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We Demand Inefficiency

It's all about the money.

Well, that is what Senator Elizabeth Warren believes.

Grilling Republican Congressman Tom Price, the physician turned congressman Donald Trump picked to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, Warren demanded that Price answer a simple question: would he swear on a stack of medical books that he would never, ever “carry out a single dollar of cuts to Medicare or Medicaid eligibility or benefits.”

Trump had said he would not cut either program. But Price, who is known for his skepticism about the efficiency of government programs and has proposed cuts to the programs before, worries Warren.

So she demanded an answer, using words like “guarantee” and “safeguard.”

Price said neither “yes” nor “no.” Instead, he evaded the question.

Thoughtfully.

“What the question presumes is that money is the metric,” Dr. Price replied. “In my belief . . . from a scientific standpoint, if patients aren't receiving care, even though we're providing the resources, then it doesn't work for patients.”

Elizabeth Warren, the doyen of progressive politicians for several years now, was mighty upset about Price's attempt to switch the standard (“metric” is the buzzword for this) for judging a program to the practical from the simple, easy-to-demagogue-with disbursement tally.

She could have said, “We demand inefficiency; all we care about is the money. Actually helping people? Too complicated. But we sure can score points in debate when you try to cut something.”

What she said* was, “The metric *is* money.”

Same thing, actually.

Thus it is that government grows while real human welfare is ignored.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

* Peter Suderman, over at *Reason*, sums it up like this: “What Warren seems to want from Price is a commitment to spend more regardless of a program's results.” Suderman calls Warren's reaction “a surprisingly blunt expression” of a view “that undermines the programs it is designed to defend.”

