprisoned? That's the opinion of famed former prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi. He says the Justices who supported George W. Bush in the election dispute are almost treasonous white-collar criminals. He'll explain why."

"It is a scathing indictment of the high court of the United States, at least these five conservative Justices. And I really, really, I urge law students especially, but anyone who's interested in the machinations of the Court, to check this out: Vincent Bugliosi's *The Betrayal of America*."

— Beginning and end of Geraldo Rivera's interview with Bugliosi, CNBC's *Rivera Live*, June 25. [50]

■ "Nineteen days after the presidential election, Florida's Republican Secretary of State is about to announce the winner — as she sees it and she decrees it — of the state's potentially decisive 25 electoral votes...."

"The believed certification — as the Republican Secretary of State sees it — is coming just hours after a court ordered deadline for counties to submit their hand count and recount totals...."

"The reason we're on the air right across-the-board nationally right now is because Florida's Secretary of State — a Republican, as we've mentioned before — campaigned actively for George Bush, well-connected to Governor Bush's Governor brother Jeb Bush in Florida, but a woman who has consistently said 'I'm trying to do my job, right down to the letter of the law, as best I can'....She will certify — as she sees it — who gets Florida's 25 electoral votes...."

"What's happening here is the certification — as the Florida Secretary of State sees it and decrees it — is being signed....After this, it will be, at least in the opinion of the Secretary of State, that the results will be final...."

— Dan Rather during a CBS News Special Report on the Nov. 26, 2000 official certification of Florida's vote. [42]

■ "As everyone knows, George Bush was ahead by only a few hundred votes. At the request of Al Gore, some counties were launching hand recounts which were gaining votes for him. So what did she do? Well, from Day One she seemed completely inflexible, insisting on the narrow letter of the law. She enforced strict deadlines even when one county asked for just two hours more, and she tried to block the hand recount of those punched but disputed ballots. The Bush team was thrilled, the Gore team was outraged."

— ABC's Diane Sawyer in a January 11 *Prime Time Thursday* interview with Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris. [27]

Department of Injustice Award for Denigrating John Ashcroft

✓ "Well, you know, Attorney General is actually an important job. Why can't they buy off the right wing with unimportant jobs? I mean, this is a sop, I assume, to buy off the wing nuts, but it's like giving, I mean, the Attorney General counts, it matters."

— *Newsweek* Assistant Managing Editor Evan Thomas on *Inside Washington*, December 23, 2000. [55 points]

Runners-up:

■ "In John Ashcroft's America, he said in 1999, 'We have no king but Jesus.' But President-elect George W. Bush has nominated Ashcroft to the position of Attorney General of the United States. In the venerable halls of the Justice Department, where he will work, it is the Constitution that is king....Ashcroft will need to assure the nation that he can enforce the Constitution and the laws of Congress when they run contrary to the laws of Jesus, as they surely will. A larger question, spoken or unspoken, will be: Can a deeply religious person be Attorney General?"

— Opening of Jan. 16 *USA Today* op-ed piece by former *USA Today* Supreme Court reporter Tony Mauro. [51]

■ "What do you think Senator Ashcroft's distortion of your record and tarnishing of your good name says about his character?"

— CBS's Bryant Gumbel to Missouri Supreme Court judge Ronnie White, January 19 *Early Show*. [48]

■ "Good evening on this Martin Luther King holiday, a prelude to what begins tomorrow in Washington: The confirmation hearings for John Ashcroft, the former Missouri Senator who is George W. Bush's choice to be Attorney General. Race will be a major issue in the contentious hearings, especially since Ashcroft defended the Confederate agenda of Robert E. Lee in an interview with the *Southern Partisan*, a magazine promoting the culture of the Old South."

— Tom Brokaw, January 15 *NBC Nightly News*. [36]

Politics of Meaninglessness Award for the Silliest Analysis

✓ “What are you, a bunch of Jesus freaks? You ought to be working for Fox.”

— CNN founder Ted Turner on Ash Wednesday to CNN employees with ash marks on their foreheads at Bernard Shaw’s retirement party, as reported March 6 on FNC’s *Special Report with Brit Hume*. [73 points]

Runners-up:

■ Bill O’Reilly: “I want to ask you flat out, do you think President Clinton’s an honest man?”

