



"The American concentration camps were directed as an integral auxiliary of the wartime administration's propaganda machine, to firm support for the war."

JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

## Prison camps of the propaganda machine

JAMES J. MARTIN

*Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* by Michi Weglyn (introduction by James A. Michener). William Morrow and Company, 351 pp., \$5.95

ONE FEATURE OF World War II which went far beyond the wartime innovations of the previous half-century was the mass population transfers and large-scale incarceration of whole classes of people along racial and ethnic lines. World War I had seen extensive internment camps for civilians (there are still readers of e.e. cummings's *The Enormous Room*, but who today remembers Aladar Kuncz's *Black Monastery*?), though they did not rival the much larger and more conventional prisoner-of-war installations. But the imprisonment of civilians in the fray of 1939-1945 exceeded in scope anything ever before known. Thanks to unremitting propaganda still in full cry 40 years after the fact,

most Americans have at least a passing acquaintance with the German concentration camps of 1933 and after, though they held far, far fewer people than the much more numerous, older, and much larger ones operated by the Bolshevik-Stalinist regime in Russia.

The fate of half a million Volga Germans and many other peoples at the hands of the Stalinist regime during wartime has been aired in a variety of studies, though the subject of Soviet concentration camps was effectively smothered by the generally Red-sympathizing American literary establishment for a generation and a half, and only recently caved in as a consequence of the global attention it all received stemming from Alexander Solzhenitsyn's grim *Gulag Archipelago*. Until very recently, Americans preferred to be regaled with stories of the allegedly unique and exclusive German malfeasance. Their preferred model for a hated and all-pervading police force is still the 1933-1945 German *Geheimstaatspolizei* (Gestapo), not the much more ferocious and efficient and now 60-year-old Soviet Communist police machine, encompass-

ing the globe in its enterprises, by which standard the far more notorious German institution was little better than the sheriff's department an American county of some size might sport.

It is always more comfortable to dwell upon the failings of others, and the more distant they are, the easier it is to feel superior about it all. For that reason, whatever it may know about sin abroad, the general populace in the USA in this day is only faintly aware of the American participation in the business of mass population roundups and incarceration on the sole basis of ethnic or racial origin. Yet this participation has caused much distress among those few who have considered its impact in terms of historical and future legal consequences, let alone the somewhat more intangible effects of a psychological or psychic nature. The literature on the subject is already vast.

Those who pay attention to TV credits as they roll past at the conclusion of shows, and who watched the Perry Como Show for eight years, may dimly recall a credit which read "Costumes by Michi." This is the professional name of

Michiko Nishiura Weglyn, a Japanese-American woman of uncommon talents, brains and good looks. One of the nation's best at what she does best, theatrical costume designing, Mrs. Weglyn took time out from her expertly-written works on costuming, and related matters pertaining to both professional and personal grooming, to write a historical work on the experience of the American Japanese who spent the time of the noble Liberals' War, 1941-1945, expelled from their homes, stripped of all but their most simple belongings, and herded into ten bleak concentration camps from the California desert to Arkansas, for the duration. All 120,000 of them were locked up on a totality of evidence which, the anguished liberal legalist Eugene V. Rostow later admitted, would not have served to bring about a conviction for having stolen a dog.

The original projected title of *Years of Infamy* was *Days of Infamy*, but apparently a reverential editor thought that smacked too closely of reflection upon the adored departed master, FDR, who had employed the singular—"day of infa-

my"—in describing the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Mrs. Weglyn's book is a contribution to the growing literature on the American experience in operating such camps (though, in the exquisite hypocrisy of American bureaucracy, they have always been described as "relocation centers"). A generation of works now streams behind us, beginning with the pioneer studies by the late Morton Grodzins and Louis Obed Renne, stretching on through other worthy labors by Anne Fisher, Allan Bosworth, Roger Daniels and half a dozen others of fairly recent vintage.

However, *Years of Infamy* is the first broad history (there have been several personal memoirs) by one who was actually among the incarcerated. Not only is it remarkably restrained (one sees almost nothing of this sort in the inflammatory works by those who spent some time in the European concentration camps) but it incorporates work based on sources not used by previous writers. (On the over 50 works on the subject so far the reader is directed to Raymond Okamura's impressive bibliographical essay in *Counterpoint: Perspectives on Asian America* [1976].)

