

# 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

## Look Who's Talking

"Can a news outlet pursue a political agenda without their news, by definition, being less credible as a result?"

— Former NBC and CBS anchor Bryant Gumbel to *Newsweek's* Jonathan Alter on PBS's quarterly *Flashpoints USA*, September 16. Gumbel was referring to Fox News.

## Reporters Too Pro-Bush...

"I think the press was muzzled, and I think the press self-muzzled. I'm sorry to say, but certainly television and, perhaps, to a certain extent, my station was intimidated by the administration and its foot soldiers at Fox News. And it did, in fact, put a climate of fear and self-censorship, in my view, in terms of the kind of broadcast work we did....The entire body politic...did not ask enough questions, for instance, about weapons of mass destruction. I mean, it looks like this was disinformation at the highest levels."

— CNN's Christiane Amanpour on CNBC's *Topic A with Tina Brown*, September 10.

## ...Or Too Soft on Saddam?

"Terror, totalitarian states, and their ways are nothing new to me, but I felt from the start that this [Saddam's Iraq] was in a category by itself....I felt that that was...the essential truth that was untold by the vast majority of correspondents here. Why? Because they judged that the only way they could keep themselves in play here was to pretend that it was okay....In the run up to this war, to my mind, there was a gross abdication of responsibility."

— *New York Times* Baghdad reporter John Burns in an interview with Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson for their book, *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*, in an excerpt posted Sept. 15 on *Editor & Publisher's Web site*.

## Bush Squandered World Sympathy

"In the two years since Sept. 11, 2001, the view of the United States as a victim of terrorism that deserved the world's sympathy and support has given way to a widespread vision of America as an imperial power that has defied world opinion through unjustified and unilateral use of military force....To some degree, the resentment is centered on the person of President Bush, who is seen by many of those interviewed, at best, as an ineffective spokesman for American interests and, at worst, as a gunslinging cowboy knocking over international treaties and bent on controlling the world's oil, if not the entire world."

— *New York Times* reporter Richard Bernstein in a Sept. 11 front-page article, "Foreign Views of U.S. Darken After Sept. 11."

## CNN Pops Champagne Corks

**Judy Woodruff:** "Striking new evidence that President Bush may be beatable in 2004. Our senior political analyst, Bill Schneider, is here with our just-released poll numbers. Bill, what is happening to the President?"

**Bill Schneider:** "Judy, President Bush is sinking! Last month the President's job approval rating was at 60 percent. Now it's dropped to 50, his lowest rating ever."

— CNN's *Inside Politics*, September 22.

## General, Could You Bomb Exxon?

"Do you think that oil companies are gouging Americans and what would you do to lower gas prices?"

— Hannah Storm to Democratic presidential candidate Wesley Clark on CBS's *Early Show*, September 17.

## If It's Sunday, Let's Repeal Tax Cut

"If you froze the tax cut for the top one percent of Americans, it would generate enough money to pay for the \$87 billion for the war, if you did it for just one year. Would you consider that?"

— Tim Russert to Vice President Cheney on NBC's *Meet the Press*, September 14.

**Vice President Dick Cheney:** "One of the reasons the deficit got as big as it did, frankly, was because of the economic slowdown, the fall-off in deficits, the terrorist attacks. A significant chunk was taken out of the economy by what happened after the attacks of 9/11."

**Russert:** "And tax cuts."

**Cheney:** "Tax cuts accounted for only about 25 percent..."

**Russert:** "But we see deficits for the next ten years, big ones. How do you deal with that, when you have Social Security, Medicare, coming up?"

— A few minutes later on the same program.

## Media Mavens Still Miss Mondale

"Does the name Walter Mondale ring a bell? The Democratic presidential candidate who in 1984 laid out a detailed tax plan and asked of Ronald Reagan 'Where's the beef?' was pummeled for his forthrightness. Who wants beef when you can have chocolate? Bush, by comparison, has been feeding on fiscal sweets. Sooner or later the whole country will get a stomach ache. But it sure tastes good for a while. Maybe through November 2004."

— Former *Washington Post* economics reporter Steve Mufson, now Deputy Editor of the *Post's* Sunday "Outlook" section, in a September 14 op-ed.

## “Soviet-Style Purge” in Alabama

“Back in the USSR?...How a Soviet-style purge with a Southern accent translates into the Political Play of the Week.”

