



## Comment on the Commentary of the Day

by

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17 July 2012

Editor, The Wall Street  
Journal

1211 6th Ave.

New York, NY 10036

Dear Editor:

James Taranto rightly criticizes Pres. Obama's assertion that any individual's success in the market is so overwhelmingly the result of the efforts of other people - such as those who build roads, staff courts, and do the myriad additional tasks that make society possible - that no successful person really has a defensible moral claim against the

government on his or her 'private' wealth ("Political Correctness and Racial Tension," July 17).

Like Mr. Obama, all serious people understand that modern society results from the efforts of millions of people. Adam Smith - who opposed an expansive state of the sort that Mr. Obama champions - famously marveled that the production of an ordinary woolen coat requires countless workers, nearly all of whom are strangers to the coat's owner. More recently, in a memorable segment of the PBS program "Free To Choose," Milton Friedman explained that a seemingly

simple pencil is in fact so complex that it can be produced only through the efforts of millions of workers spread across the globe.

But Smith and Friedman and other people of good sense understand also something that Mr. Obama does not. They understand that the agreements through which each of millions of people contracts to contribute to the production of coats and pencils and peas and policing and roads and barges and engineering textbooks and on and on and on are not open-ended. Selling wool to tailors does not thereby

give shepherds an open-ended claim upon the wealth of coat owners. Government's success at persuading taxpayers to fund the hiring of more teachers and the construction of new highways does not thereby give government (or teachers or highway workers) an open-ended claim upon the wealth of private citizens who benefit from these teachers or who use these highways.

Such open-ended obligations would mean that people aren't citizens represented by government so much as they are slaves ruled by the state.

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16 July 2012

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

Dear Editor:

You eloquently expose the silliness of Sen. Chuck Schumer's attempt to force U.S. Olympic uniforms to be stitched together in America ("The Imports of Patriots," July 16). I write "stitched together in America" rather than "made in America" for a reason. As you suggest, the 2012 U.S. Olympic

uniforms are labeled "Made in China" simply because Chinese workers supplied the relatively low-valued-added service of stitching together inputs from all over the globe – including from America – into their final form as Olympic sportswear. The unfortunate convention of identifying the country of final assembly as the country in which goods are "Made in" masks the fact that nearly all goods today are "Made Everywhere on Earth." [See the important 2009 study by Dan Ikenson, "Made on Earth": <http://www.cato.org/publications/trade-policy-analysis/made-earth-how-global-economic-integration-renders-trade-policy-obsolete>]

More to the point, Adam Smith long ago warned against absurd martinets such as Sen. Schumer: "The statesman who should attempt to direct private people in what manner they ought to employ their capitals would not only load himself with a most unnecessary attention, but assume an authority which could safely be trusted, not only to no single person, but to no council or senate whatever, and which would nowhere be so dangerous as in the hands of a man

who had folly and presumption enough to fancy himself fit to exercise it." [Adam Smith, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), Book IV, Chapter 2, paragraph 10]

Shame on anyone foolish enough to fall for Sen. Schumer's demagoguery.