The situation, boiled down to its essential, the plausible excuse for it all, concerned the likely behavior of the Pacific Coast's Japanese ethnics once war between the USA and Japan became a reality on Dec. 7, 1941. The panic and hysteria prevailing in the area from the Mexican border to Alaska at this time cannot be adequately described today. There were elements so unhinged by the Pearl Harbor bombing that they readily accepted the idea that a Japanese invasion of

the Coast was likely to occur momentarily, and that the entire area to the Continental Divide should be abandoned, and that a last-ditch stand be made against the Japanese somewhere in the mountains west of Denver. In general the fear of the next stages of the war with Japan was nowhere near that extreme, but it ballooned apprehension about the probable behavior of the resident Japanese in America, regardless of place of birth. Thereupon there grew the notion which led to the psychological support for the eventual expulsion of the entire Japanese populace from their Pacific Coast homes and their separation from \$200 million worth of hard-earned property, to be subsequently "relocated" in the miserable camps stretching from the California high desert to the extremities of the High Plains: the expectation that they would act as a supporting force to the coming Japanese invasion, or become an internal element devoted to sabotage and other interference and hindrance to the armed forces and the "war effort."

Perhaps part of this sentiment could be traced to those who had watched the civilian populaces of Europe since late 1939, which gleefully mixed it up with the armed forces of Germany in particular, in total contempt for the condemnation of such practices by the Hague Rules of Land Warfare. Theirs was the New Warfare introduced by the Communist regimes of Russia and China. It continues to be a serious factor in world politics to this day.

The strangest part of this affair was that an exhaustive report had been filed by a State Department agent, Curtis B. Munson, after a period of secret surveillance, the gist of

which was that there was not the faintest doubt but that the USA could depend upon the loyalty of the Japanese, citizens and non-citizens alike. Nevertheless, the decision and program to uproot and incarcerate them all went ahead, seemingly motivated by the vague expectation that they *might* do something in the future, anyway. That they had yet not done anything at all did not seem to matter. The model seemed to be a legal principle revived from the 15th century by the Germans in various regions they occupied in Europe, allowing for the imprisonment of persons in anticipation of their doing something hostile. Rafael Lemkin, the Polish-Jewish refugee lawyer who invented the ugly neologism 'genocide' in 1943, railed against the Germans for such a policy, but carefully ignored its American variant. The Germans undoubtedly had reasons for their variant of this precaution; the German General Staff charged that civilians committed from 1200 to 1600 acts of sabotage *every day* against the German forces, and the Soviet functionary P.K. Ponomarenko boasted after the war that civilians had killed 500,000 German soldiers while fighting in 'resistance' outfits under Stalinist discipline. But no American Japanese was ever convicted of sabotage or of killing any American soldier.

A major departure in *Years of Infamy* is a willingness to fix responsibility for the decision to destroy the Japanese-American community on the mainland (the Hawaii-dwelling Japanese were only incidentally bothered) and lodge them in these incredibly desolate and dreary internment camps for nearly five years. There has always been a strong

tendency to fog over and smudge the subject of responsibility, and to scatter it about in such a blurred manner that most readers have emerged from earlier works with the conclusion that "it all just happened." There did not seem to be much of anyone discernibly identified with the decisions which went into this political wartime trauma. Like Pearl Harbor, blame usually is assessed, if at all, upon a lower echelon of officials who obviously were carrying out orders from superiors, not inventing policy. For once we have in the case of Mrs. Weglyn's approach an effort to trace the decision-making process up the pipeline to the top. And the heartburn *that* has created among the surviving generation of affluent and powerful liberal inheritors of domestic and world influence and dominance has been extensive. This is evident from the tremulous and penitent introduction by James A. Michener, and from the testimonials of a similar nature appended to the jacket of the first edition by the likes of Edwin O. Reischauer, Dore Schary, William Manchester and Carey McWilliams, all of which reinforces much of the earlier distress and agony of Rostow in his memorable *Harper's* article of September, 1945.

