



**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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2 October 2011

Rep. Michele Bachmann  
(R-MN)

Dear Rep. Bachmann:

Politico reports your support for Uncle Sam taking action against Beijing's policy of allegedly keeping the value of the Chinese renminbi too low ("Bachmann hits China on 'lasers'," Sept. 30).

Now that you've aligned yourself with America's screechy protectionists, who insist that it's harmful for Americans to have too much access to low-priced imports, I've a question for you. Would you applaud if Beijing erects a partial blockade against America -

a blockade in which Chinese naval and air forces forcibly reduce America's imports to levels that you and, say, Sen. Chuck Schumer determine are 'appropriate'?

If not, why not?

The result of such action by Beijing would be identical to the result of the action that you insist Beijing take: in both cases Americans' cost of buying Chinese-made goods would rise and, hence, Americans would import fewer goods from China. If deploying government force to raise Americans' cost of importing makes Americans more prosperous, surely you'd as vigorously support Beijing

enforcing such a blockade as you now support Uncle Sam enforcing higher tariffs on imports from China.

Same means (government force used to obstruct voluntary purchases); same result (fewer American imports, and - at least in your reckoning - greater American prosperity).

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29 September 2011

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

Dear Editor:

C. Fred Bergsten claims that eliminating America's trade deficit is a costless way to boost employment in America ("An Overlooked Way to Create Jobs," Sept. 29). He's mistaken. Among his several errors is his illegitimate assumption that all dollars that foreigners don't spend on American exports remain idle, effectively withdrawn from circulation.

Consider two cases. First, Americans buy \$1 million worth of textile imports from the Chinese who then buy \$1 million worth of pharmaceutical exports from Americans. The result: balanced trade.

Second case: Americans buy \$1 million worth of textile imports from the Chinese who then buy \$1 million worth of land in Texas. The American seller of the land immediately spends this \$1 million on American-made pharmaceuticals. (Perhaps the Texan is opening a pharmacy.) The result: a \$1 million U.S. trade deficit.

In both cases, Americans producers sell an additional \$1 million worth of output as a consequence of Americans importing \$1 million worth of goods. So – although America runs a

trade deficit only in the second case – the employment effects in both cases are identical.

Such an example, being entirely plausible, is sufficient to prove the absence of any necessary connection between trade deficits and unemployment.

29 September 2011

Editor, Washington Times

Dear Editor:

You report that "A federal judge on Wednesday said Alabama law enforcement officers can try to check the immigration status of those they suspect are in the country illegally ("Federal judge upholds key parts of Alabama immigration law," Sept. 29).

So it has finally come to pass that in America agents of the state go about demanding from peaceful people "Your papers, please."

The fact that the armed officials speak, not ominously accented German, but familiar American English when demanding to see documentation that someone has government approval simply to be in a certain jurisdiction - the fact

that the words spoken literally are "Your papers, please" rather than "Ihre papiere, bitte" - does nothing to make this spectacle any less heinous an affront to freedom and to civilization than it was in Nazi Germany

28 September 2011

Editor, Boston Globe

Dear Editor:

Jeff Jacoby exposes the flawed presumptions and conclusions in Elizabeth Warren's insistence that wealthy Americans are morally obliged to pay more taxes because each individual's success in the market requires the efforts and cooperation of millions of other people ("Professor Warren's ire," Sept. 28).

Pop quiz: Who described the term "self-made man" as "an incredibly naive and arrogant expression"? [Thomas Sowell, Knowledge and Decisions (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 110] Is it someone who, apparently like Prof. Warren, assumes that proponents of limited government fail to understand that each individual in modern society critically and ceaselessly depends upon countless numbers of his

or her fellow human beings?

No. These are the words of economist Thomas Sowell, here referring to the fact that modern prosperity requires a vast system of social cooperation that is, and can only be, coordinated chiefly by market prices. Insofar as taxes distort these prices and thwart incentives, social cooperation is diminished.

So Prof. Warren's pointing out correctly that each person (I put it here in the words of Adam Smith) "has constant occasion for the help of his brethren" [Adam Smith, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), Bk. 1, Chapter 2, para. 2] is an insufficient justification for raising taxes.