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.

29 January 2006
The Editor, New York Times
229 West 43rd St.
New York, NY 10036

To the Editor:

Indian Finance Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram wrongly accuses the U.S. of robbing poor countries of much-needed capital ("Leaders Told: Fix the Economy's Gaps as Sun Shines," Jan. 29). Capital flows into the U.S. because, relative to most countries, our currency is stable, our investment climate is open and secure, and our laws are impartial. In contrast, poor countries are poor precisely because their governments are too likely to confiscate capital, or to tax it away outright or through inflation, excessive regulation, and corruption.

Poor countries aren't robbed of capital; their governments repel it.

28 January 2006
Editor, The Washington Post
1150 15th St., NW
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Editor:

Eager to tell private firms how to compensate employees, Maryland's left-of-center legislators are now aghast that their colleagues on the right seek to ban same-sex marriage ("Gay Unions Fracture Md.'s Black Caucus," Jan. 28). I have a proposal to bring harmony to the Free State's legislature: delegates on the right should agree not to ban or otherwise penalize any consensual sexual acts, while those on the left should agree not to ban or otherwise penalize any consensual capitalist acts.

27 January 2006
Editor, USA Today

To the Editor:

Yolanda Young asserts that "[t]oday, 53% of Americans live paycheck to paycheck" ("Fringe economy preys on the poor," Jan. 27). This figure is dubious. More than half of American households have a net worth greater than $100,000. (http://money.cnn.com/2004/08/10/pf/millionaire/net_worth_stackup/)

Ms. Young says also that 56 millions Americans don't have bank accounts. Unlike the previous figure, this one is believable: more than 60 million Americans have yet to reach the age of 15. (http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2004-sa.html)

26 September 2006
Editor, The Boston Globe

To the Editor:

Political cartoonist Dan Wasserman misses the mark in blaming Alan Greenspan for the
trade deficit and the government's budget deficit (Jan. 26).

First, contrary to Mr. Wasserman's claim, the trade deficit itself isn't debt. Although America's trade deficit rises when foreigners hold dollars, for example, no American has any debt obligations as a result. Second, the budget deficit (which is debt) is caused by reckless spenders in Congress and the White House. Indeed, we should thank Mr. Greenspan for not reducing this debt by monetizing it. Had he done so, we would now be in the throes of high inflation.

25 January 2006

Editor, The Christian Science Monitor

To the Editor:

You admirably call for Americans "to respond in a kind way" to illegal immigrants ("All in a day's (illegal) work," Jan. 26). But, to this end, you insist that minimum-wages statutes be applied to these workers.

Is it kind to price these workers out of jobs? Or to give employers who do hire these workers incentives to drive their employees at a more grueling pace?

24 January 2006

The Editor, The Boston Globe

Dear Editor:

You correctly note that "mixing politics with science produces bad science" (Editorial, Jan. 24). But your solution - to prohibit "misleading information" being passed off as science, and to forbid questioning agency appointees about their politics - is highly unscientific. It ignores the reality of politics.

Government is run by politicians. Why do you cling to the faith that people who excel at kissing babies, chanting platitudes, smiling pretty for cameras, and spending other people's money can ever be trusted to keep politics out of anything their noses are in?

23 January 2006

The Editor, The Christian Science Monitor

Dear Editor:

Jason and Janelle Fleming complain that "wages and benefits have deflated because of outsourcing and immigration" (Letters, Jan. 23, ). Although popularly believed, this claim isn't supported by the evidence.

Over the long run, free trade increases worker compensation by ensuring that each country's resources are used most productively (rather than used in ways that are artificially protected by tariffs). Likewise with immigration. A recent study released by the National Bureau of Economic Research (http://www.economics2.uni-tuebingen.de/teaching/courses/ss06/sem06/Material/10)%20Wages%20and%20immigration/Ottaviano%20Peri%20NBERw11672.pdf) finds that "overall immigration generates a large positive effect on the average wages of U.S.-born workers" - in large part because immigrants often complement and enhance, rather than displace, Americans' work skills.