



Comment on the Commentary of the Day

by

Donald J. Boudreaux
Chairman, Department of Economics
George Mason University
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.

19 June 2009

Editor, Los Angeles Times

Dear Editor:

Seth Hill writes that "Every time I'm surfing channels and I happen by mistake to land there [on the Fox News channel], I have to watch a commentary by [Newt] Gingrich or former Vice President Dick Cheney. That channel makes me long for the days of the Fairness Doctrine" (Letters, June 19).

Mr. Hill's attitude is the seed of totalitarianism: he's willing to use force to save himself from the

annoyance of fleetingly encountering disagreeable ideas as he flips his channel changer - and to hamper other persons' access to those ideas.

There's nothing fair about that.

19 June 2009

Editor, New Orleans Times-Picayune

Dear Editor:

Befuddled that many Louisianans don't wish to force motorcyclists to wear helmets, Nicholette Shannon suggests that safety is always more important than what she

dismisses as "convenience" (Letters, June 19).

Safety, however, clearly does not always trump convenience. If it did, no one would ever ride a motorcycle to begin with. Indeed, no one would ride in automobiles, jaywalk, or eat fast food. Each of us routinely trades-off some safety to get more convenience. And no one, including Ms. Shannon, should presume that her preferred balance between safety and convenience is or ought to be the preferred balance for other persons.

18 June 2009

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

To the Editor:

It's heartening that so many of your readers support drug legalization (Letters, June 18). As they, and columnist Nicholas Kristof, point out, there are indeed many practical reasons to end the cruel and futile 'war on drugs.' But there's also an ethical reason to do so: each adult owns his or her life and only his or her own life. It's none of my business what you ingest. Nor is it the business of my neighbor or of my co-workers. This fact does not change if my neighbor, co-workers, and I form a coalition and vote to govern your ingestion.

A society truly free tolerates all peaceful actions, from the sublime through the self-destructive.

17 June 2009

News Editor, WWL Radio
New Orleans, LA

Dear Sir or Madam:

A listener called in today during the one o'clock hour to assert that "health care

isn't like other services" - and so it can't be supplied reliably on the market - because people are willing to "incur any cost to save their lives."

First, if this assertion is true, it's unclear how matters would be improved by socializing the payment of medical expenses. Second, everyday experience shows that this assertion, in fact, is false. If people really are desperate to save their lives at all costs, then everyone would exercise regularly, eat only healthy foods, and completely avoid rock climbing, horseback riding, snow skiing, and tanning booths. No one would smoke, drink to excess, or have unsafe sex. Women would never get pregnant, as there's still some positive chance of dying while giving birth.

Unless and until people stop behaving in ways that reduce their life-expectancies, it's mistaken to believe that each of us is committed to living longer at all costs.

17 June 2009

Friends,

FYI -- ABC New's and 20/20's John Stossel is now blogging. This news

is outstanding! Here's the link:

<http://blogs.abcnews.com/johnstossel/>

17 June 2009

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

To the Editor:

Maureen Dowd wants President Obama to display his healthy, low-fat eating habits more publicly ("Hold the Fries," June 17). The idea is that Our Leader's ostentatious display of his preferred diet will inspire ordinary Americans to eat better.

What has become of Americans? How different are we now from Louis XIV's French subjects who gazed in awe upon him at his table? And are we so childish that our dietary choices are directed by political celebrities?

If we Americans are indeed such mindless lemmings as Ms. Dowd assumes, I'd prefer that Pres. Obama spend lots of time being filmed gobbling Big Macs while, between bites, insisting that each of us take control of our own individual lives and that we would do well to reject the

stupid cult of celebrity that government officials.
now surrounds high