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19 May 2014

Editor, *USA Today*

Dear Editor:

Air Line Pilots Association president Lee Moak opposes Norwegian Air International's effort to operate in the U.S. ("Why the U.S. must deny NAI," May 19).

Overlook Mr. Moak's mistaken assumption that foreign competition is harmful if it destroys domestic jobs. Focus instead on his report that the ocean-freight industry "employed in 1960 more than 100,000 people here but less than 2,500 today." True. But contrary to Mr. Moak's claim, this fact does not support his call to block foreign rivals today from competing for U.S. air passengers. The reason is that the vast majority of those maritime jobs were destroyed not by foreign competition but by technological improvements - most notably, the advent of container shipping. The results are impressive. Not only has the tonnage of freight shipped into and out of U.S. ports more than quadrupled since 1960, but the average amount of freight handled annually by each U.S. maritime worker has skyrocketed from 3,393 tons in 1960 to 591,840 tons today.*

If Mr. Moak really wants to protect employment in the U.S. aviation industry, he should ignore the relatively small effects of foreign competition and instead spend his time trying to prohibit the use of jumbo jets. Indeed, if he is correct in his assumption that economic forces are to be judged by how many jobs they create, Mr. Moak should demand legislation that prohibits commercial airlines from having any planes in their fleets larger than, say, the 37-seat Embraer 135. Think of all the piloting jobs we'd have then!

Sincerely,

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Professor of Economics

and

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* Calculated from data found here:

http://www.rita.dot.gov/bts/sites/rita.dot.gov.bts/files/publications/national_transportation_statistics/html/table_01_56.html

22 May 2014

Program Director, 1010 WINS Radio
New York, NY

Dear Sir or Madam:

You reported during today's 11:00am hour that citizens of Utah are upset that the number of wild horses now being rounded up by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management is too few to protect the environment. In response, the BLM explains that its budget is too tight to justify spending additional sums to round up more horses.

An easy solution is available: politicians can simply declare that additional expenditures on horse round-ups are worthwhile. After all, President Obama teaches us that government can make additional expenditures by businesses on employing low-skilled workers worthwhile simply by raising the minimum wage (that is, by government declaring that all low-skilled workers are now worth whatever wage government declares these workers to be worth). In light of this "Progressive" economics lesson, therefore, there's every reason to believe that government can make additional expenditures by the BLM on rounding-up more horses worthwhile simply by declaring that these additional expenditures are worthwhile. It's really quite simple!

So let's have no more 'neigh'-saying by those who deny that government can use incantations to miraculously raise the market values of whatever economic activities government wishes to raise.

Sincerely,

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and

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23 May 2014

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

Dear Editor:

On economic matters you consistently and correctly explain that government's capacity to gather enough knowledge to intervene productively is weak and that its incentives to promote special interests (including its own) at the expense of the public interest are strong. Yet, as in your defense of NSA spying ("Honey, I Shrunk the NSA," May 22), on national-security matters your mature skepticism of government is replaced by a childish faith that government officials are wise and trustworthy.

I'll never understand this political schizophrenia.

Of course, the NSA and its champions assert that its activities protect us and keep us free. But why are such claims any more believable than, say, the FDA's assertions that its testing procedures are beneficial, or the IRS's claims that it never pursues political agendas?

In fact, we would all be safer and freer if more of us heeded - for *all* government activities - H.L. Mencken's wise warning that "[i]t is the theory of all modern civilized governments that they protect and foster the liberty of the citizen; it is the practice of all of them to limit its exercise, and sometimes very narrowly."*

Sincerely,
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* H.L. Mencken, "On Liberty," *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, March 21, 1926.

26 May 2014

Editor, *Boston Globe*

Jeff Jacoby is correct that President Obama's competence at executing various desired policies, such as deficit reduction and reforming the VA, falls far short of candidate

Obama's competence at convincing voters that he possesses unusually high competence at executing such policies ("Obama fails to show his vaunted 'competence,'" May 25). But such is politics.

The typical politician's orations are crafted to win votes and applause by duping audiences into believing that that politician is someone who he or she certainly is not. To believe that Barack Obama (or Mitt Romney, or Hillary Clinton, or Jeb Bush, or you name the thespian pining for stardom on the Potomac) can really perform heroic feats such as ending corruption, securing world peace, and creating more prosperity than can be created by free markets, is akin to believing that Hugh Laurie can really cure seriously ill hospital patients of mysterious ailments or that William Shatner can really pilot a starship and save the galaxy from alien villains.

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