

The Motives of Public Officials

Editor's Pick. Written by Scott McPherson for FFF.org.

It is not uncommon for critics of the free market to allege that for-profit providers of services have an interest, not in solving problems, but rather in prolonging them. Why would the medical industry cure cancer, heart disease, or AIDS, for example, when it would just be putting itself out of business?

This argument essentially hinges on the notion that all humans who enter a trade with the purpose of making money automatically become sinister creatures with the worst of motives — rather than heroes of invention who daily improve our lives in an inestimable number of ways. That should tell us something about the mindset behind such suppositions. (Interestingly, those who make this argument typically do work in order to gain money themselves. It's always the other guy in this straw-man approach to economics that you can't trust.)

By comparison, those who work for a nonprofit organization — or, even better, the government — are altruists motivated only by the welfare of all mankind.

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