The preposterousness of this entire operation becomes more evident as time passes, and as it is examined by those not even born when it happened. The part played in the carefully nurtured war hysteria by the Roosevelt war administration propaganda machine has to be considered, as well as some idea of the nationwide campaign of Japanophobia which had never subsided in the interwar decades, and was further inflamed by the Pacific Coast press during that time.



Rounding up a racial community as distinctive as the Japanese was relatively easy. Not only were they plainly incapable of concealing their physiognomy, there were not very many of them, and they were almost all concentrated in one part of the mainland. (Left to the lay public, perhaps all other Asiatic minorities might have been included; Chinese played Japanese villain roles in wartime movies, and it was a rare viewer who might have been able to tell the difference.)

Of course, the Japanese were a very small fraction of the total of "enemy aliens" in the USA and its possessions. Attorney General Francis Biddle estimated there were 1,100,000 in all, counting Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, when he directed them on Jan. 1, 1942 to surrender all their firearms to local police authorities by 11 p.m. January 5. But the sweeping order to round up the entire Japanese community later led to the inclusion of approximately 70,000 Japanese *who were American-born citizens*, not aliens at all. This made this aspect of the "internal security" program of the Roosevelt regime quite distinct from anything else related to it. There *were* camps which housed small numbers of German and Italian aliens in the USA, contrary to most illusions about that part of the affair, but a roundup of all of them would have been a matter far too exhausting for the authorities. Not being racially distinct from the run of American white citizens, the effort to locate them without the aid of a vast organization of informers would never have made it. (Speaking of this subject, has it ever occurred to the reader how the Nazi authorities were

able to establish who the Jews were in the areas of Europe under their control, and how many they missed?)

In one notable respect, Mrs. Weglyn does not flinch from direct attribution of the whole Japanese internment program to

could match his Sinophile predilections, which was the positive side opposing his Japanophobia (John T. Flynn has done a capable job of outlining the 19th century Roosevelt Chinese Connection). Nevertheless, it is long past the season when blurout-artists can

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## "The guards in the American concentration camps could easily have made the transition to similar employment in Germany or Russia."

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where it has always belonged: squarely on the doorstep of President Roosevelt. For once the standard liberal evasion of blaming it all on "public opinion" in California, the Army colonel who wrote the executive order authorizing it, the Army general who administered it, and the entire category of diversionary figures which might divert attention from the White House, is bypassed. For once there is no irritating masking of the basic act. As Mrs. Weglyn bluntly puts it, "In short, Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066—and the exclusion-internment program which grew out of it—is where to start looking. This act she goes on to describe as "nothing less than a rash, deliberate violation of the Constitution."

This insistence that there be no more circuitous wheeling about the central fact is refreshing, though the ascription of the promulgation to 'racism' may be overdrawn. Roosevelt hardly held a position of superiority pretensions toward all Asiatics; few

wail that FDR was 'badly advised' about the program, and several other people are blamed for it all. Mrs. Weglyn has quite firmly closed the door on this ploy. It surely demolishes the limits of credulity for mouthpieces of executive puissance to maintain that the man at the head of a global war machine which saw him authorize the enrollment of 14,000,000 Americans into its armed forces, and stand at the head of an operation which spent in excess of \$400,000,000,000 in the prosecution of that war, suddenly became so feeble, distracted and powerless as to be unable to prevent such a shameful and unnecessary caper as the Japanese-American incarceration adventure. The fact is that this program was directed as an integral auxiliary of the wartime administration's propaganda machine, and its encouragement of civilian sentiments was an adjunct to the firming of popular support for the war.

