

# Republicans allow things to get ugly, dangerous and frightening



LARA MARLOWE  
**AMERICA**

Right-wingers are using threats and vandalism to intimidate those who voted for healthcare Bill

IN AMERICAN slang, a "wingnut" is a mentally deranged person, someone who advocates extreme measures. "Lunatic fringe" is a simile, as in the title of John Avlon's book, *Wingnuts: How the Lunatic Fringe is Hijacking America*.

Last Sunday's passage of the healthcare Bill brought the wingnuts out of the woodwork. The right-wing fringe are using threats and vandalism to intimidate and punish those who voted to extend medical insurance to 32 million people. And Republican Party leaders are letting them do it. It is ugly, dangerous and frightening. If it continues, somebody is going to get hurt.

In the most serious incident to date, Mike Troxel, a member of a right-wing Tea Party group in Virginia, posted what he thought was the home address of Democratic congressman Tom

Perriello in a blog, urging readers to "Drop by . . . and express their thanks regarding his vote for healthcare". Soon after, someone cut the gas line to the house, which was in fact Perriello's brother's. Local authorities told the *New York Times* it was "a deliberate act of vandalism" and that "leaking gas could have posed a danger if there had been an ignition source".

"We know where you live" is the message conveyed to supporters of Barack Obama. Someone left a coffin on the lawn of Representative Russ Carnahan's home in Missouri. In Cincinnati, protesters gathered outside the home of Representative Steve Driehaus, who also voted for the healthcare Bill, after his address was published in a conservative blog.

Before the vote, House minority leader John Boehner said: "Take Steve Driehaus, for example. He may be a dead man.

He can't go home to the west side of Cincinnati." Steny Hoyer, the House majority leader, announced that more than 10 Democratic members of Congress have received threats since Sunday's vote.

Mike Vanderboegh, an Alabama militia member, took credit for a wave of broken windows at Democratic Party offices across the country. In an interview with Fox News, Vanderboegh said, "I am telling you, we are motivated to break windows. We feel a deadly threat from the federal government".

Vanderboegh is scheduled to speak at a "Show Your Guns" rally in Virginia, the closest place to Washington where the gun enthusiasts could legally display their weapons. They chose April 19th because it was the first day of the American Revolution, the anniversary of the FBI's 1993 siege of Waco Texas (86 killed), and the anniversary of Timothy

McVeigh's bombing of a Federal building in Oklahoma City two years later (168 killed). Vanderboegh threatened "a thousand little Wacos".

Perhaps the most frightening things about the vandalism and intimidation is the way it is tolerated, if not openly condoned, by Republican leaders. On firenancy Pelosi.com, the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, is shown against a background of flames. It's a fundraising site for the Republican National Committee.

Or take Sarah Palin's response to the healthcare Bill, on Twitter: "Commonsense Conservatives & lovers of America: Don't Retreat, Instead - RELOAD! Pls see my Facebook page." Palin continued the hunting metaphor, posting a map with crosshairs over 20 districts held by Democratic Congressmen.

Conservatism in America now runs in a continuous line from

Mike Vanderboegh to Sarah Palin to Republican leaders like John Boehner. All use the words "socialist" and "European" as epithets. The polarisation is accentuated because conservatives rely on Fox News and right-wing blogs for information, while liberals watch MSNBC and read the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*. There is no common ground.

Palin is the darling of the Tea Party movement, three-quarters of whom consider themselves Republicans. The Republicans know the tea partiers have the power to make or break them in the November mid-terms, and are bracing themselves for ideological vetting.

Palin will today campaign with Senator John McCain, standing for re-election in Arizona. McCain was given a chance to denounce his former running mate's "RELOAD" and crosshairs metaphors. "Those words have

been used throughout my political career . . . That rhetoric . . . is just part of the political lexicon," McCain told NBC.

On Fox News, John Boehner acknowledged widespread anger over the healthcare Bill, adding a feeble comment that "violence and threats are unacceptable". He did not demand that purveyors of anonymous threats and vandalism be tracked down and prosecuted.

