



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.

24 January 2010

Editor, Christian Science
Monitor

Dear Editor:

Decrying the exorbitant debt that Americans ran up prior to the current recession, Joseph Stiglitz rightly says that "We shouldn't go back to living beyond our means in the US, which is what created the crisis to begin with ("US economy needs a second stimulus," Jan. 22).

But by advising Congress to "pass a second stimulus" - to engage in even more deficit spending - Mr. Stiglitz himself

counsels not only that we continue to live beyond our means, but that we do so even more recklessly than before.

Note to Mr. Stiglitz: If it's irresponsible for me and my neighbors to choose to spend beyond our means, then it's no less irresponsible for Congress, allegedly an agent of me and my neighbors, to force us to spend beyond our means. Either way, as consumers or as taxpayers, the bill will come due for goods and services that we ought not have consumed.

Only by unthinkingly presuming government to

be some kind of transcendental entity, exempt from many laws of reality, does someone as bright as Mr. Stiglitz stumble into such confusion and inconsistency.

23 January 2010

Editor, Los Angeles Times

Dear Editor:

Criticizing the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United, Erwin Chemerinsky asserts that "There is no way to see this other than as the conservative justices using judicial review to advance the traditional conservative ideological agenda" ("Conservatives embrace judicial activism in campaign finance ruling," Jan. 23).

Really? Then why did both the AFL-CIO and the ACLU submit amicus briefs to the Court in support of the eventual winning outcome? Do these two organizations now embrace "the traditional conservative ideological agenda"? Seems unlikely.

The better explanation for this ruling is that the five justices in the majority sincerely believe that government restrictions on corporate campaign spending do, in fact, violate the First amendment – a belief that is neither "conservative" nor "liberal", just commonsensical.

23 January 2010

Editor, Los Angeles Times

Dear Editor:

Erwin Chemerinsky rightly criticizes as being inconsistent those conservatives who have long railed against judicial activism but who now applaud the Citizens United decision ("Conservatives embrace judicial activism in campaign finance ruling," Jan. 23).

Too many conservatives, such as Robert Bork, overreacted to Warren-court excesses by calling on judges to be mere ciphers for legislatures. To the extent, however, that these conservatives wished to promote a society of free and responsible individuals, they should instead have endorsed judicial ACTIVISM in support of the Constitution's clear enumeration of the limited powers granted to the national government and its equally clear protections of individuals rights against infringement by government.

Had they taken this course, such conservatives could consistently oppose all unconstitutional extensions of government power, be these the result of

overreaching by judges or the result of overreaching by the executive branch or the legislature.

22 January 2010

Editor, The New York Times
620 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10018

To the Editor:

Lamenting that Democratic politicians up and down Pennsylvania Avenue have lost their enthusiasm for radical health-care 'reform,' Paul Krugman maintains that "politics is supposed to be about achieving something more than your own re-election" ("Do the Right Thing," Jan. 22).

This notion of politics is absurdly unrealistic. Public-choice economics - pioneered by my colleagues Jim Buchanan (who boasts his own Nobel Prize) and Gordon Tullock - uncovers overwhelming evidence that politics, in fact, almost exclusively IS about achieving election and re-election. So to insist that politics SHOULD be about something other than what it's about makes as much sense as insisting, say, that snow should be hot or that donkeys should be bipedal.

22 January 2010

Editor, The New York Times
620 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10018

To the Editor:

Paul Krugman wants the House to pass the Senate's current health-care bill because "the nation is waiting" ("Do the Right Thing," Jan. 22).

Ummm.... no. Polls show that health-care 'reform' of the sort the Senate passed is now overwhelmingly unpopular. Indeed, as Scott Brown's victory makes clear, it's unpopular even in Massachusetts - perhaps the most "Progressive" state in the union. And the President and members of the House clearly believe these polls, otherwise they wouldn't have so quickly run away from the Senate bill.

For Mr. Krugman nevertheless to insist that "the nation is waiting" for final legislative approval of this 'reform' reveals that Mr. Krugman's arrogance has reached such Brobdingnagian proportions that he mistakes his own desires for those of the American public.

21 January 2010

Editor, New York Post

Dear Editor:

Trying to explain the plunge in popularity of Obamacare, Pres. Obama yesterday said of himself and his administration that "I think we lost some of that sense of speaking directly to the American people about what their core values are" ("Bam: I fell out of touch," Jan. 21).

Note to Mr. Obama: among my core values is self-determination, and an abhorrence of the arrogance that leads persons such as you to presume to tell me what my core values are. Mind your own business, Sir.

21 January 2010

Editor, Los Angeles Times

Dear Editor:

Hoping for the electoral defeat of members of Congress who vote against Obamacare, Don Warner asks your readers to think of these Obamacare opponents "Every time you have to pay an extravagant co-pay, every time you must make up a huge deductible" (Letters, Jan. 21).

In other words, Mr. Warner asks me to be angry whenever I actually have to pay for resources that I use - to be peeved that someone else isn't footing my bill - to be upset that Uncle Sam hasn't arranged for me to free-ride on other people's nickels - to strike back at politicians who refuse to force Mr. Warner to pay my health-care expenses and me to pay his.

