

March 8, 2010

Purple fingers in Iraq again. Story in [The Corner](#).

[Marty Peretz](#) reviews various commentary on the success of Iraq. Here he looks at Tom Ricks' description of the catch-22 that Obama has created for himself.

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[Fouad Ajami](#) also comments on one of the most amazing events in the Middle East. All of the cynicism from the Left regarding how we came to invade Iraq cannot tarnish the remarkable democracy of this once tortured nation.

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You don't have access to *Pickings* circa 2005, but we do. We replay a Mark Steyn column from *The Australian* on the occasion of the first elections in post-war Iraq. This is from February 1, 2005.

*... Three years ago, Jonathan Kay of Canada's National Post wrote that if Robert Mugabe turned up at an Arab League meeting he'd be the most democratically legitimate leader in the room. That's no longer true.*

*What happened on Sunday was a victory for the Iraqi people and a vindication for a relatively small group of Western politicians -- most notably the much-maligned US Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, whose faith in those Iraqi people turned out to be so much shrewder than the sneers of his detractors.*

*John Kerry is wrong. It's time for him and Ted Kennedy and Kim Beazley and Paul McGeough to stop under-hyping. If freedom isn't on the march, it's moving forward dramatically in a region notoriously inimical to it.*

*This weekend's election was a rebuke to the parochial condescension of the West's elites.*

*"These elections are a joke," Juan Cole, a professor of modern Middle East history at the University of Michigan, told Reuters. Sorry, professor, the joke's on you. And the modern Middle East history is being made by the fledgling democracy of the new Iraq.*

As if global warming alarmists don't have enough problems, now Paul Ehrlich is coming to their defense. [Mitch Berg](#) has the story in *Hot Air*.

*... Ehrlich started his academic career as an entomologist, an expert on Lepidoptera – butterflies. But in 1968 he wrote one of the biggest best-sellers in the history of pseudo-scientific literature, *The Population Bomb*. In it, Ehrlich reprised the work of Thomas Malthus, arguing that population growth would eventually, inevitably lead mankind to three choices: Stop making new humans, stop consuming resources, or starve to death. The book started "The battle to feed all of humanity is over ... hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death." He spent much of the next decade writing other books and articles in support of his thesis in *Population Bomb*, adding in a later article "By 1985 enough millions will have died to reduce the earth's population to some acceptable level, like 1.5 billion people." The book and his body of "work" through the seventies proposed a number of radical solutions to the overpopulation crisis; dumping sterilizing agents into water supplies, allowing only selected people the privilege of reproduction, and performing mass "triage" of nations, the same way an emergency room triages patients – between those who don't need help (North America, Australia, parts of Europe), those who can be saved, and those who are beyond help – India, Sub-Saharan Africa, and much of Asia, which he predicted would be hell on earth by the 1980's; he essentially gave up all hope for Africa and India. Our ecology was going to strike back at us; in a 1969 article, "Eco-Catastrophe!", he predicted that by the end of the century the population of the US would be under 20 million, and our life expectancy would be around 40 years – due not to starvation, but to pesticides. ...*

In the *Weekly Standard*, [Steven Hayward](#) looks at the fortunate demise of the global warming conspiracy. He neglects to cover one thing: will the Climategate hackers win the Nobel Prize too?

*... Two weeks ago the World Meteorological Association pulled the rug out from under one of Gore's favorite talking points—that climate change will mean more tropical storms. A new study by the top scientists in the field concluded that although warmer oceans might make for stronger tropical storms in the future, there has been no climate-related trend in tropical storm activity over recent decades and, further, there will likely be significantly fewer tropical storms in a warmer world. "We have come to substantially different conclusions from the IPCC," said lead author Chris Landsea, a scientist at the National Hurricane Center in Florida. ...*

*...A London Times headline last month summarizes the shocking revision currently underway: "World May Not Be Warming, Scientists Say." ... Skeptics such as Anthony Watts, Joseph D'Aleo, and Stephen McIntyre have been pointing out the defects in the surface temperature record for years, but the media and the IPCC ignored them. Watts and D'Aleo have painstakingly documented (and in many cases photographed) the huge number of temperature stations that have been relocated, corrupted by the "urban heat island effect," or placed too close to heat sources such as air conditioning compressors, airports, buildings, or paved surfaces, as well as surface temperature series that are conveniently left out of the IPCC reconstructions and undercut the IPCC's simplistic story of rising temperatures. The compilation and statistical treatment of global temperature records is hugely complex, but the skeptics such as Watts and D'Aleo offer compelling critiques showing that most of the reported warming disappears if different sets of temperature records are included, or if compromised station records are excluded.*

*The puzzle deepens when more accurate satellite temperature records, available starting in 1979, are considered. There is a glaring anomaly: The satellite records, which measure temperatures in the middle and upper atmosphere, show very little warming since 1979 and do not match up with the ground-based measurements. Furthermore, the satellite readings of the middle- and upper-air temperatures fail to record any of the increases the climate models say should be happening in response to rising greenhouse gas concentrations. ... Bottom line: Expect some surprises to come out of the revisions of the surface temperature records that will take place over the next couple of years.*

*Eventually the climate modeling community is going to have to reconsider the central question: Have the models the IPCC uses for its predictions of catastrophic warming overestimated the climate's sensitivity to greenhouse gases? Two recently published studies funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, one by Brookhaven Lab scientist Stephen Schwartz in the Journal of Geophysical Research, and one by MIT's Richard Lindzen and Yong-Sang Choi in Geophysical Research Letters, both argue for vastly lower climate sensitivity to greenhouse gases. ...*

**Thomas Sowell** continues with his health care columns explaining one of the unintended effects of comprehensive health insurance plans. When doctors have to deal with the hassles of third-party bureaucracy to get paid, much less Obamacare socialist medicine, we have less doctors. *...Those who are old enough to have paid off their medical school debts long ago, and successful enough that they can afford to retire early, or to take jobs as medical consultants, can opt out of the whole elaborate third-party payment system and its problems. What the rising costs of medical liability insurance has already done for some, other hassles that bureaucracies and politicians create can have the same effect for others.*

*There is another group that doesn't have to put up with these hassles. These are young people who have reached the stage in their lives when they are choosing which profession to enter, and weighing the pluses and minuses before making their decisions.*

*Some of these young people might prefer becoming a doctor, other things being equal. But the heady schemes of government-controlled medicine, and the ever more bloated bureaucracies that these heady schemes will require, can make it very unlikely that other things will be equal in the medical profession. ...*

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## The Cornet

[Purple Power](#) [Daniel Foster]



Via [the Feed](#), the [photo](#) of the day: a girl in Iraq who asked to ink her finger even though she is too young to vote.

## The Spine

[Sorry, But The Verdict Is In On The Long American Excursion In Iraq. And It Is Favorable](#)

by Marty Peretz

There were moments--long moments--during the Iraq war when I had my doubts. Even deep doubts. Frankly, I couldn't quite imagine any venture requiring trust with Arabs turning out especially well. This is, you will say, my prejudice. But some prejudices are built on real facts, and history generally proves me right. Go ahead, prove me wrong.

