



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.

9 June 2006

News Editor, WTOP Radio

To the Editor:

With her report billed by anchorman Frank Herzog as showing that "marijuana is more dangerous" than teens think, Kate Ryan recounts the recent deadly violence surrounding marijuana sales.

The risk of violence during drug deals is not a danger of drugs; it is a danger of drug prohibition. It makes no more sense to say that marijuana today is dangerous because of the violence that sometimes accompanies its exchange than it does to say that whiskey in the 1920s was dangerous because of the violence that sometimes accompanied its exchange.

9 June 2006

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

To the Editor:

Paul Krugman admires the fiscal principles of those "Americans from an earlier era" who instituted the modern income- and estate-tax ("The DeLay Principle," June 9). Although my admiration is less, I'm willing to keep the estate tax if we return to the original personal-income-tax policies of those "progressive" leaders in 1913 - most notably, a tax-rate structure whose lowest rate was one percent and whose maximum rate of seven percent kicked in only when annual incomes reached \$7.7 million (in 2006 dollars).

8 June 2006

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

To the Editor:

Altha Cravey invokes the mythical "race to the bottom" to justify western college-students' protests against sweatshops (Letters, June 8). But as Dartmouth economist Douglas Irwin notes, "Several studies have failed to find a strong

relationship between measures of labor standards and ... direct investment flows (such as whether countries with low standards attract more foreign investment)." (Douglas A. Irwin, *Free Trade Under Fire*, 2nd ed. (Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 192-193)

Indeed, if there really were a race to the bottom, the United States would likely not receive so much foreign direct investment - \$95.9 billion in 2004. This is about \$325 per capita in the U.S., nearly ten times larger than, for example, the \$34 of per capita foreign direct investment in Indonesia and more than 23 times larger than the \$13.85 of per capita foreign direct investment in sub-Saharan Africa.

7 June 2006

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

To the Editor:

David Fischer asks City Hall to "convene employers, educators

and government to determine how best to create paths of upward mobility" for workers in fields such as automotive repair and construction (Letters, June 7). Good idea. Here's what Mayor Bloomberg should say:

"Educators, stop blocking real education reform. Loosening your cancerous grip over schooling is necessary to improve youngsters' futures."

"Government, slash taxes; abandon your monopolizing racket of occupational-licensing; stop dictating terms of employment contracts; and abolish rent control so that builders again have incentives to construct rental units for people with modest incomes."

"Employers, do your thing. Expect from us neither favors nor hindrances. We demand only that you not commit force or fraud. Only you - not we pompous asses in City Hall - create jobs and prosperity."

6 June 2006

Editor, The Boston Globe

Dear Editor:

Three cheers for Bill Fried's impassioned yet well-reasoned call to end drug prohibition ("A safer society? Legalize drugs," June 6). In addition to the benefits he mentions that legalization will bring, these others are important:

- drugs' potency will fall as sellers lose the incentive to stuff maximum narcotic power into small, easily hidden packages;

- fewer sting operations, as police will no longer be charged

with uncovering activities that, unlike robbery and murder, produce no complaining victims;

- a freer society in which presumptuous busybodies are obliged to mind their own business.

5 June 2006

Program Director, Morning Edition
National Public Radio

Dear Sir or Madam:

So officials at the Food and Drug Administration believe that restaurants should fight obesity by "serving smaller portions, providing more nutritional information, and promoting healthier eating" ("FDA Report Says Eating Out Can Contribute to Obesity," June 5).

Does it occur to my would-be keepers in Washington that not only CAN I decide for myself what to eat, how much to eat, and what restaurants to frequent – but that I cherish the right to do? Or do these meddlesome bureaucrats suppose that restaurants stubbornly ignore their patrons' preferences, forcing us to eat whatever they carelessly or greedily serve rather than what we would choose to eat were we not trapped so helplessly in the tenacious grip of the food-service industry?