And where were all the pundits, including Walter Lippmann, and the big newspaper and radio

mouthpieces, the fat, comfortable, affluent and prestigious, the war profiteers, and the looters of Japanese-American property, the big legal eagles and the professional liberal warriors, so quick to bel-low in dismay at injustice abroad? Almost all of them were squarely behind the administration Japanese lockup program, approved almost unanimously by Congress in a voice vote maneuver to disguise later pinpointing of personal positions. As usual, the sole voice criticizing the enabling legislation which put flesh on FDR's executive order was Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio, who called it "probably the sloppiest criminal law I have ever read or seen anywhere," though even Taft shrank from attacking the basic program, which he saw as one for the control of "enemy aliens." But he was fully aware of its capacity for injustice. But the opportunities for hypocrisy were never all dissipated. Carey McWilliams, later editor of the liberal bible, the *Nation*, wrote piously upon witnessing a train of Japanese being shipped out to Tule Lake in the fall of 1943 that he wished the entire membership of one of the California "nativist" organizations were there with him to witness the misery and anguish being caused these people. I also witnessed a trainload of Japanese expellees, departing from the Los Angeles Union Station in the late summer of 1942, and I would have liked as *my* fellow witnesses a lot of McWilliams's liberal buddies, who, like the conservative patriots, were wholly supportive of the expulsion.

There are several topics concerning this subject which receive special treatment at the hands of Mrs. Weglyn. Not only is the



Munson Report and its total avoidance by officialdom properly memorialized for the first time; generous attention is given to the scratching and clawing among the State, War, Navy and Justice Departments to run the deportation/internment operation. Still another aspect finally given its proper attention is that which looked upon this mass apprehension of the American Japanese as a look-ahead hostage pool, considering them as possible exchange bait for Caucasian Americans stranded in various Asiatic locations in the hands of the Imperial Japanese armed forces. And then there is the tale of involvement of a dozen Western hemisphere states cooperating with the USA in also locking up their tiny numbers of Japanese subjects and aliens. Paraguay acted with alacrity and jailed its two Japanese, while Peru sent many of its to the USA for internment, which amounted to American jailing, not of aliens of Imperial Japanese affilia-

tion, but of aliens of a friendly country! To such an extent did the lunacy, if not the pathological criminality, of this program proceed.

As far as the personal domestic experience of the Japanese Americans in these camps is involved, Mrs. Weglyn shows an almost monastic reserve in treating of it, and a detachment which is most remarkable, in view of her own presence in the camps as a teenager ripped up from life in California and deposited into the howling inferno of the southern Arizona desert wilds (the amenities so common there today did not exist there over 35 years ago, as I can testify from thousands of miles of railway travel back and forth across the entire area in 1942-1943.)