Of course, Iraq hasn't turned out *that* well. Sunni *jihadniks* are still routinely murdering pious Shi'a on pilgrimage to Karbala. Still...

There are three especially compelling personal testimonies arguing that Iraq is on its way to making its own inter-ethnic and inter-sectarian history, and it will be a relatively democratic history.

The last of these judgments came today, and it came from Gordon Brown, the British prime minister who is under Tory siege in the May elections. Iraq was always an unpopular war into which Brown's predecessor, Tony Blair, also a Laborite inhabiting 10 Downing Street, led the Brits under the command of America. Brown's last statement in this regard, including some politic dissents from George Bush's early Iraq policy, [appears](#) in Friday's *New York Times*.

The second of these *pronunciamentos* comes from Tom Ricks, authoritative or especially believable because of his authorship of two critical books on the American venture in Iraq, [Fiasco](#) and [The Gamble](#). In "Extending Our Stay in Iraq," an [op-ed](#) in last Wednesday's *Times*, Ricks focuses on President Obama's coming predicament. Having pledged to start removing American troops early on, Obama may find that his withdrawal will come just at a time when U.S. personnel are needed most. The president put himself long ago--during the campaign, when he played to the crowds--in this Iraqi conundrum. In his West Point

address, he repeated the promise of withdrawal from Afghanistan when our presence there could be most important. This is a tic of the president's, as a recent *TNR* [editorial](#) pointed out and as Dexter Filkins [argued](#) in the same issue. Ricks concludes that American and Iraqi leaders "may come to recognize that the best way deter a return to civil war is to find a way to keep 30,000 to 50,000 United States service members in Iraq for many years to come. ... As a longtime critic of the American invasion of Iraq, I am not happy about advocating a continued military presence there. Yet... just because you invade a country stupidly doesn't mean you should leave it stupidly."

In one way or another, the logic of this last sentence will be taken up by the Obami in their irresistible *volte face* on Iraq. It will be an embarrassment, an enormous one. But there is no alternative save shame and defeat.

Unlike Ricks, Fouad Ajami has no reason to be unhappy about the consequences of his historic arguments about Iraq. (By the way, if you haven't already, you should read Ajami's [review](#) in *TNR* of the searing Algerian novel, [The German Mujahid](#), by Boualem Sansal.) "Another Step Forward for Iraq" is his title and his [argument](#) in Wednesday's *Wall Street Journal*. He begins with a gentle slap at Vice President Joe Biden for having "the audacity of claiming on CNN's 'Larry King Live' that Iraq is destined to be 'one of the great achievements of this administration.'" I would call it *chutzpah*, especially for Joe, who, despairing all through the Iraq venture, recommended a break-up of the country into three sectarian and tribal states.

Ajami reopens the argument about Paul Bremer's order No. 1, which was an edict banning adherents of the Ba'ath from political life. It was, says Ajami, "a boon to the new Iraq," removing Hussein's gangsters without there being a bloodbath revenge against those who had "perpetrated on Iraqis a reign of the darkest terror" ... and the longest terror. Imagine post-World War II Germany without de-Nazification.

Ajami's argument is intricate and deepened by the knowledge of a history that other "experts" think they can pick up on the fly.

Here is his summation of it:

For decades, American policy makers have imbibed the Sunni orthodoxy of the Arab holders of power. That view seeped into the American official consciousness. It survived the terrors of 9/11 and the doctrines of the Sunni jihadists. America remained wedded to the idea of Shiite radicalism. Now a Shiite-led state in Baghdad could yet make its way into the American security structure in the region, and the Sunni rulers have taken up sword against it.

In the received wisdom of those who never took to the justice or the wisdom of the Iraq war, the balance of power in the region was upended by the destruction of the Saddam Hussein regime that had presumably served as a buffer against the Iranian theocracy.

But that view grieves for a golden era that never was. It was in the 1980s and the 1990s, when the tyranny of Saddam Hussein ran a regime of extortion and plunder in the region, that the Iranians made their way to the Mediterranean, formed and trained Hezbollah in Beirut and the Bekaa Valley, installed their proxies in southern Lebanon on Israel's northern border. It was in that fabled time that the Iranians spread mayhem all around and stoked the furies of the Sunni-Shiite schism that has poisoned the life of Islam.

There is a better way of "balancing" Iran: a regime in Baghdad endowed with the legitimacy of democratic norms. Of all that has been said about Iraq since the time that country became an American burden, nothing equals the stark formulation once offered by a diplomat not given to grandstanding and rhetorical flourishes. Said former U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker: "In the end, what we leave behind and how we leave will be more important than how we came."

We can already see the outline of what our labor has created: a representative government, a binational state of Arabs and Kurds, and a country that does not bend to the will of one man or one ruling clan.

WSJ

## [Another Step Forward for Iraq](#)

*A democratic country is emerging that answers neither to Sunni Arab states nor to Iranians.*

by Fouad Ajami

Forgive Vice President Joe Biden the audacity of claiming last month on CNN's "Larry King Live" that Iraq is destined to be "one of the great achievements of this administration." The larger point he made—that a representative government is taking hold in Baghdad—is on the mark.

As Iraq approaches its general elections on March 7, we should take yes for an answer. The American project in Iraq has midwived that rarest of creatures in the Greater Middle East: a government that emerges out of the consent of the governed. We should trust the Iraqis with their own history. That means letting their electoral process play out against the background of the Arab dynasties and autocracies, and of the Iranian theocracy next door that made a mockery out of its own national elections.

In a perfect world, the Iraqis would have left the past alone and avoided the ban that was imposed on some 500 candidates accused of ties to the Baath Party. But this is a matter for the Iraqis themselves. In the twilight of the American regency the United States can't order Iraqi political life.

Sure, there are some candidates tainted with Baathism who should have been allowed to take part in this round of elections. It would have been the better part of wisdom to let the Sunni parliamentarian Saleh al-Mutlaq participate. He is a gregarious man with natural political gifts, better inside the tent than outside.

But then, too, de-Baathification has never been ably defended and explained to the American public. In time, the idea has taken hold that de-Baathification was a matter of sectarian revenge: the newly ascendant Shiites striking back at their Sunni tormentors.



*Iraqi police post voting instructions in Basra, Iraq's second-largest city. Iraqis head to the polls for the national election on March 7.*

There was willfulness in this reading of de-Baathification. In the new Iraq, released by American power from its long nightmare, it was either de-Baathification or mass slaughter of yesterday's tormentors. The American regency in Iraq made its share of blunders. But that order No. 1 issued by proconsul Paul Bremer, banning the Baath, was a boon to the new Iraq. On the whole, the hand of vengeance was stayed. It was remarkable how little violence was unleashed on those who had perpetrated on Iraqis a reign of the darkest terror.

