

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 syndicated and therefore may have appeared in other publications also.

<http://www.taxfoundation.org/taxdata/s/how/250.html>

30 October 2005

The Editor, The Boston Globe

To the Editor:

Allan Hunter thinks that the income-tax burden falls most heavily on "ordinary people" and suggests that the rich should pay more taxes ("The Wealthy Should Pay More Taxes," Letters, Oct. 30). The facts suggest otherwise.

Just-released IRS data for 2003 show that, while the average federal income-tax rate for all income-earning Americans is 11.9%, America's top 1% income earners are taxed at an average rate of 24.31%. The figure for the top 10% of income earners is 18.49%. The bottom half of American income earners are taxed at an average rate of 2.95%.*

29 October 2005

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

Dear Editor:

Cornelia Strawser correctly reports that much of the rhetoric of America's Puritan founders was proto-Marxist (Letters, Oct. 29). The reality, however, wasn't. After initially trying communism, Plymouth's settlers privatized their corn crops and only then began to flourish and find reason to give thanks. Here's part of Governor William Bradford's account:

"[Privatization] had very good success, for it made all hands very industrious, so as much more corn was planted than otherwise would have been by any means the Governor or any other could use, and saved him a great deal of trouble, and gave far better content. The women now went willingly into the field, and took their little ones with them to set corn; which before would allege weakness and inability; whom to have compelled would have been thought great tyranny and oppression."*

28 October 2005

Editor, The Boston Globe

Dear Editor:

Everyone - such as Sandra Heiler (Letters, Oct. 28) - clamoring for nationalized health care should do the following mental experiment. Imagine having nationalized hunger care, in which government supplies groceries "free." Anyone who's hungry is entitled to walk into a supermarket and take whatever food items he or she needs without having to pay a cashier.

Is it conceivable that such a system would not make food much more costly and its distribution more arbitrary? Too many people will take too many groceries that, in fact, are more highly valued by others. Inevitably, draconian rules will be imposed to govern access to "free" food - and wealthy Americans will begin traveling to Canada to buy groceries.

27 October 2005

Editor, The New Yorker

Dear Editor:

Justice Stephen Breyer interprets the Constitution to enhance democratic participation rather than to constrain government ("Breyer's Big Idea," Oct. 31). He argues that this interpretation promotes liberty. In support he quotes Benjamin Constant's definition of liberty as "active and constant participation in collective power."

But this is Constant's description of the liberty of the ancients, which he contrasted sharply with the liberty of the moderns. Here's the full quotation from Constant's 1816 essay "The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of Moderns": "It follows from what I have just indicated that we can no longer enjoy the liberty of the ancients, which consisted in an active and constant participation in collective power. Our freedom must consist of peaceful enjoyment and private independence."

Justice Breyer's conception of liberty is decidedly retrograde.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/25/AR2005102501456.html>

26 October 2005

Editor, The Washington Post
1150 15th St., NW
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Editor:

Harold Meyerson believes that Wal-Mart supports raising the minimum wage because that company wishes to improve its public image and to increase its customers' incomes ("Trouble in Wal-Mart's

America," Oct. 26). I suspect a more sinister motive.

As Meyerson reports, much opposition to Wal-Mart comes from small retailers. Many of these retailers pay wages lower than Wal-Mart's average hourly wage of \$9.68. A higher minimum wage would strip these smaller retailers of this competitive advantage, causing many to shut down - leaving more of the retail market to Wal-Mart.

25 October 2005

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

To the Editor:

You write that Ben Bernanke's chief responsibility is to "tame inflation" (Business, Oct. 25). Avoiding inflation is indeed Bernanke's top job. But

because inflation's only source is excessive money-supply growth - and because the money supply is controlled by the Fed - Bernanke's task isn't like that of an animal tamer. Rather, his task is like that of a driver not wishing to exceed the speed limit: he's guaranteed to do so as long as he doesn't press the accelerator too hard. This task involves no mystery or difficulty beyond self-control.



