



Comment on the Commentary of the Day

by

Donald J. Boudreaux

Chairman, Department of Economics

George Mason University

dboudrea@gmu.edu

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.

11 December 2005

The Editor, The Washington Times

To the Editor:

I'm proud that Alan Reynolds mentions three George Mason University economists as authors of important and accessible books on economics ("The Gift of Economics," Dec. 11, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/commentary/20051210-090838-1453r.htm>). But GMU Economics is prominent also in the blogosphere. Two of the world's leading economics blogs - Marginal Revolution and Econoblog - are written by GMU economists. Other GMU blogs that aim to make economics relevant and inspiring are The Austrian Economists, Neuroeconomics, and Cafe Hayek.

The gift of economics is more and more available on-line.

11 December 2005

The Editor, New York Times

229 West 43rd St.
New York, NY 10036

To the Editor:

Reasonable people disagree over the role government should play in rebuilding New Orleans ("Death of an American City," Dec. 11). But you unreasonably despair by lamenting that very few people "could even name the president's liaison for the reconstruction effort." How many ordinary New Yorkers knew the name of Robert Moses in the mid-20th century when he exercised extraordinary urban-planning power in Gotham?

10 December 2005

The Editor, The Economist
25 St James's Street
London SW1A 1HG
United Kingdom

SIR:

You shouldn't be surprised that our ignorance of the causes and consequences of the pricing practices of firms in two-sided markets "has not stopped

regulators" from meddling with these practices (Dec. 10, Economic Focus).

While masquerading as consumers' friend, antitrust's true purpose is (and always has been) to protect politically influential firms from the competition of innovative rivals. Antitrust regulators respond not to the dictates of economic efficiency but, instead, to the whining of firms seeking relief from competition.

9 December 2005

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

Dear Editor:

Revolutionary-era Minutemen fought against foreigners who used violence to protect their illegitimate economic privileges from the open competition of ordinary Americans. Today's "Minutemen," in contrast, aim to create illegitimate economic

privileges for some Americans by protecting them from the competition of peaceful foreigners seeking (horrors!) to work and produce ("In Herndon, Only Feet Away but Worlds Apart," Metro, Dec. 9).

8 December 2005

The Editor, The Christian Science Monitor

To the Editor:

Henry Kaufman and Thomas Johnson wisely support science education, but they go overboard when insisting that "America's economic well-being hinges on our preeminence in science and technology" ("Send Future U.S. Business Leaders Abroad," Dec. 8).

If a people's well-being depended upon their nation leading all others in science and technology, then only one nation in the world, at any time, would be prosperous. More importantly, economic freedom and free trade -- not science education -- are the ultimate keys to economic well-being. Economic freedom unleashes entrepreneurship while free trade allows people in technologically less-advanced countries to benefit from the knowledge and skills of people in technologically more-advanced countries.

7 December 2005

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

To the Editor:

Sen. Charles Schumer says that the additional \$4 billion in taxes that he wants oil companies to pay "is a pittance" compared to the profits these firms have made since Katrina (Letters, Dec. 7).

Let's make other comparisons, such as \$4 billion compared to Uncle Sam's annual expenditures of \$2.2 TRILLION. Schumer's tax would fund less than 0.2 percent of these outlays. And this: even if oil-industry profits double in 2005 from their 2004 level, www.taxfoundation.org/publications/show/1168.html, they'd equal a mere four percent of federal expenditures. And as for Schumer's claim that accounting practices keep reported profits "artificially low," don't forget that nearly 17 percent of federal expenditures are off-budget - a shady accounting practice that artificially shrinks the reported size of the federal budget.

6 December 2005

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

Dear Editor:

CEOs often complain about alleged government subsidies enjoyed by foreign rivals. Yesterday Micron's Steve Appleton moaned about subsidized semiconductors from South Korea (Letters, Dec. 5); today GM's Rick Wagoner gripes about subsidized automobiles from Japan ("A Portrait of My Industry," Dec. 6).

If these subsidies are real, then taxes used to fund them must be extracted from other foreign

industries, making foreign rivals in these other industries artificially LESS efficient. But I've not once heard a CEO thank a foreign government for giving his firm an undeserved competitive advantage.

5 December 2005

Editor, The Boston Globe

To the Editor:

Proposing that the draft be reinstated as a means of ending the war in Iraq, Virginia Benson repeats John Kerry's question: "How do you ask someone to be the last person to die for a mistake?" (Letters, Dec. 5).

Good question. But I have an even better one for Ms. Benson and all others who endorse conscription for a war they oppose: "How do you COMMAND someone to die for a mistake?"