Nor is it true that a sister republic of the Iranian theocracy is emerging in Baghdad, as some American officials have suggested. This is a slur on Iraq and Iraqis, and on the vast Shiite majority to be exact.

So Iran has designs on Iraq. Well what of it? A long border, the traffic of centuries in faith and commerce, runs between the two countries. But no Iraqi project in the offing contemplates making Iraq a satrap of the Persian state. The Iraqis are neither Lebanese seeking outside patronage, nor Palestinians in need of

money and guns from foreign donors. They are a tough breed, they have their own material means, oil aplenty, and a determination to keep their country whole and theirs.

If anything, that border with Iran concentrates the Iraqi mind. The Iraqis know their Persian neighbors. The kind of romance about Iran entertained in the Bekaa Valley and Greater Beirut, or in the Gaza Strip, has no takers in Iraq. The Shiism of Iraq is tenacious and Arab through and through.

The sacred geography of Shiism is in Iraq, and clerics in the holy city of Najaf, or in Kazimiyya on the outskirts of Baghdad, display no deference to the theology of Qom. I hazard to guess from discussions with many Shiite jurists in Iraq that no one of any consequence in the clerical hierarchy believes that Iran's "Supreme Leader," Ali Khamenei, is a scholar of genuine standing and religious authority.

Iraqis of all stripes are wary of Iran. In the provincial elections of 2009, pro-Iranian candidates were trounced and Iraqi nationalists carried the day.

There plays upon Iraqis the hope that their country can make its own way, defying the obituaries of doom written for their new order in neighboring lands and beyond. There is a transparent parliamentary culture in Iraq, and we for our part ought to be proud of what we have given birth to.

Leave it to the Egyptians and the Arabs of the Peninsula and the Persian Gulf to belittle the new order in Iraq. They threw everything at it but it managed to survive. Peace has not settled upon Baghdad, but this Iraq, even in its current condition, is a rebuke to the dynasties and the dictatorships of the Arab world.

There will be irregularities in the Iraqi elections. Some votes are destined to be bought. But is the Egyptian regime of Hosni Mubarak, with the same man at the helm for three decades now, entitled to sit in judgment? The rulers around Iraq tax this Iraqi order with illegitimacy, dismiss it as a handmaiden of the Americans. But from one end of the Arab world to the other, countless regimes are in the orbit of the Pax Americana. Wily survivors, the Arab rulers frighten us with the scarecrow of a Shiite state in Baghdad.

For decades, American policy makers have imbibed the Sunni orthodoxy of the Arab holders of power. That view seeped into the American official consciousness. It survived the terrors of 9/11 and the doctrines of the Sunni jihadists. America remained wedded to the idea of Shiite radicalism. Now a Shiite-led state in Baghdad could yet make its way into the American security structure in the region, and the Sunni rulers have taken up sword against it.

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We can already see the outline of what our labor has created: a representative government, a binational state of Arabs and Kurds, and a country that does not bend to the will of one man or one ruling clan.

*Mr. Ajami, a professor at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, is the author of "The Foreigner's Gift" (Free Press, 2007).*

**The Australian (February 1, 2005)**

**Mark Steyn: The 'civil war' that wasn't**

***".....a dwindling supply of suicide bombers, a job in which by definition it's hard to get people with experience."***

AND so the "looming Iraqi election fiasco" joins "the brutal Afghan winter" and "the brutal Iraqi summer" and "the seething Arab street" and all the other junk in the overflowing trash can of post-9/11 Western media fictions. The sight of millions of brave voters emerging from polling stations holding high their purple dye-stained fingers was so inspiring that, from America's Democratic Party to European protest rallies, opponents of the war waited, oh, all of three minutes before flipping the Iraqis their own fingers, undyed.

"No one in the United States should try to over-hype this election," warned John Kerry yesterday before embarking on the world champion limbo dance of Iraqi election under-hyping.

He has a point. One vote does not a functioning democracy make. To be a truly advanced, sophisticated democracy you need an opposition party that knows how to react to good news by sounding whiny and grudging and moving the goalposts. "The real test is not the election," he declared, airily swatting aside 8 million voters. "The real test is..."

I dozed off at that point, so I'm unable to tell you what moved goalposts the senator inserted. But no doubt they involved, as they always do, the Bush administration needing to "reach out" more effectively to involve the "international community". "International community", by the way, doesn't mean Tony Blair, John Howard, the Poles, Japan, India, Fiji, et al but Jacques Chirac and Kofi Annan, a pantomime horse in which both men are playing the rear end. But, in an advanced, sophisticated democracy, that's how we define the "international community": no matter how many foreigners are in your coalition, it's unilateral unless Jacques is on board.

In Commonwealth countries, of course, we have the concept of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, so called because the Loyal Opposition carries on like a hysterical old queen. Thus, Kim Beazley, back in the saddle and already sore -- on the very eve of the Iraqi election triumph, when elementary prudence might have suggested waiting 24 hours before singing another refrain of When It's Quagmire Time on the Tigris.

But the old new Labor Party leader had barely taken possession of the keys to the executive washroom before he was "warning" the US that it risked being bogged down in -- all together now -- "a long-running civil war in Iraq".

How lame do you have to be to be the last guy on the planet to do the old "Iraq on the brink of civil war" routine? Just as "the brutal Afghan winter" that was supposed to mire shivering US forces in the graveyard of empire is now one-third of a decade behind schedule, so Iraq has now been "teetering on the brink of civil war" for coming up for two years. Brink-wise, that's quite a leisurely teeter. There's no danger of a "long-running civil war in Iraq". Instead, we've had a long-running hysteria about impending civil war in Iraq.

Indeed, as long runs go, predictions of Iraqi civil war are the Cats of doomsday scenarios -- except that, unlike Cats, it's all previews and no opening night. Tom Clark of Canada's CTV network was warning that "Iraq could be teetering on the brink of civil war" in August 2003. Graydon Carter, editor of the perfumed glossy Vanity Fair, was warning that Iraq was "on the brink of civil war" a month earlier.

To their credit, both men teetered on the brink of making a laughably inaccurate prediction and then plunged right in. What's the point of Beazley teetering on the brink of retirement for half a decade only to come back and hurl himself into the abyss of yesterday's clichés?

To hold a civil war you need two sides. Iraq fails to meet that minimum requirement. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi - not an Iraqi, incidentally -- has a few foreign jihadi, some enthusiastic head-hackers and a dwindling supply of suicide bombers, a job in which by definition it's hard to get people with experience. On election day, his guys bullied a kid with Down syndrome into taking the gig. You can't have a Sunni-Shia war because Zarqawi doesn't represent the Sunni. Meanwhile, in the face of his provocations, the Shia have been a model of restraint and discipline and political surefootedness. Beazley might learn a thing or two from them.

