



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.

6 June 2010

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

Dear Editor:

Jim Hoagland ends his otherwise fine column on South Africa by comparing American Tea Partiers to apartheid-applauding Afrikaners ("Ex-president de Klerk teaches the inspiration of South Africa," June 6).

This comparison unjustly smears the great majority of Tea Partiers. Is Tea Partiers' judgment that Uncle Sam's scale and scope have become too

large really hateful? Is their opposition to nationalized health-care and to bailouts of Wall Street and of teachers' unions symptoms of antisocial bigotry? Is the proclamation "Don't Treat On Me" – a proclamation featured prominently at Tea Party events – a slogan in support of government privileges for a select few? Hardly.

One may disagree with Tea Partiers' demands that personal responsibility be restored to private markets, and that fiscal responsibility be restored to public finance. But one may not legitimately accuse these demands -

demand motivated in large part by the ugliness of Uncle Sam playing favorites with politically influential interest groups - of being at all similar to an ideology that supported a strong central government whose purpose was to bestow privileges on a minority by taxing and suppressing the majority.

4 June 2010

News Editor, WTOP Radio
Washington, DC

Dear Sir or Madam:

I missed the name of the expert interviewed today, during the 11am hour, who said that farmers' markets are better for the environment than are supermarkets because foods sold at farmers' markets "are shipped shorter distances" than are foods sold at supermarkets.

This expert jumps too quickly to what is probably a mistaken conclusion.

Although foods sold at farmers' markets are indeed grown close to the places where they are sold, these foods are also transported from farm to market in small vehicles - typically, in pick-up trucks. In contrast, foods sold in supermarkets are generally shipped from farm to market in very large vehicles, each of which moves to market multiple times more foods than is moved by pick-up trucks. Therefore, the amount of carbon used to transport, say, each tomato and each link of artisan sausage to a supermarket is likely LESS than is the amount of

carbon emitted to transport each of these items to a farmers' market.

3 June 2010

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

Dear Editor:

George Will explains the differences between (James) "Madisonians" and (Woodrow) "Wilsonians" ("The danger of a government with unlimited power," June 3). In so doing he eloquently exposes Wilsonians' naive trust in powerful government and their haughty disdain for individual freedom.

Mr. Will's timely criticism of Wilsonian 'Progressives' calls to mind an observation by the great English jurist F.W. Maitland. After listing several sound arguments for keeping government strictly limited, Maitland concluded: "But after all, the most powerful argument is that based on the ignorance, the necessary ignorance, of our rulers." [The Collected Papers of Frederic William Maitland, Vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1911); link here: [\[ex.php?option=com_staticx
&staticfile=advanced_sear
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A great mistake of "Progressives" is to believe that all the knowledge necessary to keep society peaceful and progressing can be mastered - or at least adequately enough grasped - by government officials. This belief is, in the words of the late F.A. Hayek, a "fatal conceit."

1 June 2010

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

To the Editor:

Suppose Uncle Sam orders you to raise the price you charge for subscriptions to your paper by 41 percent. Would you be surprised to find a subsequent fall in the number of subscribers? If you assigned a reporter to investigate the reasons for this decline in subscriptions, would you be impressed if that reporter files a story offering several possible reasons for the fall in subscriptions without, however, once mentioning the mandated 41 percent price hike?

Unless you answered "yes" to this last question, I wonder why you published Mickey Meece's report on today's record high teenage unemployment rate ("Job Outlook for Teenagers Worsens," June 1). Between 2007 and 2009, Uncle Sam ordered teenager workers (who are mostly unskilled) to raise the price they charge for their labor services by 41 percent. (That is, the federal minimum-wage rose from \$5.15 per hour in 2007 to its current level of \$7.25 in 2009 - a 41 percent increase.)

Does it not strike you as more than passing strange for your reporter - assigned to help explain why teenagers today have an increasingly difficult time finding jobs - to ignore the fact that these teenagers are ordered by government to raise significantly the wages that they charge their employers?

31 May 2010

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

Dear Editor:

Robert Samuelson reports that Pres. Obama's wants to redefine poverty such that "People are

automatically poor if they're a given distance from the top, even if their incomes are increasing. The idea is that they suffer psychological deprivation by being far outside the mainstream" ("Why Obama's poverty rate measure misleads," May 31). And while he offers sound objections to this attempt to redefine poverty as a relative concept, Mr. Samuelson missed the most important objection: its premise of "psychological deprivation" is questionable.

Indeed, evidence that people suffer no significant "psychological deprivation by being far outside the mainstream" is found elsewhere in Mr. Samuelson's column when he notes that, from 1989 through 2007, "three-quarters of the increase in the poverty population occurred among Hispanics - mostly immigrants."

If being RELATIVELY poor were truly a devastating psychological experience for most people, Hispanics would remain in Latin America instead of immigrating to - and remaining in - the United States where, in their relative poverty here, they are "far outside the mainstream."

This pattern of immigration counsels skepticism of those who assert that people care so overwhelmingly about their relative economic positions that the typical poor person would prefer that the rich be made poorer today rather than the poor be given opportunities to grow rich tomorrow.