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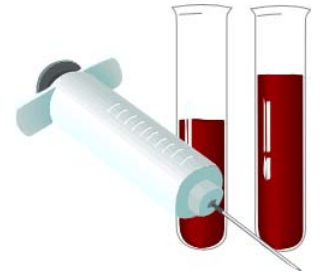
Lying about Canada and UK

December 20, 2009 by [Alan OldStudent](#)

Reader Bob White, a Canadian resident and citizen, [commented](#) on the recently posted article: [Obama's Health Insurance Bailout Bill of 2009](#).

Like many Canadians and Britons, Mr. White finds the American conservative's description of their health system strangely at odds with their usual medical experiences.

I invite any other interested Canadians or Britons (*or anybody else, for that matter*) to share their reactions, experiences, and opinions. And do [click here](#) to see Mr. White's comments if you haven't already read them.



Between April 23 and May 5, 2009, the [Nanos Research](#) firm, (*probably the most prestigious polling firm in Canada*) [conducted a poll that shows 86.2% of Canadians](#) want public health care to be strengthened and oppose privatization. Although Canadians have their criticisms of Canadian Medicare (*Canada Health Act*), it is widely popular and enjoys broad public support.

For example, a blogger named Sara Robinson, who contributes to [Orcinus](#) and who is a US citizen residing in Canada, weighs in on her personal experiences and impressions of both Canadian- and American-style health care delivery. You can read her blog article called [Mythbusting Canadian Health Care](#) by clicking on the title of the piece.

It's a worthwhile read and backs up what Mr. White and the *Nanos Research* organization say.

It's not just our Canadian cousins whom the American anti-reform advocates lambaste. The American health insurance apologists are even more horrified at the UK's NHS system, perhaps because it actually is socialized medicine, unlike Canada's system.

For the information of those outside the UK, [NHS stands for National Health Service](#), the British health care program, and although Britons have their gripes about it, they are fiercely proud of it and resent American conservative attacks against it. And when those attacks display ignorance about the facts that are completely obvious to UK residents, many Britons find them to be particularly galling.

Consider the following:

British Conservatives are trying to put some distance between themselves and their American conservative cousins because of American conservative criticism of NHS seems so shockingly incorrect and mistaken in its facts. Actually, the Tories are literally running for political cover, not wishing to be associated with the bizarre and shrill nuttiness of the American right on the other side of the pond. American conservative hysteria about the "*totalitarianism*" of socialized medicine in Britain quite literally embarrasses most British conservatives, and calling for NHS to be privatized is the sure road to political suicide and

electoral defeat in the UK.

As a matter of fact, the Labour PM [Gordon Brown, as well as the Labour Party itself](#), whose political popularity has been slipping of late, are using Republican Party attacks on NHS and Tory-Republican connections to discredit them in the upcoming elections, and there is some indication that this tactic is gaining traction.

Here's an example of American conservative's idiocy that so embarrasses British conservatives: The *Investors Business Daily* recently said this in an editorial:

People such as scientist Stephen Hawking wouldn't have a chance in the U.K., where the National Health Service would say the life of this brilliant man, because of his physical handicaps, is essentially worthless.

Of course, the *Investors Business Daily* had plenty of egg in its face and had to publish a [mealy-mouthed retraction](#) after they discovered Dr. Hawking was not a sterling example of American scientific genius

Instead, as a matter of fact, he happens to be a sterling example British scientific genius, has always lived in Britain, and is a great supporter of NHS!

The UK paper, *The Daily Telegraph*, [carries a story about this](#). Dr. Hawking is reported to have stated:

I wouldn't be here today if it were not for the NHS. I have received a large amount of high-quality treatment without which I would not have survived.

Here's the [Columbia Journalism Review's comment](#) on this kerfuffle:

Investor's Business Daily corrected an embarrassing boo-boo in an editorial and in the process made another huge error.

In an editorial ginning up fear over Obama's health-care plan and comparing it to the dread National Health Service in the UK, IBD wrote that the famed physicist Stephen Hawking would have been toast had he lived in the UK because, IBD said, ridiculously, the country's eugenics-like health policies deem handicapped people worthless.

Of course, Hawking is British and has lived there his whole life. He's a professor at Cambridge for crying out loud.

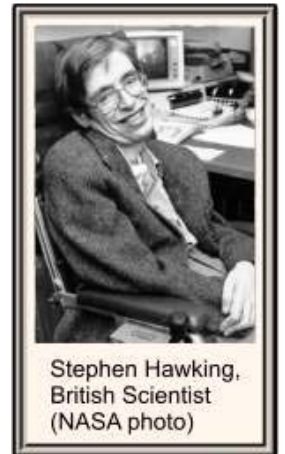
But it's not just ignorance of some conservatives at play here. There are plenty of out-and-out lies, too.

Some American conservative propagandists and public relations firms aren't above a bit of deception to undermine and to delegitimate any reform effort at all.

The *Think Progress* website has an [interesting story](#) of just such mendacity. A right-wing propaganda outfit, CPR (*Conservatives for Patient Rights*), one of the biggest and slickest forces behind the so-called "tea bag" movement, tricked two British women into appearing on [this anti-reform YouTube ad](#) and deliberately misrepresented their views, in essence, lied about their views.