Dan Rather: “Yes, I think he’s an honest man.”

O’Reilly: “Do you, really?”

Rather: “I do.”

O’Reilly: “Even though he lied to Jim Lehrer’s face about the Lewinsky case?”

Rather: “Who among us has not lied about something?”

O’Reilly: “Well, I didn’t lie to anybody’s face on national television. I don’t think you have, have you?”

Rather: “I don’t think I ever have. I hope I never have. But, look, it’s one thing –”

O’Reilly: “How can you say he’s an honest guy then?”

Rather: “Well, because I think he is. I think at core he’s an honest person. I know that you have a different view. I know that you consider it sort of astonishing anybody would say so, but I think you can be an honest person and lie about any number of things.”

— Exchange on Fox News Channel’s *The O’Reilly Factor*, May 15. [64]

■ “You said that the air strikes are deliberately designed not to hit residential centers, but you also say that the Taliban is hiding weapons, stockpiling weapons in residential areas. Have you ruled out the possibility of dropping leaflets days in advance of an air strike to get residents out and saying, ‘This could become a military target’? Is that something, without discussing future operations, could you see that possibly coming to fruition?”

— Question from an unidentified male reporter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Oct. 30 military briefing. [27]

■ “People send me e-mails full of dopey attacks — ‘I bet you’ve never written anything positive about a Republican in your whole life’ — obviously never having read any of the columns I wrote praising John McCain during the campaign.”

— *Newsweek’s* Jonathan Alter, quoted by *Washington Post* media writer Howard Kurtz, June 4. [25]

Euro-Envy Award for Advocating More Government Spending

✓ NBC News reporter Keith Miller in Paris: “Break out the band, bring on the drinks. The French are calling it a miracle. A government-mandated 35-hour work week is changing the French way of life. Two years ago, in an effort to create more jobs, the government imposed a shorter work week on large companies, forcing them to hire more workers....Sixty percent of those on the job say their

lives have improved. These American women, all working in France, have time for lunch and a life.”

• Avivah Wittenberg-Cox: “More Americans should be more aware that an economy as successful as the French one managed to be successful without giving up everything else in life.”

• Katie Couric, following the end of Miller’s taped piece:

• “So great that young mother being able to come home at three every day and spend that time with her child. Isn’t that nice? The French, they’ve got it right, don’t they?”

• — NBC’s *Today*, August 1. [78 points]

Runners-up:

• ■ “The U.S. is actually the least generous of the industrialized nations. In Sweden, a new mother gets 18 months of maternity and parental leave, and she gets 80 percent of her salary for the first year. Mother or father can take the parental leave any time until a child is eight. England gives 18 weeks maternity leave. For the first six weeks, a mother gets 90 percent of her salary from the government and \$86 a week thereafter. German women get two months of fully paid leave after giving birth. The government and the company kick in, and either parent has the option of three full years in parental leave with some of their salary paid and their jobs protected.”

• — Peter Jennings, April 19 *World News Tonight*, following a story on a study showing more aggression in children who attend day care. [73]

• ■ “You know, the U.S. is the only industrialized nation, I didn’t know this until today, that doesn’t spend federal money promoting tourism. Do you think it should?”

• — Question from NBC’s Katie Couric to Maryland Governor Parris Glendening on the October 1 *Today*. Glendening, a liberal Democrat, said no. [47]

• ■ “More trouble at the nation’s amusement parks, two dozen people injured. Why won’t Congress let the government regulate those parks?”

• — ABC’s Elizabeth Vargas, previewing an upcoming story on the July 31 *World News Tonight*. [44]

Nobody Here But Us Apolitical Observers Award for Denying Liberal Bias

• ✓ *Newsweek’s* Evan Thomas: “There is a perception, even among journalists, that the [*New York*] *Times* is going a little bit left, is getting more liberal, and that’s disquieting.”

