Christopher Booker has written a book on global warming. He uses an op-ed in the Daily Telegraph, UK to retail his thesis.

... By any measure, the supposed menace of global warming – and the political response to it – has become one of the overwhelmingly urgent issues of our time. If one accepts the thesis that the planet faces a threat unprecedented in history, the implications are mind-boggling. But equally mind-boggling now are the implications of the price we are being asked to pay by our politicians to meet that threat. More than ever, it is a matter of the highest priority that we should know whether or not the assumptions on which the politicians base their proposals are founded on properly sound science.

This is why I have been regularly reporting on the issue in my column in The Sunday Telegraph, and this week I publish a book called The Real Global Warming Disaster: Is the obsession with climate change turning out to be the most costly scientific delusion in history?.

There are already many books on this subject, but mine is rather different from the rest in that, for the first time, it tries to tell the whole tangled story of how the debate over the threat of climate change has evolved over the past 30 years, interweaving the science with the politicians' response to it.

It is a story that has unfolded in three stages. The first began back in the Seventies when a number of scientists noticed that the world’s temperatures had been falling for 30 years, leading them to warn that we might be heading for a new ice age. Then, in the mid-Seventies, temperatures started to rise again, and by the mid-Eighties, a still fairly small number of scientists – including some of those who had been predicting a new ice age – began to warn that we were now facing the opposite problem: a world dangerously heating up, thanks to our pumping out CO₂ and all those greenhouse gases inseparable from modern civilisation. ...

... In words quoted on the cover of my new book, Prof Lindzen wrote: “Future generations will wonder in bemused amazement that the early 21st century’s developed world went into hysterical panic over a globally averaged temperature increase of a few tenths of a degree and, on the basis of gross exaggerations of highly exaggerated computer predictions combined into implausible chains of inference, proceeded to contemplate a rollback of the industrial age.”

Such is the truly extraordinary position in which we find ourselves.

Thanks to misreading the significance of a brief period of rising temperatures at the end of the 20th century, the Western world (but not India or China) is now contemplating measures that add up to the most expensive economic suicide note ever written.

How long will it be before sanity and sound science break in on what begins to look like one of the most bizarre collective delusions ever to grip the human race?

Turning our attention to health care, Matthew Continetti says maybe it won't pass.

... But a left-liberal health care reform is a dicey proposition. Consider what happened last week in the Senate. Medicare is scheduled to reduce doctor’s payments by more than 20 percent in 2010. The Democrats wanted to restore those cuts at a cost of $247 billion in unfunded liabilities. But, when Harry Reid tried to end debate on the measure last week, he failed. Joe Lieberman and 12 Democrats voted against the Senate Democratic leadership and for fiscal responsibility. Reid can’t get 60 votes for a payoff to the American Medical Association. What makes the White House think he can get 60 for Obamacare?

The Calendar. Obama originally wanted a bill before summer’s end. Didn't happen. Back in September, lawmakers expected Pelosi to hold a vote by the end of that month. No go. Then the deadline was the end of October. Another fantasy. Now we’re told the vote won’t come before early November.
But November features off-year gubernatorial elections that look favorable for Republicans. In Virginia, Republican Bob McDonnell holds a commanding lead over Democrat Creigh Deeds. When Obama won the state last year, the reigning opinion was that his coalition was strong enough to move the Old Dominion firmly into the Democratic column. A McDonnell victory would shatter this illusion. It would give pause to the center-right Democrats about to tie their fortunes to the president. It would show that the enthusiasm in American politics is all on the right. Southern and Western Democrats may begin to ask, What's the rush? And then the longer the health care debate goes on, the more the momentum for grand reform will fade. Big schemes will be abandoned.

The health-reform Calvinists are wrong. Politics isn't physics. Legislative logrolling isn't gravity. Nothing is inevitable.

Let's see, the government can't get vaccine produced on time, and we're supposed to hand over our health care to them? Mark Tapscott asks the question in his blog. President Obama's late-night declaration of a nationwide public health emergency last night shouldn't be allowed to obscure the most important lesson of the developing swine flu crisis - The same government that only weeks ago promised abundant supplies of swine flu vaccine by mid-October will be running your health care system under Obamacare.

On Sept. 13, Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services, told ABC's This Week program that the government was on schedule to deliver an "ample supply" of swine flu vaccine by mid-October:

"We're on track to have an ample supply rolling by the middle of October. But we may have some early vaccine as early as the first full week in October. We'll get the vaccine out the door as fast as it rolls off the production line."

But here we are five weeks later and news reports are coming in from across the nation of long waiting lines of people wanting the shot, but being turned away because of grossly inadequate supplies. The typical explanation from public health officials is that the swine flu vaccine requires more time to be cultivated than seasonal flu vaccine. ...

NewsBusters wonders if the Obama folks are going to go after CBS after the "60 Minute" bit on Medicare fraud?
"60 Minutes" did a fabulous exposé Sunday on Medicare fraud that should be required viewing for all people who support a government run healthcare program in this country.

The facts and figures presented by CBS's Steve Kroft were disturbing as were the details concerning how shysters bilk the system for an estimated $60 billion a year.

As Kroft warned viewers in the segment's teaser, "We caution you that this story may raise your blood pressure, along with some troubling questions about our government's ability to manage a medical bureaucracy" ...

