



## 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.**

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26 September 2010

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

To the Editor:

Your report on Venezuela's new state-owned cafes overlooks the many ill economic consequences that will be unleashed by these government enterprises and by the below-market prices that they so proudly charge ("Political Flavor Infuses Venezuela's New Cafes," Sept. 26).

For example, while it might be true that "The prices are

intended to offer a respite from the country's rampant inflation," in fact these below-market prices will fuel Venezuela's inflation even further. The reason is that Chavez's government will almost certainly get the funds it needs to subsidize these cafe sales by using the very same method that it increasingly turns to get the funds it uses for its slew of other boondoggles: printing more money (i.e., inflation).

Not even Oliver Stone movie heroes are exempt from the laws of economics.

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25 September 2010

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

Dear Editor:

Derrick K. Jackson is among the many persons fearful of genetically modified salmon ("Keep Frankenfish fiction," Sept. 25).

I don't understand this opposition.

Nearly every plant and animal we consume today is genetically modified. Most of this modification was done through selective breeding over the centuries; today it's done

increasingly through recombinant DNA techniques. But the results are identical: genetically modified organisms that better serve human purposes.

If opponents of genetically modified plant and animal products were consistent, they'd also avoid eating ' Frankenfoods ' such as the maize, tomatoes, potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, dairy products, beef, chicken, turkey, pork, and bread that bulge on supermarket shelves - and in stalls at farmers' markets. These back-to-nature enthusiasts would also wear only clothes made of polyester and other petroleum-based products, as today's cotton, sheep, silkworms, and cows are all the result of human-engineered genetic modifications. Finally, Mr. Jackson and comrades would never buy fresh flowers, have beautiful lawns, or keep as pets any dogs or cats - genetically engineered all.

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24 September 2010

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

Dear Editor:

Harold Meyerson, like many pundits, continues to

write as if there is no question that the Chinese renminbi is undervalued ("The real un-Americans," Sept. 24).

But there is question - plenty of it - and from some of the world's most respected and non-partisan international-economics scholars. In today's Wall Street Journal, for example, the eminent Stanford economist Ronald McKinnon applauds Beijing for pegging the renminbi to the dollar - a policy that, McKinnon argues, is key to the current impressive increase in wage rates throughout China. The legislation now on the Hill to 'punish' China for its monetary policy will, if enacted, slow wage growth in China and, thus, obstruct what McKinnon calls this "important mechanism for balancing international competitiveness."

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24 September 2010

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

Dear Editor:

Harold Meyerson notes that "a large number of American businesses, in a campaign coordinated by the U.S.-China Business Council, oppose"

legislation to 'punish' China for its allegedly undervalued currency ("The real un-Americans," Sept. 24). He continues: "The question here is whether the 220 corporations that belong to the council - household names such as Coca-Cola, Bank of America, Ford, GM, Wal-Mart, Intel, Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard, J.P. Morgan Chase, Chevron, Exxon Mobil and Boeing - are already so deeply invested in China as manufacturers, marketers or retailers that buy goods there to sell them here that their interests are more closely aligned with China's than with America's."

That Mr. Meyerson's view of trade is distorted is revealed by his presumption that firms' interests are not aligned, or only weakly so, with those of the countries in which they sell their outputs. That Mr. Meyerson's understanding of America's interests is mistaken is revealed by his belief that those interests are furthered by legislation that raises the prices Americans pay for goods and services.

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23 September 2010

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

To the Editor:

Many of your readers are mystified that scores of ordinary Americans are now so vocally opposed to Obama's, Reid's, and Pelosi's "Progressive" agenda (Letters, Sept. 23).

I am among these opponents. A chief reason for my opposition was expressed by Alexis de Tocqueville in his book *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*. Discussing the few years leading up to 1789, Tocqueville wrote of the French state in words that have an eerily contemporary American ring: "The number of persons having monetary dealings with it, subscribing to its loans, living on wages paid by it, and speculating in government-sponsored enterprises [!] had enormously increased. Never before had the interests and fortunes of private individuals been so closely bound up with those of the State. Thus the mismanagement of the State finances, which formerly had affected only the administration, now brought ruin to many

homes." [Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (Trans. Stuart Gilbert) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, [1858] 1955), p. 179]

Such progress.

22 September 2010

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

Dear Editor:

Dana Milbank thinks the Democrats aren't sufficiently boastful ("Do-nothing Democrats," Sept. 22). He writes that "Over the past 20 months, Democrats have done a lot - too much, the opposition says. But they don't want to talk about the achievements. The stimulus bill is unpopular; they're not getting credit for health-care legislation, financial reforms and many other accomplishments."

Enacting legislation is neither an "achievement" nor an "accomplishment" that, standing alone, deserves credit. To think otherwise is akin to thinking that a rain-dancer deserves credit for performing his fancy ritual even if afterward the crops

continue to wilt because the drought persists.

21 September 2010

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

Dear Editor:

Enjoying an uproariously good time poking fun at the Tea Party, Richard Cohen helpfully explains that its adherents' insistence on strict interpretation of the Constitution is the result of a "fatuous infatuation" with that document - is the consequence of a yokel-like refusal to recognize that the Constitution is valuable "only because it has been wisely adapted to changing times. To adhere to the very word of its every clause hardly is respectful to the Founding Fathers" ("Republicans under a spell," Sept. 21).

Question for Mr. Cohen: if government officials and the courts are free to choose which words of the Constitution to "adhere to" and which to ignore, what meaning does the Constitution really possess? And why did the Founding Fathers struggle so hard during the long, hot summer of 1787 over the precise wording of the Constitution? Why didn't

they - to ensure that they would win the respect of future generations of Very Smart Persons - simply draft a document that reads "Government may do whatever it judges to be best for The People" and leave it at that?

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20 September 2010

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

To the Editor:

Paul Krugman alleges that rich opponents of tax hikes are gripped by "a belligerent sense of entitlement" ("The Angry Rich," Sept. 20). Well, yes: save for corporate-welfare kings and queens, rich people EARN their riches. They are, in fact, entitled to their money, and entitled to be angry when government tries to take more of it.

What Mr. Krugman derisively calls a "sense of entitlement" is what

sensible people call "property rights." In fact, I'll bet that Mr. Krugman himself retains traces of this pre-"Progressive" possessiveness: if government tried to take credit for 40 percent of his scholarly output - allowing him to sign his name to only 60 percent of his articles, books, and columns - I'll bet that he, too, would exhibit "a belligerent sense of entitlement."