• *Time* magazine’s Jack White: “That’s a lot of hokum, with all due respect to Evan. There is no liberal bias in the press in the whole. In fact, if there is a bias, it’s on the other side. It’s hard to find a person really, truly, of the liberal persuasion who are making any important decisions in any important media institutions in this country now. I’ve looked for them, I consider myself one, I have very few birds of a like feather around.”

• — Exchange on the September 1 *Inside Washington*. [56 points]

Runners-up:

■ **Diane Sawyer:** "Watching you and watching you cover the news over the past year, you are so much about passion for politics, and it doesn't matter to you, I mean — I really mean this."

George Stephanopoulos: "Thank you."

Sawyer: "You've been completely non-partisan in covering the news."

— **Exchange on ABC's *Good Morning America*, July 24. [54]**

■ "*The New York Times* is middle of the road. There is no active, aggressive, important publication of the left in America. And so as a consequence, *The New York Times* when compared to *The Wall Street Journal's* editorial page may be considered to the left of it. But to call *The New York Times* left-wing is absurd."

— **Norman Pearlstine, Editor-in-Chief of Time-Warner magazines, on C-SPAN's *Washington Journal* on May 24, responding to former CBS reporter Bernard Goldberg's point that Dan Rather's belief that the *Times* editorial page was merely "middle of the road" showed Rather's cluelessness on the issue of liberal media bias. [50]**

■ "I think there is a mainstream media. CNN is mainstream media, and the main, ABC, CBS, NBC are mainstream media. And I think it's just essentially to make the point that we are largely in the center without particular axes to grind, without ideologies which are represented in our daily coverage, at least certainly not on purpose."

— **Peter Jennings, CNN's *Larry King Live*, May 15. [40]**

Blame America First Award

✓ "Am I angry? You bet I am. I am an American citizen, and my leaders have taken my money to fund mass murder. And now my friends have paid the price with their lives.

"Keep crying, Mr. Bush. Keep running to Omaha or wherever it is you go while others die, just as you ran during Vietnam while claiming to be 'on duty' in the Air National Guard. Nine boys from my high school died in that miserable war. And now you are asking for 'unity' so you can start another one? Do not insult me or my country like this!

"Yes, I, too, will be in church at noon today, on this national day of mourning. I will pray for you, and us, and the children of New York, and the children of this sad and ugly world."

— **Message posted by left-wing filmmaker Michael Moore on his Web site, September 14. [54 points]**

Runners-up:

■ "We have been the cowards. Lobbing cruise missiles from 2,000 miles away, that's cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the building, say what you want about it, not cowardly."

— **ABC's Bill Maher on *Politically Incorrect*, Sept. 17. [52]**

■ "My daughter, who goes to Stuyvesant High School only blocks from the World Trade Center, thinks we should fly an American flag out our window. Definitely not, I say: The flag stands for jingoism and vengeance and war. She tells me I'm wrong — the flag means standing together

and honoring the dead and saying no to terrorism. In a way we're both right....[The flag] has to bear a wide range of meanings, from simple, dignified sorrow to the violent anti-Arab and anti-Muslim bigotry that has already resulted in murder, vandalism and arson around the country and harassment on New York City streets and campuses."

— ***The Nation's* Katha Pollitt in an Oct. 8 column. [43]**

■ "I do not believe the memory of the 7,000 plus people who were killed in these most horrendous acts of terrorism are honored by going out and killing other civilians. We went alone, we went alone when we bombed Tripoli at night, a crowded city where old people and children were sleeping. 1986, Reagan. We killed Qaddafi's kid, and lots of other children. One person said, well, several people, 'well, he's adopted' they said of the kid. And we got Pan Am 103, Lockerbie. Tell those loved ones, it was December 21, my birthday."

— **Phil Donahue on FNC's *The O'Reilly Factor*, Sept. 25. [37]**

■ "The disconnect between last Tuesday's monstrous dose of reality and the self-righteous drivel and outright deceptions being peddled by public figures and TV commentators is startling, depressing. The voices licensed to follow the event seem to have joined together in a campaign to infantilize the public. Where is the acknowledgment that this was not a 'cowardly' attack on 'civilization' or 'liberty' or 'humanity' or 'the free world' but an attack on the world's self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions? How many citizens are aware of the ongoing American bombing of Iraq? And if the word 'cowardly' is to be used, it might be more aptly applied to those who kill from beyond the range of retaliation, high in the sky, than to those willing to die themselves in order to kill others. In the matter of courage (a morally neutral virtue): whatever may be said of the perpetrators of Tuesday's slaughter, they were not cowards."