Rocco Landesman is Obama's boot-licking head of the National Endowment for the Arts. John Steele Gordon posts in Contentions.
... It's amazing how many people seem not to know where to look information up, or perhaps don't care, as they have things other than accuracy on their agenda. Take Rocco Landesman, the new head of the National Endowment of the Arts. In a speech in Brooklyn last week, he said of Barack Obama, “This is the first president that actually writes his own books since Teddy Roosevelt and arguably the first to write them really well since Lincoln.”
Oh, dear, where do I begin? Well, let’s start with grammar. It’s “the first president who,” not “the first president that.”

Second, he implicitly accuses Presidents Clinton, Bush 41, Reagan, Carter, Ford, Nixon, Johnson, Kennedy, Eisenhower, Truman, Hoover, Coolidge, and Wilson of having had their memoirs, autobiographies, and other works ghosted. ...

The Vatican's outreach to Anglicans attracted David Warren's attention. There has been very big news out of Rome, this past week, for all English-speaking Christians -- regardless of denomination, as I have realized from much e-mail. (The reader may recall that I am myself a Roman convert, from Anglicanism, and thus a natural recipient of such mail.)

The North American media have downplayed it, and focused coverage on the pettiest controversial points: "Is the Pope a homophobe?" "Was the Archbishop of Canterbury blindsided?" "Does this mean Catholic priests can now marry?" and other such questions, to each of which the answer is, very obviously, no. (In England, it was rather more front-page.)

What happened? In a sentence, the Vatican announced arrangements by which traditionalist Anglican congregations, in all the English-speaking countries, may apply and be received into communion with the Roman "universal" or Catholic church. (The word "catholic" means universal.)

One crucial point: that this was not an instance of the Vatican "poaching." For many years, since the Anglican communion started coming to pieces over the issue of female ordination in the 1970s, traditional Anglicans have been appealing to Rome for just what Rome finally offered: to be in full communion while also being allowed to keep their distinctive liturgical forms (founded in the magnificent Book of Common Prayer), and to "grandfather" several of their received customs, such as married priests. ...

WaPo op-ed advocates legalizing pot. And just as escalating the drug war over the past three decades hasn't caused a decrease in supply and demand, there's no good reason to believe that regulating drugs instead of outlawing them would cause an increase. If it did, why are drug usage rates in the Netherlands lower? People start and stop taking drugs for many different reasons, but the law seems to be pretty low on the list. Ask yourself: Would you shoot up tomorrow if heroin were legal?

Nobody wants a drug free-for-all; but in fact, that's what we already have in many communities. What we need is regulation. Distribution without regulation equals criminals and chaos -- what police see every day on some of our streets. People will buy drugs because they want to get high, and the question is only how and where they will buy them.

History provides some lessons. The 21st Amendment ending Prohibition did not force anybody to drink or any city to license saloons. In 1933, after the failure to ban alcohol, the feds simply got out of the game. Today, they should do the same -- and last week the Justice Department took a very small step in the right direction.

Without federal control, states, cities and counties would be free to bar or regulate drugs as they saw fit. Just as with alcohol and tobacco regulation, one size does not fit all; we would see local solutions to local problems.

Even without federal pressure, most states and cities would undoubtedly start by maintaining the status quo against drugs. That's fine. In these cases, police with or without federal assistance should focus on reducing
violence by pushing the drug trade off the streets. An effort to shift the nature of the illegal trade is different than declaring a war on drugs.

Regulating and controlling distribution is far more effective at clearing the corners of drug dealers than any SWAT crackdown. One can easily imagine that in some cities -- San Francisco, Portland and Seattle come to mind -- alternatives to arrest and incarceration could be tried. They could learn from the experience of the Dutch, and we could all learn from their successes and failures.

Regulation is hard work, but it's not a war. And it sure beats herding junkies.

Daily Telegraph, UK
The real climate change catastrophe
In a startling new book, Christopher Booker reveals how a handful of scientists, who have pushed flawed theories on global warming for decades, now threaten to take us back to the Dark Ages
by Christopher Booker

Next Thursday marks the first anniversary of one of the most remarkable events ever to take place in the House of Commons. For six hours MPs debated what was far and away the most expensive piece of legislation ever put before Parliament.

The Climate Change Bill laid down that, by 2050, the British people must cut their emissions of carbon dioxide by well over 80 per cent. Short of some unimaginable technological revolution, such a target could not possibly be achieved without shutting down almost the whole of our industrialised economy, changing our way of life out of recognition.

Even the Government had to concede that the expense of doing this – which it now admits will cost us £18 billion a year for the next 40 years – would be twice the value of its supposed benefits. Yet, astonishingly, although dozens of MPs queued up to speak in favour of the Bill, only two dared to question the need for it. It passed by 463 votes to just three.

One who voted against it was Peter Lilley who, just before the vote was taken, drew the Speaker’s attention to the fact that, outside the Palace of Westminster, snow was falling, the first October snow recorded in London for 74 years. As I observed at the time: “Who says that God hasn’t got a sense of humour?”

By any measure, the supposed menace of global warming – and the political response to it – has become one of the overwhelmingly urgent issues of our time. If one accepts the thesis that the planet faces a threat unprecedented in history, the implications are mind-boggling. But equally mind-boggling now are the implications of the price we are being asked to pay by our politicians to meet that threat. More than ever, it is a matter of the highest priority that we should know whether or not the assumptions on which the politicians base their proposals are founded on properly sound science.

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It is a story that has unfolded in three stages. The first began back in the Seventies when a number of scientists noticed that the world’s temperatures had been falling for 30 years, leading them to warn that we might be heading for a new ice age. Then, in the mid-Seventies, temperatures started to rise again, and by the mid-Eighties, a still fairly small number of scientists – including some of those who had been predicting a new ice age – began to warn that we were now facing the opposite problem: a world dangerously heating up, thanks to our pumping out CO₂ and all those greenhouse gases inseparable from modern civilisation.

