



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.

4 June 2006

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

SIR:

Gayle Weber says that America's "so-called representative government has forced free trade...down our throats," allegedly against the wishes of the majority (Letters, June 3).

Overlook Weber's verbal deceit of labeling as "force" a relaxation of force - in this case, an easing of government-imposed restrictions on consumer choice. Even if the minority has forced free trade on the majority, that's far better than the majority forcing protectionism on the minority. As John Milton wisely

observed: "More just it is...if it come to force, that the less number compel a greater to return...their liberty than a greater number...compel a less most injuriously to be their fellow slaves." (Quoted in Will & Ariel Durant, *The Age of Louis XIV* (1963), p. 233)

3 June 2006

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

Dear Editor:

Jack Bond is correct: H. L. Mencken was indeed a libertarian who detested the New Deal (Letters, June 3). In the Bard of Baltimore's own inimitable words, "The New Deal began, like the Salvation Army, by promising to save humanity. It ended,

again like the Salvation Army, by running flop-houses and disturbing the peace." (H. L. Mencken, *A Mencken Chrestomathy* (1948), p. 622)

2 June 2006

Editor, The Christian Science Monitor

Dear Editor:

Jeffrey Shaffer asserts that growing population inevitably threatens to lower individual living standards ("Overcrowding at the gas pump," June 2). Baloney.

Are Americans today poorer than we were, say, in 1800? According to Mr. Shaffer's logic, we should be. Back then U.S. population was 5.2 million; today it's 57 times larger at nearly 300 million. And the world's population now is more than six times larger. Yet, of course, our standard of living - along with that of everyone living in open, market societies - is today inexpressibly higher. The reason is that free markets ensure that, for all that we consume, we produce even more.

31 May 2006

Editor, The New York Post

Dear Editor:

Sen. Hillary Clinton is correct: a national speed limit of 55 mph will force Americans to consume less oil. But it will also force us to spend more time in our cars rather than at our destinations.

Given Sen. Clinton's concern that, as she says on her website, "Today's families are often stretched thin... trying to carve out time for their young children and ageing relatives," (<http://clinton.senate.gov/issues/children>) surely she should think twice before concluding that the oil we'll save by driving more slowly is more precious than the time we'll waste by doing so.

30 May 2006

Editor, The Boston Globe

Dear Editor:

Yolanda Ostolaza justifies raising the minimum wage by saying that "studies have shown that a higher minimum wage does not cost jobs" (Letters, May 30). Indeed so - just as studies have shown that tobacco use poses no health risks and that the fossil record disproves the theory of natural selection.

The overwhelming majority of studies of the effects of minimum-wage legislation find that such legislation harms low-skilled workers, not only by eliminating jobs for many of these workers, but also by reducing these workers' access to on-the-job training and fringe benefits and by promoting discrimination in hiring and firing.

29 May 2006

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

SIR:

Scandinavians do move more readily than Americans from one income quintile to another (Charlemagne, May 27). This fact, however, provides less support than you suppose for the conclusion that Scandinavians enjoy more income mobility than do Americans.

One important reason for Scandinavians' greater mobility among income quintiles is the fact that these quintiles are smaller and more compressed than in America. For example, while in Sweden top quintile earners earn approximately 3.3 times what bottom quintile earners earn, in America top-quintile earners' income is 7.3 times larger than the income of bottom-quintile earners. America's greater span of incomes means that the same change in income that moves a Swede to a different income quintile is less likely to move an American to a different quintile.