



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.

6 August 2006

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

To the Editor:

Robert Hicks describes the McMansion-owning new residents of his home of Williamson County, Tennessee, as "first and foremost, driven by an obsession with taxes. This isn't to say that none of them have genuine concern for the poor" ("The New New South," August 6). Interesting comment.

Why does Mr. Hicks assume that a desire to keep one's money out of politicians' paws signals

indifference to the poor? Correct or not, there's a perfectly coherent case that the poor are best helped by low taxes which foster robust economic activity along with a vibrant civil society that assists the less-fortunate through private, voluntary aid. Skepticism of political action is not evidence of callousness and greed.

5 August 2006

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

Dear Editor:

Charles Whalen argues that the failed 1981 PATCO strike "was a

watershed" that still casts "a long, dark shadow" ("Echoes of a Broken Strike," Aug. 5). Among the pieces of evidence he cites to support his claim is the fact that since the early 1980s the percentage of American workers who belong to labor unions has fallen from 20.1 to 12.5.

True. But this decline in union membership began nearly thirty years before the PATCO strike. Union membership (as a percent of workers) peaked, at 36 percent, in 1953. It has steadily declined ever since. Indeed, data (http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/webfeatures_snapshots_archive_05051999) from the union-funded Economic Policy Institute show that

the PATCO strike did nothing even to accelerate (much less to spark) this trend.

3 August 2006

Editor, The Washington Times

Dear Editor:

Senator Richard Lugar writes that "the business case for ethanol has never been stronger" ("We can end oil addiction," August 3). But he then says that market forces are moving "far too slowly" in developing ethanol, a fact that he predictably uses to justify government subsidies for this effort.

Lugar specializes in winning elections and in spending other people's money. Investors specialize in spending their own money, or money voluntarily entrusted to them, in search of truly profitable economic opportunities. Which of these - a career politician or private investors - is likely correct about the speed with which resources should be devoted to developing ethanol?

2 August 2006

Editor, The Washington Times

Dear Editor:

You write that now is the first time since 1959 that Cuba has been without Fidel Castro "at the helm" ("Cubans ponder life without Fidel," August 2). Your metaphor is inappropriate. Castro was never so much a captain "at the helm" as he was a slave master incessantly flogging - often to death - innocent victims of his megalomania.

31 July 2006

Editor, The Washington Times

Dear Editor:

Deforest Rathbone rightly laments the thousand of deaths caused each year by drug abuse but wrongly asserts that legalization of drugs "would drive that horrific statistic much higher" (Letters, July 31). On the contrary, it's the current system of prohibition that keeps this statistic inhumanely high.

If drugs were legalized, addicts would more readily seek treatment. Also, suppliers would be under competitive and legal pressures not only to ensure the quality of their products but to standardize information about dosages.

And importantly, sellers would lose incentives to push drugs to schoolchildren. Anyone who doubts this claim should ask himself when he last saw Anheuser-Busch or Seagram's peddling their intoxicating wares on schoolyards.