In 1988, a handful of the scientists who passionately believed in this theory won authorisation from the UN to set up the body known as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). This was the year when the scare over global warming really exploded into the headlines, thanks above all to the carefully staged testimony given to a US Senate Committee by Dr James Hansen, head of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS), also already an advocate for the theory that CO₂ was causing potentially catastrophic warming.

The disaster-movie scenario that rising levels of CO₂ could lead to droughts, hurricanes, heatwaves and, above all, that melting of the polar ice caps, which would flood half the world’s major cities, struck a rich chord. The media loved it. The environmentalists loved it. More and more politicians, led by Al Gore in the United States, jumped on the bandwagon. But easily their most influential allies were the scientists running the new IPCC, led by a Swedish meteorologist Bert Bolin and Dr John Houghton, head of the UK Met Office. The IPCC, through its series of weighty reports, was now to become the central player in the whole story. But rarely has the true nature of any international body been more widely misrepresented. It is commonly believed that the IPCC consists of “1,500 of the world’s top climate scientists”, charged with weighing all the scientific evidence for and against “human-induced climate change” in order to arrive at a “consensus”.

In fact, the IPCC was never intended to be anything of the kind. The vast majority of its contributors have never been climate scientists. Many are not scientists at all. And from the start, the purpose of the IPCC was not to test the theory, but to provide the most plausible case for promoting it. This was why the computer models it relied on as its chief source of evidence were all programmed to show that, as CO₂ levels continued to rise, so temperatures must inevitably follow.

One of the more startling features of the IPCC is just how few scientists have been centrally involved in guiding its findings. They have mainly been British and American, led for a long time by Dr Houghton (knighted in 1991) as chairman of its scientific working group, who in 1990 founded the Met Office’s Hadley Centre for research into climate change. The centre has continued to play a central role in selecting the IPCC’s contributors to this day, and along with the Climate Research Unit run by Professor Philip Jones at the University of East Anglia, controls HadCrut, one of the four official sources of global temperature data (another of the four, GISTemp, is run by the equally committed Dr Hansen and his British-born right-hand man, Dr Gavin Schmidt).

With remarkable speed, from the time of its first report in 1990, the IPCC and its computer models won over many of the world’s politicians, led by those of the European Union. In 1992, the UN staged its extraordinary Earth Summit in Rio, attended by 108 prime ministers and heads of state, which agreed the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change; and this led in 1997 to the famous Kyoto Protocol, committing the world’s governments to specific targets for reducing CO₂.

Up to this point, the now officially accepted global-warming theory seemed only too plausible. Both CO₂ levels and world temperatures had continued to rise, exactly as the IPCC’s computer models predicted. We thus entered the second stage of the story, lasting from 1998 to 2006, when the theory seemed to be carrying everything before it.

The politicians, most notably in the EU, were now beginning to adopt every kind of measure to combat the supposed global-warming menace, from building tens of thousands of wind turbines to creating elaborate schemes for buying and selling the right to emit CO₂, the gas every plant in the world needs for life.
But however persuasive the case seemed to be, there were just beginning to be rather serious doubts about the methods being used to promote it. More and more questions were being asked about the IPCC’s unbalanced approach to evidence – most notably in its promotion of the so-called “hockey stick” graph, produced in time for its 2001 report by a hitherto obscure US scientist Dr Michael Mann, purporting to show how global temperatures had suddenly been shooting up to levels quite unprecedented in history.

One of the hockey stick’s biggest fans was Al Gore, who in 2006 made it the centrepiece of his Oscar-winning film, An Inconvenient Truth. But it then turned out that almost every single scientific claim in Gore’s film was either wildly exaggerated or wrong. The statistical methods used to create the hockey-stick graph were so devastatingly exposed by two Canadian statisticians, Steve McIntyre and Ross McKitrick (as was confirmed in 2006 by two expert panels commissioned by the US Congress) that the graph has become one of the most comprehensively discredited artefacts in the history of science.

The supporters of the hockey stick, highly influential in the IPCC, hit back. Proudly calling themselves “the Hockey Team”, their membership again reflects how small has been the number of closely linked scientists centrally driving the warming scare. They include Philip Jones, in charge of the HadCrut official temperature graph, and Gavin Schmidt, Hansen’s right-hand man at GISS –which itself came under fire for “adjusting” its temperature data to exaggerate the warming trend.

Then, in 2007, the story suddenly entered its third stage. In a way that had been wholly unpredicted by those IPCC computer models, global temperatures started to drop. Although CO₂ levels continued to rise, after 25 years when temperatures had risen, the world’s climate was visibly starting to cool again.

More and more eminent scientists have been coming out of the woodwork to suggest that the IPCC, with its computer models, had got it all wrong. It isn’t CO₂ that has been driving the climate, the changes are natural, driven by the activity of the sun and changes in the currents of the world’s oceans.

The ice caps haven’t been melting as the alarmists and the models predicted they should. The Antarctic, containing nearly 90 per cent of all the ice in the world, has actually been cooling over the past 30 years, not warming. The polar bears are not drowning – there are four times more of them now than there were 40 years ago. In recent decades, the number of hurricanes and droughts have gone markedly down, not up.

As the world has already been through two of its coldest winters for decades, with all the signs that we may now be entering a third, the scientific case for CO₂ threatening the world with warming has been crumbling away on an astonishing scale.