— **CNN *Inside Politics* announcer teasing a Sept. 12 story by political analyst Bill Schneider about how anti-tax conservatives defeated a tax increase in Alabama.**

## You Really Shouldn't Believe Us

“While increasingly organized guerrilla war-style attacks are a top concern for American forces in Iraq, ordinary Iraqis are faced with an extraordinary surge of crime, banditry and thuggery from carjacking and robbery to kidnapping and murder. As CBS's Kimberly Dozier reports, the result is a population fearful, frustrated, angry and heavily armed.”

— **CBS's Dan Rather introducing a story on crime in Iraq on the September 19 *Evening News*.**

“A reminder that television sometimes has trouble with perspective, so you may want to note that in some areas of Iraq, things are peaceful.”

— **Rather after Dozier's story concluded a couple of minutes later.**

## ABC's Worry on 9/11 Anniversary

**Claire Shipman:** “The people who guard it [the terrorists' prison in Guantanamo Bay] call it simply ‘The Wire.’ Miles of razored coils wrap the Delta Prison Camp, binding the prisoners inside....But The Wire is perhaps more significant for what it's keeping out — lawyers, family members and the protections of U.S. and international law....The military prefers to keep the focus on the physical conditions here, which they've worked hard to improve....Still, many argue that humane treatment is no substitute for basic legal rights.”

**Stuart Taylor, *National Journal*:** “I think it's maybe the most lawless set of actions that the United States government has taken in my lifetime.”

— **ABC's *World News Tonight*, September 11.**

## Uncle Walter Gets Nasty

“Attorney General John Ashcroft has earned himself a remarkable distinction as the Torquemada of American law. Tomás de Torquemada...was largely responsible for...[the] torture and the burning of heretics — Muslims in particular. Now, of course, I am not accusing the Attorney General of pulling out anyone's fingernails or burning people at the stake (at least I don't know of any such cases). But one does get the sense these days that the old Spaniard's spirit is comfortably at home in Ashcroft's Department of Justice.”

— **Former CBS anchor Walter Cronkite in his syndicated column published in the Sept. 22 *Philadelphia Inquirer*.**

## Hailing the Biggest Hero of All

“Senator Hillary Clinton is at Ground Zero this morning to attend the September 11th anniversary ceremony. And she joins us now. Good morning, Senator Clinton...You've fought so much for the heroes of 9/11. You have sought money for firefighters, you've taken the EPA to task for toning down their report on air quality at Ground Zero. Has enough been done for the heroes, the people who fought so bravely on that day?”

— **CBS's Hannah Storm to New York Senator Hillary Clinton on *The Early Show*, September 11.**

## City of Selfish Child-Haters

“The town [of Seattle] is feeling a little edgy over the proposed espresso tax, an attempt to save child care programs for 7,000 needy kids left underfunded by the state's \$2.5 billion budget shortfall....They wondered, ‘Who could say no to an extra dime to help kids?’ Everyone from Starbucks to thousands of rabid coffee drinkers and the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, that's who.”

— **ABC's Neil Karlinsky on *World News Tonight*, Sept. 15.**

## Quick, Someone Get Harry a Clue

“[Senator John] Kerry and most of the other candidates showed up Saturday for Iowa Senator Tom Harkin's 26th annual steak fry. Kerry's followers were noisy, energized and organized, not bad for a campaign barely two weeks old. But did Kerry, wait too long to get in the hunt?”

“Howard Dean has got out to an amazing lead in terms of momentum and press. Did you wait too long to announce your candidacy?”

— **CBS's Harry Smith in a taped piece and an interview with Kerry on the September 15 *Early Show*. Kerry has been on the campaign trail since he set up an exploratory committee in early December.**

## “Shameful” Bill & Rush Can Fight

**Anti-war actor Tim Robbins:** “I would suggest that we send some of those people over there [to Iraq]. I would love to see a Sergeant O'Reilly in the armed forces. And a Lieutenant Limbaugh. Lieutenant Limbaugh would be a beautiful thing to see...Most of these guys that were such advocates of this war had the opportunity during Vietnam to serve their country and pussied out, and here's a perfect opportunity for them to undo that shameful past and to enlist and go over and walk it like they talk it.”

**HBO's Bill Maher:** “So you want fat, middle-aged men fighting for America?”

**Robbins:** “Hey, you know, the police departments.”

— **HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher*, September 19.**

## Notable Quotables

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