ABC’s Hidden Partisans

Dear Member,

When it comes to a commitment to objectivity and fairness, ABC News reminds me of a line from an old Seven-Up commercial: Never had it, never will.

On June 9, Peter Jennings’ network announced it had hired Rick Kaplan, the former President of CNN, to be the number-two man in its news operation. This is terrible news for anyone interested in fair and objective political reporting.

In his new role as Senior Vice President, Kaplan will oversee World News Tonight, Nightline, This Week and the ABC News Political Unit. While he will remain unseen, you can bet his liberal prejudices will influence almost every major news story as the nation moves closer to the 2004 Presidential election.

The Clintons may not be running the White House, but the Clintonites are still running the networks. A long-time Friend of Bill and Hillary, Kaplan is as partisan as any journalist in America and has never been shy about using his position and influence to support liberal politicians. As an executive producer at ABC’s Prime Time Live in 1992, Kaplan advised candidate Clinton on how he should answer questions about the Gennifer Flowers affair for a 60 Minutes interview. A few weeks later, Kaplan arranged for Clinton to appear on the Don Imus radio program and helped prepare him for that interview. It was also reported that Kaplan attended Clinton campaign staff meetings and helped set up the campaign’s press office. All while working as a supposedly objective producer for ABC!

Kaplan’s hard work did not go unrewarded. He played golf with the President-elect before his first inauguration and later, at the urging of Clinton, spent a night in the Lincoln Bedroom.

After 18 years at ABC, Kaplan left the network in 1997 to become president of CNN’s United States operations. Under his direction, the news organization became notorious for its unflagging support of Clinton and was disparaged, by both conservatives and others interested in the truth, as the “Clinton News Network.”

Kaplan couldn’t keep his hands off politics. In his first year in charge, Kaplan set aside his managerial responsibilities to return to the studio, where he personally produced a special on campaign finance reform. According to U.S. News & World Report, Kaplan demanded that reporters limit their use of the word “scandal” in reference to Clinton’s fundraising activities. The result was that the phrase “Clinton scandal” was never uttered during the 120-minute program despite the numerous questions surrounding Clinton’s campaign contributions.

That bit of activist journalism was but a prelude to the Monica Lewinsky matter. With his good friend under investigation by special

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prosecutors and congressional committees, Kaplan dumped any pretense of objectivity and used his network to attack, often viciously, Clinton’s critics. CNN broadcast a two-hour “Media Madness” in January 1998 that sanctimoniously asked, “What the hell are you people doing?” investigating Clinton’s sex life. An “Investigating the Investigator” special followed and suggested that Special Prosecutor Kenneth Starr was “suspect” because of his “religious and Republican roots.” In May, Kaplan devoted an hour to demonizing Rep. Dan Burton, a Clinton critic who CNN correspondent Bruce Morton compared to the English dictator Oliver Cromwell.

ABC News President David Westin, the same man who has regularly promoted former Clinton aide George Stephanopoulos, was instrumental in bringing Kaplan aboard.

The CNN chief’s partisan efforts haven’t been restricted to helping Clinton. Newsweek reported that in March 2000 Kaplan was at Al Gore campaign headquarters helping the former Vice President prepare for an upcoming debate with Democratic opponent Bill Bradley. A month later, Kaplan spent another night at the White House courtesy of the Clintons.

In Kaplan’s mind, there was nothing wrong with it. “No, I do not feel embarrassed, ashamed, or compromised in any way, shape or form,” an unrepentant Kaplan told the April 10, 2000 USA Today.

Just as troubling as Kaplan’s partisanship are the ethical breaches that have dotted his past. While with Prime Time Live in 1991, he produced an investigative piece on the Food Lion grocery chain. ABC News employees falsified resumes so they could be hired at Food Lion stores and even staged events that later became part of that controversial news “expose.” Food Lion sued and a jury fined Kaplan $35,000 personally, a judgment that was later overturned.