Yet it is at just this point that the world’s politicians, led by Britain, the EU and now President Obama, are poised to impose on us far and away the most costly set of measures that any group of politicians has ever proposed in the history of the world – measures so destructive that even if only half of them were implemented, they would take us back to the dark ages.

We have “less than 50 days” to save the planet, declared Gordon Brown last week, in yet another desperate bid to save the successor to the Kyoto treaty, which is due to be agreed in Copenhagen in six weeks’ time. But no one has put the reality of the situation more succinctly than Prof Richard Lindzen of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, one of the most distinguished climatologists in the world, who has done as much as anyone in the past 20 years to expose the emptiness of the IPCC’s claim that its reports represent a “consensus” of the views of “the world’s top climate scientists”.

In words quoted on the cover of my new book, Prof Lindzen wrote: “Future generations will wonder in bemused amazement that the early 21st century’s developed world went into hysterical panic over a globally averaged temperature increase of a few tenths of a degree and, on the basis of gross exaggerations of highly exaggerated computer predictions combined into implausible chains of inference, proceeded to contemplate a rollback of the industrial age.”
Such is the truly extraordinary position in which we find ourselves.

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How long will it be before sanity and sound science break in on what begins to look like one of the most bizarre collective delusions ever to grip the human race?

'The Real Global Warming Disaster' by Christopher Booker (Continuum, £16.99) is available from Telegraph Books for £14.99 plus £1.25 postage and packing. To order, call 0844 871 1516 or go to books.telegraph.co.uk

**Weekly Standard**

**The Inevitability Myth**

*Health care reform is not a fait accompli*

by Matthew Continetti

Did the Democrats become Calvinists when we weren't looking? Lately they've been talking an awful lot about predestination. They want to claim that Obamacare's victory is foreordained, that the health care debate is over and--surprise, surprise--the liberals won.

So: Paul Krugman wrote on his blog that an "aura of inevitability" surrounds Obamacare. The *Washington Post*’s health care blogger wrote that this month's pro-Obama vote in the Senate Finance Committee "convincing many that health care reform was more of an inevitability than a possibility." A blogger for the *Atlantic Monthly* wrote that health care reform is a "fait accompli."

*Pas encore.* Yes, the chances of some sort of health bill passing, at some point, are by no means negligible--unfortunately. But there are many reasons to be skeptical of the future of Obamacare. Here are three:

**The Landscape.** "Our government rests in public opinion," Abraham Lincoln said in 1856. "Whoever can change public opinion, can change the government."

Public opinion is not on the Democrats' side. Most Americans remain satisfied with their health care. It's true that certain elements of the proposed reform, when isolated from others, poll well. But Congress isn't going to hold separate votes on each piece. Congress will be voting for the whole package. And the fact is that, ever since Congress began to assemble that package, more people have opposed the health care plan than favored it. The polls are striking. Since September 9, President Obama has campaigned strenuously for his plan, and it continues to lose support. And the Gallup poll says that Obama's ratings plunge over the last three months is the largest quarterly drop for an elected president since 1953.

In other words, a polarizing chief executive is asking Congress to enact a $1 trillion entitlement and tax hike against the public's wishes. Won't Democrats whose seats are up in 2010 think twice before acceding to his demands?

**The Money.** A glance at the polls reveals the alarm at our ballooning national debt. The Congressional Budget Office concluded that the Senate Finance Committee's health care bill would pay for itself in its first 10 years, but only by imposing taxes and cutting Medicare. There is no reason to believe that the reform that comes to a floor vote will resemble the Finance bill. This bill is far too stingy for liberals. They are ready to add to the debt in order to achieve their social vision. They want universal coverage. They want more
generous subsidies.

But a left-liberal health care reform is a dicey proposition. Consider what happened last week in the Senate. Medicare is scheduled to reduce doctor's payments by more than 20 percent in 2010. The Democrats wanted to restore those cuts at a cost of $247 billion in unfunded liabilities. But, when Harry Reid tried to end debate on the measure last week, he failed. Joe Lieberman and 12 Democrats voted against the Senate Democratic leadership and for fiscal responsibility. Reid can't get 60 votes for a payoff to the American Medical Association. What makes the White House think he can get 60 for Obamacare?

The Calendar. Obama originally wanted a bill before summer's end. Didn't happen. Back in September, lawmakers expected Pelosi to hold a vote by the end of that month. No go. Then the deadline was the end of October. Another fantasy. Now we're told the vote won't come before early November.

But November features off-year gubernatorial elections that look favorable for Republicans. In Virginia, Republican Bob McDonnell holds a commanding lead over Democrat Creigh Deeds. When Obama won the state last year, the reigning opinion was that his coalition was strong enough to move the Old Dominion firmly into the Democratic column. A McDonnell victory would shatter this illusion. It would give pause to the center-right Democrats about to tie their fortunes to the president. It would show that the enthusiasm in American politics is all on the right. Southern and Western Democrats may begin to ask, What's the rush? And then the longer the health care debate goes on, the more the momentum for grand reform will fade. Big schemes will be abandoned.

The health-reform Calvinists are wrong. Politics isn't physics. Legislative logrolling isn't gravity. Nothing is inevitable.

Beltway Confidential
From the people who brought us the swine flu vaccine shortage - Government-run health care!
by Mark Tapscott

President Obama's late-night declaration of a nationwide public health emergency last night shouldn't be allowed to obscure the most important lesson of the developing swine flu crisis - The same government that only weeks ago promised abundant supplies of swine flu vaccine by mid-October will be running your health care system under Obamacare.

