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“Crazed” Protesters Acting Like Unruly Six-Year-Olds

“Members of Congress are back home holding town hall meetings on the issue, and in meeting after meeting, there’s been a pattern of disruption — opponents of change shouting at members of Congress so loud that at times police are called in. White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said today, ‘We can discuss these issues without being uncivilized. It’s the same thing I tell my six-year-old.’”

— Anchor Charles Gibson opening ABC’s *World News*, August 7.

“What do you call a crazed group of people that disrupts a meeting on health care and hangs the congressman holding it in effigy? A mob. What do you call the partisan groups that whip up their fear-of-change ultra-conservative base to engage in that symbolic lynching and then disavow any responsibility?...One can only hope that this effort at organized intimidation doesn’t escalate.”

— Former CNN reporter Bob Franken writing on AOL’s “Politics Daily” site, August 7.



Let’s Blame Limbaugh for “Extremist” Rhetoric

“Critics of health care reform say it’s genuine grass roots anger, but Democrats say activists are orchestrating the protests. The evidence — Web sites of conservative groups that list Democratic town halls and urge critics to go and be heard. And conservatives, like Rush Limbaugh, who, Democrats say, are whipping activists into a frenzy, comparing President Obama’s health care plan to Nazi policies.”

— CBS’s Chip Reid on the August 7 *Evening News*.

“The Democratic National Committee in a Web video charged these protests are staged....Some anger on display gets stoked by the provocative megaphone of Rush Limbaugh, who went so far as accusing Democrats of wanting the socialized medicine of Nazi Germany.”

— NBC’s Kelly O’Donnell on the August 7 *Nightly News*.

Moderator David Gregory: “Republicans in office and on the airwaves insist the anger is real, reflecting real fears about a government takeover of the health care system. But the rhetoric has become extreme.”

Clip of Rush Limbaugh on his radio show: “There are far more similarities between Nancy Pelosi and Adolf Hitler than between these people showing up at town halls to protest a Hitler-like policy.”...

New York Times columnist David Brooks: “I hadn’t seen the Rush Limbaugh thing. That is insane. What he’s saying is insane.”

— NBC’s *Meet the Press*, August 9. All failed to point out Limbaugh was replying to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi smearing town hall protesters as “carrying swastikas.”



Anti-ObamaCare Protesters: Just Racists and Terrorists

Wall Street Journal’s Steve Moore: “This is still a pretty conservative country and people are upset about the policies in Washington and they don’t think the politicians are listening.”

Chris Matthews: “Okay, I think, I think some of the people are upset because we have a black President.”

— Talking about the town hall protests on MSNBC’s *Hardball*, August 11.

“The truth is out about the societal sabotage dressed up as phony protests against health care reform....When Hamas does it or Hezbollah does it, it is called terrorism. Why should Republican lawmakers and the AstroTurf groups organizing on behalf of the health care industry be viewed any differently — especially now that far too many tea party protesters are comparing President Obama and health care reform to Hitler and the Holocaust?”

— MSNBC’s Keith Olbermann talking about anti-ObamaCare protests on *Countdown*, August 7.

Health Care Debate Threatens Obama's Safety?

"We turn now to the contentious debate over President Obama's health care agenda. The rising anger is now ramping up concerns over the President's personal safety..."

— ABC's Bill Weir introducing a story on *Good Morning America*, August 14. The on-screen headline: "Anxious Moments; Threats Growing In Health Care Debate?"



"Rockwellian Ideal" Replaced by "Quarrelsome Masses"

"As Congress returns home for its summer break, conservative activists are packing community halls and school cafeterias to protest the health care legislation, hoping to derail President Obama's top domestic priority... The Rockwellian ideal of neighbors gathering to discuss community issues in a neighborly way is gone, replaced by quarrelsome masses hollering questions downloaded from activist websites..."

— *Boston Globe* reporter Lisa Wangsness in an August 6 front-page story.

Protests Overshadowed Obama's Week of Glorious Accomplishments

"They [the White House] look back at this week, and they see that they've rescued two Americans from North Korea; that they broke a barrier at the Supreme Court with the confirmation of soon-to-be Justice Sonia Sotomayor; that a major terrorist was killed in, of the Taliban, a figure that is believed, that is somebody that might be able to break up the Taliban in such a way; that the Cash-for-Clunkers turned out to be a success; those good unemployment news [numbers]. So they sit here and say, hey, it's pretty good, but then this health care debate and this town halls that Kelly [O'Donnell] was reporting on..."

— White House correspondent Chuck Todd on *NBC Nightly News*, August 7.

