

The Elemental Case for Free Trade

Remarks delivered by Donald J. Boudreaux, published at FEE.org:

The positive economic case for free trade is straightforward. Here I distill it into ten – well, as you’ll see, really eleven – elemental points.

First, nothing about political borders justifies treating trades that cross those borders differently than trades that don’t. Whatever benefits result from you trading with someone in Kentucky are no less available when you trade with someone in Korea. Whatever economic problems – real or imaginary – are caused by you trading with someone in Korea are no less likely when you trade with someone in Kentucky.

Second, all economic activity is ultimately justified by how much it enables us to expand our consumption, not by how much it enables us to expand our production. Consumption is the end; production is the means. Of course, production is an essential means; we cannot expand consumption without expanding production. But production is not the ultimate purpose of economic activity. If you disbelieve me, ask yourself how much you’d pay for a sawdust-nail-‘n’-cardboard pie that took its well-meaning baker several days to produce. If you answer “nothing,” then you get this point.

Read the full thing at FEE.org.