On Sept. 13, Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services, told ABC's This Week program that the government was on schedule to deliver an "ample supply" of swine flu vaccine by mid-October:

"We're on track to have an ample supply rolling by the middle of October. But we may have some early vaccine as early as the first full week in October. We'll get the vaccine out the door as fast as it rolls off the production line."

But here we are five weeks later and news reports are coming in from across the nation of long waiting lines of people wanting the shot, but being turned away because of grossly inadequate supplies. The typical explanation from public health officials is that the swine flu vaccine requires more time to be cultivated than seasonal flu vaccine.

That's no doubt true, but did federal public health officials just discover that fact? These are the same government officials who will be in charge of your health care under the government-run health care system being sought by Obama and Democratic leaders in Congress.
And the president’s declaration contains this statement that is rich with irony in the context of the debate on health care reform: "The foundation of our national approach to the H1N1 flu has been preparedness at all levels -- personal, business, and government -- and this proclamation helps that effort by advancing our overall response capability," according to Fox News.

The declaration will allow waiving of federal regulations on a case-by-case basis. But how will we waive an entire government-run health care system?

Here’s something else to think about: How will Obama and congressional Democrats seek to take advantage of this public health crisis? This is, after all, the administration that never lets a good crisis go to waste, right?

**UPDATE: H.L. Mencken would understand instantly**

Ralph Benko reminds us of these words of wisdom from the old Baltimore curmudgeon: “The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary.”

**UPDATE II: Vaccination line Hell**

Theblogprof reports from Oakland County, Michigan, where the vaccination wait was 5-7 hours. Don't miss the video. As theblogprof notes: This is "a prelude to what will happen under Obamacare."

**News Busters**

*’60 Minutes’: Medicare Fraud Raises 'Troubling Questions About Our Government's Ability to Manage a Medical Bureaucracy'*

by Noel Sheppard

"60 Minutes" did a fabulous exposé Sunday on Medicare fraud that should be required viewing for all people who support a government run healthcare program in this country.

The facts and figures presented by CBS's Steve Kroft were disturbing as were the details concerning how shysters bilk the system for an estimated $60 billion a year.

As Kroft warned viewers in the segment's teaser, *We caution you that this story may raise your blood pressure, along with some troubling questions about our government's ability to manage a medical bureaucracy*

STEVE KROFT, CBS: Of all the problems facing the United States right now, none are more important than healthcare. President Obama says rising costs are driving huge federal budget deficits that imperil our future, and that there is enough waste and fraud in the system to pay for health care reform if it was eliminated.

At the center of both issues is Medicare, the government insurance program that provides health care to 46 million elderly and disabled Americans. But it also provides a rich and steady income stream for criminals who are constantly finding new ways to steal a sizable chunk of the half a trillion dollars that are paid out each year in Medicare benefits.
In fact, Medicare fraud - estimated now to total about $60 billion a year - has become one of, if not the most profitable crimes in America.

We caution you that this story may raise your blood pressure, along with some troubling questions about our government's ability to manage a medical bureaucracy.

Kroft spoke with FBI special agent Brian Waterman and Kirk Ogrosky, a top justice department prosecutor:

BRIAN WATERMAN, FBI: There's a healthcare fraud industry where people do nothing but recruit patients, get patient lists, find doctors, look on the Internet, find different scams. There are entire groups and entire organizations of people that are dedicated to nothing but committing fraud, finding a better way to steal from Medicare.

KROFT: Is the Medicare fraud business bigger than the drug business in Miami now?

KIRK OGROSKY, JUSTICE DEPARTMENT: I think it's way bigger.

KROFT: What changed?

OGROSKY: The criminals changed...

WATERMAN: Sophistication.

OGROSKY: They've figured out that rather than stealing $100,000 or $200,000, they can steal $100 million. We have seen cases in the last six, eight months that involve a couple of guys that if they weren't stealing from Medicare might be stealing your car.

WATERMAN: You know, we were the king of the drugs in the '80s. We're king of healthcare fraud in the '90s and the 2000's.

Kroft also spoke to Attorney General Eric Holder:

ERIC HOLDER, ATTORNEY GENERAL: We have to understand this is a major fraud area. […]

KROFT: Why do you think it's been so attractive for the criminals?

HOLDER: Because I think it's been pretty easy. I think that they have found a way in which they have been able to get pretty substantial amounts of money with not a huge amount of effort and at least until now, without the possibility of great detection.

KROFT: With much fewer risks.

HOLDER: Much fewer risks. You'll see some of these people and they'll say "You know there is not a chance that you are going to have some other drug dealer shooting at you." The chances of being incarcerated were lower, the amount of time that you would spend in jail was smaller. All of which is different now.

Kroft then spoke to a man who claimed to have defrauded Medicare out of $20 million, after which Kroft said, "According to the FBI, all you have to do to get into this business is rent a cheap storefront office, find or create a front man to get an occupational license, bribe a doctor or forge a prescription pad, and obtain the names and ID numbers of legitimate Medicare patients you can bill the phony charges to."

WATERMAN: There's a whole industry of people out there that do nothing but provide patients.
Kroft narrated, "Once the crooked companies get hold of the patient lists, usually stolen from doctors' offices or hospitals, they begin running up all sorts of outlandish charges and submit them to Medicare for payment, knowing full well that the agency is required by law to pay the claims within 15 to 30 days, and that it has only enough auditors to check a tiny fraction of the charges to see if they are legitimate."

