



Anti-Consumerism Comes to Self Storage

By Tim Dietz – SSA VP, Communications & Government Relations

According to one *TIME Magazine* columnist, the success of the self storage industry is symptomatic of an overly-consumptive society. The November 27 column titled, “Why Shopping Bargains are Bad News for America,” by Barbara Kiviat, is a rallying cry for the anti-consumerism movement. Kiviat is calling for higher prices on all goods to actually DISUADE the purchasing of materials. She infers that the country’s “2.4 billion square feet of self storage” represents a nation out of control when it comes to materialism.

Kiviat referenced the self storage stats nearly within the same breath of another choice line where she chastised the American consumer for the “child workers in Bangladesh who sew our clothes and brush their teeth with ash since they can’t afford toothpaste.” Such outlandish correlations are easily asserted because it’s impossible to criticize the comment without appearing insentive.

Judging simply from the title of her article, one would think that Kiviat was worried about America, but it turns out she is actually a protagonist of third-world countries that we here in the States apparently victimize with our over-zealous spending on cheap items stashed in storage units that enable the whole process. It matters not, apparently, to Kiviat that the United States has the world’s strictest child labor laws and has consistently led the most successful efforts to improve the culture surrounding such abuse worldwide—with great success for the most part.

It is a rather simple assumption on her part that self storage is emblematic of bargain shopping and that this in turn leads to the mistreatment of the rest of the world. Is it too far a leap to realize that the majority of tenants appreciate and actually require storage because they are in transition, live in a small dwelling, have inherited items, run a small business or are deployed in the military overseas? Do their stored beds, couches, clothing, pharmaceuticals, etc., qualify under the author’s seemingly broad definition of “ultra-cheap goods?”

The anti-consumer crowd apparently believes self storage facilities are bursting with toys and cheap trinkets inscribed with “made in” labels. Only a nominal bit of research would have revealed that the self storage industry resulted from a creative business model that, like other successful industries, was built to meet demand. Self storage allows people to keep the things that are important to them—a reasonable purpose and a helpful purpose. The reason self storage facilities have become popular is not because they are monuments to our greed, but to our need.

Some of these anti-consumerism groups are championing holiday gifts that are not actually material items, such as babysitter coupons. Such nonproducts are fine presents—as would be gift certificates or coupons for a self storage space. ❖