



## Comment on the Commentary of the Day

by

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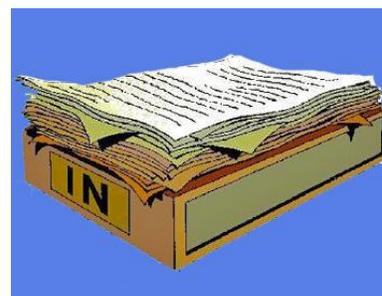
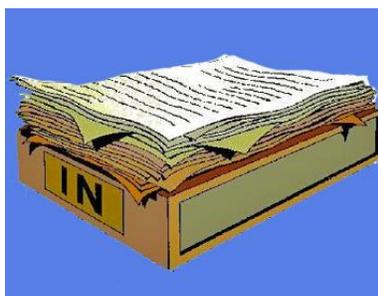
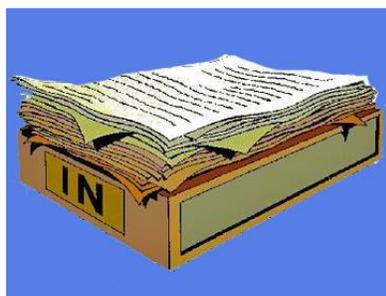
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**Disclaimer: The following "Letters to the Editor" were sent to the respective publications on the dates indicated. Some were printed, but many were not. The original articles that are being commented on may or may not be available on the internet, and if they are, they may require registration or subscription to access. Some of the articles being commented on are syndicated, therefore, they may also have appeared in other publications.**

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7 January 2014

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

Dear Editor:

Michael Gerson argues that conservatism is superior to libertarianism ("How the tea party undermines conservatism," Jan. 7). Key to his argument is the fact that conservatives' defense of liberty - unlike that of libertarians - isn't bound by any tedious and irksome principles. "Conservatism," as Mr. Gerson proudly says, "is a governing vision that allows for a yellow light: careful, measured public interventions to encourage the health of civil society. There are no simple rules here."

Indeed there aren't. But such a "yellow light" is a bug and not a feature.

F.A. Hayek, in his 1960 essay "Why I Am Not a Conservative," warned against the very lack of principles that Mr. Gerson celebrates as a shining feature of conservatism: "In general, it can probably be said that the conservative does not object to coercion or arbitrary power so long as it is used for what he regards as the right purposes. He believes that if government is in the hands of decent men, it ought not to be too much restricted by rigid rules. Since he is essentially opportunist and lacks principles, his main hope must be that the wise and the good will rule - not merely by example, as we all must wish, but by authority given to them and enforced by them. Like the socialist ... he regards himself as entitled to force the value he holds on other people."\*

In short, conservatives are no more to be trusted with power than are socialists, "Progressives," or any other people.

Sincerely,  
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and  
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\* F.A. Hayek, "Why I Am Not a Conservative," in *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 401:  
<http://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/articles/hayek-why-i-am-not-conservative.pdf>

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10 January 2014

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

Dear Editor:

You report that increasing numbers of U.S. firms insist that their employees undergo "unconscious-bias training" in order to rid employees of any harmful yet hidden prejudices that they might bring into the workplace ("Bringing Hidden Biases Into the Light," Jan. 10).

It's well and good that "diversity experts" are paid to raise employees' awareness of their unrecognized biases against people of color, against young people, against old people, against obese people, and against people who graduated from different colleges. But why not expand "unconscious-bias training" so that "Progressives" themselves can personally benefit from the exercise?

How about "unconscious-bias training" to raise "Progressives'" awareness of their own bigotries - such as their biases against successful entrepreneurs and investors, against consensual capitalist acts, against people who oppose social engineering, and against those of us who sense that programs such as "unconscious-bias training" smack less of useful worker training and more of "Progressive" indoctrination?

Sincerely,  
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12 January 2014

Editor, The New Yorker

Dear Editor:

The theme of James Surowiecki's "Do the Hustle" (Jan. 13) is the ubiquity of con artists. Curiously, though, he mentions only con artists operating in the private-sector.

Con artists do sometimes infect private markets (although it's absurd for Mr. Surowiecki to assert that "[s]uccessful entrepreneurship involves hucksterism"). But private markets contain built-in means for keeping con artistry to a minimum - namely, to fall victim to fishy schemes in private markets, individuals must stake their own money. Matters differ in the public sector where individuals - voters, bureaucrats, elected officials - gamble on fishy schemes with other people's money. However imprudent someone might be when risking his or her own funds, that person's imprudence is magnified when the funds at stake belong to others.

The most skilled and ambitious con artists, therefore, gravitate toward politics. Why would they not? There, these scammers not only have much looser reins to act as (quoting Mr. Surowiecki) "greedy hucksters who sell us dreams that never come true" (remember Solyndra?), they also - because through the fiat of legislation they themselves ordain their fraudulent schemes as lawful - enjoy the added benefit of seldom being exposed as the shysters that they are.

Politics is truly the perfect con game.

Sincerely,  
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18 January 2014

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

Dear Editor:

With his usual eloquence, George Will explains that union power is exercised first and foremost against workers ("Government should not force people into unions," Jan. 19).

It has always been so. F.A. Hayek, for example, would not be surprised at today's attempt by the Service Employees International Union to force home health-care workers into its ranks. As Hayek wrote in 1960: "It cannot be stressed enough that the coercion which unions have been permitted to exercise contrary to all principles of freedom under the law is primarily the coercion of fellow workers. Whatever true coercive power unions may be able to wield over employers is a consequence of this primary power of coercing other workers."\*

The myth is that unions benefit all workers. But because unions in practice raise wages only by artificially restricting the supply of labor, the reality is that unions benefit some workers chiefly at the expense of other workers - other workers who are either coerced to join unions or who are forcibly prohibited from working at jobs, or on terms, of their own choosing.

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\* F.A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 269.