Granted, a footling suicide cult with no mass support will still blow up cars and burn buildings, and it's savvy enough to do so in parts of the country conveniently located so that Zarqawi's shills in the Western press corps don't have to stray far from their hotels to film it. Or as the internet satirist Scott Ott deftly summarised the coverage: "Iraqi Voting Disrupts News Reports of Bombings."

That's another sign that you're a mature, sophisticated democracy -- when you've got media so bogged down in the Vietnam-like quagmire of their ancient Vietnam quagmire analogies that they're unable to drag themselves free, whatever happens. The election was "an act of folly in the eyes of so many Iraqis", pronounced a confident Robert Fisk, the beloved comic doom-monger. Care to pin down that so many a bit more precisely, Robert?

In his own pre-election message, Zarqawi denounced the "evil" of democracy and warned any Iraqis who went along with it that they'd be regarded as having gone over to the other side. Yet at some Sunni Triangle precincts there were reports of 40 per cent voter turnout -- courageous men and women who were willing to defy the thugs and murderers in their own so-called stronghold.

That's not how Paul McGeough, The Sydney Morning Herald's man in Baghdad, sees things. Zarqawi may have issued an explicit threat against voting in the election, but according to McGeough yesterday, you weren't at risk of being killed for showing up but for staying away. "It was only a personal threat of violence that motivated some people to go to the polls." They came "only because of the gun at their backs".

How many would that be? Six million? Fourteen thousand? Couple of dozen? Hard to tell from McGeough's report. Perhaps he's just confused. Isn't it Australia where you're forced to vote whether you want to or not?

Three years ago, Jonathan Kay of Canada's National Post wrote that if Robert Mugabe turned up at an Arab League meeting he'd be the most democratically legitimate leader in the room. That's no longer true.

What happened on Sunday was a victory for the Iraqi people and a vindication for a relatively small group of Western politicians -- most notably the much-maligned US Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, whose faith in those Iraqi people turned out to be so much shrewder than the sneers of his detractors.

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This weekend's election was a rebuke to the parochial condescension of the West's elites.

"These elections are a joke," Juan Cole, a professor of modern Middle East history at the University of Michigan, told Reuters. Sorry, professor, the joke's on you. And the modern Middle East history is being made by the fledgling democracy of the new Iraq.

*Mark Steyn is a columnist with Britain's Telegraph group and a regular contributor to The Australian's Opinion page.*

## Hot Air

### Ehrlich's lifetime of hot air

by Mitch Berg

I was reading [Ed's piece](#) on the [apparent attempt](#) by “human-caused global warming” partisans at the National Academy of Sciences to attack their detractors (via the *NYTimes*, naturally, rather than via actual science or anything), and I came across this bit here (emphasis added):

“Most of our colleagues don't seem to grasp that we're not in a gentlepersons' debate, we're in a street fight against well-funded, merciless enemies who play by entirely different rules,” **Paul R. Ehrlich**, a Stanford University researcher, said in one of the e-mails.

Paul Ehrlich. Leading the attack.

Ladies and gentlemen, this battle may be over.

Ehrlich started his academic career as an entomologist, an expert on *Lepidoptera* – butterflies. But in 1968 he wrote one of the biggest best-sellers in the history of pseudo-scientific literature, *The Population Bomb*. In it, Ehrlich reprised the work of Thomas Malthus, arguing that population growth would eventually, inevitably lead mankind to three choices: Stop making new humans, stop consuming resources, or starve to death. The book started “*The battle to feed all of humanity is over ... hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death.*” He spent much of the next decade writing other books and articles in support of his thesis in *Population Bomb*, adding in a later article “By 1985 enough millions will have died to reduce the earth's population to some acceptable level, like 1.5 billion people.” The book and his body of “work” through the seventies proposed a number of radical solutions to the overpopulation crisis; dumping sterilizing agents into water supplies, allowing only selected people the privilege of reproduction, and performing mass “triage” of nations, the same way an emergency room triages patients – between those who don't need help (North America, Australia, parts of Europe), those who can be saved, and those who are behind help – India, Sub-Saharan Africa, and much of Asia, which he predicted would be hell on earth by the 1980's; he essentially gave up all hope for Africa and India. Our ecology was going to strike back at us; in a 1969 article, “Eco-Catastrophe!”, he predicted that by the end of the century the population of the US would be under 20 million, and our life expectancy would be around 40 years – due not to starvation, but to *pesticides*.

By the mid-seventies, though Ehrlich broadened his sights a bit, behind overpopulation and into geopolitics. In 1975's *The End of Affluence*, Ehrlich predicted cataclysmic food riots in America, leading the President to declare martial law. But it did no good – in Ehrlich's narrative – because the world was driven to destroy the US in a combined nuclear assault, spurred by our use of...

...pesticides.

He broadened it further with 1978's *The Race Bomb*, which was a paranoid melange on the dangers of racial diversity, followed by *The Golden Door: International Migration, Mexico, and the United States*, in which he called for sealing off the border long before it became Tom Tancredo's issue.

By the eighties, he'd joined with much of the left's elite (who were, by the by, not busy participating in food riots or race wars, and were well-fed enough to go to protests) in warning about the danger of nuclear war, joining with Carl Sagan to write [The Cold And The Dark](#), demanding the US disarm just in time for our generations of deterrence to render the point moot with the fall of the Soviet Union.

He was, of course, early on the Climate Change bandwagon, with *Betrayal of Science and Reason: How Anti-Environment Rhetoric Threatens Our Future*, a 1998 book co-authored with his wife Anne, which

basically served as a model for the left's response to questions about Global Warming this past decade – he didn't call for Nuremberg trials *per se*, but he wasn't that far off, either.

His body of work – at least, his work that impinges on politics and human events – has had three things in common.

He's blamed Western Civilization – especially our economic freedom – for successive waves of self-caused, predicted catastrophes.

He's prescription to deal with these catastrophes has been, in every case, for the individual to surrender his/her autonomy, and even future, to an all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful central entity that'll make all the hard, life and death choices for them.

And he's been wrong on every count. Humans, rather than sitting in caves waiting to get eaten by sabre tooth tigers, invented spears. Faced with floods, we invented the sandbag as an alternative to drowning and mildew. And faced with shortage of resources, we adapt. And humanity in the past forty years has adapted – learning to grow crops where we didn't before, learning to conserve farmland and water, developing new crops and practices.

Julian Simon, an American economist, [placed a bet with Ehrlich](#):

Simon set up a bet wherein he would sell Ehrlich \$1,000 dollars worth of any five commodities that Ehrlich chose. Ehrlich would hold the commodities for ten years. If the prices rose — meaning scarcity — Simon would buy the commodities back from Ehrlich at the higher price. If the prices fell, Ehrlich would pay Simon the difference. Professor Ehrlich jumped at the bet, noting that he wanted to “accept the offer before other greedy people jumped in.”

