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OF THE THOMAS PAINE SOCIETY

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MOMENT OF UNVEILING OF THE PAINE STATUE
AT THETFORD, NORFOLK, JUNE 1964.

Photograph: G. MOMMER

B U L L E T I N

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The Bulletin is published by the Thomas Paine Society and any communication in respect of it should be addressed to the Editors at the above address. The editors welcome papers relevant to the field in which the Society works, though they are prepared to consider other material, they also welcome letters and press cuttings. Views expressed in signed articles are not necessarily those of the Society.

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AIMS

To promote the recognition of Thomas Paine's contribution to the cause of freedom, and to spread a knowledge of his works and activities with a view to encouraging the growth of a similar spirit of constructive criticism in every aspect of public life.

Membership of the Society is open to anyone who agrees with the above aim. Members receive a newsletter four times a year and both issues of the Bulletin, they also receive other items as issued. There is no set subscription, applicants are asked to give what they can afford but we do suggest a minimum figure to start with at 10/- per annum. The Secretary will be pleased to furnish an application form on request.

Publications.

The Bulletin. Certain back numbers are available (quantity is limited) and may be had at 2/6 per copy (No.1.Vol.1. is now out of print).

PAINES ECONOMIC IDEAS

by
Henry Collins.

We do not usually think of Thomas Paine as an economist and, indeed, his writings under this head are neither systematic nor particularly original. Nevertheless, his economic ideas reflect his attitude to wider political issues and show both a grasp of economic realities and a penetration in powers of analysis which have been consistently under-rated by his biographers.

The Case of the Officers of the Excise, which Paine wrote in 1772, is his first known political work of which we have any record. He backed up the claim of his fellow excisemen to improved pay and working conditions by drawing attention to "the high price of provisions" which he attributed to "the increase of money in the kingdom". Rising prices, he argued, were harmful because they were unjust. To some they brought affluence; others might find their market situation strong enough to enable them to offset the effects of inflation by pushing up the price of their own products. But large numbers of people would find themselves in the same category as Paine's fellow customs officers and would lack either the economic or the political strength to counter the effects of inflation.

Paine returned to the question eight years later when, in The Crisis Extraordinary, he dealt with the problems of war finance at the time of the American revolution. The Federal Government had come to depend increasingly on paper money to cover its expenses. Paine underlined the inflationary consequences and stressed the importance of meeting public expenditure out of taxes and loans rather than by the printing press. Assessing the needs of the central government at £2 millions a year, he proposed raising half the sum by taxes and half by loans at 6 per cent. Paine would have preferred to raise the entire sum by taxes but he recognised that in view of the primitive state of government machinery this was impractical. In the circumstances he recommended that half the money should be raised by loans and half by taxes. These should consist mainly of import duties - since there were only a few points of entry they would be comparatively easy to collect - and by excise duties on liquor. He argued the case for the latter in characteristic Paine style, with a touch of salty irony: "How often", he remarked, "have I heard an emphatical wish, almost accompanied by a tear, 'Oh, that our poor fellows in the field had some of this!'. Why then need we suffer under a fruitless sympathy, when there is a way to enjoy both the wish and the entertainment at once?"

Paine's views on war finance in particular, and on monetary policy in general, were developed more explicitly in his Letter to the Abbé Raynal, which appeared in 1782. Inflation and taxation, it argued, were two alternative ways of paying for a war and, of the two, taxation was much to be preferred. However, it needed an administrative machine that might not be available to a revolutionary Government, so that inflation might be used as a temporary expedient. Otherwise taxation, by directly reducing demand, made people aware of the real costs which were being incurred, and so occasioned "frugality and thought", while inflation gave rise to "dissipation and carelessness". Moreover, taxation gave governments some control over the allocation of the burden and this, in democratic conditions, increased the likelihood that it would be fairly distributed. As soon as possible after the war the currency should again be based on gold and silver. This would restore the public's confidence and provide an automatic discipline on government.

Paine's most recent biographer, Professor A.O. Aldridge, says baldly that: "Paine's economics are now outmoded. Virtually a mercantilist, he considered gold and silver as the only form of capital". But to put the matter in these terms suggests some lack of historical imagination. Paine's life was passed in a period of secular inflation which began in the 1740s, when he was a child, and continued down to the end of the French wars. British wheat prices rose from less than 30/- a quarter in the early 1740s, to over 50/- in the early 1770s, when Paine left for America. By the 1790s they were over 70/- and still on a rising trend. By contrast, the wages of a craftsman in the Home Counties rose only from 2/- a day in 1740 to 3/- a day in 1800. Add to this the fact that Paine spent the most active periods of his political life supporting revolutionary governments which were desperately coping with the problems of war finance, and his ideas can be seen in reasonable perspective.

Professor Aldridge, writing in a period of full, Keynesian reaction to the depression of the 1930s, may have failed to grasp the significance of what Paine was saying. But to the radical of the late eighteenth century, as to William Cobbett who in this, as in some other respects, became his disciple, the salient feature of inflation was that it re-distributed income in favour of the rich and to the detriment of the wage-earner and artisan. Taxation, by contrast, made possible a more equitable distribution of the burden and in this aspect of Paine's Letter to the Abbé Raynal we can find the germ of the ideas which were to reach fruition ten years later in Part 11 of the Rights of Man.

