



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.

15 April 2007

Editor, Baltimore Sun

To the Editor:

Benjamin Barber laments the great diversity and abundance of products available in modern market economies ("Overselling capitalism with consumerism," April 15). His lamentation reaches its crescendo when he proclaims that "When we see politics permeate every sector of life, we call it totalitarianism. When religion rules all, we call it theocracy. But when commerce dominates everything, we call it liberty."

He compares rifles to roses. Totalitarianism and theocracy are evil because, under them, persons with power bend innocent people to their will though the use of violence. Commerce is the opposite. It is a peaceful series of voluntary offers to buy and to sell. It IS liberty - and it is profoundly good.

14 April 2007

Editor, Baltimore Sun

To the Editor:

Carleton Brown asserts that natural disasters are nature's way of warning that human population is too large (Letters, April 14). Mr. Brown should study history.

For example, geologists have identified 27 monster floods during the past 1.8 million years. More than half (16) - including the worst eleven of these floods - are pre-historic. They occurred either before humans existed or when our population was no higher than 20 million (merely 0.3 percent of today's level). Further each of the remaining 11 floods occurred in areas that are non-industrialized and sparsely populated. [Jim E. O'Connor and John E. Costa, "The World's Largest Floods, Past and Present: Their Causes and Magnitudes" U.S. Geological Survey, Circular 1254, (2004):

<http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/2004/circ1254/>]

Or take the Black Death. This massive plague struck during the 14th century when our population was no higher than 500 million - just eight percent of today's level. Considering that life-expectancy today is at an all-time high, it is very difficult to sustain the case that our large population is a curse.

13 April 2007

Editor, USA Today

To the Editor:

Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* are justly admired ("Defiant to the end," April 13). But his finest work, in my opinion, is his 1961 short story "Harrison Bergeron" which foretells the idiocy and the horror of using government to enforce equality of outcomes.

It's the year 2081 and a Handicapper General ensures that people with above-average looks wear masks; people with above-average strength are saddled with weights; people with above-average intelligence have implants in their brains to stymie above-average thoughts. Everyone is the same. No one suffers envy or embarrassment. Life is a tomb of numbness -- and of utter tyranny.

Note: Here's a link to "Harrison Bergeron":
<http://instruct.westvalley.edu/lafave/hb.html>

12 April 2007

Editor, Washington Times

To the Editor:

Carl Henn wants to raise taxes on gasoline so that oil consumption is curtailed (Letters, April 12). He argues that, because oil is a finite resource allegedly destined to increase in value, taxing it more heavily now means that "we" can "capture" this rising value. If we don't raise taxes, Mr. Henn says, the rising value of oil will simply redound in profits to oil companies.

There's plenty wrong with Mr. Henn's argument. But his most serious error is to suppose that more revenue for government is akin to more wealth for citizens. In fact, revenue in the paws of politicians is likely to be squandered; profits on the books of oil companies is likely to be used productively - reinvested in exploration, for example - as well as to inspire entrepreneurs to develop alternative fuels.

