

***Like all goods and services that are created by one human being and consumed by another, medical care is not right; the use of government force to provide medical care is therefore morally wrong, and tantamount to theft.***

I am not going to scrutinize the details of the various pieces of healthcare-related legislation that are making the rounds in Washington. I haven't read any of them – and to tell you the truth, I don't see much of a point in doing so. As we have seen, many (if not most) of our congressmen don't bother to read these bills; and if **they** won't do the job we pay them to do, I'm certainly not going to do it for free. Perhaps we shouldn't blame them for failing to fulfill their responsibilities! After all, what's the point in reading a bill, when the text could be altered, in the dead of night, only hours before the final vote is taken? If you're like me, you don't have time to read a thousand pages of lobbyist legalese – because you're too busy simply trying to make ends meet.

In this era of big government, laws are no longer general principles applying equally to all citizens: rules enabling free individuals peacefully to regulate their social affairs. In the words of Nobel Prize-winning economist Friedrich Hayek, today's so-called laws are in fact “instructions issued by the state to its servants concerning the manner in which they are to direct the apparatus of government and the means which are at their disposal.” Laws do **not** apply equally to all, because they are not intended to. The TARP, the stimulus package, and all of Obama's central economic planning measures divide the American people into a variety of castes, so that money can be taken from some and given to others, whether those others are bankers, trade unions, or too-big-to-fail corporations. We must remember that government, in the words of Mises, is but the “social apparatus of coercion and compulsion” – and that behind its every action lies the threat of force, however veiled and indirect.

We no longer live in a democratic republic. The system of government you learned about in 8th grade civics class no longer exists. The trappings of democracy have of course been retained – but no matter who is in office, the imperial goose-step continues. Every few years, we elect a new dictator, who presents the American people with his all-encompassing “vision,” and instructs the Congress on how and when it shall be carried out. In effect, the president writes the laws; and the powers that he cannot wrest from the legislators he simply wills into existence, by executive order. It is nearly impossible to argue with the proponents of statism, because they see nothing wrong with such a system – or do so only when it is controlled by the leader of the opposing party.

Still, we must strive against the plans of the statist. But when we do, we must also remember that they do not believe in freedom. They do not wish to live in a world where men are independent and take responsibility for their own welfare. They have no use for economics; and though they do not understand capitalism, they are not interested in learning about it from the likes of us. I have found that policy discussions are useless, unless they begin from a point of principled agreement, however small. To the libertarian, health care is a good like any other – and we all prefer inexpensive goods to expensive ones; we all favor quality over shoddiness. The left, however, has long claimed that health care (as well as other goods like education, housing, and now even the internet) is a right. Until they realize that no one can have a right to the product of another person's skill and labor, they will continue to espouse their tangled and false philosophy.

I know that I cannot win an argument with a collectivist. Their minds are equipped with an override mechanism, an Orwellian “faculty of stopping short, as though by instinct, at the threshold of any dangerous thought.” All we can do is make simple points, and hope that one of them penetrates the fog of contradiction, allowing a faint ray of truth to illuminate the shoddy ideological patchwork to which the statist cling. Truth begs no argument: a right is something that one is entitled to by virtue of one's very existence. The violation of a right is by nature an act of aggressive force, and it is for **this** reason that we are permitted to use force in defense of our rights. No leftist, no matter how radical, will assert that his “right” to medical care means that this care can be forcibly extracted from the doctor or nurse whose time and ability the provision of such a service requires. When the statist recognize that the theft of a man's labor is equivalent to the theft of the income derived from that labor – when they embrace non-violence as a **means** and not merely as an **end** (which they defer indefinitely in the name of some vague and arbitrary notion of “social justice”) – we may finally have something to talk about. Until then, we must hold fast to our principles, and suffer the consequences if necessary.

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