The leading light of CPR is none other than the disgraced former CEO of *Columbia/HCA Healthcare*, Rick Scott. He's also the presenter in this ad. If you click on it, you can see how smooth, professional, and attractive this liar and political conman can seem.

Forbes Magazine has a [story about how Columbia/HCA](#) paid a record \$840 million in fines and penalties in the largest fraud settlement in U.S. history. It seems that *Columbia/HCA* engaged in nearly a decade of crooked Medicare billing while under Rick Scott's "leadership." Forbes says, "*The fraud revealed by that investigation ran deep within HCA's way of doing business.*"



Do read that story. It's a great example of how this smooth-talking, ultra-presentable trickster, who now poses as an advocate of patient rights, led a major health care corporation as it systematically and deliberately bilked the government, doctors, hospitals, and patients out of hundreds of millions of dollars

When he became head of *Columbia/HCA*, he said [his mission](#) was to do "*for hospitals . . . what McDonald's has done in the food business and what WalMart has done in the retailing business,*" God save us all!

The Daily Mail, the UK's second biggest-selling newspaper, on August 15, 2009 carried this story: [‘We Were Duped’: Two British Women Tricked Into Becoming Stars Of Campaign To Sabotage Obama’s Healthcare Reforms.](#)

Two British women have claimed they were duped into becoming the stars of a campaign to sabotage Barack Obama's healthcare reforms.

Furious Kate Spall and Katie Brickell claim that their views on the NHS have been misrepresented by a free market campaign group opposed to Mr Obama's reforms in a bid to discredit the UK system.

On whose behalf do the Rick Scotts of this world act during the current debate? Who stands to benefit from their lying propaganda?

I had already shown how health insurance companies make money by denying policy holders coverage they pay for. But now I'd like to put a human face on some of those who profit from this system.

According to Fierce Healthcare, a daily newsletter for healthcare executives, [these are the compensations for the top 10 Health Care company CEOs](#) in the past year. Bear in mind that many of them have had cuts from what they earned a few years previously.

- Aetna's Ron Williams \$24,300,112
- CIGNA's H. Edward Hanway \$12,236,740
- WellPoint's Angela Braly \$9,844,212
- Coventry Health Care's Dale Wolf \$9,047,469
- Centene's Michael Neidorff \$8,774,483
- AMERIGROUP's James Carlson \$5,292,546
- Humana's Michael McCallister \$4,764,309
- Health Net's Jay Gellert \$4,425,355
- Universal American's Richard Barasch \$3,503,702
- UnitedHealth Group's Stephen Hemsley \$3,241,042

Even at that *measly* \$3,241,042 dollars that Mr. Hemsley earned, that's more than \$369.74 for every hour of every year, whether working, eating, or sleeping. And at Mr. Ron William's compensation, that's \$2,772.14 for every hour of the year or about \$46.20 a minute.

Do you think you could get your boss to pay you *\$46.20 a minute* for legitimate work?

Isn't this compensation any of us could learn to live with?

Moreover, the companies these worthies represent have made quite handsome profits while not giving us any value. Their profits [have gone up 428%](#) between 2000 and 2007.

Yet health care costs in the United States still are rising [twice as fast](#) as the rate of inflation in 2006, before the present financial crisis, and they are still skyrocketing.

It would be fair to say the health insurance industry does not want any meaningful reform at all, despite claims to the contrary. That's why they're willing to invest so much money in advertising, PR firms, lobbyists, buying politicians, etc to stop change.

According to [CNN Money](#):

The bill for lobbyists, television ads and political donations has topped \$375 million — or enough to pay the

entire insurance tab for about 30,000 families a year.

This morning (*December 20, 2009*), as I am giving this article a final proofread before uploading it, the *Chicago Tribune* carries a story entitled [How Health Lobbyists Influenced Reform Bill](#), with the subheading being: *Former Staffers Of Lawmakers From Harry Reid To Mitch McConnell Push Clients' Agenda*.

This story gives the total that health care “*stakeholders*” (meaning industry) spent on influencing this legislation as being \$635 million, almost twice the figure cited in the CNN Money story cited above. That’s a steep increase over the short period of September to December, 2009. Here’s a bit from the Chicago Tribune:

An analysis of public documents by Northwestern University’s Medill News Service in partnership with the Tribune Newspapers Washington Bureau and the Center for Responsive Politics found a revolving door between Capitol Hill staffers and lobbying jobs for companies with a stake in health care legislation.

At least 166 former aides from the nine congressional leadership offices and five committees involved in shaping health overhaul legislation — along with at least 13 former lawmakers — registered to represent at least 338 health care clients since the beginning of last year, according to the analysis.

Their health care clients spent \$635 million on lobbying over the past two years, the study shows.

If that doesn’t show the cozy relationship between capitalist politicians of both the Republican and Democratic parties and the corporate ruling class plutocrats, nothing does!

The health insurance industry can’t, and therefore does not, make a rational argument for why we should tolerate an industry which makes money by **denying us the access** to health care that **we pay for**. All we are told is that the Obama administration must include the “*stakeholders*.” Who these “stakeholders” are becomes clearer by the minute.

And that is the fatal flaw with relying on the “free” market to provide access to health care.

Regards,

Alan OldStudent

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