



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.

13 January 2008

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

Dear Editor:

Finding an upside to India's ages-old poverty, Mira Kamdar notes that Indians today don't have to break the "bad habit" of driving ("It Costs Just \$2,500. It's Cute as a Bug. And It Could Mean Global Disaster." January 13). But with the introduction of the \$2,500 Tata Nano Ms. Kamdar worries that Indians will do like Americans and start driving a lot. So she calls upon India's government to

discourage the use of automobiles and encourage the use of bicycles and mass-transit. Among her examples of the practicality of bicycles is Paris's "charming" new system of bicycle rentals.

But India is not urban. Seventy percent of Indians live in rural areas. There is no way that mass transit, much less bicycles (regardless of their charm), can supply these hundreds of millions of Indians with the same convenience and speed of movement that affordable automobiles will give them.

12 January 2008

Editor, The Atlantic

Dear Editor:

I have a question for Warren Robinson and others who worry that trade with low-wage China will make "the U.S. considerably worse off" (Letters, Jan./Feb.). Suppose that a Chinese scientist discovers a recipe for combining everyday kitchen ingredients into a medicine that completely and safely cures cancer, heart disease, tuberculosis, and erectile dysfunction. This generous scientist publishes the recipe on the web for free so that ordinary people throughout the world can, at near-zero

cost, protect themselves from these diseases.

Would this invention make Americans poorer?
Treating these diseases today is big business. Patients pay lots of money for treatment by highly skilled and highly paid specialists, as well as lots of money for medicines made by other highly skilled specialists. America's wealth, however, does not lie in the production of these high-priced outputs. Rather, it lies in Americans' ability to CONSUME these and other useful outputs.

It's true that, given the current scarcity of resources and knowledge available for treating these awful diseases, the prices that we willingly pay today for such treatments are high. Hence, the remuneration of the specialists who provide these treatments is unusually high. But these high prices reflect the regrettable fact that we still face unusually high obstacles to overcoming these diseases. A people grow wealthier as they lower the obstacles standing in their way of satisfying their desires. Just as the invention of a low-cost cure for dreaded diseases would make

nearly all of us richer, so, too, does our ability to acquire goods and services from abroad at unusually low costs make nearly all of us wealthier.

12 January 2008

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

Dear Editor:

For the past few years, persons on the left have described themselves proudly as being members of the "reality-based community." This community, ostensibly, insists that policies be based on facts, reason, and intelligent thinking rather than upon myths, superstitions, and sloppy thinking.

So we can trust, I presume, that Sen. Clinton's remarks yesterday in Los Angeles will cost her the votes of reality-based citizens. Speaking about the economy, Ms. Clinton declared that "the statistics are one thing, the stories are something altogether different. . . . It doesn't matter what you're told. It's what you feel, what you feel deep down" ("Clinton Proposes \$70 Billion To Stimulate Economy," January 12). As a wag

once noted, the plural of "anecdote" is not "data." And because facts are found with the head and not the heart, Ms. Clinton's "feelings" - no matter their depth - would be a dangerous guide to policy.

11 January 2008

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

To the Editor:

Government officials in California now seek power to centrally control thermostats in private building ("California Seeks Thermostat Control," January 11). In an attempt to paint those who object to such government intrusion as alarmists, your reporter explains that "The fact that similar radio-controlled technologies have been used on a voluntary basis in irrigation systems on farm fields and golf courses and in limited programs for buildings on Long Island is seldom mentioned" by opponents of such power.

Suppose Sacramento proposes to remotely control, in "emergency" situations, all newspaper presses. Would you remain sanguine about such government powers if someone explained that history is full of instances of the press voluntarily restraining itself?

10 January 2008

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

Dear Editor:

While it's true that the Clintons' political skills are sharp as daggers, I disagree with Robert Novak's claim that Hillary's now-famous tears were insincere ("The Clintons' One-Two Punch," January 10). She cried at the prospect of not ascending to the peak of power. What she tearfully confessed was her "passionate" belief that without her in the White House, America will "fall backwards as nation." Emotion welled in her bosom when she reflected on how many "opportunities" she has to offer America, and how "very personal" is her craving to govern others.

I have no doubt that real tears were brought to her eyes by this emotional stew of conceit mixed with fear of not grabbing the power that she so craves.