Despite "Town Hall Madness," ObamaCare "Stable"

"The bottom line on health care is that when this town hall madness started three weeks ago the President's plan was in serious condition. It's still in serious condition politically, but it is stable."

— NBC White House correspondent Chuck Todd reviewing new poll results on the August 18 *Nightly News*.



See If You Can Spot the Tilt

"Health Care Hysteria"

"Conservatives Coming Unhinged?"

"Are Liberals Being Too Weak?"

— Sampling of on-screen headlines during MSNBC's midday coverage, August 10.

Free Clinic Shows "Desperate Need" for ObamaCare

"Once again, we begin tonight with the battle over health care reform, but this time, we're not starting at a town meeting. Tonight, we're going to show you why many believe reform is desperately needed. These are just some of the tens of thousands of Americans who need health care but have no insurance or not enough of it, and they're lining up at a free makeshift clinic in Los Angeles."

— CBS's Katie Couric opening the August 13 *Evening News*.



"In Inglewood, California, tonight, a vivid demonstration of the health care crisis: A clinic that provides free health care has been inundated with patients. Almost 46 million people in this country do not have health insurance, but the problem is a lot bigger than that..."

— ABC's Dan Harris on the August 15 *World News*.

Pleading for Obama to Stand by Big Government "Public Option"

"Will he go to the mat for a public option?... We talked to several health care experts today, and they all said if you take out the public option in terms of insurance, there's going to be no restraints on the cost of insurance."

— ABC's Charles Gibson to White House correspondent Jake Tapper, August 17 *World News*.

Media Fact-Checker Gets It Wrong

“There’s no evidence, as we’ve found out, that there’s any plans to make the government or make all Americans pay for abortions in the plan.... What’s your strategy for dealing with those falsities?”

— CNN’s Rick Sanchez to White House spokeswoman Linda Douglass, August 11.

vs.

“Health care legislation before Congress would allow a new government-sponsored insurance plan to cover abortions, a decision that would affect millions of women and recast federal policy on the divisive issue.”

— Lead sentence of August 5 dispatch from Associated Press writer Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar.



Castro’s Cuba Offers a Lesson in Health Care Reform?

Anchor Don Lemon: “Cuba as a model for health care reform? Well, we’ll see. It is a poor country. But it can boast about health care, a system that leads the way in Latin America. So, what are they doing right?...”

Reporter Morgan Neill: “How does health care work in Cuba? It’s not an easy question to answer, but there are some impressive statistics. According to the World Health Organization, Cuba’s life expectancy is 78 years. The same as Chile and Costa Rica and the highest in Latin America. And its infant mortality rates are the lowest in the hemisphere.... Health officials admit the system isn’t perfect, but, they say, no one falls through the cracks.”

— 12pm ET hour of *CNN Newsroom*, August 6.

Need a Latter-Day Buckley to Purge Conservatives

CNBC’s John Harwood: “What do you suppose Bill Buckley would think of the nature of the arguments that are being made against the Obama health care plan right now, death panels and all the rest?”

New York Times Week-in-Review editor Sam Tanenhaus: “Well, you know, one of the great contributions Bill Buckley made to conservatism was to move it toward the center. And one way he did that was to repudiate in a very forceful way what was then called the lunatic fringe.... We may see in the days ahead where serious responsible Republicans and conservative thinkers say if they’re going to make a forceful argument the country can accept, they’ll have to cut themselves off from this more extreme view.”

— Exchange on MSNBC’s *New York Times Edition* program, August 14.

Slamming Novak as “Dark Force” in Cable News

“[Robert] Novak titled his 2007 memoir, *The Prince of Darkness*, and he was indeed a very dark force in cable TV news contributing mightily to the toxic culture of confrontation, belligerence and polarization that so defines cable TV and American political discourse today. There is no way to be nice about his impact on cable TV during its formative years.... I am talking about Novak’s sneering TV persona and the role it played in reaching back to the dark political style of the 1950s Richard Nixon — and leading us to the polarized, angry space that cable TV and the conversation of American politics now inhabits.”

— *Baltimore Sun* critic David Zurawik August 18 on his “Z on TV” blog, two hours after news broke of Novak’s passing.



Rather’s Work “Not Even Close to the Standards We Expect”

“It’s like he is in some paranoid nightmare where everybody is out to get him. We’re all witnessing the poor guy thrashing around, tormented. I can’t for the life of me understand why he’s doing this.... I hate to say it in public, but many of [his] stories were not even close to the standards we expect at *60 Minutes*.”

— *60 Minutes* Executive Producer Jeff Fager talking about former *CBS Evening News* anchor Dan Rather, as quoted by *Los Angeles Times* media writer Matea Gold in an August 16 article.

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