



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.

2 March 2008

Editor, The Baltimore Sun

Dear Editor:

Steve Chapman exposes the illogic, lies, and crude pandering now commonplace whenever Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama discuss NAFTA and trade ("Democrats' trade myths," March 2). As all eyes gaze to see which politician will win the tawdry grandeur of the presidency - win it in part by demonizing trade - it's especially important to heed the words of the early 18th-century English essayist Joseph Addison: "[T]here are no more useful

members in a commonwealth than merchants. They knit mankind together in a mutual intercourse of good offices, distribute the gifts of nature...."
[\[http://hnn.us/blogs/comments/47901.html\]](http://hnn.us/blogs/comments/47901.html)

How sad that destructive and divisive power can be won by those who shamelessly pour scorn upon one of the most productive and unifying of all human institutions: free and peaceful trade.

2 March 2008

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

Dear Editor:

Each campaign season I catalog the countless instances of politicians being held to ethical standards lower than those to which people hold their household pets. Case in point: the usually wise Sebastian Mallaby - exposing Sen. Clinton's and Sen. Obama's deceptions about NAFTA - sighs that "Quite a lot of trade populism can be forgiven, even if it is intellectually dishonest. Like it or not, trade liberalization has stalled, so mild populism makes no practical difference" ("Democrats,

Off Course On Trade,"
March 2).

In other words, aspirants to what is typically called the highest office in the land are forgiven when they intentionally deceive voters as long as these deceptions make "no practical difference." I don't much care if my dog deceives me under such circumstances, but I surely teach my son that such dishonesty and lack of integrity is intolerable.

1 March 2008

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

To the Editor:

Daniel Griswold expertly explains why Sen. Clinton's and Sen. Obama's hostile claims about Nafta are mistaken ("Ohio Needs More Foreign Trade," March 1). It's shameful, though, that these self-proclaimed "leaders" must be set straight in your pages. The data reported by Mr. Griswold are readily available, and they clearly, easily, and utterly refute the anti-trade assertions issued by both candidates.

I'm left to conclude that these allegedly courageous public servants are quite dim-witted or pathetically uninformed, or that they are unscrupulous about spreading misinformation in their pursuit of office. Whatever the explanation, it exposes each of these persons as being unfit to exercise power.

29 February 2008

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

To the Editor:

Whenever I read - such as I do today in Dan Schnur's on-line column - of Hillary Clinton being a "centrist" Senator, I'm reminded of the man standing in a bucket of ice with his head stuck in a heated oven. When asked if he was too hot or too cold, the man replied "Neither. The temperature is just right, on average."

I suspect that Sen. Clinton's reputation for being a centrist comes from two related pathologies. The first is her pandering to statist at the extremes of both the Democratic and Republican parties. For example, she favors government-supplied "universal" health care, but also a Constitutional amendment to ban flag burning. Second, her Mark-Penn poll-driven persona has her flip-flopping in ways fit to make Mitt Romney blush: she voted for the war in Iraq but now opposes it; she supports free trade but wants a "time out" on

agreements to make trade freer; she professes a belief in personal responsibility but calls on government to freeze interest rates for five years on adjustable-rate mortgages.

Apparently, there is precious little that this woman would not say or do in order to win the gaudy glory of being President. So let's not mistake dissembling, equivocation, insincerity, and a willingness to embrace extreme statism of all sorts for "centrism."

27 February 2008

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

To the Editor:

Your excellent obituary for William F. Buckley, Jr. (February 27) fails to mention one important way in which Mr. Buckley distanced himself from many of his fellow conservatives - namely, he steadfastly opposed the "war on drugs." Would that more public intellectuals, regardless of ideology, have the good sense and courage to say, as Mr. Buckley did in this closing to a 1995 speech he

delivered to the New York Bar Association,

"I leave it at this, that it is outrageous to live in a society whose laws tolerate sending young people to life in prison because they grew, or distributed, a dozen ounces of marijuana. I would hope that the good offices of your vital profession would mobilize at least to protest such excesses of wartime zeal, the legal equivalent of a My Lai massacre. And perhaps proceed to recommend the legalization of the sale of most drugs, except to minors."

27 February 2008

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

To the Editor:

David Leonhardt reports that famed economist Alan Blinder - now giving aid and comfort to protectionists - says that "Trade has winners and losers ... and there have been a lot of losers in Ohio" ("The Politics of Trade in Ohio," February 27). Prof. Blinder should know better. Trade is simply one manifestation of consumer sovereignty.

Just as there are, by Prof. Blinder's calculus, winners and losers from consumers being free to shift their expenditures from goods made in America to goods made abroad, there are winners and losers from consumers being free to shift their expenditures from goods made in Tennessee to goods made in California - or from consumers being free to shift their expenditures from donuts, beef, cigarettes, whiskey, and train travel to bagels, fish, yoga lessons, wine, and air travel.

Prof. Blinder's suggestion that international trade is uniquely responsible for eliminating particular jobs is terribly mistaken.

Friends,

In this excellent op-ed in the Oakland Tribune, my GMU colleague Alex Tabarrok (who also blogs at www.marginalrevolution.com) shoots a bazooka blast through the absurd notion that government schemes to buy guns from citizens will reduce the supply of guns on the street. Here's the link:

http://www.insidebayarea.com/oaklandtribune/ci_8345000

26 February 2008

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

To the Editor:

Bettijane Sills declares that
"If Mrs. Clinton does all she
can to win the nomination,
then more power to her"
(Letters, February 26).
Such praise of the
hypocrisy, deceit,
dissembling, and
demagoguery so typical of
political campaigns hits a
truer target than Ms. Sills
intends. It IS, for each
candidate, all about getting
"more power."

finds most attractive.

Sellers' nationalities enter
into consideration here no
more than do sellers'
musical tastes, hair color,
or shoe sizes.

In contrast, tariffs and other
restrictions on international
trade not only reduce
consumers' freedom, they
also enable domestic
producers to charge prices
higher than they could
otherwise charge. And
that's truly unfair, for such
restrictions unjustly rob
consumers of the most
attractive exchange
opportunities in order to
give unearned benefits to
domestic producers.

25 February 2008

Editor, Newsweek

Dear Editor:

Re "Obama targets NAFTA
but says supports free
trade" (February 25): You
can bank on the fact that
any politician, such as Sen.
Obama, who supports free
trade as long as it is "fair
trade" opposes both
freedom and fairness in
trading. Fact is, trade that
is free is presumptively fair.
With free trade, no third-
party prevents any
consumer from striking
deals that that consumer