9 January 2008

Editor, The New Yorker

Dear Editor:

John Seabrook correctly reports that the Chinese buys lots of scrap metal from Americans ("American Scrap," January 14). But he incorrectly asserts that "In this sense, China's industrial might is literally being constructed out of the ruins of our own."

As the Cato Institute's Dan Ikenson found, U.S. manufacturing is hardly in "ruins." In America, manufacturing output and inflation-adjusted exports and profits reached an all-time high in 2006. (Data for 2007 are still incomplete.) And despite having only one-third the population of China, America's industrial output in 2006 - the largest of any country in the world - was 2.5 times greater than China's.

<http://freetrade.org/pubs/pas/tpa-035es.html>

8 January 2008

Editor, Slate.com

Dear Editor:

I disagree with Timothy Noah that the only real question about the tears

Hillary Clinton shed yesterday in New Hampshire is whether or not they were genuine ("The Politics of Weeping"). Of course her tears were genuine. She cried not because of some real or imagined affront to her personally, to her family, or to a favored political group; nor did she cry over any of her failures. Instead, Sen. Clinton cried over her own lust for power. Her emotion was sparked by her self-admiration. She got all choked up when she suggested how indispensable she is to America and when she reflected upon - perhaps a better phrase is "wallowed in" - her own magnanimity at being willing to endure the awful hardship of being President of the United States.

8 January 2008

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

To the Editor:

Surely I'm not alone in being horrified by the soaring narcissism and arrogance that Hillary Clinton revealed yesterday during her tearful moment in New Hampshire ("Tears Have Turned Campaigns,"

January 8). She confessed that she could not maintain her brutal campaign pace if she "didn't just passionately believe it was the right thing to do." The Senator continued: "I have so many ideas for this country, and I just don't want to see us fall backwards as a nation. This is very personal for me."

No one person is as important to a free country as Ms. Clinton fancies herself to be. More fundamentally, her burning "personal" desire to subject all Americans to her "many ideas" is evidence of a frightening itch to be a social engineer. Anyone itching as badly as Ms. Clinton claims to itch to rule over others should never be trusted with power.

7 January 2008

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

To the Editor:

So Lou Dobbs might run for President ("CNN's Lou Dobbs for President? He Says No, Sort of," January 7). May the ghost of Adam Smith help us!

You report one of Mr. Dobbs's trademark roars: "The middle class in this country, the majority in the country, has been ignored. Our elites in Washington, D.C., both political and corporate, are hell bent on ignoring the majority." Perhaps this claim is true, but if so the inference Mr. Dobbs draws - that the American middle-class is in trouble - is emphatically mistaken. I quote my colleague Walter Williams: "Controlling for inflation, in 1967, 8 percent of households had an annual income of \$75,000 and up; in 2003, more than 26 percent did. In 1967, 17 percent of households had a \$50,000 to \$75,000 income; in 2003, it was 18 percent. In 1967, 22 percent of households were in the \$35,000 to \$50,000 income group; by 2003, it had fallen to 15 percent. During the same period, the \$15,000 to \$35,000 category fell from 31 percent to 25 percent, and the under \$15,000 category fell from 21 percent to 16 percent. The only reasonable conclusion from this evidence is that if the middle class is disappearing, it's doing so by swelling the ranks of the upper classes."

<http://www.townhall.com/columnists/WalterEWilliams/>

[2007/12/05/income_mobility\]](#)

7 January 2008

News Editor, Boston Globe

Dear Editor:

Charlie Lord writes that "environmentalists are always hard-hitting and effective" (Letters, January 7). Indeed. But hard-hitting and effective at what? As John Tierney explained recently in the New York Times, the environmental movement overflows with "availability entrepreneurs."

[\[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/01/science/01tier.html?n=Top%2fNews%2fScience%2fColumns%2fFindings\]](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/01/science/01tier.html?n=Top%2fNews%2fScience%2fColumns%2fFindings)

Tierney describes these people as "activists, journalists and publicity-savvy scientists who selectively monitor the globe looking for newsworthy evidence of a new form of sinfulness, burning fossil fuels." For example, everyone now knows that Arctic sea ice is shrinking - and infers, with much help from these "entrepreneurs," that the cause is global warming. But how many people know that Antarctic sea ice is expanding to record levels?

The world could do with fewer "hard-hitting and effective" - and cunning - scaremongers.