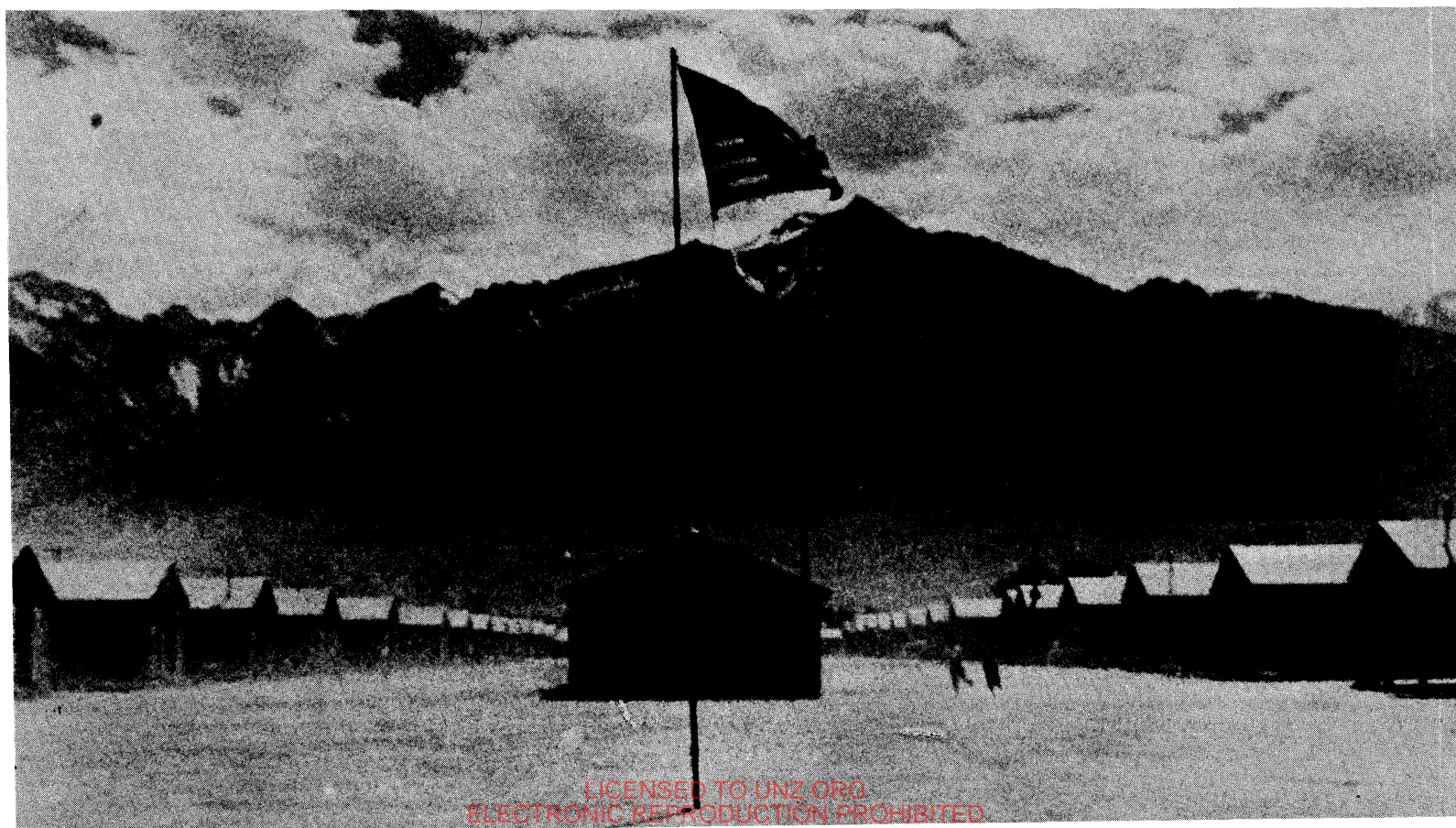
As far as the internal operation of the camps is concerned, there have been several memorable personal accounts. The outstanding contribution of this book in that regard is the solid chapter on the Tule Lake camp and its

many complicated ramifications, surely a monument to the extremes to which native administrative bureaucratic mismanagement can go. The people responsible for that narrative could easily have made the transition to similar employment in Germany or Russia (or in France or England, for that matter, both expert in running World War II concentration camps,) given the opportunity. (It was Tule Lake which furnished the background for John Okada's bitter but memorable novel, *No-No Boy*.)

This is an expertly-turned work, even if here and there Mrs. Weglyn has employed flowery phrasing not customarily encountered in works of academic "objectivity." Especially appealing to this writer, fond of informative source notes, is the fund of elaboration in the documentation, as well as the file of revealing photocopied documents, lodged, for some mysterious reason, not at the end of the text, but between the

eighth and ninth chapters. Among them: Late in the summer of 1943, the bureaucracy created to run the camps, the "War Relocation Authority," adopted a program of selective release or "leave clearance," for some detainees. They were required to answer a fantastic questionnaire during their interview when it was sought to determine their acceptability for this leave of absence. My favorite is the following: "Can you furnish any proof that you have always been loyal to the United States?" Shades of *Fragebogen*, indeed.

My growing favorable disposition toward amateur historians, after a lengthy and sustained unhappiness with most of the professionals in Clio's lupanar, may have led to excessive appreciation of *Years of Infamy*. But I will consider that possible reservation when I see one of the guild of the *historikers* do a better job on this subject than has Michi Weglyn. And let no one who has never been





hungry and friendless, yanked free from one's home and associations, for having done nothing at all, and abandoned to bake and dessicate in a sun-roasted and sandstorm-assaulted nightmare-nowhere, issue any smug disclaimers about the author's credentials for producing such a book as this.

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## Letter from a science fiction fan

PATRICIA WINTER

*Enemies of the System* by Brian W. Aldiss. Harper and Row, 119 pp., \$7.95

DEAR JEFF:

The science fiction fan in me read Brian Aldiss's *Enemies of the System* in a growing snarlymean fit. Too much talking. Not enough story. Just piddling glimpses of the giant, entrancing, three-weeks-reading, fat, lovable novel it could have been. I was ready to throw the book into the disintegrator when another part of me, the ideologue, took over and reread the damned thing.

