



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on September 19, 2011

Ron Paul & the Great Progressive Myth (Healthcare)

During that debate, Dr. Ron Paul, an obstetrician and Texas congressman, had the following [exchange](#) with moderator Wolf Blitzer:



Wolf Blitzer: "You're a physician, Ron Paul. So you're a doctor, you know something about this subject. Let me ask you this hypothetical question. A healthy, 30-year-old young man has a good job, makes a good living, but decides, 'you know what, I'm not going to spend \$200 or \$300 a month for health insurance, because I'm healthy. I don't need it.' But you know, something terrible happens. All of a sudden, he needs it. Who's going to pay for it if he goes into a coma, for example? Who pays for that?"

Ron Paul: "In a society [where] you accept welfarism and socialism, he expects the government to take care of him."

Blitzer: "But what do you want?"

Paul: "What he should do is whatever he wants to do and assume responsibility for himself. My advice to him would [be to] have a major medical policy but not be forced —"

Blitzer: "But he doesn't have it. He doesn't have it and he needs intensive care for six months. Who pays?"

Paul: "That's what freedom is all about, taking your own risks. This whole idea that you have to prepare and take care of everybody —"

Blitzer: "But Congressman, are you saying that society should just let him die?"

Paul: "No...."

{youtube width="420" height="315"}6qTwcWocFCU{/youtube}

Just let him die? Note the progressivist assumption by Blitzer is that there is only one alternative to a man dying: government intervention. In the progressive mind, there is no alternative. But Ron Paul, who's old enough to remember an America before the welfare state became heavily involved in medicine, [responded](#) from his long personal and professional medical experience as a doctor:

No. I practiced medicine before we had Medicaid, in the early 1960s when I got out of medical school. I practiced at Santa Rosa Hospital in San Antonio. And the churches took care of them. We never turned anybody away from the hospitals, and we've given up on this whole concept that we might take care of ourselves, assume responsibility for ourselves; our neighbors, our friends, our churches would do it. This whole idea — that's the reason the cost is so high. The cost is so high



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because we dump it on the government, it becomes a bureaucracy, it becomes special interests, it cowers to the insurance companies then the drug companies.

Dr. Paul's brilliant response to Blitzer's question couldn't be described by any other word besides the Internet neologism ["total pwnage."](#) But to the progressive, of course, it doesn't matter how healthcare was handled before Medicaid. If government doesn't do it, it doesn't count. A prime example of this is *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman's column on this exchange in the debate. Krugman's column, "Free to Die," makes two important — and false — points. He [wrote](#): "Now, there are two things you should know about the Blitzer-Paul exchange. The first is that after the crowd weighed in..."

Krugman first claims that "the crowd" weighed in, referring to a handful of cheers at the wrong time in the debate. These loud cheers appeared to answer "yes" to Blitzer's question "Should society just let him die?" But this was not the crowd, it was one loud person, followed by another handful of possibly drunken spectators in an audience of about 1,000.

That's all it takes for a progressive to tar the entire Tea Party movement, of course. Left-wing groups have already assembled television advertisements based on the handful of cheers. Even people who have been fair to Ron Paul, such as Comedy Central's Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, stopped the tape roll of the debate at the errant cheers and avoided Dr. Paul's informed response. It was a classic case of the progressive fallacy; if government doesn't do it, then it doesn't count. And why run Dr. Paul's response if it didn't count?

Krugman also made that point in his column, [writing](#):

"Mr. Paul basically tried to evade the question, asserting that warm-hearted doctors and charitable individuals would always make sure that people received the care they needed — or at least they would if they hadn't been corrupted by the welfare state. Sorry, but that's a fantasy."

Krugman apparently believes that American society is thoroughly corrupt and uncaring, and that not one person would step into the breach to help this man. In that sense, Krugman's accusation against America reminds this writer of Edmund Burke's [quip](#): "He that accuses all mankind of corruption ought to remember that he is sure to convict only one."

But Krugman says that only government can do many things. In 2002, he [cheered on the housing bubble](#) that caused our current recession while [Ron Paul warned against it](#).

Consider Paul Krugman's view that the only way to prevent people from dying is for government to intervene. But government has a poor record of saving lives, while the one thing government has traditionally excelled at is taking lives. Indeed, government healthcare inevitably involves rationing to limit costs, and healthcare rationing leads to the government deciding who may get what care. Government healthcare also kills market development of innovative medicine.

In fact, not only is government control of healthcare lethal, but government control of its citizens in general is also lethal. Moreover, the more power a government is allowed to exercise, the more lethal that government tends to be. This is clearly evidenced by the totalitarian "isms" of the last century such as the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Both regimes, by the way, had national healthcare systems that not only let people die but were proactive in killing them when it served the interest of the state.

A good question for Blitzer and Krugman is: How many people have been saved over the years by government, versus how many have been killed by government? In his ground-breaking study [Death by Government](#), University of Hawaii Professor R. J. Rummel estimated that governments killed 125 million



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innocent people in the 20th century, and the death toll in peacetime was more than twice the death toll of wars. In this one statistic, the private sector could never compete.

Government, clearly, is not the tool one should depend on to save lives. Government, instead, should be restrained, so that people motivated by their religious beliefs have the political freedom and economic opportunities to provide for those truly in need.

Thumbnail photo of Ron Paul: AP Images

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