

[Print](#)  [Close](#) **INVESTORS.com**

POWERED BY INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY™

[IBD EDITORIALS](#)

The Doctor Will See You Later

Posted 06/07/2010 06:33 PM ET

Health Care: The British government has decided that it needs to cut millions of operations because the public system cannot afford them. This is coming soon to a hospital or doctor's office near you.

According to the Daily Mail, Britain's National Health Service is "preparing to cut millions of operations" so that it can save \$29 billion by 2014. Procedures that will be "decommissioned," if we may borrow a particularly descriptive term used by one doctor, include hip replacements for obese patients, some operations for hernias and gallstones, and treatments for varicose veins, ear and nose problems, and cataract surgery.

Thus is the future of all socialized medicine. Bureaucratic rationing of treatment is inevitable. No system can forever meet the demand of "free" care. Jeff Taylor of the Economic Voice clarified the problem when he wrote last week that "the U.K. is broke."

"Our whole society and way of life is now built on the shaky foundation of debt," he writes in response to the NHS cuts. "Our hospitals, schools, armed forces, police, prisons and social services are founded on debt. In truth we have not yet paid for the operations that have already taken place."

As former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher famously — and fittingly — said: The problem with socialism is you eventually run out of other people's money to spend. This is a universal truth, more universal than the health care provided in Britain. To trifle with it, ignore it, disrespect it, attempt to repeal it or arrogantly try to bypass it will always lead to trouble.

Yet the political left continually makes those mistakes and operates as if governments will never run out of other people's money. Until it does. And then the government has to make cuts and ration the benefits.

What have the congressional Democrats who rammed through their health care overhaul been watching over the years as both hard and soft socialist governments have either collapsed, continued to bring misery or become unsustainable? Despite ample evidence that a welfare state cannot thrive, these lawmakers have forced on the country a "reform" that will load Americans with a burden they will not long be able to bear.

Though it was sold to the public as a plan that, at \$940 billion over the first decade, would bring down the deficit, the real cost for the initial 10 years could be as much as \$2.5 trillion, including mandates placed on the private sector, according to an estimate by the Cato Institute.

It's possible that the Cato projection is off. But history shows us that it's more likely to be right than Washington's estimate. Government programs always cost more than the rosy initial projections that are used to drum up public support. It's another lesson that remains unlearned by most of our elected officials and the voters who keep putting them in office despite the problems the lawmakers refuse to stop creating.

Given our lawmakers' inability to learn from the health care policy blunders committed in Britain and Canada — which is reassessing its model because of ruinous costs — no one should be surprised when rationing by bureaucracy becomes a feature of the U.S. public health care system.

There should be no shock when waiting lists for treatment are simply rosters of Americans suffering — and in some cases dying — from a lack of care. No astonishment when those who do get treatment get substandard care, no dismay as a two-tiered system develops in which the more important among us get top-flight medicine while the rest get what the public clinics have to offer.

Our own polling shows that the disapproval of the Democrats' health care legislation is beginning to wane. That's as alarming as the heated opposition to the law had been encouraging. If we surrender ourselves to the soft tyranny of elected officials gone too far, we will be leaving an America that future generations won't want.

© 2010 Investor's Business Daily, Inc. All rights reserved. Investor's Business Daily, IBD and CAN SLIM and their corresponding logos are registered trademarks of Data Analysis Inc. [Copyright and Trademark Notice](#) | [Privacy Statement Terms](#) | [Conditions of Use](#)