



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.

18 November 2007

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

To the Editor:

Douglas Martin's obituary of Harold Berman is eloquent and wise ("Harold J. Berman, 89, Who Altered Beliefs About Origins of Western Law, Dies," November 18). But in describing the thrust of Professor Berman's most celebrated work - his 1983 book *Law and Revolution* - Mr. Martin misses that work's central point.

That point is not so much that today's western legal tradition began earlier than the 16th century. Rather, the point is that law in the west emerged from the competition between popes and princes for sovereign power - and from the competition of both church and state with manors, cities, and merchants for jurisdiction over a wide variety of disputes. Mr. Berman's momentous scholarship revealed that our modern conception of law as being exclusively the dictate of a sovereign power is mistaken.

17 November 2007

Editor, Baltimore Sun

To the Editor:

Although de rigueur among "progressives," Jim Salvucci is mistaken to describe bourgeois values as "empty" and consumerism as "mindless" (Letters, November 17). Bourgeois values encourage hard work, sobriety, thrift, honesty, and self-reliance - all which earn their practitioners the ability over time to enjoy greater material comforts and amusements. What is truly empty is the value that counsels A to live off of the wealth given to him by B and which B confiscated from C. And what is truly

mindless is the notion that society progresses as greater numbers of us live as A's or as B's, and all the while thinking of C's as being nothing more than contemptible cows to be milked for the "general good."

16 November 2007

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

To the Editor:

Paul Krugman asserts that Social Security faces no financial crisis ("Played for a Sucker," November 16). His evidence? Peter Orszag's and Philip Ellis's statement that the largest fiscal problem confronting Uncle Sam is the projected growth in health-care costs. Mr. Krugman's logic is as compelling as would be that of a physician who concludes that tuberculosis isn't a serious illness because pancreatic cancer is even more lethal.

In 2005 testimony before Congress, the eminent economist Thomas Saving - appointed by President Clinton to serve as a Public Trustee of the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds - acknowledged that

Medicare and Medicaid are in worse financial shape than is Social Security. But Mr. Saving also warned that Social Security's financial condition is precarious. Speaking for the Trustees, Mr. Saving said that action to fix Social Security's coming insolvency "should not be deferred any longer than necessary for due deliberation and decision."

[\[http://mysocialsecurity.org/main/news.php?ItemsID=115\]](http://mysocialsecurity.org/main/news.php?ItemsID=115)

15 November 2007

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

To the Editor:

Rafael Medoff makes a good case that Churchill's politics prevented him from saving as many Jewish lives as he would have saved had he not refused to open British-ruled Palestine to Jews seeking escape from Hitler's killers (Letters, November 15). But let's not forget F.D.R.'s unforgivable refusal to admit into the U.S. the 937 Jews trying to escape from Germany in 1939 aboard the ship St. Louis.

14 November 2007

Editor, Baltimore Sun

To the Editor:

"Rosemary's Baby" and "The Boys from Brazil" are indeed the two most popular novels written by the late Ira Levin ("Rosemary's Baby' Author Ira Levin Dies," November 14). But his best work, in my opinion, is his little-known 1970 novel "This Perfect Day." In this work, Mr. Levin describes the horrors unleashed by a collectivist mentality that

deifies the state as the creator of all that is orderly and good in society - a mentality that, as a result, empowers government to crush liberty and individuality. "This Perfect Day" should rank with other collectivist-dystopian works such as Orwell's "1984" and with Huxley's "Brave New World."

13 November 2007

Editor, USA Today

To the Editor:

DeWayne Wickham's analysis of the dollar's declining value is flawed ("Weakening dollar reflects USA's fading world status," November 13). First, prosperity isn't created by a nation having "economic dominance" (whatever that means); it is created by open markets unburdened by excessive regulations and taxes. Second, the size of the trade deficit is no part of the explanation for the dollar's fall. What must be explained is why investors until recently were keen on the dollar (and thus increasing the trade deficit) and why they are less keen on it now. I have my hunches for this change in investors' sentiments - namely, Congress's increasing hostility to free trade and

its mounting enthusiasm for raising taxes, and the Fed's acceleration of the growth of the supply of dollars.

12 November 2007

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

To the Editor:

Here's the scariest line I've read in ages: "The era of laissez-faire happiness might be coming to an end. Some prominent economists and psychologists are looking into ways to measure happiness to draw it into the public policy realm" ("All They Are Saying Is Give Happiness a Chance," November 12).

Several decades ago, some economists - enamored of their increasing ability to describe statistically existing patterns of production - fancied that a new age was dawning in which government would improve the lot of ordinary people by substituting its own production and distribution "plans" for the results of the market. These fancies proved to be dangerous fantasies. We would all be much better

off - happier, even! - if this new generation of planners are laughed out of the public arena before their power grows to be as large as their gargantuan arrogance.

12 November 2007

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

Dear Editor:

Sebastian Mallaby sensibly finds merit in Benn Steil's call for currency to be supplied by the private sector ("The Dollar In Danger," November 12). But Mr. Mallaby misses the mark somewhat when he writes that "The more the dollar slides, the less Steil's suggestion sounds like a fantasy from a movie studio." History beat Hollywood to this story line.

Several economies have successfully used private currencies in the past. The most famous of these was Scotland from the early 18th century until 1845, when the Scottish Banking Act ended free entry into the currency-issuing business. Research by George Selgin, Lawrence White, and others shows not only that markets can supply money, but also that privately issued money is

quite sound. [An excellent survey is George A. Selgin and Lawrence H. White,

"How Would the Invisible Hand Handle Money?," Journal of Economic

Literature, Vol. 32, December 1994.]