



## Bladensburg's Mencken

By Hugh Turley

John T. Flynn was a contemporary of the noted "Sage of Baltimore," H.L. Mencken. In 1882, Flynn was born to a devout Catholic family in Bladensburg and educated in the local public school. He likely attended mass at St. Jerome's parish in Hyattsville after it was founded in 1884.

Like Mencken, Flynn made his name as a newspaper journalist. As a student at Georgetown University Law School, he worked part-time as a reporter for the Washington Times (no relation to today's newspaper). After graduation he never practiced law but instead made his living as a writer.

Flynn worked at several newspapers in California before returning east to work at the New Haven Register and eventually the New York Globe. His years at the Globe shaped the direction of his writing. He began to study finance and economics and as the real-estate editor he uncovered schemes between individuals, organizations and government officials to cheat the public.

Throughout his career, he took a stand against corrupt officials, corporate fraud and crooked bankers. Eventually he took on the federal government and President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In the early 1930s, he had sup-

ported the president. But he later opposed FDR's economic policies, comparing them to Benito Mussolini's. Flynn's articles appeared in leading publications including the New Republic, Harper's Magazine and Collier's Weekly. He expounded on his political views in books like *Graft in Business, Country Squire in the White House* (this book placed him on the White House enemies list), *The Roosevelt Myth*, *The Truth about Pearl Harbor*, *Betrayal at Yalta*, and *The Lattimore Story*.

H.L. Mencken praised Flynn's biography of John D. Rockefeller, *God's Gold*, calling it "an excellent book."

Mencken, too, was a Democrat who opposed FDR's New Deal. Both men opposed Roosevelt's foreign policy, with Flynn accusing the president of using deception to maneuver the U.S. into war with Japan and Germany. Flynn consistently opposed militarism and an economic model based on defense spending and endless wars.

"We are always moving forward with high mission, a destiny imposed by the deity to regenerate our victims while incidentally capturing their markets, to civilize savage and senile and paranoid peoples while blundering accidentally into their oil wells or metal mines,"

wrote Flynn in his popular book, *As We Go Marching*. "No matter what the cause, even though it be to conquer with tanks and planes and modern artillery some defenseless black population, there will be no lack of poets and preachers and es-

sayists and philosophers to invent the necessary reasons and gild the infamy with righteousness."

One might think the former liberal and critic of FDR would be championed by the political right. But his views drew ire from both ends of the political spectrum: his opposition to American militarism kept his articles from being published in William F. Buckley's

conservative National Review.

Currently, there are no popular writers quite like Flynn, who warned that an economy driven by defense industry spending will lead to Fascism. Today, it seems, America's leading journalists are uncritical of politicians on the left and right deploying military personnel to 175 countries to fight an endless "war on terrorism."