In October of 1990, Ehrlich mailed Simon a check for \$570.07. As Simon predicted, free markets provided lower prices and more options. Simon would have won even if prices weren't adjusted for inflation. He then offered to raise the wager to \$20,000 and use any resources at any time that Ehrlich preferred.

The bet never happened. Ehrlich moved on.

To global warming.

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# the weekly Standard

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## Weekly Standard In Denial

*The meltdown of the climate campaign.*

by Steven F. Hayward

It is increasingly clear that the leak of the internal emails and documents of the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia in November has done for the climate change debate what the Pentagon Papers did for the Vietnam war debate 40 years ago—changed the narrative decisively. Additional revelations of unethical behavior, errors, and serial exaggeration in climate science are rolling out on an almost daily basis, and there is good reason to expect more.

The U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), hitherto the gold standard in climate science, is under fire for shoddy work and facing calls for a serious shakeup. The U.S. Climate Action Partnership, the self-serving coalition of environmentalists and big business hoping to create a carbon cartel, is falling apart in the wake of the collapse of any prospect of enacting cap and trade in Congress. Meanwhile, the climate campaign's fallback plan to have the EPA regulate greenhouse gas emissions through the cumbersome Clean Air Act is generating bipartisan opposition. The British media—even the left-leaning, climate alarmists of the *Guardian* and BBC—are turning on the climate campaign with a vengeance. The somnolent American media, which have done as poor a job reporting about climate change as they did on John Edwards, have largely averted their gaze from the inconvenient meltdown of the climate campaign, but the rock solid edifice in the newsrooms is cracking. Al Gore was conspicuously missing in action before surfacing with a long article in the *New York Times* on February 28, reiterating his familiar parade of horrors: The sea level will rise! Monster storms! Climate refugees in the hundreds of millions! Political chaos the world over! It was the rhetorical equivalent of stamping his feet and saying "It is *too so!*" In a sign of how dramatic the reversal of fortune has been for the climate campaign, it is now James Inhofe, the leading climate skeptic in the Senate, who is eager to have Gore testify before Congress.

The body blows to the climate campaign did not end with the Climategate emails. The IPCC—which has produced four omnibus assessments of climate science since 1992—has issued several embarrassing retractions from its most recent 2007 report, starting with the claim that Himalayan glaciers were in danger of melting as soon as 2035. That such an outlandish claim would be so readily accepted is a sign of the credulity of the climate campaign and the media: Even if extreme global warming occurred over the next century, the one genuine scientific study available estimated that the huge ice fields of the Himalayas would take more than 300 years to melt—a prediction any beginning chemistry student could confirm with a calculator. (The actual evidence is mixed: Some Himalayan glaciers are currently expanding.) The source for the melt-by-2035 claim turned out to be not a peer-reviewed scientific assessment, but a report from an advocacy group, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), which in turn lifted the figure from a popular magazine article in India whose author later disavowed his offhand speculation.

But what made this first retraction noteworthy was the way in which it underscored the thuggishness of the climate establishment. The IPCC's chairman, Rajendra Pachauri (an economist and former railroad engineer who is routinely described as a "climate scientist"), initially said that critics of the Himalayan glacier melt prediction were engaging in "voodoo science," though it later turned out that Pachauri had been informed of the error in early December—in advance of the U.N.'s climate change conference in Copenhagen—but failed to disclose it. He's invoking the Charlie Rangel defense: It was my staff's fault.

The Himalayan retraction has touched off a cascade of further retractions and corrections, though the IPCC and other organs of climate alarmism are issuing their corrections *sotto voce*, hoping the media won't take notice. The IPCC's assessment that 40 percent of the Amazonian rain forest was at risk of destruction from climate change was also revealed to be without scientific foundation; the WWF was again the source. The *Daily Telegraph* identified 20 more claims of ruin in the IPCC's 2007 report that are based on reports from advocacy groups such as Greenpeace rather than peer-reviewed research, including claims that African agricultural production would be cut in half, estimates of coral reef degradation, and the scale of glacier melt in the Alps and the Andes. Numerous other claims were sourced to unpublished student papers and dissertations, or to misstated or distorted research.

Peer reviewers in the formal IPCC process had flagged many of these errors and distortions during the writing of the 2007 report but were ignored. For example, the IPCC claimed that the world is experiencing rapidly rising costs due to extreme weather related events brought on by climate change. But the underlying paper, when finally published in 2008, expressly contradicted this, saying, "We find insufficient evidence to claim a statistical relationship between global temperature increase and catastrophe losses." Perhaps the most embarrassing walkback was the claim that 55 percent of the Netherlands was below sea level, and therefore gravely threatened by rising sea levels. The correct number is 26 percent, which Dutch scientists say they tried to tell the IPCC before the 2007 report was published, to no avail. And in any case, a paper published last year in *Nature Geoscience* predicting a 21st-century sea level rise of up to 32 inches has been withdrawn, with the authors acknowledging mistaken methodology and admitting "we can no longer

draw firm conclusions regarding 21st century sea level rise from this study without further work.” The IPCC ignored several published studies casting doubt on its sea level rise estimates.

The IPCC isn't the only important node of the climate campaign having its reputation run through the shredder. The 2006 Stern Review, a British report on the economics of climate change named for its lead author, Lord Nicholas Stern, was revealed to have quietly watered down some of its headline-grabbing claims in its final published report because, as the *Telegraph* put it, “the scientific evidence on which they were based could not be verified.” Like rats deserting a sinking ship, scientists and economists cited in the Stern Review have disavowed the misuse of their work. Two weeks ago the World Meteorological Association pulled the rug out from under one of Gore's favorite talking points—that climate change will mean more tropical storms. A new study by the top scientists in the field concluded that although warmer oceans might make for stronger tropical storms in the future, there has been no climate-related trend in tropical storm activity over recent decades and, further, there will likely be significantly *fewer* tropical storms in a warmer world. “We have come to substantially different conclusions from the IPCC,” said lead author Chris Landsea, a scientist at the National Hurricane Center in Florida. (Landsea, who does not consider himself a climate skeptic, resigned from the IPCC in 2005 on account of its increasingly blatant politicization.)

It was a thorough debunking, as Roger Pielke Jr.'s invaluable blog ([rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com](http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com)) noted in highlighting key findings in the study:

What about more intense rainfall? “[A] detectable change in tropical-cyclone-related rainfall has not been established by existing studies.” What about changes in location of storm formation, storm motion, lifetime and surge? “There is no conclusive evidence that any observed changes in tropical cyclone genesis, tracks, duration and surge flooding exceed the variability expected from natural causes.” Bottom line? “[W]e cannot at this time conclusively identify anthropogenic signals in past tropical cyclone data.”

When Pielke, an expert on hurricane damage at the University of Colorado at Boulder, pointed out defects in the purported global-warming/tropical storm link in a 2005 edition of the *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, the lead author of the IPCC's work on tropical storms, Kevin Trenberth, called the article “shameful,” said it should be “withdrawn,” but in typical fashion refused to debate Pielke about the substance of the article.

