



## 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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13 December 2008

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

To the Editor:

You rightly dismiss the argument that a government bailout of GM, Ford, and Chrysler is justified because people won't buy cars from companies in Chapter 11 ("Mitch McConnell's Finest Hour," December 13).

People will indeed not buy cars from companies that might not be around in a few years. But this fact argues against, not for, a bailout. Precisely because

- unlike Chapter 11 - a bailout postpones the need for these companies to restructure themselves into more-competitive producers, it makes their long-term viability much more suspect than would Chapter 11.

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13 December 2008

Friends,

In this engrossing 35-minute video, my GMU colleague (and co-blogger at Cafe Hayek) discusses the New Deal and its legacy with historian David Kennedy, economist Lee Ohanian, and others. It's VERY much worth watching:

<http://www.tv.org/TVOWe>

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13 December 2008

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

To the Editor:

Part of Jon Walker's case for drug prohibition is his claim that today's controlled substances, unlike alcohol, are not "entwined in the fabric of our culture" (Letters, December 13). Perhaps. But a much more important fact looms: individual liberty IS "entwined in the fabric of our culture" - at least as the worthiest of aspirations. Because the "war on drugs" is an odious assault on liberty, it is ripping the fabric of our culture.

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12 December 2008

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

To the Editor:

Presidential spokeswoman Dana Perino said today that "Under normal economic conditions we would prefer that markets determine the ultimate fate of private firms. However, given the current weakened state of the U.S. economy, we will consider other options if necessary - including use of the TARP program - to prevent a collapse of troubled automakers" ("White House Open to Using Bailout Money to Aid Detroit," December 12, 2008).

In other words, the administration believes that the market is the best way to allocate resources - to discover their most productive uses and to give producers and consumers unparalleled incentives to pursue those uses - but in times, such as today, when it is especially important to use resources wisely, the administration concludes that resource-allocation decisions are best made by politicians and bureaucrats.

What lunatic logic.

11 December 2008

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

To the Editor:

While I agree with Nicholas Kristof's criticisms of Uncle Sam's practice of picking Americans' pockets and transferring the booty to big agribusiness, I'm mystified by his "regret" that his "kids don't have the chance to grow up on a farm" as he did ("Obama's 'Secretary of Food'?", December 11).

America has lots of farms and farmland. Even along the heavily urbanized eastern seaboard, many local farms thrive. So the truth is, Mr. Kristof did indeed "have the chance" to live on a farm and raise his children there. The fact that he didn't do so reflects no obstacle other than the fact that working for the New York Times was more attractive to him than farming. He CHOSE not to live on a farm. He CHOSE the amenities of urban living; these weren't forced upon him by the Department of Agriculture or by anyone or anything other than his own preferences.

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December 11, 2008

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

To the Editor:

Nicholas Kristof rightly bemoans the current, corrupt system of agricultural protection and subsidies ("Obama's 'Secretary of Food'," Dec. 11). He is wrong though when he suggests that we need government to promote local farms and foods.

My family, for example, has ready access to high-quality local foods. We purchased shares in a farm cooperative located in western Virginia and fresh food was delivered to our door. From early May to late October I visit our local farmers' market, along with hundreds of others, for everything from apples to zinnias. Finally, several Whole Foods and other grocery retailers provide locally grown fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and meat. This cornucopia of products is available to consumers in northern Virginia not because of government efforts; it's there because of market incentives - people like me

want, and will pay for, locally grown fruits and vegetables.

So forget about a renamed or revamped Department of Food! What we need is freedom for creative food entrepreneurs to do what they are already doing: improving the quality of the US food supply.

Sincerely,  
Karol Boudreaux  
Senior Research Fellow  
Mercatus Center at George Mason University

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11 December 2008

Friends,

In today's Wall Street Journal, I argue against the bailout of GM, Ford, and Chrysler:

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122895755096596653.html>

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10 December 2008

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

To the Editor:

On a day when the top news story is a politician's attempted sale of a U.S. Senate seat, Thomas Frank fires his intellectual popgun at surrogate-

mother contracts ("Rent-a-Womb Is Where Market Logic Leads," December 10).

What irony! A high-ranking member of the class of people that Mr. Frank believes must protect us from greed - politicians - tries to sell that which doesn't belong to him, while Mr. Frank gets all hot'n'bothered by the idea of a private person selling that which DOES belong to her.

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10 December 2008

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

To the Editor:

Thomas Frank laments that "market logic" promotes transactions that he finds unappealing, such as surrogate-mother contracts ("Rent-a-Womb Is Where Market Logic Leads," December 10). True, the ability of men and women to transact in any ways that they choose is, as long as those transactions don't violate the same rights of others, a feature of the market. And it is a gleaming, glorious feature, largely because it protects ordinary people from the frenzied arrogance of Mr.

Frank and his ilk who presume that society should be organized to gratify their personal aesthetics.

How ironic that on a day when the top news story is a politician's attempted sale of a U.S. Senate seat - a seat in a chamber whose members thrive by forcibly taking wealth from some and giving it to others - Mr. Frank should criticize private, voluntary contracts that create life.

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9 December 2008

Editor, Baltimore Sun

Dear Editor:

Dan Neil wants to nationalize General Motors, in part because "without big subsidies, there is no way in the near term to build these [electric] vehicles and make a reasonable profit, because of the stubbornly high cost of advanced batteries" ("Let's nationalize GM," December 9).

Mr. Neil makes several wrongheaded assumptions. For example, he assumes that the future benefits of such a battery would outweigh the current costs of using them. But there's no way

he can know this to be true. These batteries cost a lot today because their production requires an extraordinary amount of resources today. Using these resources to produce an unprofitable battery means that we sacrifice, TODAY, a great deal of profitable outputs and investments in other industries. Perhaps resources artificially forced into advanced-battery development would otherwise have helped cure cancer, or encouraged development of a new generation of more fuel-efficient jet engines, or used to keep millions of retired Americans more financially secure. Neither Mr. Neil nor Uncle Sam can know the value of what would never be created as a result of subsidizing unprofitable production in Detroit.

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8 December 2008

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

To the Editor:

The caption beneath your front-page photo of a Detroit Pentecostalist service says that the "congregants prayed to

save the auto industry" (December 8). No such prayers are necessary; the auto industry is in fine shape. Toyota, Honda, Hyundai, and other automakers are strong and flexible. It's time that GM, Ford, Chrysler, and the U.A.W. - and your caption writers - recognize that Detroit firms are not synonymous with the auto industry, and that government efforts to keep these failed entities artificially alive will only divert resources from productive to unproductive uses.