



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.

19 September 2010

Editor, Boston Globe

Dear Editor:

Bravo for Jeff Jacoby's clear-eyed assessment of recycling ("Get excited about recycling? Not me," Sept. 19). When materials are worth recycling, markets for their reuse naturally arise. For materials with no natural markets for their reuse, the benefits of recycling are less than its costs - and, therefore, government efforts to promote such recycling wastes resources.

Everyday experience should teach us this fact. The benefits of recycling clothing, for example, are large enough to prompt us to buy costly clothes-recycling machines that we routinely use to recycle for tomorrow the clothes we wear today. We call these machines "washers and dryers." And when American families no longer want their clothing, organizations such as Goodwill come by to gather the discarded garments to recycle them for use by poor people.

People also recycle their homes. The one I own and live in was previously owned by a family who

recycled it - which included refurbishing it - rather than simply discarded it when they moved to another town. Many people also drive recycled ("used") cars, stock their homes with recycled ("antique") furniture, listen to recycled ("used") CDs, and read recycled ("used") books.

Markets promote conservation when it's worthwhile; government promotes it when it's wasteful.

17 September 2010

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

To the Editor:

Attempting to defend intrusion by antitrust bureaucrats into Google's business operations, Charles Rule writes that "Ironically, many of the most ardent defenders of Google are the same individuals - such as Eric Schmidt, Google's CEO who was an executive at Sun and later Novell - who devoted so much time, money and effort to pushing the frontiers of the law and government regulation against Microsoft a decade ago" ("Trust Us' Isn't An Answer," Sept. 17).

Nothing about this fact is remotely ironic. Business executives use antitrust to throttle their competitors: businesses accused of antitrust violations point out (almost always rightly) that they are guilty only of unusual success at pleasing consumers, while businesses that are either too lazy or too incompetent to excel in the marketplace turn to antitrust legislation for relief from the rigors of competition.

The real irony is that, for its entire 120-year history of being used to stymie competition and the forces of creative destruction,

antitrust regulation continues to be portrayed as pro-competitive.

16 September 2010

Editor, Boston Globe

Dear Editor:

You demand that Uncle Sam slap punitive taxes on Americans who buy subsidized solar panels and wind turbines from China ("Obama should take on China's trade violations in clean energy," Sept. 16). And you assert that such taxation of Americans is a matter of "sticking up for the principles of free trade."

Wrong. The principles of free trade demand that no government punish its own citizens with trade restrictions. Ever. Even if another government, such as China's, harms its citizens by forcing them to pay tariffs or subsidies, the principles of free trade demand that our government nevertheless refrain from inflicting like harm on us.

Free trade is the principle that people should be free to spend their money as they see fit. Period. That principle is in no way contingent upon its

acceptance or rejection by other governments.

16 September 2010

Editor, Boston Globe

Dear Editor:

Complaining that Beijing subsidizes the production of solar panels and wind turbines in China, you worry that such subsidies "run the risk of killing off worldwide competitors that - with a more level playing field - could come up with more technically advanced models" ("Obama should take on China's trade violations in clean energy," Sept. 16).

So can we expect from you soon an editorial expressing opposition to the billions of dollars now spent annually on subsidies for "green" technologies by Uncle Sam? Will you convey your outrage at, for example, the \$16.8 billion that just one obscure office - the U.S. Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy - is spending this year to promote renewable energy?

15 September 2010

Editor, The New York Times
620 Eighth Avenue

New York, NY 10018

To the Editor:

Alexandria Zertuche alleges that China and India are "catching up to America because businesses there are willing and able to exploit their labor even more horrendously than we do" (Letters, Sept. 15).

Baloney. Ordinary people in China and India are growing wealthier; since 1978, for example, some 200 million Chinese have been lifted out of poverty. And they are growing wealthier precisely because they are no longer exploited as they were in the past.

If exploitation of labor were key to national prosperity, China under Mao would have been paradise, and India under Nehru and his daughter Indira would have been nirvana. It's only since significant market reforms were adopted in those countries that ordinary workers are enjoying noticeable improvements in their standards of living.

14 September 2010

Editor, The New York Times
620 Eighth Avenue

New York, NY 10018

To the Editor:

You support legislation to ease older workers' ability to prove that they are victims of age discrimination ("Fairness for Older Workers," Sept. 14).

Can you offer one plausible reason why employers would sacrifice profits by firing, or otherwise harming, productive workers simply because these workers are over the age of 50? Are employers really so soaked with irrational hostility to those of us with graying hair that they need the threat of lawsuits to force them to focus on their bottom lines?

13 September 2010

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

To the Editor:

How disappointing that a trade economist of Paul Krugman's stature has become a leader of the tribe of fear-mongering protectionists ("China, Japan, America," Sept. 13). Like all members of that anxious and ill-informed

clan, he tosses around arguments without concern for facts or consistency.

Consider: Given Mr. Krugman's claim that we live today "in a world awash with excess savings," why does he suppose that a lower U.S. trade deficit with China will not be offset by higher trade deficits with other countries? (The U.S. today has trade deficits with more than 90 other nations.)

Someone has to lend Uncle Sam all that money that Mr. Krugman famously demands that Uncle Sam borrow and spend - a demand that is not just a little bit inconsistent with Mr. Krugman's call for Congress and the President to take actions to reduce the U.S. trade deficit with China.