Seven years later, Kaplan was a driving force at CNN in creating NewsStand, a television magazine show patterned after CBS’s 60 Minutes. The program’s heavily advertised first story was “Tailwind,” yet another journalistic fiasco that claimed American soldiers had used nerve gas in Laos during the latter stages of the Vietnam War. The story was so wrong that CNN was forced to take the highly unusual step of publicly retracting the story, fired two producers and eventually let Peter Arnett go for his role in it.

With such a checkered past, one wonders why ABC News would hire Kaplan. The answer can be found at the very top of the network in the person of ABC News President David Westin.

Westin is the man who told a Columbia University journalism class shortly after 9-11 that he had “no opinion” as to whether the Pentagon was a legitimate terrorist target. Westin later apologized, but only after MRC Vice President Brent Baker told the world about the remark via our daily CyberAlert.

ABC’s top man is just as partisan as Kaplan and perhaps more thorough. With the lone exception of George Will, Westin has steadily removed from ABC personnel considered right of center, such as ABC commentator (and current Fox News analyst) William Kristol and former This Week executive producer Dorrance Smith.

When Smith, who had served as an official in the first Bush administration, was let go in 1999 Westin defended the decision. He told the Washington Post’s Howard Kurtz that “‘over time we have an obligation to our viewers to make sure we present both sides of any issue.’ While no one’s previous employment should be held against him...’we shouldn’t have executive producers who have identifiable alliances either way.’”

Kaplan’s hire, like the relentless promotion of former Clinton aide George Stephanopoulos to the top job at This Week, makes a mockery of Westin’s claim. It’s clear that “identifiable alliances” are just fine at ABC News, as long as they’re identifiable liberal alliances.

The MRC has documented the activist, biased antics of Kaplan for years. The day Kaplan was hired, we issued a Media Reality Check detailing his partisan past, and we are prepared to refute the onslaught of biased reporting that will emanate from ABC now that he has joined forces with Westin and ultraliberal anchor Peter Jennings.

We would not be able to expose this bias with your generous support. As always, I thank you.

Until next time,

L. Brent Bozell III
Hillary Clinton’s *Living History*, that supposed “tell all” book about the Clinton White House, has put the former First Lady at the center of a media frenzy unlike any in history. No politician – not even Hillary’s media-coddled husband – has ever received such sympathetic and unquestioning coverage from the national press corps.

Katie Couric conducted a fawning interview of Hillary…

In news story after news story, Hillary has been treated with revolting reverence. Her claim that she did not know the truth of Bill’s infidelity with Monica Lewinsky until just a few days before his August 1998 grand jury testimony, despite seven months of detailed reports about the encounters, was repeated as gospel truth by her apologists in the media. It was “Hillary’s heartache,” in the words of Katie Couric on the June 4 *Today*. “Senator Clinton reveals how she learned the painful truth about her husband and Monica Lewinsky,” she sympathetically added.

Over on ABC, Good Morning America co-host Charles Gibson echoed the idea. “Bill’s confession made her gulp for air, cry, and yell at him, ‘Why did you lie to me?’” That night’s CBS Evening News made it unanimous for the broadcast networks, as Byron Pitts called the claim “the wounded wife’s account of her husband’s...not-so-secret sins. Just days before President Clinton made this confession to the nation...he choked back tears and confessed to his wife that he’d also lied to her.”

Are we really supposed to believe this foolishness? Where were the skeptical, prove-it-to-me questions from the press? Where were the demands, that if she didn’t know of the affair Hillary should have apologized to the truth-seekers she so famously condemned as the “vast right-wing conspiracy?”

Answer: They’re too busy defending Hillary. “Mrs. Clinton believed him,” CNN’s Jonathan Karl pronounced in his initial report on Hillary’s book, “and famously went on national television, unwittingly repeating his lies and denouncing the reports about Lewinsky as the product of a vast right-wing conspiracy.”

As bad as the news stories were, the interviews were worse. ABC’s Barbara Walters, in her heavily advertised interview on June 8, threw bouquet after bouquet to the former First Lady. “I can barely remember a week,” she said at one juncture, “when one of you wasn’t being criticized and investigated.”

