



## 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.**

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15 July 2007

The Editor, The New York Post

To the Editor:

Terry Keenan says that it's unfair that gains on hedge-funds are taxed at the capital-gains tax rate of 15 percent rather than at the higher income-tax rate of 35 percent ("Richest Men in the World Cry Poverty on Capitol Hill," July 15).

I agree. But why not solve this problem by lowering income-tax rates rather than raising the capital-gains rate? In this debate du jour, most people unthinkingly assume that hedge-fund owners are receiving an unjustified

break. But isn't it at least possible that other income earners are being unjustifiably milked by the political class in Washington?

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12 July 2007

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

To the Editor:

Demanding a single-payer health-care system, Celina Su announces that her "health is not a consumer good" (Letters, July 12).

Ms. Su can call her health whatever she pleases, but changing the way health care is funded can never

free us from the need to ration health care somehow. The resources necessary to supply medical treatments are scarce. These resources can be rationed through market mechanisms (which I prefer) or through bureaucratic mandates, but always there will be some health-care desires that go unmet. The notion that a single-payer system will create for Americans "an embarrassment of health care riches" is infantile.

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11 July 2007

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

To the Editor:

Economists Alan Blinder and Dani Rodrik pose as courageous, clear-eyed dissenters from the benighted mainstream support for free trade ("In Economics Departments, a Growing Will to Debate Fundamental Assumptions," July 11). Courageous they might be; clear-eyed they are not.

First, the case for free trade relies upon the fact that trade destroys some particular jobs in order to release workers for newly created ones. So while Blinder might be correct that trade will eliminate 40 million particular American jobs, this possibility doesn't begin to undermine the case for free trade.

Second, if "faith" explains why most economists insist that political borders are economically irrelevant,

perhaps it also explains why Dani Rodrik never argues that, say, the economy of Massachusetts might be strengthened if that state were to restrict its citizens' freedom to buy products from Connecticut, Maine, and other states. If protecting producers from competitors outside of their political unit can create prosperity, surely an open-minded scholar should explore how individual states, even individual cities, can create prosperity through such protection.

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10 July 2007

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

Dear Editor:

Jay Markowitz defends the FDA's drug-review process by asserting that, without it, "doctors and patients

would be faced with a bewildering array of choices with no way to tell which is best" (Letters, July 10). Dr. Markowitz is mistaken.

First, there is no objective 'best' treatment for any illness. One patient's tolerance for risk differs from another patient's tolerance, and her illness might be more advanced than his. Second, if persons closest to each case - each patient and his or her physician - will be paralyzed by "a bewildering array" of treatment choices, why suppose that FDA staffers are immune to such bewilderment? The process for discovering effective drugs is stymied, not enhanced, by funneling a "bewildering" number of choices through a politically influenced bureaucracy.