Later, Kroft asked Waterman, "There's something I don't understand. I mean, you're saying essentially people just fill out the phony paperwork, they send a bill to Medicare and they pay it."

WATERMAN: That's why you have companies that can run for 60, 90 days, and bill for ridiculous things. Because there are very few checks and balances to even determine whether these things a, were medically necessary, b, were ever given, or c, even physically possible for a patient with the kind of conditions they have.

A bit later in the segment, Kroft spoke with Kim Brandt, Medicare's director of program integrity. After he shared with her some of the scams he'd previously witnessed or been told about, he asked how crooks get away with it:

KIM BRANDT, MEDICARE DIRECTOR: We're as frustrated by that as the law enforcement officials that you went out with. And in fact, our primary focus over the past years has been to tighten our enrollment standards to make it so it's much harder for people like that to be able to get in the program, and to be able to commit that kind of fraud.

KROFT: Look, I'm sure that you're aware of these problems. But it doesn't seem like you're doing a very good job. I don't mean you personally, but I mean, the government. This is still like a huge problem, and getting worse, right?

BRANDT: Well, it really does come down to the size and scope of the Medicare program, and the resources that are dedicated to oversight and anti-fraud work. One of our biggest challenges has been that we have a program that pays out over a billion claims a year, over $430 billion, and our oversight budget has been extremely limited.

Just imagine what the fraud will be like if the government is responsible for everyone's healthcare.

As the segment drew to a close, Holder told Kroft something that should scare the heck out of everyone who wants government run insurance for all Americans: "I think people I don't think necessarily thought that something as well intentioned as Medicare and Medicaid would necessarily attract fraudsters. But I think we have to understand that it certainly has."

Yes we do.

Contentions
Pardon Me, but Your Sycophancy Is Showing
by John Steele Gordon

According to a story — unconfirmed by me — a reporter was interviewing Albert Einstein shortly after Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier in 1947. In the course of the conversation, the reporter asked Einstein what the speed of sound was at sea level. The physicist said he was sorry, but he couldn't remember exactly. The reporter expressed surprise that the world's greatest scientist didn't know something like that. Einstein looked at him balefully over the top of his reading glasses and said, "I know where I can look it up."

It's amazing how many people seem not to know where to look information up, or perhaps don't care, as they have things other than accuracy on their agenda. Take Rocco Landesman, the new head of the National Endowment of the Arts. In a speech in Brooklyn last week, he said of Barack Obama, "This is the
first president that actually writes his own books since Teddy Roosevelt and arguably the first to write them really well since Lincoln.”

Oh, dear, where do I begin? Well, let’s start with grammar. It’s “the first president who,” not “the first president that.”

Second, he implicitly accuses Presidents Clinton, Bush 41, Reagan, Carter, Ford, Nixon, Johnson, Kennedy, Eisenhower, Truman, Hoover, Coolidge, and Wilson of having had their memoirs, autobiographies, and other works ghosted. Many of them received research assistance (one could hardly write a modern presidential memoir without it), and many, no doubt, also received a good deal of editing. Presidents are not usually professional writers. But research and editorial assistance is by no means the same thing as resorting to a ghost writer. I can’t imagine Harry Truman using a ghost writer. Herbert Hoover wrote sixteen books in his life, including Fishing for Fun — and to Wash Your Soul, published three years after his death, and a translation (with his wife) from the Latin of De re Metallica. Just a guess, but I don’t think there are many ghosted 640-page translations around.

Woodrow Wilson was a college professor and president before entering politics. Congressional Government: A Study in American Politics, his best known work and one that ran through many editions, was not ghost written.

Third, Landesman implicitly accuses Theodore Roosevelt of being, unlike Barack Obama, a second-rate writer. Roosevelt wrote a total of 38 books in his life (not to mention countless magazine articles and thousands of letters, all while holding a day job and living only sixty years). His first, The Naval War of 1812, written when he was 23, is considered a basic historical text on that subject and is still both highly readable and in print. Will The Audacity of Hope be in print a 125 years after it was published?

Fourth, Landesman seems ignorant of even the existence of The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant. They were written in the last months of Grant’s life (he died in agony from throat cancer three days after he finished the manuscript). They are universally regarded as the greatest military memoirs since Caesar’s Commentaries, and among the genuine masterpieces of American literature. Perhaps Mr. Landesman should give them a try if he doesn’t object to reading memoirs written by someone who had actually done something (like — you know — save the Union) before writing them.

Fifth, Lincoln never wrote a book.

What is it about Barack Obama that causes such cringe-inducing butt-kissing?

Ottawa Citizen
Gathering home
by David Warren

There has been very big news out of Rome, this past week, for all English-speaking Christians -- regardless of denomination, as I have realized from much e-mail. (The reader may recall that I am myself a Roman convert, from Anglicanism, and thus a natural recipient of such mail.)

The North American media have downplayed it, and focused coverage on the pettiest controversial points: "Is the Pope a homophobe?" "Was the Archbishop of Canterbury blindsided?" "Does this mean Catholic priests can now marry?" and other such questions, to each of which the answer is, very obviously, no. (In England, it was rather more front-page.)

What happened? In a sentence, the Vatican announced arrangements by which traditionalist Anglican congregations, in all the English-speaking countries, may apply and be received into communion with the Roman "universal" or Catholic church. (The word "catholic" means universal.)
One crucial point: that this was not an instance of the Vatican "poaching." For many years, since the Anglican communion started coming to pieces over the issue of female ordination in the 1970s, traditional Anglicans have been appealing to Rome for just what Rome finally offered: to be in full communion while also being allowed to keep their distinctive liturgical forms (founded in the magnificent Book of Common Prayer), and to "grandfather" several of their received customs, such as married priests.