I reject Mr. Warner's childish advice and his predatory principles.

20 January 2010

Editor, The New York Times
620 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10018

To the Editor:

Reacting to Republican Scott Brown's election to the U.S. Senate seat once held by Massachusetts's Ted Kennedy, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said that "Massachusetts has health care... The rest of the country would like to have that too. So we don't say a state that already has health care should determine whether the rest of the country should" ("Gut-Check for Obama and Dems on Health Care," Jan. 20).

Question for Ms. Pelosi. If the citizens of Massachusetts are able, without any further legislation from Congress, to foist on themselves the kind of government-directed health-care that Ms. Pelosi alleges the rest of the country desires, what's stopping people across the country from doing in each of their states what the people of Massachusetts have already done in that state? Why does Congress have to act at all?

20 January 2010

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

To the Editor:

Several well-credentialed accountants and tax-preparers write to support the IRS's new regulation of their industry, asserting that such regulation is necessary to ensure that Americans' income-tax filings are prepared properly (Letters, Jan. 20).

Nonsense.

With 25 to 40 percent of their incomes at stake each year - and knowing that the IRS is a humorless, dangerous monster when it isn't fed what it believes to be its annual ration - each individual taxpayer has strong incentives to seek out and find tax-preparers who are skilled and careful. Surely the vast majority of persons with incomes and expenses sufficiently high to justify taking deductions other than the standard one are intelligent enough to choose their own tax-preparers without the government's "help."

19 January 2010

Editor, Baltimore Sun

Dear Editor:

Len Bollinger is upset with Pres. Obama because the president hasn't delivered on his campaign promise that, as Mr. Bollinger puts it, "Special interests and the influence of lobbyists was going to end" (Letters, Jan. 19).

Mr. Bollinger should be more upset with himself and American voters for believing Mr. Obama to be capable of the impossible.

Any government that annually spends \$3-plus trillions of dollars, and regulates trillions upon trillions of dollars worth of other resources, will inevitably be targeted by special interests and their lobbyists. And any government manned by persons capable of the duplicity, pandering, and cheap theatrics required to win elections will inevitably and without shame put themselves at the service of these special interests.

19 January 2010

Editor, The New York Times
620 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10018

To the Editor:

Mitchel Abolafia blames today's economic turmoil on Alan Greenspan's and Ben Bernanke's alleged excessive "faith in the self-regulation of markets" (Letters, Jan. 19).

I've no idea how much faith Messrs. Greenspan and Bernanke had in markets. But I do know that, from Adam Smith to Vernon Smith, scholars who brought to light markets' remarkable ability to self-regulate always insisted that a prerequisite for this self-regulation is sound money. Sound money, alas, has not been the order of the day. The shifting, often loose, monetary policies of the past decade severely distorted prices - including interest rates, the prices that coordinate economic activity over time.

With prices and interest rates distorted by government's monopoly control over the money supply, investors, producers, and consumers were fooled into making

choices that seemed reasonable but were revealed only later to be misguided.

The emphasis that scholars through the ages have placed on the importance of sound money is being ignored in today's headlong rush to convict the likes of F.A. Hayek and Milton Friedman of a crime they never committed - namely, the crime of insisting that markets work flawlessly regardless of the institutional structures in which they are embedded.

18 January 2010

Editor, Memphis Commercial Appeal

Dear Editor:

Endorsing a government-guaranteed minimum income, Bartholomew Sullivan writes that Americans are increasingly economically vulnerable because of "increased mechanization and labor efficiencies," "the export of industrial and manufacturing jobs to low-wage countries," and improvements in robotics ("Martin Luther King Jr. focused on ending poverty," Jan. 18).

Mr. Sullivan has matters backward. All of the advances that he lists lowers production costs. By enabling us to produce each bushel of corn - and each cord of lumber, each pair of shoes, each bar of soap, each automobile, each airplane flight, each vial of antibiotics, and on and on and on - with fewer resources than before, we become wealthier and more materially secure. The necessities of life, and even most of its luxuries, become more widely accessible.

By stifling the incentives that power the wealth creation that we all enjoy today (even as many people take this wealth for granted), government efforts to guarantee a minimum income to every citizen will make us poorer and less materially secure.

18 January 2010

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

To the Editor:

University of Virginia history professor Elizabeth Thompson says that "state funding has plummeted" for public universities (Letters, Jan. 18).

The facts say otherwise. Data from Illinois State University's Center for the Study of Education Policy show that from 1994 to 2008 inflation-adjusted state tax appropriations to higher education rose by 32 percent. And if we go back to the heyday of the "anti-tax movements" that Ms. Thompson blames for the alleged starvation of public colleges and universities, we find that higher education receives, in inflation-adjusted dollars, 53 percent more state funding today than it did in 1981. [I calculated these changes in state tax appropriations to higher education from data gathered here:

<http://www.grapevine.ilstu.edu/historical/index.htm>]