



Comment on the Commentary of the Day

by

Donald J. Boudreaux
Chairman, Department of Economics
George Mason University
dboudrea@gmu.edu
<http://www.cafehayek.com>

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.

17 December 2006

Editor, The Baltimore Sun

Dear Editor:

Today's letter from the American Lung Association's Stephen Peregoy reveals the contempt that members of the command-and-control crowd have for ordinary people. Justifying his opposition to letting "each bar and restaurant owner . . . decide whether to allow smoking," Mr. Peregoy rhetorically asks "Should each restaurant owner decide whether or not to refrigerate dairy products? Or whether rodents should be allowed to roam the kitchen?"

Here's someone who imagines that we ordinary people are too inept on our own to avoid filthy restaurants serving rotten food.

Here's someone who supposes that the great bulk of us normal folks are ignoramuses who must be grabbed by our noses and led to salvation by the enlightened few represented by the likes of Mr. Peregoy.

16 December 2006

Editor, The Wall Street Journal
200 Liberty Street
New York, NY 10281

Dear Editor:

Peter Navarro insists that China's trade practices are "unfair" (Letters, Dec. 16). Unfair for whom? Not for American consumers. We get lower-priced goods and - because trade with China releases our own resources to produce things that would otherwise be too costly to supply - more innovative

products. Not for American producers, for an essential rule in a market economy is that no producer has any right to consumers' patronage.

Any unfairness in this picture is suffered only by Chinese citizens who are taxed and regulated to make Chinese exports more attractive. Even here, though, the picture is unclear. The lifting of hundreds of millions Chinese out of poverty over the past quarter-century is powerful evidence that that country relies less and less on government intervention and more and more on the rules of the market.

15 December 2006

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

To the Editor:

Opposed to a loosening of S.E.C. rules governing foreign firms that raise capital in America, Floyd Norris mocks the idea that shareholders can protect themselves by voting with their feet ("S.E.C. to Firms: Keep Money, Forget Rules," Dec. 15). But he himself presents evidence against his proposition by reporting that researchers find that "investors paid more if a company complied with American rules and promised to keep doing so."

Investors need no help from Washington bureaucrats to distinguish between firms that do and firms that don't follow effective disclosure and corporate-governance procedures.

13 December 2006

Editor, The Los Angeles Times

Dear Editor:

Regarding all the complaints about America's trade deficit with China ("Trade deficit drops sharply in October," Dec. 13):

In plain language, America's trade deficit with China means that we voluntarily buy more from the Chinese than the Chinese buy from us. This situation is no more of a problem than is the fact that I buy more from supermarkets

than supermarkets buy from me.

Now here's a genuinely serious problem: Uncle Sam forces me to "buy" more from him than he buys from me. Like most taxpayers, I have a gigantic and growing trade deficit with Washington. Does my trade deficit with Washington justify my refusing to ship any more of my money to that town?

12 December 2006

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

To the Editor:

The U.S. government argues that Beijing puts too many barriers in the way of its citizens who wish to buy foreign goods ("Before Visit to China, a Rebuke," Dec. 12). Although correct, this argument is sodden with hypocrisy.

Most notably, among Uncle Sam's complaints is that China imposes "limits on some sales of farm goods." On Sunday and yesterday, the Washington Post reported how Washington protects large dairy farms by shutting down low-priced dairy suppliers - in other words, by imposing "limits on some sales of farm goods."

11 December 2006

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

Dear Editor:

To make an even more compelling case for free trade, Sebastian Mallaby should avoid sports metaphors. For example, by writing that the

WTO's purpose is "to keep the trade playing field balanced" ("Cracking the Currency Puzzle," Dec. 11), he lends credence to the protectionist illusion that trade is a zero-sum contest among producers to see which ones can score the most exports.

In truth, trade is a positive-sum process by which consumers seek the best available deals.

Trade's benefits are measured ultimately in consumer satisfaction, not in producer output or profits. And while foreign-governments' trade interventions should be criticized, the problems with such interventions are not that they harm "our" producers but that they harm foreign consumers and taxpayers.