This is not a "merger." Nothing is immediately changed for practising Catholics.

Indirectly, however, the reception of these traditional Anglicans will create very exciting possibilities for all English-speaking Catholics on the "liturgical" front: for the traditional Anglicans retain, in intensely beautiful English, a liturgy that is actually more "catholic" in spirit and form than the rather crass and now dated "contemporary translations" Rome mistakenly approved at the end of the 1960s, in the depths of the post-Vatican II meltdown. Those old Anglicans can help us recover our own more reverent liturgical traditions.

And of course, the announcement creates a precedent, that may well prove significant for other congregations of Protestant "traditionalists" now appealing to Rome. But the view down that road is unforeseeable.

This is also, incidentally, the opposite of a hostile takeover. That many "mainstream" Anglicans, who bought (often sleepily) into the various post-modern "reforms" in their church, may have their noses out of joint is unfortunate but unavoidable. It was they, not the traditionalists, who set about reversing Christian teachings and customs going right back to Christ. And many of them, who now regret what they did as they harvest the squalid consequences, will also in the course of time "cross back over the Tiber" -- for the only alternative is continuing to drift away from Christianity entirely.

The same comment goes for moans (from places like the New York Times) about how this sabotages ecumenical negotiations between Romans and Anglican/Episcopalian going back to the 1960s. Those talks were like the "roadmap to peace" in the Middle East, i.e. a joke of ever-increasing staleness. They were for all practical purposes obviated the moment Canterbury started abandoning all her surviving catholic traditions, thus herself moving farther away from Rome.

The real schism-healing ecumenical conversation is anyway not happening in the north of Europe, but in the east, between Catholics and Orthodox. After that comes the American conversation, between Catholics and Evangelicals. "Mainstream Protestantism" no longer comes into this, for it is now dying out.

For the longer run, it is ever more obvious that the conflict will not be between Catholics and Protestants, as it was for centuries after the Reformation. The real conflict today is becoming more and more like that in the late Roman Empire -- between Christians and lions -- as an increasingly self-confident atheist force within society, controlling the courts, seeks ever stricter ways to suppress any kind of religious expression, through ever more intrusive and absurd "human rights" jackbooting.

This, paradoxically -- or rather, not paradoxically at all in view of 2,000 years of Christian history -- is in turn fuelling Christian unity, via the notion that we might as well hang together, since we are all going to hang. It is an idea well expressed in this remark I received from a thoughtful Baptist gentleman about the announcement in Rome:

"I have wondered what it would look like if we all could come back together in one church. It would invite persecution, I would think. Ultimately, that is an upside."

Again, I must stress to my non-Christian readers that the faithful Christians among them do think differently, about most things, and so the categories into which secular questions are sorted do not apply to religious questions. We don't think humans are in control of the universe. We think God is, and that what is interesting about it will unfold, not because we have a plan, but because He does.
And that goes for all Christians, not only Catholics -- for whom the pope in Rome is the legitimate heir of Peter, but therefore also the mere servant of a Lord whose directions are the final ones.

**Washington Post**

**If it's on the shelves, it's off the streets**

by Peter Moskos

When an indoor public smoking ban took effect in the Netherlands in the summer of 2008, the worry wasn't so much for the one-third of Dutch adults who smoke cigarettes. Bars and restaurants went smoke-free without much problem.

A more intriguing concern was for the effect on the uniquely Dutch institution of marijuana-selling "coffee shops." If a place calls itself a coffee shop, that means three things: One, there is marijuana and hash for sale; two, for the price of a coffee, you may sit and smoke your own; and three, you will not be arrested.

The smoking ban does not apply to marijuana, but Dutch who smoke it almost always mix it with tobacco. So while the pot is still okay, the tobacco in the joint isn't. Larger coffee shops have built walls and separate smoking rooms. Smaller shops make people smoke outside or hope the authorities will simply tolerate a little illegal tobacco along with the marijuana.

The Dutch classify marijuana as a "soft drug," which means that, like alcohol and tobacco, it is best regulated through controlled distribution. "Hard drugs," such as cocaine and heroin, remain illegal. But personal drug use is more a health matter than an arrestable offense.

Even the Amsterdam police want to keep the coffee shops open. "Why push drug use underground?" asked Christian Koers, the police chief responsible for Amsterdam's red-light district. "Then you cannot control it, and it becomes more popular and more dangerous."

This idea -- that drugs are both enjoyable and dangerous and thus better regulated than prohibited by government and sold by criminals -- seems common-sense enough, even in America. Until now, the main opposition to a state's right to legalize marijuana has been the federal government. But last week, in a major policy shift, the U.S. Justice Department instructed federal prosecutors not to focus on "individuals whose actions are in clear and unambiguous compliance with existing state laws providing for the medical use of marijuana."

In a memo explaining the new guidelines, Deputy Attorney General David Ogden emphasized that the department is not ending the war on drugs. But it's the first time the federal government has paused and taken a small step back. And though the change will affect few, at least in some states doctors and terminal cancer patients should no longer fear federal arrest.

Thirteen U.S. states have already legalized medicinal marijuana in some way, and last week Wisconsin jumped on the bandwagon. "It's pretty hard to say that a doctor actually thinks marijuana would be helpful and the doctor can't prescribe it, whereas [he] could prescribe morphine," said Gov. Jim Doyle. "We prescribe much more dangerous drugs."

