



“Government is a Necessary Evil”

Useful Actions and Harmful Actions of the State according to Jean-Baptiste Say

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Abstract: This article deals with the useful and harmful actions of the State in Jean-Baptiste Say's writings. Say's liberal positions have long been caricatured and even falsely attributed to him the formula of "*gouvernement ulcère*". Several issues are discussed in the article: the nature of public consumption, the functions of government, freedom of trade and exceptions to regulation (including foreign trade), the question of the "producer State", and the management of public finance. For Say, the role of the State is not limited to national defense, internal security and justice; its activities also include education, scientific research and public works (means of communication). Specific interventions are possible to protect consumers and the health of citizens and also in case of technological unemployment.

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