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Comment on the Commentary of the Day

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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.

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5 August 2010

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

Dear Editor:

Promising a "renaissance in American manufacturing," the Obama administration proposes "raising taxes on multinational corporations that Democrats accuse of shipping jobs overseas" ("New Democratic strategy for creating jobs focuses on a boost in manufacturing," August 4).

Never mind that until the current downturn U.S. manufacturing output was at an all-time high and still growing. Even now it remains the largest in the world. The lie of U.S. manufacturing decline - repeated ad nauseam - conveniently paves the path for greater government control over the economy.

Instead focus on the plan to tax business actions that "ship jobs overseas" - that is, the plan to tax actions that economize on labor costs. Will Democrats seek also to tax, say, shipping containers? Over the past half-century, these humble boxes have put millions of high-paid longshoremen out of work. Perhaps the Democrats will tax also high-grade rubber tires: by enabling cars and trucks to travel farther on single sets of tires, the number of jobs in tire-manufacturing plants is reduced. Or maybe TeamObama will slap a punitive tax on electrical generators, for ready access to inexpensive electricity continues to encourage businesses to lower their costs by replacing human labor with machines.

The possibilities to spark the kind of economic "renaissance" envisioned by Mr. Obama and friends are endless.

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4 August 2010

Editor, The Wall Street Journal
1211 6th Ave.
New York, NY 10036

To the Editor:

You report that "The Obama administration is promising labor unions that it will enforce a range of worker protections in new trade pacts in an effort to win labor's support of a revised South Korea free-trade agreement" ("Obama Courts Labor Support for Trade Deal," August 4).

Translation: "The Obama administration is promising labor unions that it will raise the obstacles that poor foreigner workers encounter when they try to compete against their far-wealthier American counterparts in an effort to bribe labor to scale back its greedy assault on American consumers."

3 August 2010

Editor, The Los Angeles Times

Dear Editor:

Like Michael Smith, I have none of the "Progressive" itch for income equality (Letters, Aug. 3). Not only does achievement of such "equality" require the state to treat people unequally, obsession with income equality also reflects a Scrooge-like fetish for money.

Consider a man who spends unusually long hours at the gym. He does so for the same reasons that another man spends long hours at work: to gain an advantage and a sense of achievement. Are gym-man's broad shoulders, bulging biceps, and ripped torso appropriate objects of envy by couch-potato man? Is this envy a social problem demanding government action? Should gym-man be scorned as greedy for working extra-hard to improve his physique - extra-hard work that likely wins gym-man disproportionate access to attractive mates? Should government force gym-man to share his beautiful babes with couch-potato man? Should gym-man's muscles, or natural good looks, be taxed?

If we recognize that envy of other persons' physiques is a sentiment deserving only ridicule, why do so many "Progressives" excuse - or even positively approve of - envy of other persons' monetary assets?

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2 August 2010

Editor, The Wall Street Journal
1211 6th Ave.
New York, NY 10036

To the Editor:

Paul Ingrassia is too quick to declare Uncle Sam's recent bailout of G.M. and Chrysler "an unexpected success" ("Two Cheers for the Detroit Bailout," August 2). First, the passage of a year-and-a-half isn't long enough to justify drawing any such inference from the reversal in these firms' income statements.

Second - and more importantly - the economic case against the bailout was NOT that huge infusions of taxpayer funds and special exemptions from bankruptcy rules could not make G.M. and Chrysler profitable. Of course they could. Instead, the heart of the case against the bailout is that it saps the life-blood of entrepreneurial capitalism. The bailout reinforces the debilitating precedent of protecting firms deemed 'too big to fail.' Capital and other resources are thus kept glued by politics to familiar lines of production, thus frustrating entrepreneurial initiative that would have otherwise redeployed these resources into newer, more-dynamic, and more productive industries.

The 'success' of the bailout is all too easy to engineer and to see. The cost of the bailout - the industries, the jobs, and the outputs that are never created - is impossible to see, but nevertheless real.