



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.

11 February 2007

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

To the Editor:

Reviewer Elizabeth Royte reports that Jay Griffiths, author of *Wild*, is utterly contemptuous of modern society - including being angry at such apparently heinous cultural innovations as "indoor sex, maps, clean fingernails, golf ('greenery made stupid'), missionaries and the measurement of land, money or time" ("*Nature Girl*," Feb. 11)

I notice, though, from Ms. Royte's superb review that

the British Ms. Griffiths experiences nature in "the Amazon, the Arctic, the Australian desert, the mountains of West Papua and on the Indonesian seas." I wonder: did Ms. Griffiths walk, swim, or take a wooden raft from one of these exotic locations to the next? If not, perhaps she should temper her contempt for those of us who clean our nails and make love indoors and thank us for the airplanes, automobiles, vaccines and many other products that make possible her trips to the wilderness.

9 February 2007

Editor, The Baltimore Sun

To the Editor:

You assert that the diamondback terrapin is endangered because "Demand for them as food or pets had skyrocketed" ("*Diamondbacks in the rough*," Feb. 9). This fact cannot possibly be the full story.

Demand for chicken as food has skyrocketed, yet we hear no talk of chickens being endangered. Likewise, demand for Jack Russell terriers as pets has skyrocketed without casting this breed into the endangered category. The reason is that these animals are privately owned - and their owners have incentives not to slaughter or sell these animals into extinction.

The problem for terrapins is that state ownership of the Chesapeake and other inland waters thwarts private entrepreneurs from establishing private property rights over these animals.

9 February 2007

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

To the Editor:

You are unduly mystified over the fact that Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott joined forces with labor-union leader Andy Stern to press for government-run health-care ("Andy Stern | Wal-Mart," Feb. 9). Such an alliance would be mysterious only if business people were generally champions of free markets. But most are not. The late Milton Friedman said it well:

"The two chief enemies of the free society or free enterprise are intellectuals on the one hand and businessmen on the other, for opposite reasons. Every intellectual believes in freedom for himself, but he's opposed to freedom for others.... He thinks ... there ought to be a central planning board that will establish social priorities.... The businessmen are just the opposite - every businessman is in favor of freedom for everybody else, but when it comes to himself that's a different question. He's always the special case. He ought to

get special privileges from the government, a tariff, this, that."

8 February 2007

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

To the Editor:

David Brooks vividly explains that today's politicians always camouflage themselves in public: they routinely endorse policies that they really don't believe in ("Private Virtue, Public Vice," Feb. 8). Then Brooks strangely concludes "In private, we have a decent leadership class. In public, it's rotten."

Persons who are wise and steadfast only in private - only when they suffer no risks for sticking to their principles - are neither decent nor leaders. They are opportunists, posers, and rogues.

7 February 2007

Editor, The Boston Globe

To the Editor:

Opposing the nomination of Susan Dudley to lead the agency that oversees the regulations that Uncle

Sam imposes on the economy, you assert that "Only an undue faith in the ability of the market to correct problems created by industry could have led Dudley to oppose, as she did, EPA's efforts to keep arsenic out of drinking water" ("A specific governing failure," Feb. 7).

Nonsense. Like Ms. Dudley, law professor Cass Sunstein - decidedly a man of the left - argues vigorously in favor of using cost-benefit analysis to guide regulatory policy. And Sunstein is quite clear that the proposal to reduce arsenic levels in drinking water might well create more harm than good. [Cass R. Sunstein, *Laws of Fear* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005), p. 28.]

7 February 2007

Editor, The Washington Times

To the Editor:

Re Helle Dale's "Just the facts" (Feb. 7): Let's grant (if just for the sake of argument) that environmental scientists have proven that the earth's ideal average temperature was reached about a century ago, and that that temperature now is rising because of human activity.

The truth remains that these scientists have no expertise to judge whether or not government can be trusted with the power and resources to "combat" global warming. Nor can these scientists tell us how a free market would likely deal with global-warming's consequences.

Contrary to widespread belief, environmental scientists can legitimately say nothing about whether, or how, to respond to global warming.

6 February 2007

Editor, The Washington Times

To the Editor:

Brendan Conway is charmed by Philip Gold's notion that every American male "should spend some time in uniform as a normal part of life and of citizenship" ("Selective service," Feb. 6). I'm not so charmed.

Society remains primitive insofar as individuals are regarded as agents to butcher for - and to be butchered for - the collective. Society progresses only as the depraved romance of the collective gives way to respect for the individual - the individual whose life and property are never regarded as being at the disposal of the state.