

# Lyndon LaRouche on Who Invented Malthus

*This excerpt is from Lyndon LaRouche's 1983 book, No Limits to Growth, available [here](#).*

We begin with the case of the Reverend Professor Thomas Malthus himself. Who and what was behind his writing of his 1798 *An Essay on the Principles of Population*? It was the same stratum of wealthy families behind Malthus then, which has been behind the orchestration of neo-Malthusian propaganda and movements again, today.

During the year 1751, the leader of the cause of American Independence, Dr. Benjamin Franklin, wrote and published a pamphlet, *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind*, in which he argued, on premises of economic principles, for increasing rapidly the population of North America. A friend and admirer of Franklin, Gianbattista Beccaria, translated this pamphlet into Italian, and published it in Italy. The Italian edition of this pamphlet was greeted with an attempted rebuttal published by Giammaria Ortes, a leading spokesman for the powerful rentier-financier families of Venice.

Ortes's attack on Franklin found its way to Britain, and, at a somewhat later date, an ambitious young graduate of Oxford University's divinity school, Thomas Malthus, plagiarized and published Ortes's arguments as his own *Essay on the Principles of Population*. At that time, Malthus was in the service of the British Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger. It was Pitt who sponsored the first, 1798 publication of Malthus's famous work. As Pitt stated to the British Parliament, it was Malthus's *On Population* which was used for the 1800 reform of the British Poor Law; Britain ceased to give financial assistance to its own "useless eaters."

That was the origin of the name "Malthusianism."

In honor of Malthus's achievement, the British East India Company created the first professorship in political economy to be established in Britain, appointing Malthus as first occupant of this position, at the Company's Haileybury College, where its own agents were trained. All the notable British economists—excepting the special case of Dr. Karl Marx—from Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham, through John Stuart Mill—were, like Malthus, agents of the British East India Company.

Most, like Bentham, Malthus, David Ricardo, James Mill and John Stuart Mill, were associated with and coordinated by Haileybury.

This connection among British political economy, Malthusianism, and the African slave-trade and China opium-trade, is indispensable for understanding the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' eruptions of Malthusianism....

Adam Smith had defended the opium-trade in a manner consistent with his Scottish Calvinist's Jesuitical morality:

The care of the universal happiness of all rational and sensible beings, is the business of God and not of man. To man is allotted a much humbler department: the care of his own happiness, of that of his family, his friends, his country.... But though we are ... endowed with a very strong desire of those ends, it has been entrusted to the slow and uncertain determinations of our reason to find out the proper means of bringing them about. Nature has directed us to the greater part of these by original and immediate instincts. Hunger, thirst, the passion which unites the two sexes, the love of pleasure, and the dread of pain, prompt us to apply those means for their own sakes, and without any consideration of their tendency to those beneficent ends which the great Director of nature intended to produce them.

In the case of the British East India company and its American agents, the African slave-trade and China opium-trade; and, in the case of the leading American families, treason; were pursuits of profit by means of which they and their descendants might become wealthier, more powerful, and even all the more paragons of respectability.

The African slave-trade, the China opium-trade, monstrous usury, and the profitable occupation of treason, were the hallmarks of moral character and philosophy of the British East India Company and its American agents. These were the Malthusians then; their descendants, and the Swiss and "black nobility" descendants, are the force behind neo-Malthusianism today.