Eric Cantor, a Republican Representative from Virginia, showed journalists a bullet that was fired into his office in Virginia, saying he hadn't intended to talk about it. Democrats were "reckless" in using the incidents "as media vehicles for political gain", Cantor said. "To use such threats as political weapons is reprehensible. By ratcheting up the rhetoric, some will only inflame these situations to dangerous levels."

**Somebody is going to get hurt**

# Mystery surrounds sinking of S Korea ship

## Officials say no sign of North Korean involvement

CHRISTIAN OLIVER and JUNG-A SONG in Seoul

ALMOST 60 people were yesterday rescued from a sinking South Korean naval vessel, which had a crew of 100, though US and South Korean officials played down suggestions that North Korea might have played a role.

Initial reports hinted that a North Korean vessel might have been involved. But a presidential aide last night told the Yonhap news agency that there had been no sign of North Korean military in the area.

The agency quoted the official as saying that satellite pictures and other information showed no sign of any North Korean activity in the vicinity.

If the sinking did result from a North Korean attack, it would be a dangerous escalation of tensions by the reclusive dictatorship, which last year fired a long-range missile over Japan and tested its second atomic warhead.

South Korea said 58 sailors had been rescued, but had no further comment. Seoul's presidential

office said it had convened an emergency meeting of security officials to determine the cause of the sinking and consider any response. The defence ministry said the vessel was holed below the waterline but declined to specify a cause.

Seoul said a second South Korean warship opened fire after the sinking. South Korean media had initially said the salvoes were aimed at a North Korean ship, but the joint chiefs of staff said suspicious movements on a radar screen could have been a flock of birds.

North and South Korean vessels exchanged fire in the same waters in November. The vessel sank near the disputed Yellow Sea border off the west coast of the peninsula which was the scene of two deadly naval fights between the rival Koreas in the past decade.

The international community has been pressuring the North to give up efforts to build nuclear weapons, promising help for its broken economy if it does so. - (Copyright Financial Times Limited 2010)

## Old sea dog: skeleton found in wreck of 'Mary Rose' goes on display



LONDON - The skeleton of a two-year-old dog discovered at the bottom of the sea with the wreck of the *Mary Rose* was yesterday reunited with other artefacts from the Tudor warship.

The mongrel, which staff at the Mary Rose Trust have named Hatch, would have been kept as a pet on board Henry VIII's flagship, which sank in 1545. But the dog would have been a

working member of the 500-strong crew as it would have earned its keep as a ratter - cats were not allowed on board as they were thought to bring bad luck.

The preserved skeleton has been put on display at the Mary Rose Museum, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, ahead of new premises which are being built to house the hull and the artefacts together.

John Lippiett, chief executive of the Mary Rose Trust, said: "We are very excited to bring our dog into the museum for the first time, because the public, especially children, have always been particularly fascinated to learn that one had been discovered during the excavation.

"Expert analysis of Hatch's bones suggests that she spent most of her short life within the

close confines of the ship. "It is likely that the longest walks she took were along the quayside at Portsmouth, her home town."

The *Mary Rose* sank in 1545 in the Battle of the Solent, off Portsmouth, Hampshire, and was raised from the seabed in 1982 to a television audience of more than 60 million people worldwide. - (PA)

# Former Czech PM withdraws from poll over remarks

DANIEL McLAUGHLIN

FORMER CZECH prime minister Mirek Topolánek has stepped down as his party's top candidate for a May general election after making derisive remarks about gays, Jews and the church.

It was only the latest embarrassment for the gaffe-prone Mr Topolánek, who said he would now consider his future as chairman of the centre-right Civic Democrats (ODS) after its executive council urged him to resign.

During an interview and photo shoot for a gay magazine, Mr Topolánek talked about reportedly homosexual transport minister Gustav Slamečka and prime minister Jan Fischer, who replaced the outspoken ODS leader as premier when his government collapsed last year.

"When things really get tough, really tough, then I have the feeling that Slamečka, as a minister, gives way. And that Fischer is simply a Jew, not a gay, and he gives way earlier still. That's got nothing to do with his being gay, that's a matter of character," Mr Topolánek said.