There was a reason for that. Hardly a week passed for eight long years without news or rumor of an investigation of the most corrupt administration in American history. As MRC President Brent Bozell pointed out in his June 17 nationally syndicated column, Hillary’s book filled more than 500 pages yet never addressed and resolved a single one of the alphabet soup of scandals that occurred during her husband’s administration.

Did Hillary hire goon Craig Livingstone to collect the FBI files of political opponents, for instance? (And if not, who did? Why?) How did the First Lady turn $1,000 investment into $100,000 in one year? And how did subpoenaed Rose Law Firm billing records, absent for a considerable period of time, wind up in the White House residence?

Those are just three of many, many questions. But never mind: Hillary didn’t say and the so-called journalists interviewing her didn’t care to ask.

Walters wasn’t the only one pitching softball. The *Today* show broke the Hillary interview into five segments and Couric went so far as to recast Hillary as the victim of the health-care debacle she so incompetently engineered. Was she surprised by the “vitriolic, violent backlash?” Couric asked. “Do you think it was good old-fashioned sexism?” she wondered.

PBS’s Charlie Rose, a long-time admirer of all things Clinton, added his own fawning tone on taxpayer-supported television a few nights later. “You made a decision, because of your affection, love for him, to go to Arkansas where he wanted to pursue his dream,” Rose claimed. “Now, here in a sense it’s come full circle for you...it seems to be the emergence to me of a new independence for you since you’re on your own.”

Hillary on her own? Not as long as the Roses, Courics, Walters and the rest of the media are around.
How do Brit Hume, Bill O’Reilly, Rush Limbaugh, Michael Reagan, Janet Parshall, Matt Drudge, National Review, the Washington Times, World magazine, and thousands of others stay on top of the latest liberal media bias? They read the MRC’s CyberAlert. And you can too...for FREE! As a member of the MRC, you can sign up to receive the MRC’s near-daily e-mail report CyberAlert!

To subscribe, just e-mail sengle@mediaresearch.org and say you want to get your FREE CyberAlerts!

Mention that you read about the offer in FLASH.

Fabrications, mistakes and public pressure led to the resignation of former New York Times Executive Editor Howell Raines.

Raines Over at the New York Times

Former New York Times Executive Editor Howell Raines resigned on June 5, brought down by a lying reporter, an out-of-control liberal staff, an inflexible management style and increasing public pressure. Raines number-two man, Managing Editor Gerald Boyd, also resigned.

Famous for his loathing of conservatives – he once said President Reagan “couldn’t tie his shoelaces if his life depended on it” – the ultra-liberal editor moved the Times further left during his 21-month tenure. While short-lived, his reign will be remembered for its liberal, unfair crusades such as those against the U.S. intervention in Iraq and Augusta National Golf Club’s membership policy.

At one time, it was unthinkable that the editors of the mighty New York Times would be held accountable in the same manner corporate executives and government leaders are. But times have changed and the MRC’s efforts in exposing the biases and prejudices of major news organizations have helped create this new climate of accountability.

NBC Blames Fox News for Public Distrust

In the aftermath of the New York Times resignations, NBC’s Jim Avila attempted to explain why the public distrusts the media.

Avila based his story on a recent Pew Research Center study that found only 35 percent of the public trusted news organizations to “get the facts straight.” What, he asked Steve Rendell of the far-left media watchdog Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, caused this problem? Without citing a single poll, study or scrap of evidence, which is FAIR’s trademark, Avila’s leftist source blamed corporations. “The whole corporate climate, where people feel they’re being sold to rather than informed,” was the unsupported explanation.

NBC didn’t even use the word “liberal” to identify Rendell’s radical group. But over a logo of Fox News Channel, NBC’s reporter charged that “some experts say opinion-based journalism, so popular on cable TV, undercuts credibility. Viewers now charge bias against any news that they don’t agree with.”

If Avila really wonders why the public has such a low opinion of the press he needs look no further than his own story. A far left-wing source went unidentified and was allowed to make an outrageous, unsubstantiated claim – without comment. This was followed by the reporter suggesting his audience wasn’t smart enough to separate commentary from news reporting.

What’s truly hard to understand is why 35 percent said they still trust networks like NBC.

