Comment on the Commentary of the Day

by
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Disclaimer: The following "Letters to the Editor" were sent to the respective publications on the dates indicated. Some were printed but many were not. The original articles that are being commented on may or may not be available on the internet and may require registration or subscription to access if they are. Some of the original articles are also syndicated and therefore may have appeared in other publications also.

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9 October 2005

The Editor, New York Times
229 West 43rd St.
New York, NY 10036

To the Editor:

David Brooks "knows" that "we need a national service program" ("As Parties Grow Weary, Time for an Insurgency," Oct. 9).

Would Mr. Brooks be so sure if the saccharine euphemism "national service" were replaced with a more accurate, if less pithy, descriptor: a policy of confiscating young people's time and labor so that these are at the disposal of the likes of Tom DeLay, John Dingell, and Bill Frist? Does Mr. Brooks really imagine that such a program would not be hideously politicized?

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8 October 2005

Editor, The Wall Street Journal
200 Liberty Street
New York, NY 10281

Dear Editor:

Matt Anderson argues (Letters, Oct. 8) that privatizing air space, air-traffic control, and aviation infrastructure would cause airline fares to rise to "nose-bleeding" heights.

If true, then Americans now are subsidizing air travel with nose-bleedingly high taxes. Better that we privatize these resources and pay the true costs of air travel directly as passengers and freight-shippers than pay indirectly as taxpayers. Direct payments would encourage airline customers to use resources more wisely. Privatization would unleash entrepreneurial creativity. The consequence of both would be lower cost of air travel.

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7 October 2005

The Editor, New York Times
229 West 43rd St.
New York, NY 10036

To the Editor:

Paul Krugman blames California's 2001 electricity crisis on market manipulation by energy companies ("A Pig in a Jacket," Oct. 7).

While producers and traders might well have acted unlawfully, my Nobel Prize-winning colleague Vernon Smith identifies a deeper problem that encourages market manipulation - namely, California's restrictions on the entry of competing energy suppliers.* With entry stymied, existing producers are better able to injure consumers without risking loss of market share.

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5 October 2005

The Editor, USA Today

To the Editor:

In your report on banks charging higher fees for late credit-card payments and bounced checks, Greg McBride of Bankrate.com is quoted as saying that "These are not things that are subject to price competition. No bank is going to advertise low bounced-check fees" ("Rising Bank Fees Hit Consumers," Oct. 5).

Why not? If consumers truly are being stung hard by unfair fees, a bank that proclaimed loudly its promise to keep such fees reasonable would make a mint.

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4 October 2005

Editor, The Wall Street Journal
200 Liberty Street
New York, NY 10281

To the Editor:

Steel-industry lobbyist Andrew Sharkey self-righteously demands that foreign steel producers not be allowed to break American anti-dumping "laws" (Letters, Oct. 4). These aren't real laws. They're unjust privileges bestowed by a shameless Congress upon politically powerful big steel - favors paid for by American consumers who are prevented from buying steel at low prices.

As the Dartmouth economist Douglas Irwin observes, "It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the antidumping laws are simply a popular means by which domestic firms can stifle foreign competition under the pretense of 'fair trade.'"*