Finally, the original Climategate controversy over the leaked documents from the University of East Anglia's Climate Research Unit (CRU) (see my “Scientists Behaving Badly,” *The Weekly Standard*, December 14, 2009) is far from over. The British government has determined that the CRU's prolonged refusal to release documents sought in 95 Freedom of Information requests is a potential criminal violation.

The rout has opened up serious divisions within the formerly closed ranks of the climate campaign. Before Climategate, expressing skepticism about catastrophic global warming typically got the hefty IPCC report thrown in your face along with the mantra that “2,500 of the world's top scientists all agree” about climate change. Now the IPCC is being disavowed like a Mission Impossible team with its cover blown. Senate Environment and Public Works chairman Barbara Boxer insisted on February 23 that she relied solely on U.S. scientific research and not the IPCC to support the EPA's greenhouse gas “endangerment finding.” In her opening statement at a hearing, Boxer said, “I didn't quote one international scientist or IPCC report. . . . We are quoting the American scientific community here.” The U.N. has announced that it will launch an “independent review” of the IPCC, though like the British investigation of the CRU, the U.N. review will probably be staffed by “settled science” camp followers who will obligingly produce a whitewash. But Pachauri's days as IPCC chairman are likely numbered; there are mounting calls from within the IPCC for Pachauri to resign, amid charges of potential conflicts of interest (like Gore, Pachauri is closely involved with commercial energy schemes that benefit from greenhouse gas regulation) but also in part because Pachauri chose this delicate moment to publish a soft-core pornographic novel. (The main character is an aging environmentalist and engineer engaged in a “spiritual journey” that includes meeting Shirley MacLaine, detailed explorations of the Kama Sutra, and group sex.)

Robert Watson, Pachauri's predecessor as chairman of the IPCC from 1997 to 2002, told the BBC: "In my opinion, Dr. Pachauri has to ask himself, is he still credible, and the governments of the world have to ask themselves, is he still credible." Not the most ringing endorsement. Yvo de Boer, the head of the U.N.'s Framework Convention on Climate Change (the diplomatic contrivance that produced the Kyoto Protocol and the Copenhagen circus), announced his surprise resignation on February 18. De Boer will join the private sector after years of saying that warming is the greatest threat humanity has ever faced.

The climate campaign is a movement unable to hide its decline. Skeptics and critics of climate alarmism have long been called "deniers," with the comparison to Holocaust denial made explicit, but the denier label now more accurately fits the climate campaigners. Their first line of defense was that the acknowledged errors amount to a few isolated and inconsequential points in the report of the IPCC's Working Group II, which studies the *effects* of global warming, and not the more important report of the IPCC's Working Group I, which is about the science of global warming. Working Group I, this argument goes, is where the real action is, as it deals with the computer models and temperature data on which the "consensus" conclusion is based that the Earth has warmed by about 0.8 degrees Celsius over the last century, that human-generated greenhouse gases are overwhelmingly responsible for this rise, and that we may expect up to 4 degrees Celsius of further warming if greenhouse gas emissions aren't stopped by mid-century. As Gore put it in his February 28 *Times* article, "the overwhelming consensus on global warming remains unchanged." I note in passing that the 2007 Working Group I report uses the terms "uncertain" or "uncertainty" more than 1,300 times in its 987 pages, including what it identified as 54 "key uncertainties" limiting our mastery of climate prediction.

This central pillar of the climate campaign is unlikely to survive much longer, and each repetition of the "science-is-settled" mantra inflicts more damage on the credibility of the climate science community. The scientist at the center of the Climategate scandal at East Anglia University, Phil ("hide the decline") Jones dealt the science-is-settled narrative a huge blow with his candid admission in a BBC interview that his surface temperature data are in such disarray they probably cannot be verified or replicated, that the medieval warm period may have been as warm as today, and that he agrees that there has been no statistically significant global warming for the last 15 years—all three points that climate campaigners have been bitterly contesting. And Jones specifically disavowed the "science-is-settled" slogan:

BBC: When scientists say "the debate on climate change is over," what exactly do they mean, and what don't they mean?

Jones: It would be supposition on my behalf to know whether all scientists who say the debate is over are saying that for the same reason. *I don't believe the vast majority of climate scientists think this.* This is not my view. There is still much that needs to be undertaken to reduce uncertainties, not just for the future, but for the instrumental (and especially the palaeoclimatic) past as well [emphasis added].

Judith Curry, head of the School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at Georgia Tech and one of the few scientists convinced of the potential for catastrophic global warming who is willing to engage skeptics seriously, wrote February 24: "No one really believes that the 'science is settled' or that 'the debate is over.' Scientists and others that say this seem to want to advance a particular agenda. There is nothing more detrimental to public trust than such statements."

The next wave of climate revisionism is likely to reopen most of the central questions of "settled science" in the IPCC's Working Group I, starting with the data purporting to prove how much the Earth has warmed over the last century. A London *Times* headline last month summarizes the shocking revision currently underway: "World May Not Be Warming, Scientists Say." The Climategate emails and documents revealed the disarray in the surface temperature records the IPCC relies upon to validate its claim of 0.8 degrees Celsius of human-caused warming, prompting a flood of renewed focus on the veracity and handling of surface temperature data. Skeptics such as Anthony Watts, Joseph D'Aleo, and Stephen McIntyre have been pointing out the defects in the surface temperature record for years, but the media and the IPCC ignored them. Watts and D'Aleo have painstakingly documented (and in many cases photographed) the huge number of temperature stations that have been relocated, corrupted by the "urban heat island effect," or

placed too close to heat sources such as air conditioning compressors, airports, buildings, or paved surfaces, as well as surface temperature series that are conveniently left out of the IPCC reconstructions and undercut the IPCC's simplistic story of rising temperatures. The compilation and statistical treatment of global temperature records is hugely complex, but the skeptics such as Watts and D'Aleo offer compelling critiques showing that most of the reported warming disappears if different sets of temperature records are included, or if compromised station records are excluded.

The puzzle deepens when more accurate satellite temperature records, available starting in 1979, are considered. There is a glaring anomaly: The satellite records, which measure temperatures in the middle and upper atmosphere, show very little warming since 1979 and do not match up with the ground-based measurements. Furthermore, the satellite readings of the middle- and upper-air temperatures fail to record any of the increases the climate models say should be happening in response to rising greenhouse gas concentrations. John Christy of the University of Alabama, a contributing author to the IPCC's Working Group I chapter on surface and atmospheric climate change, tried to get the IPCC to acknowledge this anomaly in its 2007 report but was ignored. (Christy is responsible for helping to develop the satellite monitoring system that has tracked global temperatures since 1979. He received NASA's Medal for Exceptional Scientific Achievement for this work.) Bottom line: Expect some surprises to come out of the revisions of the surface temperature records that will take place over the next couple of years.