Networks: Fighting Terrorists the Same as Killing Civilians

American news networks have reported the recent violence between Israel and Palestinian terrorists as if it were long-running family feud, the modern Middle Eastern equivalent of the Hatfields and McCoys.

“Mutual hatred and shared grief are leading to an escalating war of words, weapons and firepower,” CBS’s Kimberly Dozier reported on June 12. A night later, NBC’s Brian Williams claimed, “For every Israeli worried about the next bus bombing there is a Palestinian tonight worried about the next rocket attack from the air, from out of nowhere. Such is life in the current cycle of violence in this region.” To cement the idea in its viewers’ minds, ABC News threw up a graphic entitled “Cycle of Violence” on both nights.
This reporting is simplistic and inaccurate. The terrorist organization Hamas openly proclaims its desire to drive the Jews into the sea and murders innocent men, women and children, such as the dozen killed and the more than 100 wounded in a recent attack on a bus. The American media report these repugnant actions in the same manner as Israeli military attacks on terrorists, giving the terrorist groups what they most want and least deserve: moral equality with those they murder.

**CBS: Iraq Intelligence Problem Worse Than Watergate**

The liberal media, upset by the United States military’s rapid destruction of dictator Saddam Hussein, are now doing all they can to undermine the peace.

On June 9, the *CBS Evening News* led with a thinly researched story that suggested the intelligence may have been modified to suit the Bush administration’s purposes and that the issue might become one of the nation’s great political scandals. Reporter John Roberts set the tone with this ominous suggestion: “If the intelligence was shaded or manipulated, it could be a significant scandal, potentially worse than Watergate.”

What intelligence was tampered with? Rather than prove the incredible accusation, Roberts jumped to what would happen if President Bush were guilty of spinning the intelligence and asked former Watergate figure John Dean for his thoughts. “If Bush has deliberately turned to the intelligence agencies and told them what he wants rather than what they were giving him,” Dean warned, “I think he’s in deep trouble.”

Dean is not an expert on intelligence matters or weapons of mass destruction, so why highlight him? Because he was, long ago, a member of a scandal-ridden Republican administration. This was CBS’s way of suggesting to viewers that something was amiss at the White House, even if there was no evidence to prove it.

**CBS and ABC Interview Same “Victim” Two Years Apart**

What a coincidence. In stories separated by two years time, CBS and ABC featured the same elderly “victim” to focus on the supposed shortcomings of Republican alternatives to a Medicare prescription drug plan.

On the July 1, 2001 *CBS Evening News* reporter Diana Olnick interviewed Eva Baer-Schenkein for a story that criticized a Republican plan as too small. Fast-forward to the June 11 *World News Tonight* and there was Baer-Schenkein again, complaining of the same thing.

The June 19 *CyberAlert* highlighted the “coincidence” and Rush Limbaugh seized on it. “The Media Research Center has come up with a gem,” the radio host told his audience of 14 million listeners the next day.

The most likely cause of the embarrassing mistake, Limbaugh noted, was that ABC had allowed liberal activists to lead them to a “victim.” After all, the simplest of computer database checks would have told reporters she had appeared on CBS. “I don’t think even laziness and a deadline would cause that mistake,” Limbaugh said.

**mini-bits**

*Time’s* Nancy Gibbs asks Hillary Clinton: “Is the ‘vast, right-wing conspiracy’ bigger than you thought when you brought that term into our vocabulary?” *Gibbs* follows up with, “Would you call Bush a radical?” *Time’s* Joe Klein thinks so: “[President Bush] has given us a foreign policy of arrogance and a domestic policy that is cynical, myopic and cruel.” Radical Bill Moyers goes a step further: “I think this is a deliberate, intentional destruction of the United States of America”... Taxpayer-funded Moyers adds that compassionate conservatism makes “the rape of America sound like a consensual date.” “Something got screwed up in terms of your priorities if you think it’s more important to get rid of the dividend tax than it is to take care of 11 million kids,” the Washington Post’s David Broder claims. ABC White House correspondent Terry Moran turns the tax cut into a loaded question for Ari Fleischer: “I just want to make sure you are saying that the White House agreed to make the choice to leave these children behind” ABC’s Michel Martin determines “The majority of the [tax cut] money goes to people who probably already have everything they need.” New York Times reporter Adam Clymer savages Republicans: “They have built their strength in the South by appealing to white resentment of civil rights policies, and sometimes by discouraging voting by blacks.” Meanwhile, Times reporter Chris Hedges takes a shot at the war in Iraq and the “lower” classes: “We will pay for [Iraq], but what saddens me most is that those who will by and large pay the highest price are poor kids from Mississippi or Alabama or Texas who could not get a decent job or health insurance and joined the army because it was all we offered them.”
CNSNews.com – The First Five Years

