



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.

25 June 2006

Editor, New Orleans
Times-Picayune

Dear Editor:

Mike Howells asserts that people's ability to afford to live in any city or town "is contingent on the degree to which the government is willing to support them" (Letters, June 25). His basis for this claim is our need for goods such as roads, sewers, and potable water.

But it's literally an urban myth that these things must be supplied by government. As documented in the important book *The Voluntary City*, [The Voluntary City, David T. Beito, Peter Gordon, & Alexander Tabarrok, eds.

(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002)] history teems with examples of affordable and efficacious roads, sewers, water, public transportation, fire protection, and even law enforcement being provided privately.

24 June 2006

Editor, The Boston Globe

Dear Editor:

Robert Kuttner applauds John Edwards's call to end poverty in America within the next three decades ("Survival of the richest," June 24). Mr. Edwards is too late. Absolute poverty in America ended long ago. Today, no American starves to death. None are forced by circumstances to wear only homespun

clothing while working on subsistence farms. Even the poorest American now enjoys a life-expectancy twice that of our pre-industrial ancestors.

Relative poverty, in contrast, is very real. It is also unconquerable. Mr. Edwards's efforts, therefore, although trumpeted with soaring oratory, at best are either pointless or futile.

22 June 2006

Editor, The Christian
Science Monitor

Dear Editor:

State governments indeed are more fiscally responsible than is Uncle Sam ("States tend their piggy banks better," June 22). The most significant

reason is that only Uncle Sam has a printing press. In the U.S., only he can pay his bills by literally making more money. Aware of this fact, creditors face less risk of default by lending to the U.S. government than they face by lending, say, to the State of Kansas or to General Motors.

Combined with their native profligacy, their access to the printing press means that Congress and the President will seldom resist the easy option of deficit spending - a fact as certain as it is lamentable.

20 June 2006

Editor, The Boston Globe

Dear Editor:

If your case for raising the minimum wage is sound

("Toward an \$8.25 minimum," June 20), your policy conclusion is too modest. Why not have government dictate also the minimum prices of other things often sold by people of modest means, such as used cars and old lawn-mowers? Or baseball cards sold on eBay? After all, people so lacking in sense or ability that they need government to set the terms at which they sell their labor surely need this same benevolent intervention to set the terms of their other transactions.

19 June 2006

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

Dear Editor:

Rep. Joe Knollenberg justifies ear-marked spending by asserting that members of Congress "know better than federal officials and bureaucrats...where to spend money" (Robert Novak, "Still Logrolling for Pork," June 19). This principle is sound even if Rep. Knollenberg's application of it isn't.

The idea seems to be that distant, unaccountable government operatives can't be trusted to spend money wisely. Principled application of this principle would strip from Rep. Knollenberg and his ilk most of their current powers to tax and spend, returning decisions over how best to use resources to private individuals.