



## Comment on the Commentary of the Day

by

Donald J. Boudreaux  
Chairman, Department of Economics  
George Mason University  
[dboudrea@gmu.edu](mailto: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.**

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25 November 2007

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

Dear Editor:

In her new book, Naomi Klein reveals what she sees as a smoking gun in the hands of the late Milton Friedman. It's true that Mr. Friedman wrote that "only a crisis - actual or perceived - produces real change" ("Doing Well by Doing Ill," November 25). From these words Ms. Klein draws the fantastically mistaken conclusion that Mr. Friedman was summoning capitalists to

wreak havoc upon an unsuspecting world. Unfortunately, reviewer Shashi Tharoor's defense of Mr. Friedman - that he should not be read literally - also misses the point.

Ms. Klein's mistake is the sophomoric one of confusing description with prescription. Mr. Friedman's claim was descriptive. It is of the same genre as the claim made to my family years ago by a physician who shared our frustration at my overweight father's refusal to eat a healthier diet: "It'll likely take a heart attack to convince him to eat less and exercise

more." If Ms. Klein had heard this statement, I suspect that she would have warned us that my dad's doctor was prescribing for him a heart attack!

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24 November 2007

Editor, The New York Post

To the Editor:

Like National Review's Jonah Goldberg, I'm frightened by Mike Huckabee's itch to regulate ("Who's Extreme?" November 24). Also like Goldberg, I admire Ron Paul for being that rare politician of principle.

But I disagree with Goldberg's prediction Ron Paul's noninterventionist foreign policy would be "disastrous." "Disastrous" compared to what? To Bush's failed and bloody effort to remake Iraqi society? To Bush being obliged now to side with Pakistan's reigning strongman? To the neocons' - and National Review's - strange notion that the same government that is inherently incompetent to regulate the economy here at home is ordained by history with the obligation, wisdom, and ability to re-engineer whole societies elsewhere?

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23 November 2007

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

To the Editor:

Opposed to globalization, Jeff Milchen asserts that "The only truly sustainable path for business in the 21st century is localization" (Letters, November 23). Mr. Milchen should learn some history. He can begin with Fernand Braudel's 1981 book *The Structures of Everyday Life*, which details the living standards of ordinary

Europeans during the late middle ages. This era was emphatically one of localization: people consumed only locally grown foods and locally made clothing. All building materials were local. There were no highways, railways, or CO2-emitting engines to pollute the local atmosphere with greenhouse gases or with foreign goods and foreign ideas.

But paradise had its price. Starvation was common, as was death by plague. Giving birth was more dangerous for women than a game of Russian Roulette. People lived in tiny one-room dirt-floor huts without indoor plumbing. During the winter, some of the farm animals (all local!) shared these accommodations.

What little "business" there was during the long era of localization might have been sustainable, but human dignity and human life certainly were not.

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22 November 2007

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

To the Editor:

In Katrina's aftermath, the New Orleans Audubon Aquarium restocked its fish collection at a cost of \$99,766. But FEMA, on the hook to pay for this restocking, long insisted that the Aquarium should have achieved the same end by spending \$618,849. FEMA took 17 months to conclude that saving taxpayers nearly a half-million dollars is acceptable ("Aquarium Wins FEMA Pay for Fishing Trips," November 22).

Given this incident - which is common - on what realistic basis do "Progressives" conclude that Americans will benefit if Uncle Sam supplies universal health insurance? On what realistic basis do neocons conclude that non-Americans will benefit if Uncle Sam remakes their societies? I realize that Serious People dismiss the reality of blatant, almost comical, instances of bureaucratic bungling as an intellectually unsound reason for skepticism of expanded government power. But why? Why do so many "reality-based" folks dismiss reality as a guide to how government really operates?

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21 November 2007

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

To the Editor:

Anyone seeking at least one good reason for the dollar's falling value should ponder your report on how lowans benefit from globalization and yet nevertheless are increasingly clamor for protectionism ("A Globalization Winner Joins in Trade Backlash," November 21). With politicians brazenly pandering to this economic ignorance, America very likely will soon become less open to international commerce. And being less open to trade not only makes Americans poorer, it makes America a less attractive place to invest. As investors seek relatively greener pastures, demand for the dollar falls.

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20 November 2007

Editor, The New York Post

To the Editor:

Iran's president Ahmadinejad insists that the dollar is "a worthless piece of paper." I'm happy to relieve him of the burden of holding valueless scrip. I invite President Ahmadinejad, and everyone else who shares his assessment of the dollar, to mail to me every one of their worthless pieces of paper. I'll even pay the postage.

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19 November 2007

Editor, The Washington Times

To the Editor:

Among the jobs of any Secretary of Agriculture is to portray the

administration as smart, fiscally responsible, and in awe of farmers' goodness and wisdom. Secretary Chuck Connor does his duty in "Farmers deserve better" (November 19).

But those of us who don't work for the Beltway circus should ignore the corny debate over the relative merits of the Bush administration's offensively expensive farm bill against those of Congress's obscenely expensive alternative bill. We should, instead, tell our "leaders" that the best farm bill is no farm bill. There is no sound reason for government to subsidize farmers or protect them from foreign competitors. Any farmer or rancher too incompetent to produce food that consumers pay for voluntarily should find other employment.