Eventually the climate modeling community is going to have to reconsider the central question: Have the models the IPCC uses for its predictions of catastrophic warming overestimated the climate's sensitivity to greenhouse gases? Two recently published studies funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, one by Brookhaven Lab scientist Stephen Schwartz in the *Journal of Geophysical Research*, and one by MIT's Richard Lindzen and Yong-Sang Choi in *Geophysical Research Letters*, both argue for vastly lower climate sensitivity to greenhouse gases. The models the IPCC uses for projecting a 3 to 4 degree Celsius increase in temperature all assume large positive (that is, temperature-magnifying) feedbacks from a doubling of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere; Schwartz, Lindzen, and Choi discern strong negative (or temperature-reducing) feedbacks in the climate system, suggesting an upper-bound of future temperature rise of no more than 2 degrees Celsius.

If the climate system is less sensitive to greenhouse gases than the climate campaign believes, then what is causing plainly observable changes in the climate, such as earlier arriving springs, receding glaciers, and shrinking Arctic Ocean ice caps? There have been alternative explanations in the scientific literature for several years, ignored by the media and the IPCC alike. The IPCC downplays theories of variations in solar activity, such as sunspot activity and gamma ray bursts, and although there is robust scientific literature on the issue, even the skeptic community is divided about whether solar activity is a primary cause of recent climate variation. Several studies of Arctic warming conclude that changes in ocean currents, cloud formation, and wind patterns in the upper atmosphere may explain the retreat of glaciers and sea ice better than greenhouse gases. Another factor in the Arctic is "black carbon"—essentially fine soot particles from coal-fired power plants and forest fires, imperceptible to the naked eye but reducing the albedo (solar reflectivity) of Arctic ice masses enough to cause increased summertime ice melt. Above all, if the medieval warm period was indeed as warm or warmer than today, we cannot rule out the possibility that the changes of recent decades are part of a natural rebound from the "Little Ice Age" that followed the medieval warm period and ended in the 19th century. Skeptics have known and tried to publicize all of these contrarian or confounding scientific findings, but the compliant news media routinely ignored all of them, enabling the IPCC to get away with its serial exaggeration and blatant advocacy for more than a decade.

The question going forward is whether the IPCC will allow contrarian scientists and confounding scientific research into its process, and include the opportunity for dissenting scientists to publish a minority report. Last March, John Christy sent a proposal to the 140 authors of IPCC Working Group I asking "that the IPCC allow for well-credentialed climate scientists to craft a chapter on an alternative view presenting evidence for lower climate sensitivity to greenhouse gases than has been the IPCC's recent message—all based on published information. . . . An alternative view is necessary, one that is not censured for the so-called purpose of consensus. This will present to our policymakers an honest picture of scientific discourse and process." Christy received no response.

In the aftermath of Climategate, Christy proposed in *Nature* magazine that the IPCC move to a Wikipedia-style format, in which lead authors would mediate an ongoing discussion among scientists, with the caveat that all claims would need to be based on original studies and data. Such a process would produce more timely and digestible information than the huge twice-a-decade reports the IPCC now produces. Christy told me that he does not hold out much hope for serious IPCC reform. Although he was a lead author in the IPCC's 2001 report and a contributing author for the 2007 report, the Obama administration has not nominated Christy to participate in the next report. IPCC participants are nominated by governments (a "gatekeeping exercise," Christy rightly notes). The nomination period closes next week.

Even a reformed IPCC that offered a more balanced account of climate science would make little difference to the fanatical climate campaigners, whose second line of defense is to double-down on demonizing skeptics and "deniers." Greenpeace, which should be regarded as the John Birch Society of the environmental movement, is filing its own Freedom of Information Act and state public record act requests to obtain private emails and documents from university-based climate skeptics such as Christy, Pat Michaels (University of Virginia), David Legates (University of Delaware), and Willie Soon (Harvard University/Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics), hoping to stir up a scandal commensurate with Climategate by hyping a supposed nefarious link between such researchers and energy companies. Greenpeace has sent letters to nongovernmental skeptics and organizations requesting that they submit to polygraph examinations about their role in or knowledge of the "illegally hacked" CRU emails. "We want to do our part," Greenpeace's letter reads, "to help international law enforcement get to the bottom of this potentially criminal act by putting some basic questions to people whose bank accounts, propaganda efforts or influence peddling interests benefitted from the theft." One wonders whether Greenpeace has really thought this through, as a successful FOIA request for the emails of American scientists would open the floodgates to further probing of James Hansen at NASA, Michael Mann at Penn State, and other government climate scientists who probably wrote emails as embarrassing or crude as Phil Jones and the CRU circle.

Greenpeace is hardly alone in its paranoia. Britain's former chief government science adviser, Sir David King, popped off to the press in early February that a foreign intelligence service working with American industry lobbyists—he intimated that he had the CIA and ExxonMobil in mind—were responsible for hacking the CRU emails last year. King backed away from this claim the next day, admitting he had no information to back it up.

The climate campaign camp followers are exhausting their invective against skeptics. Harvard's Jeffrey Sachs wrote in the *Guardian* that climate skeptics are akin to tobacco scientists—some of the same people, in fact, though he gave no names and offered no facts to establish such a claim. In the *Los Angeles Times* Bill McKibben compared climate skeptics to O.J. Simpson's "dream team" of defense attorneys able to twist incontrovertible scientific evidence. Not to be outdone, Senator Bernie Sanders (Socialist-VT) compared climate skeptics to appeasers of Hitler in the 1930s, a comparison, to be sure, that Al Gore has been making since the early 1990s, but Sanders delivered it with his patented popping-neck-veins style that makes you worry for his health.

In addition to being a sign of desperation, these ad hominem arguments from the climate campaigners also make clear which camp is truly guilty of anti-intellectualism. Gore and the rest of the chorus simply will not discuss any of the scientific anomalies and defects in the conventional climate narrative that scientists such as Christy have pointed out to the IPCC. Perhaps the climate campaign's most ludicrous contortion is their response to the record snowfall of the eastern United States over the last two months. The ordinary citizen, applying Occam's Razor while shoveling feet of snow, sees global warming as a farce. The climate campaigners now insist that "weather is not climate," and that localized weather events, even increased winter snowfall, can be consistent with climate change. They may be right about this, though even the IPCC cautions that we still have little ability to predict regional climate-related weather changes. These are the same people, however, who jumped up and down that Hurricane Katrina was positive proof that catastrophic global warming had arrived, though the strong 2005 hurricane season was followed by four quiet years for tropical storms that made a hash of that talking point.

The ruckus about “weather is not climate” exposes the greatest problem of the climate campaign. Al Gore and his band of brothers have been happy to point to any weather anomaly—cold winters, warm winters, in-between winters—as proof of climate change. But the climate campaigners cannot name one weather pattern or event that would be *inconsistent* with their theory. Pretty convenient when your theory works in only one direction.