"They embodied their discomforts in new metaphysical monsters," writes a character in the book, an historian, "—even in whole populated planets full of them. As we know such things cannot exist, but their imaginations were wild with discomfort. They also dreamed of perfect machines, things of metal which would not suffer from their internal disabilities."

Aldiss's historian is talking about us—the muddled late twentieth century

model of *homo sapiens*. He is himself human, but he is not a member of *homo sapiens*. He is a member of a descendant species, *homo uniformis*, and of a social system which works so well it has held consistent cultural control for a million uninterrupted years. The system is communistic. The technology which makes it possible is called Biocom. It's a device implanted in each individual's body at birth, an automatic device which keeps the individual's "primitive ego defense mechanisms" shunted into an artificially induced gestalt state which seems to be telepathic.

In such a physiologically communistic system, only the freethinking, freeacting individual poses any real threat—unless there is some cosmic anteater out there to level the cosmic human anthill made possible by Biocom. And apparently there is no such outside threat. Then a group of the system's elect gets itself stranded on an endless, primitive, desert planet. It might be an accident. It might not be. But communication with the system is broken. And their Biocoms have begun failing them.

Meanwhile we learn that these castaways are not the first. A million years or so before, when *homo uniformis* was first being perfected, a group of *homo sapiens* had crashed in this desert and mostly perished. Their descendants live here still, practicing a debatable kind of cannibalism and a religion based on space travel. The stranded *homo uniformis* elite is captured by some of these descendants. Cut off from their civilization, the biochemical communists begin quarreling among themselves.

But wait a minute! the ideologue in me wants to cry out. Is the idea behind this featherlight outline for

a novel that individualism leads always to conflict and communism is impossible except through technology so advanced it can literally change human nature? Well, maybe not. Aldiss gets his story over with so soon after dropping his *homo uniformis* into his situation, there's no chance to see them interact with the primitives for any substantial length of time. But what time we do see them together leaves us with the distinct feeling that the author sees only folly in his biocommunicistic species.

Then there's that mysterious business near the end of the book about how human beings of the twentieth century "embodied their discomforts in new metaphysical monsters." As nearly as I can make out, the "metaphysical monsters" in this quotation are things like religion, government, philosophy, literature, even science fiction—things invented by *homo sapiens* to divert, redirect, and relieve those internal conflicts in each of us. And the implication would seem to be that it's not biotechnology but the arts and humanities which can civilize human beings, by placating "the ghost in the machine."

The problem with *Enemies of the System* is precisely that it is only implicit (and only vaguely so), never explicit about what it means. And since it consists largely of long-winded speeches by sketchy characters, what it means would seem to have been the point of writing it (or should that be dashing it off?) in the first place.

Regards,  
Pat Winter

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## The economic consequences of Mr. Keynes

RICHARD EBELING

*Democracy in Deficit, The Political Legacy of Lord Keynes* by James M. Buchanan and Richard E. Wagner. Academic Press, 195 pp.

*The Fallacy of the Mixed Economy* by Stephen C. Littlechild. Institute of Economic Affairs, 86 pp., \$4.95

IN HIS 1752 ESSAY ON the dangers "Of Public Credit," David Hume warned his readers that "it is very tempting to a minister to employ such an expedient, as enables him to make a great figure during his administration without overburthening the people with taxes, or exciting any immediate clamors against himself. The practice, therefore, of contracting debt will almost infallibly be abused, in every government. It would scarcely be more imprudent to give a prodigal son a credit in every banker's shop in London," Hume insisted, "than to empower a statesman to draw bills, in this manner, upon posterity."

For this reason, the classical economists argued that only the strong and constant pressure of public opinion against such practices could prevent the ballooning of governmental expenditure and deficits. This was most clearly expressed by James Mill in his 1808 essay, *Commerce Defended*. "One of the most powerful restraints upon the prodigal inclinations of government," Mill declared, "is the condemnation with which expense, at least beyond the received ideas of propriety, is sure to be viewed by the people. But should this