



Free to Die?

If a person without health insurance finds himself in need of costly medical care, let's investigate just how might that care be provided. There are not too many of us who'd suggest that we get the money from the tooth fairy or Santa Claus. That being the case, if a medically indigent person receives medical treatment, it must be provided by people. There are several possible methods to deliver the services. One way is for people to make voluntary contributions or for medical practitioners to simply treat medically indigent patients at no charge. I find both methods praiseworthy, laudable and, above all, moral.



Another way to provide those services is for Congress to use its power to forcibly use one person to serve the purposes of another. That is, under the pain of punishment, Congress could mandate that medical practitioners treat medically indigent patients at no charge. I'd personally find such a method of providing medical services offensive and immoral, simply because I find the forcible use of one person to serve the purposes of another, what amounts to slavery, in violation of all that is decent.

I am proud to say that I think most of my fellow Americans would be repulsed at the suggestion of forcibly using medical practitioners to serve the purposes of people in need of hospital care. But I'm afraid that most Americans are not against the principle of the forcible use of one person to serve the purposes of another under the pain of punishment. They just don't have much stomach to witness it. You say, "Williams, explain yourself."

Say that citizen John pays his share of the constitutionally mandated functions of the federal government. He recognizes that nothing in our Constitution gives Congress the authority to forcibly use one person to serve the purposes of another or take the earnings of one American and give them to another American, whether it be for medical services, business bailouts, handouts to farmers or handouts in the form of foreign aid. Suppose John refuses to allow what he earns to be taken and given to another. My guess is that Krugman and, sadly, most other Americans would sanction government punishment, imprisonment or initiation of violence against John. They share Professor Krugman's moral vision that one person has a right to live at the expense of another, but they just don't have the gall to call it that.

I share James Madison's vision, articulated when Congress appropriated \$15,000 to assist some French refugees in 1794. Madison stood on the floor of the House to object, saying, "I cannot undertake to lay my finger on that article of the Constitution which granted a right to Congress of expending, on objects of benevolence, the money of their constituents," adding later that "charity is no part of the legislative duty of the government." This vision of morality, I'm afraid, is repulsive to most Americans.

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