The unraveling of the climate campaign was entirely predictable, though not the dramatic swiftness with which it arrived. The long trajectory of the climate change controversy conforms exactly to the “issue-attention cycle” that political scientist Anthony Downs explained in the *Public Interest* almost 40 years ago. Downs laid out a five-stage cycle through which political issues of all kinds typically pass. A group of experts and interest groups begin promoting a problem or crisis, which is soon followed by the alarmed discovery of the problem by the news media and broader political class. This second stage typically includes a large amount of euphoric enthusiasm—you might call this the dopamine stage—as activists conceive the issue in terms of global salvation and redemption. One of the largest debilities of the climate campaign from the beginning was their having conceived the issue not as a practical problem, like traditional air pollution, but as an expression, in Gore’s view, of deeper spiritual and even metaphysical problems arising from our “dysfunctional civilization.” Gore is still thinking about the issue in these terms, grasping for another dopamine rush. In his February 28 *New York Times* article, he claimed that an international climate treaty would be “an instrument of human redemption.”

The third stage is the hinge. As Downs explains, there comes “a gradually spreading realization that the cost of ‘solving’ the problem is very high indeed.” This is where we have been since the Kyoto process proposed completely implausible near-term reductions in fossil fuel energy—a fanatical monomania the climate campaign has been unable to shake. In retrospect it is now possible to grasp the irony that President George W. Bush’s open refusal to embrace the Kyoto framework kept the climate campaign alive by providing an all-purpose excuse for the lack of “progress” toward a binding treaty. With Bush gone, the intrinsic weakness of the carbon-cutting charade is impossible to hide, though Gore and the climate campaigners are now trying to blame the U.S. Senate for the lack of international agreement.

“The previous stage,” Downs continued, “becomes almost imperceptibly transformed into the fourth stage: a gradual decline in the intensity of public interest in the problem.” Despite the relentless media drumbeat, Gore’s Academy Award and Nobel Prize twofer, and millions of dollars in paid advertising, public concern for climate change has been steadily waning for several years. In the latest Pew survey of public priorities released in January, climate change came in dead last, ranked 21st out of 21 issues of concern, with just 28 percent saying the issue should be a top priority for Congress and President Obama. That’s down 10 points over the last three years.

A separate Pew poll taken last October, *before* Climate-gate, reported a precipitous drop in the number of Americans who think there is “solid evidence” of global warming, from 71 percent in 2008 to 57 percent in 2009; the number who think humans are responsible for warming dropped in the Pew poll from 47 to 36 percent. Surveys from Rasmussen and other pollsters find similar declines in public belief in human-caused global warming; European surveys are reporting the same trend. In Gallup’s annual survey of environmental issues, taken last spring, respondents ranked global warming eighth out of eight environmental issues Gallup listed; the number of people who say they “worry a great deal” about climate change has fallen from 41 to 34 percent over the last three years. Gallup’s Lydia Saad commented: “Not only does global warming rank last on the basis of the total percentage concerned either a great deal or a fair amount, but it is the only issue for which public concern dropped significantly in the past year.”

“In the final [post-problem] stage,” Downs concluded, “an issue that has been replaced at the center of public concern moves into a prolonged limbo—a twilight realm of lesser attention or spasmodic recurrences of interest.” The death rattle of the climate campaign will be deafening. It has too much political momentum and fanatical devotion to go quietly. The climate campaigners have been fond of warning of catastrophic “tipping points” for years. Well, a tipping point has indeed arrived—just not the one the climate campaigners expected.

The lingering question is whether the collapse of the climate campaign is also a sign of a broader collapse in public enthusiasm for environmentalism in general. Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger, two of the more thoughtful and independent-minded figures in the environmental movement, have been warning their green friends that the public has reached the point of "apocalypse fatigue." They've been met with denunciations from the climate campaign enforcers for their heresy. The climate campaign has no idea that it is on the cusp of becoming as ludicrous and forlorn as the World -Esperanto Association.

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## **Jewish World Review**

### **Alice in Health Care, Part IV**

by Thomas Sowell

Some years ago, one of my favorite doctors retired. On my last visit to his office, he took some time to explain to me why he was retiring early and in good health.

Being a doctor was becoming more of a hassle as the years went by, he said, and also less fulfilling. It was becoming more of a hassle because of the increasing paperwork, and it was less fulfilling because of the way patients came to him.

He was currently being asked to Xerox lots of records from his files, in order to be reimbursed for another patient he was treating. He said it just wasn't worth it. Whoever was paying — it might have been an insurance company or the government — would either pay him or not, he said, but he wasn't going to jump through all those hoops.

My doctor said that doctor-patient relationships were not the same as they had been when he entered the profession. Back then, people came to him because someone had recommended him to them, but now increasing numbers of people were sent to him because they had some group insurance plan that included his group.

He said that the mutual confidence that was part of the doctor-patient relationship was not the same with people who came to his office only because his name was on some list of eligible physicians.

The loss of one doctor — even a very good doctor — may not seem very important in the grand scheme of heady medical care "reform" and glittering phrases about "universal health care." But making the medical profession more of a hassle for doctors risks losing more doctors, while increasing the demand for treatment.

A study published in the November 2009 issue of the Journal of Law & Economics showed that a rise in the cost of medical liability insurance led to more reductions of hours of medical service supplied by older doctors than among younger doctors.

Younger doctors, more recently out of medical school and often with huge debts to pay off for the cost of that expensive training, may have no choice but to continue working as hard as possible to try to recoup that huge investment of money and time.

Younger doctors will probably continue working, even if bureaucrats load them down with increasing amounts of paperwork and the government continues to lower reimbursements for Medicare, Medicaid and — heaven help us — the new proposed "universal health care" legislation that is supposed to "bring down the cost of medical care."

The confusion between lowering costs and refusing to pay the costs can have a real impact on the supply of doctors. The real costs of medical care include both the financial conditions and the working conditions that will insure a continuing supply of both the quantity and the quality of doctors required to maintain medical care standards for a growing number of patients.

Although younger doctors may be trapped in a profession that some of them might not have entered if they had known in advance what all its pluses and minuses would turn out to be, there are two other important groups who are in a position to decide whether or not it is worth it.

Those who are old enough to have paid off their medical school debts long ago, and successful enough that they can afford to retire early, or to take jobs as medical consultants, can opt out of the whole elaborate third-party payment system and its problems. What the rising costs of medical liability insurance has already done for some, other hassles that bureaucracies and politicians create can have the same effect for others.

There is another group that doesn't have to put up with these hassles. These are young people who have reached the stage in their lives when they are choosing which profession to enter, and weighing the pluses and minuses before making their decisions.

Some of these young people might prefer becoming a doctor, other things being equal. But the heady schemes of government-controlled medicine, and the ever more bloated bureaucracies that these heady schemes will require, can make it very unlikely that other things will be equal in the medical profession.

Paying doctors less and hassling them more may be some people's idea of "lowering the cost of medical care," but it is instead refusing to pay the costs — and taking the consequences.





