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ABC Had No Criticism For Reverend's Sex with Employee, But Worried About Impact on Liberals

Will Jesse's Love Child Hurt Our Cause?

When Jesse Jackson released a statement today acknowledging he had fathered a 20-month-old girl out of wedlock with Rainbow Coalition employee Karin Stanford, ABC's *Good Morning America* had no condemnation of his behavior. Instead, they worried about the political consequences, how Jackson's stepping out of the public eye would hurt the liberals.

Diane Sawyer asked: "This was going to be a weekend in which Jesse Jackson was very visible both in Florida, protesting the election there, and of course on the Ashcroft nomination. What are the consequences?"

George Stephanopoulos reassured Sawyer that his withdrawal won't "have a dramatic effect on the demonstrations themselves. There are plenty of other voices, but as he said in his statement, there will be many of his supporters who will be deeply disappointed by this. The most profound effect will be on his family. My guess is that over time, his supporters will come back with the kind of statements that Rev. Jackson had around the height of the Clinton scandal. He said, 'Anyone who's not known these trials and tribulations and temptations, you throw a rock.' A lot of his supporters will be saying the same things and trying to find out how this story got out."

Sawyer ended the segment: "This is, of course, a political story, but also a family story, and everybody has to be very concerned for the Jackson family." Everybody?

This, put it mildly, was not the kind of reception Sawyer and ABC gave to other ministers. Take Jim Bakker, the adulterous, swindling televangelist. No one at ABC was worrying about his family. On the October 5, 1989 *Prime Time Live*, Sam Donaldson said "everybody's talking about

Jim Bakker, the televangelist. He was convicted today in Norfolk. The quality of mercy was strained in Virginia today, and he could spend a lot of time in jail." Sawyer asked: "You have to wonder whether this season of revealed hypocrisy is taking any toll or not on the [TV evangelism] business. What do you think?" He replied, "You mean, will they stop sending in the cash?" She said: "Well, at least will the buyers beware?" She later added, "I think the prosecution's phrase was, 'He was more a pitchman than a preacher.'"

This morning's Jackson report made no mention of reports that the *National Enquirer* will reveal that Rainbow Coalition members were misled about Stanford's pregnancy in an internal newsletter, and as the *New York Post* relayed, when DNA tests revealed Jackson was the father, he "quickly had a financial agreement for support drawn up, a pact that included an agreement by Stanford not to publicly acknowledge her baby's parentage." Will Jackson's buyers beware?

On ABCNews.com today, ABC political director Mark Halperin predicted Jackson's affair will be exploited by conservatives: "Clearly his critics will use this as an opportunity and hope it will be a factor in maybe him scaling back his effectiveness as a public spokesman." Within hours, ABC was setting up conservatives for another liberal's misbehavior. — *Tim Graham*

Diane Sawyer on the Sore Subject

Diane Sawyer: "Your wife during a campaign once [in 1987] said something quite amazing and backed the press right off. I remember she said, 'If my husband has committed adultery, he'd better not tell me, and you better not go digging into it, because I'm trying to raise a family and won't let you be the one to destroy my family.'"

Jesse Jackson: "I regret so much that Gary Hart dropped out. He had so much to offer the country. And the politics of personal inquisition is divergence from the politics of public policy. In this case, in a strange way, Clinton has been impeached into martyrdom, because of the partisan politics and [those] seemingly obsessed with using this issue to destroy him." — Exchange on *Good Morning America*, February 12, 1999.

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; Brent Baker, Tim Graham, Editors; Jessica Anderson, Brian Boyd, Geoffrey Dickens, Ted King, Paul Smith, Brad Wilmoth, Media Analysts; Kristina Sewell, Research Associate; Liz Swasey, Director of Communications. Look for The Best Notable Quotables of 2000 in print and video at www.mrc.org