— **Novelist and playwright Susan Sontag writing for the "Talk of the Town" section of the Sept. 24 *New Yorker*. [28]**

Too Late for the Ballot, But Year End "Best of NQ" Worthy: Persecuting Clinton Allowed 9/11

"It was a huge national distraction, going after a guy who lied about getting oral sex from a woman he wasn't married to, and I think I know a million guys who get oral sex from a woman they weren't married to....All of us have a shared guilt right now, and the shared guilt is for the last ten years we have been horribly distracted. I would bet you that I can find you 4,000, 5,000 FBI agents who wish to God they weren't assigned to Whitewater, Monicagate, Bill Clinton — that instead they were on the trail of Osama bin Laden and the people who were plotting mass murder against us."

— **Geraldo Rivera on the Nov. 15 *O'Reilly Factor* on FNC.**

Homegrown Few = Al Qaeda

"Since September 11, the word 'terrorist' has come to mean someone who is radical, Islamic and foreign. But many believe we have as much to fear from a homegrown group of anti-abortion crusaders."

— **Reporter Jami Floyd on ABC's *20/20*, November 28.**

Glimpses of Patriotism Award

✓ “For once, let’s have no ‘grief counselors’ standing by with banal consolations, as if the purpose, in the midst of all this, were merely to make everyone feel better as quickly as possible. We shouldn’t feel better. For once, let’s have no fatuous rhetoric about ‘healing.’ Healing is inappropriate now, and dangerous. There will be time later for the tears of sorrow. A day cannot live in infamy without the nourishment of rage. Let’s have rage....

“As the bodies are counted, into the thousands and thousands, hatred will not, I think, be a difficult emotion to summon. Is the medicine too strong? Call it, rather, a wholesome and intelligent enmity....Anyone who does not loathe the people who did these things, and the people who cheer them on, is too philosophical for decent company....The worst times, as we see, separate the civilized of the world from the uncivilized. This is the moment of clarity. Let the civilized toughen up, and let the uncivilized take their chances in the game they started.”

— Lance Morrow in a special edition of *Time* published after the September 11 terrorist attacks. [67 points]

Runners-up:

■ “The United States had a spirit before it had a name — one of faith and freedom, of ambition tempered by piety.

• We once were a nation of neighbors and friends, we are again today. We once were a nation of hardship-tested dreamers — we are again today. We once were a nation under God — we are again today. Our enemies attacked one nation, they will encounter another, for they underestimated us. Today in our grief and in our rage, our determination and hope, we’ve summoned what’s best and noblest in us. We are again Americans.”

• — Tony Snow at the conclusion of the September 16 Fox News Sunday. [54]

• ■ “I have spent this week wiping my eyes and grinding my teeth and wondering why. I’ve drawn strength from a story about a man I knew, Father Mychal Judge. The chaplain of the New York City Fire Department, a Franciscan, he raced to the World Trade Center after the explosion to comfort the injured. While administering the last rites to a dying rescue worker, he, himself, was killed by flying debris. New York’s bravest physically carried Father Mike away.... Together, firemen, priests, and brothers wept and sang the prayer of St. Francis, ‘May the Lord bless and keep you and show his face to you and have mercy on you.’ That is the way of New York. That is the spirit of America.”

• — Tim Russert, moderator of NBC’s *Meet the Press*, concluding the September 16 show. [30]

2001 Award Judges

Chuck Asay, editorial cartoonist, *The Gazette* in Colorado Springs

Brent Baker, Editor of MRC’s *CyberAlert* and *Notable Quotables*

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David Brudnoy, radio talk show host, WBZ in Boston; journalism professor at Boston University

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Mark Larson, talk show host and GM at KCBQ/KPRZ in San Diego

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