



## 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.**

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6 May 2006

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

To the Editor:

William Powers argues that nationalization of the Bolivian oil and gas industry might well have good results ("All Smoke, No Fire in Bolivia," May 6). Powers' optimism centers on the government's claim that this is "nationalization without confiscation" - the government confiscated only 51 percent of the private companies - and Evo Morales's promise not to expel foreign companies.

Suppose Uncle Sam expropriated 51 percent of the assets of the New York Times and other news organizations, promising not to expel former

owners from the newsrooms. Would news still be reported independently? Would entrepreneurs launch upstart newspapers? Would truth thrive? No. Powers' enchantment with the cosmetic modesty of this particular instance of nationalization is outrageous.

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5 May 2006

Editor, The New York  
Review of Books

Dear Editor:

In his generally admirable essay on income inequality, Andrew Hacker discounts the significance of the 23 percent rise in median family incomes between 1982 and 2004 by saying that "this growth was almost entirely the result of the presence of additional earners, with more wives turning to full-time work"

("The Rich and Everyone Else, May 25, 2006).

True. But to the extent that women were released from housework by the greater availability of electric appliances and better prepared foods, these gains in median household earnings represent real improvements for ordinary Americans. After all, housework - although uncompensated - has genuine and considerable value. Because much housework that in the past was done by "non-working" women is now done by appliances, supermarkets, and the like, the typical American household today still receives the value of housework PLUS the additional income women earn by working outside of the home.

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4 May 2006

Editor, The New York Post

Dear Editor:

George Will is correct: John Kenneth Galbraith believed that capitalism turns ordinary people into contemptible materialists ("Galbraith's Groupthink," May 4). It's worth adding to Mr. Will's excellent analysis that Galbraith wrote *The Affluent Society*, his broadside against individuals' quest for modern amenities and creature comforts, while at his ski chalet in Gstaad, Switzerland.

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3 May 2006

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

Dear Editor:

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., repeats Thomas Carlyle's famous dismissal of economists as being practitioners of "the dismal science" ("J.K. Galbraith's Towering Spirit," May 3). But Mr. Schlesinger seems unaware of Carlyle's reason, in 1849, for issuing this criticism. Carlyle was a reactionary who supported slavery; he was furious at economists for being outspoken proponents of abolition.

Far from a black mark on my profession, being called a

dismal scientist by the likes of Thomas Carlyle is a badge of honor.

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2 May 2006

Editor, The Christian Science Monitor

Dear Editor:

I realize that it's de rigueur among the literary classes to bewail the gizmos and gadgets that so prominently facilitate the convenience of modern life. But reading Giles Slade's warning that we are throwing away too many cell-phones and iPods ("Technology made to be broken," May 2) puts a smile on my face and makes me thankful - thankful to live in an economy so staggeringly productive that we enjoy enough leisure and wealth actually to worry about the contents of landfills.

Such concerns are a blessing.

1 May 2006

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

Dear Editor:

Rob Portman and Susan Schwab assert that "the U.S. cannot keep its current offer [to dramatically reduce our agricultural subsidies and tariffs] on the table - let alone unilaterally agree to make deeper cuts to our domestic support programs - without

additional and substantial steps by the European Union and other major partners, including those in the developing world, to open their markets" ("Free Trade Vision," May 1).

Why not? Why must we Americans wait for other governments to stop harming their citizens with wasteful handouts to special-interest groups before our government stops harming us with wasteful handouts to special-interest groups?