He is also reported to have said the church "has got control of people by means of brainwashing" and to have mocked supporters of the centre-left Social Democrats - who are expected to win the May ballot.

Mr Topolánek insisted his remarks had been taken out of context but did issue an apology.

"I apologise to the gays, to my friends and to all others. I apologise to the members of churches - to those I know as well as to those whom I do not know. I apologise to Jews - those in politics as well

as outside it. I apologise to the citizens," he said. He also said he regretted being caught off-guard, but would not change a blunt style that has won him ardent admirers and bitter enemies.

"I will not use empty sentences or express myself in a roundabout way or vaguely," he said, vowing "to never be a stilted politician who would change his opinions according to the recommendations of his PR advisers".

Mr Topolánek said he had written SMS apologies to Mr Slamečka and Mr Fischer - although he restated his belief the current prime minister is a weak leader. While Mr Slamečka brushed off the remarks and said he was not a homophobe or anti-Semite, Mr Fischer called his remarks "stupid, offensive and misleading".

"I know about his apology. My task, however, is not to judge Mirek Topolánek or to give him absolution. I will restrict our future communication to the necessary working minimum," he added.

Mr Topolánek is no stranger to controversy, having slapped a photographer taking pictures of his baby son; described the original, doomed EU constitution as "shit"; and raised his middle finger to opponents in a parliamentary debate. Last year, as well as enduring the ignominy of seeing his government fall during the Czech Republic's tenure as EU presidency-holder, he grabbed headlines by calling US president Barack Obama's economic recovery plan "the road to hell" and being photographed sunbathing naked at Italian leader Silvio Berlusconi's villa.

# Cameron sets out to woo elderly voters with vow to increase pensions

MARK HENNESSY London Editor

CONSERVATIVE PARTY leader David Cameron, faced with dropping poll figures, has launched an effort to woo elderly voters with a pledge to increase the basic state pension, scrap means testing of pensioners and cut inheritance taxes.

"I think this government has got a lot of things wrong. But when I think of how they have treated the elderly, I think they should be ashamed of themselves. Those are strong words I know, but that's how strongly I feel about this," he said on a visit to Birmingham.

In his budget chancellor of the exchequer Alistair Darling announced a 2.5 per cent increase in the basic pension, which was £95.25 a week for a single person,

and £152.30 for a couple - though this will not keep up with the 3.5 per cent inflation expected in the UK over the coming year.

"We have more pensioners living in poverty than anywhere else in western Europe," said Mr Cameron, who accused prime minister Gordon Brown of having made a £100 billion tax raid on private pensions during his time as chancellor.

Labour, Mr Cameron claimed, is attempting to scare elderly voters on the doorsteps. He pledged that the Conservatives, if elected, would guarantee winter fuel payments, safeguard pension tax credits, and keep free bus travel and TV licences for those aged over 75. "You have my word," he said.

The Conservatives are likely to focus strongly on inheritance

taxes in the coming election campaign, following Mr Darling's declaration this week that he intends to freeze the £325,000 tax threshold for four years. Everything over the threshold in an estate is taxed at 40 per cent, raising £1.5 billion a year in tax.

Under the Conservatives, the inheritance tax threshold would rise to £1 million. The party is also debating whether it would reverse the chancellor's decision to increase national insurance rates by half a percentage point from next month on all incomes over £20,000. The increase has been strongly attacked by employers and unions.

The prospects for such a significant move have heightened following the latest BBC/ComRes poll, taken after this week's budget, which shows that one-

third of British voters now trust Mr Brown and Labour more than the Conservatives to run the economy, while just 27 per cent trust the Conservatives.

Meanwhile, former Conservative deputy prime minister Michael Heseltine, who believes a hung parliament is now an inevitability, urged Mr Cameron to take a strong line with the Liberal Democrats in post-election talks to form a government.

"If you, Liberal Democrats, want to bring the government down and have an early election, that is your constitutional right to do.

"The people will not forgive you - but it's entirely a matter for you. If the Lib Dems think that, as a minority party, they can dictate to the prime minister of this country, they would have a shock coming."