Five years ago, a new vision began to take shape at the Media Research Center. Long dedicated to exposing and combating liberal bias in network news, MRC President L. Brent Bozell III decided the natural compliment to critiquing the media was to enter the marketplace of news.

That entry into the news marketplace was made on June 16, 1998 with the launch of CNSNews.com, the MRC’s online news wire. At 7:14 that morning, the switch was flipped and with two editors and four reporters operating out of a 12 by 20 foot room, Cybercast News Service was born.

Since that time, CNSNews.com has grown into a global news operation, with full-time satellite bureaus in Jerusalem, London, the Pacific Rim and on Capitol Hill. The professional staff has grown to 17 reporters, editors and support staff, eight foreign and domestic correspondents, 10 political cartoonists and a stable of columnists.

With more than a million readers each month at CNSNews.com – and tens of millions of other people reading and hearing our news through radio, television and other Internet websites – Bozell’s entry into the marketplace of news has evolved into a powerful force in journalism that’s earned the respect of supporters and detractors alike.

The impact of CNSNews.com during its infancy belies its relative youth. Stories published by CNSNews.com have resulted in the preservation of the First Amendment rights of religious broadcasters across the United States; the correction of flaws in government and corporate policy; prevented the inclusion of questionable content into public school curricula. The list goes on and on.

While the staff accepts deserved credit for these accomplishments, far greater credit is due those who toil outside our newsrooms and bureaus.

That would be you.

You believed in Bozell’s vision of providing an alternative source of quality news that covers issues and events ignored by the establishment media.

You demonstrated your belief in Bozell’s vision with your support over the years, which allowed the expansion of CNSNews.com and the audience it reaches every day.

Your loyalty to Bozell’s vision is matched only by the dedication of the staff of CNSNews.com, which plies its trade each day with determination and resolve to fulfill our mission and promise to you.

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for your confidence over these past five years. Your support has done something far greater than permit the acquisition of talent and mere machines to facilitate the reporting of news. It’s been a source of pride for all of us and held us in good stead over many long days and nights of doggedly pursuing the news.

Many things are possible with individual initiative and effort, but anything is possible with the support of likeminded people who believe as we do – that the liberal bias in American media needs a counterbalance in the marketplace of ideas.

CNSNews.com is part of that counterbalance today because of you. As we note our fifth anniversary of providing ‘The Right News – Right Now,’ I hope you take a bow as we salute you, your generous support, and your loyalty over these years.
Hypocrisy Now
Bill Moyers’ Outrageous Taxpayer-Funded Behavior

PBS host Bill Moyers is constantly attacking conservatives for what he claims are their blatant conflicts-of-interest and self-serving actions.

It now appears Moyers engages in the same sins of which he so sanctimoniously accuses others. The Weekly Standard’s Stephen Hayes, backed by 50 hours of Media Research Center video, recently wrote a story that exposed the PBS host’s hypocrisy.

Hayes noted that since 1991 Moyers has served as the head of the John and Florence Schumann Foundation and its $75 million endowment. Moyers funnels grant money to his favorite left-wing causes such as the Sierra Club, The Nation magazine, the Environmental Working Group, the Union of Concerned Scientists, Friends of the Earth and several others. This, in and of itself, does not present a problem.

