

[Common Error No. 67](#) [1]

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67. "Some things, such as health, should not be provided for gain."

Why not? If gain will motivate people to supply necessary goods and services, then it can be a useful way of ensuring supply. All goods and services cost something, and the prospect of gain is a good way of encouraging people to produce them. Price, as an indicator, tells them where to direct their activities. Where prices are high, people produce because profits can be made; and in producing, they alleviate the shortage which caused those high prices.

A genuine market in such things as health would put resources where they were needed. Enough people would go into health care to meet the demand for it. It would settle at a level that people were freely prepared to pay for. For decades Britain has spent less per head through its NHS than have its partners with larger private health sectors. People spend more themselves than they will do through taxation.

This is not because the British NHS gives better value. On the contrary, it achieves poorer results overall. Britain has less scanners per 1,000 of population, less renal dialysis units, less kidney transplants, and less of almost every objective measure. It also has higher early death rates on many major illnesses.

Food might be thought even more important, but imagine what the food situation might be if most people were dependent on government supplied food, financed out of taxation, run by the bureaucracy, and available only from approved supply outlets. Even though food is important, the private market is much more capable of guaranteeing us the appropriate supply than would a state-planned system.

If we want a society in which even poor people have adequate healthcare, there is a better way than mass state provision. It is to ensure that quality healthcare is widely available, and that resources are provided to give poorer people access to it.

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