Certainly, the legalization of medicinal marijuana has not always been an unalloyed success. Dispensaries don't always make the best neighbors, and Los Angeles is trying to reduce their numbers. But it is nonetheless refreshing to see states and cities debating drug policy and regulation. And as that happens, we should notice how much easier it is to close a licensed store than an illegal drug corner.

Three years before I became a Baltimore police officer in 1999, I started my research with the Amsterdam police. The Dutch approach toward drugs, by and large, works. Without declaring a war, authorities there
have managed to lower addiction rates, limit use and save lives. The United States, by contrast, spends $50 billion a year on its war on drugs and leads the world in illegal drug use, with millions of Americans regularly using marijuana, cocaine and ecstasy.

Clearly, what we're doing doesn't work.

There is little violence surrounding the private drug trade between friends, coworkers and family members. The real drug problem, along with addictive heroin and crystal meth, is illegal public dealing. In public drug markets, signs of violence are everywhere: Intimidating groups of youths stand on corners under graffiti memorializing slain friends; addicts roam the streets and squat in vacant buildings; "decent" people stay inside when gunshots ring out in the night.

As a police officer, I responded when citizens called 911 to report drug dealing. Those calls didn't tell me much, though, because I already knew the drug corners. And what could I do? When a police car pulls up to a drug corner, the corner pulls back. Dealers, friends, addicts and lookouts walk slowly away.

I didn't chase them. If I did, they'd ditch the drugs. What would I do if I caught them? Charge them with felony running? A smart dealer doesn't hold drugs and money and guns. He's got workers for that. Besides, an anonymous call to police doesn't give the legal "probable cause" needed for a search. So I'd walk up, perhaps frisk for weapons and stand there until "my" corner was clear.

But soon enough I'd have to answer another 911 call for drugs. And when I left, the crew would reconvene. One of my partners put it succinctly: "We can't do anything. Drugs were here before I was born, and they're going to be here after I die. All they pay us to do is herd junkies."

In Amsterdam, the red-light district is the oldest and most notorious neighborhood. Two picturesque canals frame countless small pedestrian alleyways lined with legal prostitutes, bars, porn stores and coffee shops. In 2008, I visited the local police station and asked about the neighborhood's problems. I laughed when I heard that dealers of fake drugs were the biggest police issue -- but it's true. If fake-drug dealers are the worst problem in the red-light district, clearly somebody is doing something right.

In another neighborhood in Amsterdam, a man caught breaking into cars was released pending trial. The arresting officer returned to him, along with his shoelaces and personal property, his heroin and drug tools. I was amazed. The officer admitted he wasn't supposed to do that; heroin is illegal. But the officer had thought it through: "As soon as he runs out of his heroin, he'll break into another car to get money for his next hit."

For the addict, the problem was drugs. But for the police officer, the problem was crime. It made no sense, the officer told me, to take the drugs and hasten the addict's next crime. The addict was not a criminal when he had drugs (beyond possessing them); he was a criminal when he didn't have drugs.

I asked the officer if giving drugs to addicts sends the wrong message. He said his message was simple: "Stop breaking into cars!" With a subtle smirk in my direction, he added, "It is very strange that a country as violent as America is so obsessed with jailing drug addicts." Indeed, Dutch policymakers plan, regulate, fix and pragmatically debate harms and benefits. Police in the Netherlands are not involved in a drug war; they're too busy doing real police work.

The results are telling. In America, 37 percent of adults have tried marijuana; in the Netherlands the figure is 17 percent. Heroin usage rates are three times higher in the United States than in the Netherlands. Crystal meth, so destructive here, is almost nonexistent there. By any standard -- drug usage rates, addiction, homicides, incarceration and dollars spent -- America has lost the war on drugs.

And just as escalating the drug war over the past three decades hasn't caused a decrease in supply and demand, there's no good reason to believe that regulating drugs instead of outlawing them would cause an increase. If it did, why are drug usage rates in the Netherlands lower? People start and stop taking drugs for
many different reasons, but the law seems to be pretty low on the list. Ask yourself: Would you shoot up tomorrow if heroin were legal?

Nobody wants a drug free-for-all; but in fact, that's what we already have in many communities. What we need is regulation. Distribution without regulation equals criminals and chaos -- what police see every day on some of our streets. People will buy drugs because they want to get high, and the question is only how and where they will buy them.

History provides some lessons. The 21st Amendment ending Prohibition did not force anybody to drink or any city to license saloons. In 1933, after the failure to ban alcohol, the feds simply got out of the game. Today, they should do the same -- and last week the Justice Department took a very small step in the right direction.

Without federal control, states, cities and counties would be free to bar or regulate drugs as they saw fit. Just as with alcohol and tobacco regulation, one size does not fit all; we would see local solutions to local problems.

Even without federal pressure, most states and cities would undoubtedly start by maintaining the status quo against drugs. That's fine. In these cases, police with or without federal assistance should focus on reducing violence by pushing the drug trade off the streets. An effort to shift the nature of the illegal trade is different than declaring a war on drugs.

Regulating and controlling distribution is far more effective at clearing the corners of drug dealers than any SWAT crackdown. One can easily imagine that in some cities -- San Francisco, Portland and Seattle come to mind -- alternatives to arrest and incarceration could be tried. They could learn from the experience of the Dutch, and we could all learn from their successes and failures.

Regulation is hard work, but it's not a war. And it sure beats herding junkies.

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Go ahead and be a pothead... just make sure you don't break any real laws.

Whack!

...like watching Fox News.

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The watchdog that didn't bark.