# Death row inmate protests his innocence more loudly each time execution is cancelled

The sister of Troy Davis will tell his story in Dublin tomorrow, writes Lara Marlowe in Washington

TROY DAVIS fasted and prayed, chose his last visitors, and gave instructions for his own burial. "We had to order a hearse," recalls Davis's older sister, Martina Davis Correia. "It was parked in front of the prison dog; our sister passed out when she saw it. We were told we'd have to pay \$1,000 for the autopsy. The state was about to kill Troy, and they didn't know the cause of death? They told us we couldn't witness the execution because they needed the chairs for the family of the victim . . ."

Davis, who is black, will turn 42 this year. He has spent more than half his life in prison for the murder of Mark MacPhail, an off-duty white policeman, a crime he has always denied.

Three times, the state of Georgia has slated Davis for execution. In 2007, he was spared on less than 24 hours' notice. The second time, in September 2008, when the hearse was waiting, he was less than two hours from a lethal injection.

A month later, the process was stopped three days before execution. As Amnesty International reports, the condemned man and his family "have been subjected to the rollercoaster of hope and despair that is a hallmark of this cruel punishment".

Gemma Puglisi, who teaches public communication at the American University in Washington, spent a sleepless night after reading an article on

the eve of Davis's first scheduled execution. She mobilised her class to join the worldwide campaign on behalf of Davis, and has visited him several times in prison.

"He's very inspirational," she says. "Not bitter, always hopeful, and so grateful for anything anybody does to help him."

The US is the only country in the Americas that still carries out capital punishment, with 3,279 prisoners awaiting execution, according to the Death Penalty Information Centre.

Davis's experience is not unusual. Just this week, the execution of Hank Skinner, a death row inmate in Texas, was postponed an hour before he was to have died.

Troy Davis: Seven witnesses who helped convict him later refuted their own statements

testimonies were used to convict Davis later refuted their own statements. Several said they were coerced by police.

"I don't think the police intended to frame Troy," says Martina Davis Correia.

"A police officer had been killed, and until Coles came in they had no lead. So they built a case against Troy, using homeless people and drug addicts who hung around the bus station as witnesses. They said, 'We got the cop-killer off the street. The police didn't even have a mugshot of Troy because he had a clean record. They took a photograph from my mother's album and put it on wanted posters, and within 24 hours, everyone hated Troy's guts. They wanted to save face at the expense of my brother's life.'"

The Davis family believe Coles shot MacPhail. Amnesty says it "does not know if Troy Davis - or this other man - is guilty or innocent of the crime". But Davis's conviction does not meet UN guidelines that demand "clear and convincing evidence", Amnesty says.

Richard Stack, author of *Dead Wrong: Violence, Vengeance and the Victims of Capital Punishment*, who like Gemma Puglisi teaches at the American University, notes one of every eight prisoners sent to death row is exonerated. "How can we possibly take a human life based on such a system? You wouldn't jump out of an airplane if one in eight parachutes didn't work. I chose the innocence issue because common ground can be found between liberals and conservatives. No one in their right mind wants to see an innocent person executed."

Pope Benedict XVI, Desmond Tutu and Jimmy Carter have all spoken out on Troy Davis's behalf. Last August, the US Supreme

Court ruled that Davis must be given a hearing in federal court to examine new evidence. No date has been set, and Davis continues to languish on death row.

Martina Davis Correia, a trained nurse who served in the 1991 Gulf War, has campaigned tirelessly for her brother, even as she fights breast cancer. She will speak at Amnesty Ireland's annual conference at 3pm tomorrow in the Trinity school of nursing on Dublin's D'Olier Street.

# British Airways starts four-day strike

MARK HENNESSY

NO TALKS are planned between British Airways chief executive Willie Walsh and cabin crew, who began a four-day strike at midnight. However, the airline insisted that all of the 240,000 people booked with the airline over the period will be able to fly with it, or with other airlines.

