



Comment on the Commentary of the Day

by

Donald J. Boudreaux

Professor, Department of Economics

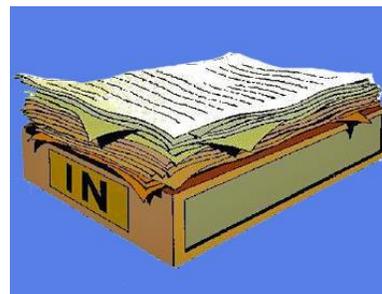
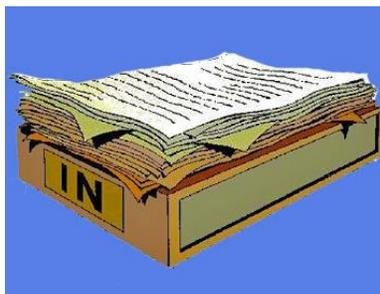
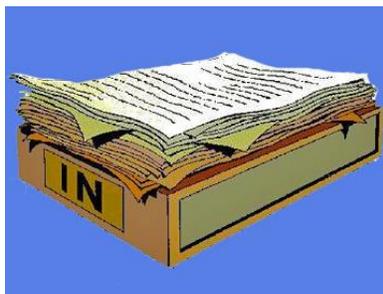
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Disclaimer: The following "Letters to the Editor" were sent to the respective publications on the dates indicated. Some were printed, but many were not. The original articles that are being commented on may or may not be available on the internet, 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.

23 October 2015

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

Dear Editor:

Today's "Notable & Quotable" reports that more than half of America's college students oppose free speech on campus - which means that more than half of America's college students are one small step away from opposing free speech everywhere.

Given this sad and scary fact, people who oppose immigration because they fear that immigrants infect America with cultural attitudes hostile to freedom ought to reconsider their position. With most of America's best and brightest already flirting with tyranny, new waves of opportunity-seeking immigrants are unlikely to make matters worse and might well supply a needed spur to protect freedom in the U.S. from its home-grown antagonists.

Sincerely,
Donald J. Boudreaux
Professor of Economics
and
Martha and Nelson Getchell Chair for the Study of Free Market Capitalism at the
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27 October 2015

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

Dear Editor:

Capping their case for restoring U.S. Export-Import Bank subsidies to politically powerful corporations, Sen. Mark Kirk (R., Ill.) and Rep. Stephen Fincher (R., Tenn.) proclaim that “[w]e want more American-made products, not less” (Letters, Oct. 27).

More American-made products are fine as long as they satisfy genuine consumer demands. But the increase in American-made products that Messrs. Kirk and Fincher seek to engineer will satisfy not the demands of consumers spending their own money but, instead, the demands of politicians and bureaucrats spending *other* people's money. With more of their resources confiscated by Ex-Im in order to artificially stimulate the exports of a handful of American firms, tens of millions of American families will have less to spend on goods and services that they judge to be best for themselves. The fact that foreign customers of companies such as Boeing and Caterpillar will be better able to consume "more American-made products" does nothing to offset the reduction in U.S. household consumption that Ex-Im subsidies necessarily cause.

Sincerely,
Donald J. Boudreaux
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and
Martha and Nelson Getchell Chair for the Study of Free Market Capitalism at the
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30 October 2015

Mr. Yong Park

Dear Mr. Park:

Thanks for your e-mail.

Objecting to my prediction that a 107-percent increase in the minimum wage (to \$15 per hour) will destroy many jobs for low-skilled workers, you accuse me of “raising theorizing over necessity of data,” and of making a prediction that “is not scientifically supported yet.” You believe that because we have no empirical data on such a steep hike in the minimum wage at the national level in the U.S, we can say nothing about its likely consequences.

I’m sorry, sir, but your empiricism is naïve in the extreme. As my friend Lyle Albaugh points out, the absence of empirical observations of the consequences of an atomic bomb being dropped on New York City does not prevent us from justifiably predicting massive death and destruction in Gotham should such a bomb be dropped.

A great deal of evidence of the consequences of other minimum-wage hikes - in combination with enormous amounts of evidence, experience, and theory showing that individuals' likelihood of doing X falls as their cost of doing X rises - supply sufficiently powerful scientific justification for predicting that a more-than-doubling of the real minimum wage will destroy jobs for many low-skilled workers. To counsel "silence" on this question unless and until we have "enough empirical data" is not, contrary to your claim, "to insist on economists being scientifically modest." Instead, such counsel is to insist on economists being unscientifically stupid; it is to insist that we abandon reason.

Sincerely,

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and

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5 November 2015

Editor, *The Washington Post*

Dear Editor:

In his latest column, Harold Meyerson draws an unwarranted conclusion from a mash-up of headline-grabbing findings, cherry-picked facts, and poor economics ("[America's white working class is a dying breed](#)," Nov. 5). Specifically, he asserts that the rising death rates of white Americans aged 45-54 since 1999 is caused by the working-classes' purported "loss of power" that, in turn, is caused by a combination of globalization (especially by its 'destruction' of American manufacturing jobs), de-unionization, and corporations embarking in the 1980s on the quest of "maximizing shareholder value." But about this conclusion it is fair to ask Mr. Meyerson:

- Given that [trade as a share of U.S. GDP has been rising since at least the early 1970s](#), why did the death rate of white Americans aged 45-54 not start rising 20 or 25 years earlier than it did?
- Given that [manufacturing jobs as a share of all jobs in the U.S. have fallen steadily and steeply since the mid-1940s](#), why did the death rate of this demographic group continue to fall for more than half a century, until 1999?
- Given that [the share of the workforce that is unionized has been steadily declining since the mid-1950s](#), what explains the more than 40-year delay in this allegedly lethal trend's grim reaping?

- Because all of these trends affect blacks and Hispanics no less than whites - and, indeed, because [members of these minority groups are more likely than are whites to be blue-collar workers](#) - why have death rates for blacks and Hispanics aged 45-54 continued to fall since 1999? If your economic thesis is correct, shouldn't death rates not only have risen also for minorities in this age group, but risen even *faster* than for whites?
- Because [the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose from the early 1940s through the early 1960s at pretty much the same rate as it has risen from the early 1980s until today](#), what's the basis for your claim that corporations began "maximizing shareholder value" only in the 1980s?

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