

Bill Clinton Snares the Fox

Fox TV-News got a come-uppance it did not expect on Sept. 22, when its prime interviewer Chris Wallace held an interview with former President Bill Clinton. Noted hatchet-man Wallace apparently told Clinton that he wanted to conduct an interview for his “Fox News Sunday” show, dedicated primarily to the Clinton Global Initiative, a fundraising program which President Clinton runs on behalf of charitable causes around the world.

There was little surprising about how the show went. Wallace devoted approximately 2 minutes to the subject of Clinton’s charitable work, before he shifted to the attack. “Why didn’t you do more to put bin Laden and al-Qaeda out of business when you were President?” he asked, claiming the question had come from e-mails into Fox News.

It was not long before Wallace realized he had made a big mistake.

From that moment on, President Clinton took over the interview, and interrogated Wallace. He blasted the Fox network for following in the footsteps of the ABC-News fraud on 9/11, which set the context for Wallace’s attack by claiming that his Administration had been responsible for that atrocity. He then began to demand answers from Wallace, and to rip his premises apart.

First, there was the fraud about Somalia, where Wallace had said that Clinton showed weakness in front of al-Qaeda. But al-Qaeda had nothing to do with Somalia, Clinton argued, and the Clinton Administration didn’t leave right away, *despite* the fact that all the neo-cons who are attacking him now were demanding that he leave.

Repeatedly, Clinton brought up Richard Clarke, the former head of counterterror in Republican and Democratic administrations, to similar effect, and hammered Wallace on his misrepresentations. When Wallace claimed he was just raising what was “on people’s minds,” Clinton pulled no punches:

“There’s a reason it’s on people’s minds. That’s the point I’m trying to make. There’s a reason it’s on people’s minds because they’ve done a serious disinformation campaign to create that impression. This country only has one person who has worked against terror under Reagan, only one, Richard Clarke. And all I’d say to anybody who wonders whether we did wrong or right, anybody who wants to see what everybody else did, read his book. The people on my political right who say I didn’t do enough, spent the whole time I was President saying “Why is he so obsessed with Bin Laden.” And “that

was ‘wag the dog’ when he tried to kill him.” My Republican Secretary of Defense—and I think I’m the only person since World War II to have a Secretary of Defense from the opposite party—Richard Clarke, and all the intelligence people, said that I ordered a vigorous attempt to get Osama Bin Laden and came closer apparently than anybody has since.”

After allowing Wallace to say “all right,” Clinton continued.

“And you guys try to create the opposite impression when all you have to do is read Richard Clarke’s findings and you know it’s not true. It’s just not true. And all this business about Somalia; the same people who criticized me about Somalia were demanding I leave the next day. Same exact crowd. . . .”

When the right-wing media went berserk after the interview, in protest against Clinton’s aggressivity, Clinton’s spokesman, Jay Carson, released a statement which said: “President Clinton fought back hard, just like any Democrat should when they are attacked with a baseless attack.”

So far, unfortunately, most other leading Democrats have failed to show even half the guts of the former President, in face of the Republican attacks.

Like Father, Like Son of a . . .

As for Chris Wallace, he had the dubious distinction of having undergone a virtual repeat of the drubbing given to his father, also a TV newsman, back in the 1950s.

Like his son’s show today, the Mike Wallace Interview show was known for grilling its guests. But, in the late 1950s, Wallace misjudged the situation when he invited Randolph Churchill, the only son of Winston Churchill, and a journalist himself, to appear on his show. In this case, Wallace decided to bait Churchill by bringing up an incident involving Randolph’s sister Sarah. Randolph Churchill erupted, and launched into an attack on the reporter, hardly letting him get a word in edgewise for the rest of the interview show.

There is, of course, no comparison between the characters of Bill Clinton and Randolph Churchill, in terms of the merits of their cases. Clinton was indeed telling the truth, while Churchill was an arrogant attack-dog from the get-go. There is, however, a lesson to be learned in terms of the chutzpah of a media which thinks it can bully and intimidate anyone it wants, and determine what is considered to be “acceptable” and true.

It’s a lesson those who want to save these United States from disaster, had better learn very quickly.

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