



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.

1 June 2008

Editor, Los Angeles Times

Dear Editor:

Robert Scheer argues powerfully that Uncle Sam's military spending is obscenely wasteful ("Indefensible spending," June 1). But he lessens his credibility by writing that the next president "will inherit at least a \$400-billion current-accounts deficit." What Mr. Scheer was referring to is the BUDGET deficit. Avoiding this confusion is vital. Government's budget is under its control, and so deficit spending reflects irresponsible profligacy by

those entrusted with the public purse. In contrast, the current-account deficit reflects the domestic economy's relationship with the global economy; it is not under government's control. Also, unlike a budget deficit, a current-account deficit does not necessarily impose financial burdens upon future generations.

31 May 2008

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

To the Editor:

Louise Benson says that allowing people to sell their transplantable body organs would result in poor people being "enticed by the money" to become suppliers; she thinks this outcome would be "sick" (Letters, May 31). Ignore Dr. Benson's arrogant presumption that her personal cultural aesthete should trump the freedom of other adults to make such choices. Focus instead on the economics. If organ sales were liberalized, the availability of organs would rise and their prices would fall. Transplant surgery would become more affordable and, thus, more lives - not only of the rich but of all

classes - would be improved and saved.

What's truly sick is government's continued prohibition of organ sales.

30 May 2008

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

Dear Editor:

Michael Gerson asserts that conservative and libertarian advocates of limited government would "invite genuine statism" by "leaving great social needs unmet" ("The Libertarian Jesus," May 30). Not so.

We advocates of strictly limited government emphatically do not propose to leave social needs unmet but, instead, to deal with these needs through non-governmental means. Now perhaps we're mistaken; perhaps non-governmental means will be inferior to government action. But for Mr. Gerson simply to assume that those of us seeking to scale back government necessarily want to leave "great social needs unmet" reveals intellectual laziness - a thoughtless equating of "government" with "society," and an

obliviousness to history and a rich intellectual tradition explaining how people operating privately can, and do, supply a wide range of public goods.

29 May 2008

Editor, USA Today

Dear Editor:

You suggest that women are less likely than men to seek political office because women have fewer political role models, and that "no one urges them to run" ("Our view on women in politics: Reluctant to take the plunge," May 29). I offer a different reason: women are more decent than men.

Fewer women than men itch to lord it over others. Also, women are less willing than men to perform the countless asinine stunts and soul-shriveling pandering necessary to win political office.

29 May 2008

Editor, USA Today

Dear Editor:

Re your editorial "One bright sign emerges in a gloomy housing market" (May 29) and the general dismay about falling real-

estate prices and rising gasoline prices: What principle of economics suggests that markets are working well when the price of one asset (say, housing) rises, but not when the price of another asset (say, petroleum) rises? What principle of ethics dictates that owners of one asset (say, housing) are entitled to capital gains and to enjoy these gains however large they might be, but that owners of another asset (say, petroleum) are not so entitled to their gains?

Finally, what moral precept advises us, in the case of petroleum products, to sympathize with buyers and demonize sellers, and in the case of housing, to ignore buyers and sympathize with sellers?

28 May 2008

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

To the Editor:

David Boaz eloquently exposes the dangers, hypocrisy, and questionable morality of politicians' practice of calling upon people to sacrifice for "a greater cause" ("Our Collectivist

Candidates," May 28; http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121193223213724275.html?mod=opinion_main_comments). Let's not forget that these calls are issued by persons who single-mindedly - I would say greedily - seek power and prestige for themselves.

By a slight rewording, economist Steven Landsburg exposed the ugly essence of the most famous line from John Kennedy's inaugural address: "Ask not what I can do for you. Ask what you can do for me."

26 May 2008

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

Dear Editor:

Barack Obama promised Wesleyan graduates that, as President, he would strive to unify Americans "in service to a greater good" ("Obama urges Wesleyan grads to enter public service," May 26). These fine (if predictable) words camouflage a false premise and a dangerous risk.

The false premise is that persons working in the private sector for

themselves do not help others. But as Adam Smith famously explained, we are fed not from the benevolence of the butcher, baker, and brewer but rather from their pursuit of their own self-interests.

The dangerous risk is that, even if the "greater good" is one that we all agree upon, the means chosen to attain that goal might be inappropriate or have unforeseen negative consequences. If we're all "united in service" to this "greater good," different and competing ways to achieve it are cast aside for the One Big Plan - an approach that dramatically reduces the experimentation that is necessary to discover genuinely effective means to improve reality.