



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.

3 September 2006

The Editor, New York Post

To the Editor:

Recalling the Great Depression, Susan Tannenbaum asks "Didn't President Roosevelt respond to that calamity with an alphabet soup of government-funded organizations and lots of action designed to get the country back on its feet? Why can't we do that for the Gulf Coast?" (Letters, September 3).

Let's hope we don't do the same for the Gulf Coast. Contrary to popular myth, FDR's New Deal did not end the Depression.

In fact, by discouraging investment, subsidizing non-production, promoting cartels, and preventing wages and prices from adjusting to market realities, the New Deal was itself the great calamity of the 1930s. [See Robert Higgs, *Depression, War, and Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2006): <http://www.lfb.com/index.php?deptid=&parentid=&stocknumber=EH9102&page=1&itemsperpage=24>]

Having endured one of the worst natural disasters in American history, residents of the Gulf Coast should be spared a replay of one of our worst man-made disasters.

2 September 2006

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

To the Editor:

John Tierney is correct that the GOP fusion of libertarians and conservatives is breaking down ("Can This Party Be Saved?" Sept. 2). The lesson here is important.

Although it hides its nature behind a glorifying facade of marble columns, grandiose titles, and stately ceremonies, government is brute power. And so in politics those who long for power, either because of their ideology or because of their vanity, will over time out-compete those

who detest power. Because true conservatives itch to control the lives of others no less than do modern "liberals," it was inevitable that conservatives would overwhelm the libertarian voices within an organization - the GOP - whose sole purpose is to grab as much power as possible.

1 September 2006

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

To the Editor:

Thomas Frank argues that the modern American economy harms ordinary workers ("Rendezvous With Oblivion," Sept. 1). He grounds this argument in part upon the widespread belief that Americans today have less job security than they enjoyed during "liberalism's" golden era.

This belief isn't supported by the evidence.

Economist Ann Huff Stevens finds in a recent paper ["The More Things Change, The More They Stay the Same: Trends in Long-term Employment in the United States, 1969-2002," National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper No. 11878: <http://papers.nber.org/papers/w11878>] that job security for men today is little changed from what it was in 1969. Specifically, "In 1969, average tenure in the longest job for males aged 58-62 was 21.9 years. In 2002, the comparable figure was 21.4 years. Just over half

of men ending their careers in 1969 had been with a single employer for at least 20 years; the same is true in 2002."

31 August 2006

The Editor, Washington Times

To the Editor:

Pam Algea agrees with Pat Buchanan that Mexicans are 'invading' America and 'reconquering' the U.S. southwest (Letters, August 31). This view is as narrow as it is baseless. First, real invaders violently plunder; they do not work and produce on terms agreeable to both employer and employee.

Second, as Princeton sociologist Douglas Massey points out, [Douglas K. Massey, "Seeing Mexican Immigration Clearly," Cato Unbound, August 20, 2006: <http://www.cato-unbound.org/2006/08/20/douglas-s-massey/seeing-mexican-immigration-clearly/>] the data on Mexican immigration powerfully contradict the claim that America is being "overrun" with Mexican immigrants: "Mexican immigration is not a tidal wave. The rate of undocumented migration has not increased in over

two decades.... Rates of migration between Mexico and the United States are entirely normal for two countries so closely integrated economically."

30 August 2006

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

Dear Editor:

Harold Meyerson writes that the past thirty years has witnessed a "war of American employers on unions" resulting in a "decoupling of increased corporate revenue from employees' paychecks" ("Devaluing Labor," August 30). He chooses as his argument's crescendo the low salaries paid to pilots by Mesaba Airlines.

Bad example. Mesaba Airlines filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in October. The low salaries it pays clearly haven't resulted from - and certainly haven't resulted in - any "increased corporate revenue" pouring into Mesaba's coffers.

29 August 2006

The Editor, Washington Times

To the Editor:

Ben Bernanke rightly looks at globalization's big picture ("Bernanke on globalization," August 29). Globalization does more than improve people's material standard of living. It also breaks down irrational prejudices - prejudices that stunt and deform the growth of civilization. Historian Will Durant said it well when he explained how foreign commerce sparked ancient Athens' rise to greatness:

"The crossroads of trade are the meeting place of ideas, the attrition ground of rival customs and beliefs; diversities beget conflict, comparison, thought; superstitions cancel one another and reason begins."*

Quite literally, trade restrictions are unreasonable.

28 August 2006

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

To the Editor:

You allege that ordinary workers today are suffering an unprecedented post-WWII failure of their compensation to keep pace with productivity gains and with profits ("Real Wages Fail to Match a Rise in Productivity," August 28). But the significance you accord the story by running it on the Front Page above the fold is at odds with the fact that you quote only one economist, Jared Bernstein. Were none others available?

Perhaps if your reporters had spoken to more scholars they would not have written that "Since last summer, however, the value of workers' benefits [along with wages] has also failed to keep pace with inflation." Bureau of Labor Statistics data series number PRS85006152, which reports the annual-percentage-rate change in real hourly compensation of non-farm workers, shows this compensation rising by

nearly 5.1 percent since
September 30, 2005.

28 August 2006

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

Dear Editor:

Sebastian Mallaby rightly takes to task the likes of Evan Bayh, Joe Biden, and Joe Lieberman who are now denouncing Wal-Mart ("Shopping for Support Down the Wrong Aisle," August 28). Alas, America is marred by a long and disgraceful history of these staged fulminations against successful retailers. That consummate demagogue

Huey Long affirmed that he would "rather have thieves and gangsters than chain stores in Louisiana." (Long was, at least, loyal to his genre.) And Rep. Wright Patman, displaying more frankness than do his modern-day successors, declared that "there is no place for chain stores in the American system."