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Mencken on 1848.... and on 2011

Posted By [Don Boudreaux](#) On April 26, 2011 @ 6:42 pm In [Business as usual](#),[History](#),[Man of System](#),[Stimulus](#),[Taxes](#) | [21 Comments](#)

Here's a letter to the *Washington Times*:

Richard Rahn ("[Risky unrealism](#) ^[1]") and Wayne Allyn Root ("[The Marxist in the mirror](#) ^[2]"), each in his respective column today, tempts even the most optimistic amongst us to the precipice of pessimism. From Mr. Obama's soak-the-rich class warfare through his demonization of speculators to his continued insistence that economic growth is best achieved when big government spends big bucks on big plans drawn up by Really Smart bigshots (such as Jeff Immelt), the president's hostility to free markets is rampant and dangerous.

What H.L. Mencken wrote about the dirigiste economic 'planning' and interventions uncorked in France in 1848 by that country's best and brightest geniuses applies to America today: "Every day they announced some new and grander scheme to bring in the millennium, and every day they abandoned some busted one. Meanwhile, the plain people went on looking for jobs, and not finding them.... Its goat was the French taxpayer. He had to pay, in the end, for all the crazy building of gaudy railway stations, and all that frantic dredging of rivers and digging of canals. Starting out with the thesis that the Rotten Rich were scoundrels and ought to be squeezed, the Brain Trust proceeded easily to the thesis that any man who had any property whatsoever was a scoundrel, too, and ought to be squeezed equally. The rich, in the main, managed to escape, but the little fellow could not get away, and squeezed he surely was."^{*}

Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose.

Sincerely,
Donald J. Boudreaux

* H.L. Mencken, "New Deal No. 1," in Mencken, ed., [A Mencken Chrestomathy](#) ^[3] (New York: Knopf, 1949), pp. 212-213.

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URLs in this post:

[1] Risky unrealism: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/apr/25/risky-unrealism/>

[2] The Marxist in the mirror: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/apr/25/the-marxist-in-the-mirror-622327470/>

[3] *A Mencken Chrestomathy*: http://www.amazon.com/Mencken-Chrestomathy-Selection-Choicest-Writing/dp/0394752090/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1303308948&sr=1-1

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