But then Moyers, without mentioning the financial ties, provides free publicity for these groups by interviewing their spokesmen on his taxpayer-sponsored PBS show NOW. In reviewing the MRC tapes, Hayes and his research assistant found that over the last year and four months, Moyers had interviewed spokesmen from no less than 16 groups that had received more than $4.8 million in Schumann money. And not a one of them was identified as a grant recipient!

The taxpayer-supported publicity is just part of the hypocrisy. There’s much more. The left-wing group Public Agenda is a nonprofit polling firm that received $300,000 from the Moyers-led foundation in 2001. Six months after receiving the grant the group’s leader appeared on NOW and discussed Wall Street conflicts of interest. According to Hayes, the financial ties were never mentioned. Nor was the fact that NOW’s executive producer and Moyers’ wife, Judith Davidson Moyers, sits on Public Agenda’s board.

In the end, Moyers ignores the rules that he so strictly applies to others, making him just another self-righteous liberal. And the MRC was happy its extensive resources helped Stephen Hayes prove it.

AMERICA’S MEDIA WATCHDOG

MRC In The News

MRC spokesmen have recently made multiple appearances on Fox News Channel Hannity & Colmes, MSNBC’s Hardball and many talk radio programs. MRC staff has also been interviewed for a variety of print stories and provided research assistance for two national magazine articles.

◆ President L. Brent Bozell appeared on the June 16 Hardball where he discussed the deal-making CBS News and its corporate parent, Viacom, had conducted in an attempt to secure an interview with former POW Jessica Lynch. President Bozell also appeared on the June 18 Hannity & Colmes, where he discussed the media coverage of the Scott Peterson murder trial.

◆ MRC research was an important source for three major magazine stories. The Weekly Standard’s Stephen Hayes made extensive use of the MRC video archive for his June 9 Weekly Standard article on Bill Moyers. Karina Collins, the senior editor of The American Enterprise, wrote a lengthy article on the media’s coverage of the war in Iraq and extensively cited Grading TV’s War Coverage, an MRC Special Report released in late April. Karl Zimmer, the editor in chief at The American Enterprise, also used MRC research for his piece on the media and war coverage.

◆ Director of Media Analysis Tim Graham was interviewed by the St. Petersburg Times for its story on MSNBC’s Scarborough Country. Graham also appeared on 12 talk radio programs where he discussed the problems at the New York Times, Barbara Walters interview of Hillary Clinton, and CBS News-Jessica Lynch controversy.
MRC Internship Program Attracts Students from Across the Nation

For the last 10 years, the MRC’s Youth and Education Intern Program has educated and trained college students to recognize media bias and the need for balanced journalism.

This summer, six students have been selected for internships. Five are currently hard at work and the sixth is scheduled to begin in July. In addition to their daily work, the group will participate in workshops with MRC staff and attend events at other conservative organizations.

Persons interested in the internship program should contact Donna Gould at (703) 683-9733 or email dgould@mediaresearch.org.

2003 MRC Summer Interns

Sarah Park: Sarah is our development and marketing intern. She is a Tulsa, Okla. native and will be a senior at Harvard this fall. Sarah is majoring in Social Studies with a track in International Relations and has been on the varsity fencing team for three years.

Nicole Casey: Nicole is an intern in the News Analysis Division and will be a junior at the University of Richmond. She is a political science major and journalism minor who also works for the student newspaper. Nicole is a native of Arlington, Va. and has worked in two congressional campaigns.

Susan (Suezy) Vaughan: Suezy is also a News Analysis Division intern from the University of Richmond. She will be a sophomore next fall and plans to major in political science and leadership studies, with a minor in journalism. Suezy plays club lacrosse and is from Virginia Beach, Va.

David Fein: David is a CNSNews.com intern from New Canaan, Conn. and will be a senior this fall at the University of Wisconsin. He is majoring in history and political science and plans to attend law school. David is a member of the College Republicans and a recreational tennis player.

Danielle Gillespie: Danielle is as a CNSNews.com intern from Hermiston, Ore. She is a senior at the University of Oregon and will graduate in December 2003. After graduation, Danielle plans to work at a daily newspaper. Her long-term goals are to get her Ph.D. and teach journalism at a major university.