The second round of industrial action by cabin crew, who are members of the Unite trade union, has become bitter, with Mr Walsh insisting he will "never" give back travel perks to staff who took part in the first three-day strike.

The chief executive rejected charges made by leading industrial relations experts that he is trying to break the union.

"They can rest easy. We have no intention of breaking Unite. On the contrary, our last offer explicitly stated our readiness to recognise Unite not only to represent existing crew for bargaining purposes in future but also to represent new crew."

British Airways said it expects to fly more than 180,000 of the 240,000 people who had planned to travel from March 27th to March 30th, while a further 18 per cent have either rebooked with other carriers, or changed their travel dates to avoid the strike.

BA's operations from Gatwick and London City airports will operate normally, while 55 per cent of short-haul and 70 per cent of long-haul flights from Heathrow will take off.

Mr Walsh said: "The vast majority of BA staff, including thousands of cabin crew, are pulling together to serve our customers and keep our flag flying.

"At the same time, I feel really sorry for those customers whose plans have been ruined by the Unite union's completely unjustified action.

"Despite the union's promises, this strike has affected the Easter holiday plans of thousands of hard-working people."

Meanwhile, Unite has rejected Mr Walsh's declaration that the company's losses from the strike will be kept to £7 million (£7.8 million) a day, and insist that the bill for the seven days of industrial action will be £100 million (£112 million).



Willie Walsh: rejects charges that he is trying to break union

**STEREO JLG / THE EDITING OF THE TRAILER PART 1**  
JUST POURING OUT OF THEIR MOUTHS THEN WHAT THEY'RE SAYING WHETHER IT BE SCRIPTED SPEECH REPORTED TEXT-TYPE SPEECH STRAIGHT ACTORS LINES AND IN SOME CASES AS GODARD SAYS WHY WHY WHY THE PURPOSE WHO'S TIGHTLY REINED SCENARIO'S REMEMBERING BEFORE LA NOUVELLE VAGUE WITHIN HEAVY INDUSTRIAL CINEMA AS FAR UP AS THE 50'S CERTAIN HOLLYWOOD SCRIPTWRITERS WERE WORTH THEIR WEIGHT IN GOLD MORE SO THAN THE DIRECTORS THEMSELVES HOWEVER ACCORDING TO GODARD THE ARRIVAL OF THE NOUVELLE VAGUE GREATLY AFFECTED THIS FINANCIAL STRANGLEHOLD OR ALL POWERFUL ECONOMIC REACTIONARY FACTOR SO WHILE VIEWING THESE FILMS AT THE FOLKIPIDOU THE WAY IN WHICH THEY'RE DIRECTED WHETHER BY HIRED DIRECTORS JOURNEMEN Hired HANDS LIKE GUNSLINGERS IN WESTERN'S CAPABLE OF DOING THE JOB ANY JOB WHILE COMING UP FOR AIR AS THE FELLA SAID OR CINEMA D'AUTOUR PRE-WAR POST-WAR INDUSTRIAL CINEMA FROM EVERY CONTINENT ONE HAS TO WONDER ABOUT IT ALL WHATS IT ALL ABOUT WHAT THE ACTORS ARE SAYING WHO'S PAYING THEM AND WHY ALL THESE TALKING HEADS WHY WHY WHY FOR PURPOSE WHO'S GAINING FROM THIS PSEUDO-ARTISTIC INDUSTRIAL LIKE DIRECTION REMEMBERING GODARD HAS ALWAYS MAINTAINED THAT CINEMA SIMPLY RAN AWAY SCAMPERS OFF JUST WASN'T AROUND TO FILM THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS EVEN IF HE FIRMLY BELIEVES THAT IMAGES EXIST OF THE GAS CHAMBERS FILMED BY THE NAZIS BUT IN CINEMA'S NON DIFFUSION IN CINEMA'S NON CAPACITY FOR ANY TYPE OF RECORDED RESPONSIBILITY WAS IT MAYBE OUT SAUNTERING IN A CASINO OR IN THE BARRAS AND GOING TO BE CONTINUED SATURDAY 10TH APRIL JOHN LALOR & C/K PROJECTS