After the end of the Revolutionary War, Paine found himself spelling out, in somewhat greater detail, his ideas on sound finance which then

1. Man of Reason. The Life of Thomas Paine, 1960, p.121.

and later gave him an undeserved reputation for economic "conservatism". The War had been followed by a slump and it seemed to many, including, for a time, a majority in the Pennsylvania Assembly, that trade would improve if the supply of paper money were to be increased. The agitation was directed against the Bank of Pennsylvania, which Paine had helped to establish during the War, and the reformers were demanding the repeal of the Bank's charter and a substantial increase in the note issue. In 1786 Paine replied with a pamphlet, Dissertations on Government, the Bank and Paper Money. The Bank's opponents, mainly up-country farmers and their friends, complained that the Bank had a vested interest in keeping money scarce and therefore dear. On the contrary, wrote Paine, the role of a bank is to mobilise savings which would be otherwise unspent, and return them, through loans, into circulation. In doing so it earns its own profits while at the same time serving the interests of the farmers and merchants by increasing the amount of trade.

Paine was not against the use of paper money as such. But he insisted that whatever was printed must have a hundred per cent backing from the country's reserves of gold and silver. This would not, as was feared, restrict trade by unduly limiting the supply of money. Paine showed that the volume of trade depended not only on the quantity of money but also on the efficiency with which financial institutions were able to attract deposits from the public's savings and return them through loans, back into circulation. Paine did not use the term "velocity of circulation" which was to feature so prominently in the later development of monetary theory, but he certainly employed the concept.

Like many of his contemporaries, Paine was obsessed by the growth of the National Debt. In 1786 he wrote Prospects on the Rubicon mainly to oppose the war which was clearly threatening between England and France. The pamphlet's main argument was that England's past wars had increased her National Debt and that this had resulted in "an unparalleled burden of taxes". In consequence; "A few men have enriched themselves by jobs and contracts and the groaning multitude bore the burden." Paine thought that the system was not only vicious but also unstable and that the further rise in the national debt which would result from a belligerent foreign policy would inevitably end in national ruin.

The War which Paine had foreseen broke out in 1793. Three years later, soon after his release from the Luxembourg prison, he published The Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance, in which he carried these arguments further and re-stated them in more rigorous and systematic form. He argued that the system of financing wars by borrowing, which had been in operation since the late seventeenth century, was insidious. It meant that in the long run the national debt must grow faster than any

possible increase in the gold reserve. Paine was here developing a theme he had already broached in Part 11 of his Rights of Man. Every expansion of the national debt would increase the load of interest payments which could only be met by further depreciating the currency. Paine was convinced that he had stumbled on a new economic law of epochal importance. In accordance with a principle analogous to the law of gravitation, the developments he was describing must, he was convinced, accelerate in geometric ratio. "I have not made the ratio", he insisted, "any more than Newton made the ratio of gravitation. I have only discovered it...."

As a piece of economic analysis, The Decline and Fall has serious limitations. The British economy turned out to be more firmly based and its tax system much more resilient than Paine - or, for that matter, any of his contemporaries - expected. Though Paine recognised the importance of manufacturing industry in Britain and the United States, such industry was still in its early infancy. The industrial revolution had barely begun and no-one seems to have rightly assessed the strength which it was to give an economy or buoyancy it could impart to tax receipts. Paradoxically, however, despite its inadequacies as a long range economic forecast, The Decline and Fall was one of Paine's more immediately influential publications. In 1797, the year following its appearance, the Bank of England was forced to suspend cash payments and Paine's predictions seemed vindicated. From then on the automatic discipline of a paper currency linked to the gold reserve was removed and inflationary pressures were accentuated. As in America, the main sufferers included the self-employed artisans and wage-earners to whom Paine was linked by social origins and political outlook. In short, while Paine was wrong in thinking that a rising national debt would mean an inevitable economic collapse he was right to see in it an instrument for enriching the wealthy at the expense of the poor. When in 1803, his pamphlet came into the hands of William Cobbett it converted him at once from an acid critic of Paine to one of his warmest - and most influential disciples.

Paine wrote The Decline and Fall in Paris, soon after his release from the Luxembourg. During the winter of 1795-6, while still convalescing, he wrote what was to be his last important work, Agrarian Justice opposed to Agrarian Law, and to Agrarian Monopoly, which appeared in 1797. To a greater extent than in any of his other writings, Paine dealt on the stark contrasts between wealth and poverty. He flatly asserted that the effects of civilisation had been to impoverish the mass of mankind. "Civilization...or that which is so called", he maintained,

"has operated two ways, to make one part of society more affluent and the other part more wretched than would have been the lot of either in a natural state."

Paine saw the cause of poverty in the appropriation, by large land-owners, of the proceeds of other men's labour. Land, the main source of wealth, was the natural gift of the Creator and its fruits should not be privately appropriated. On the other hand existing land had gained considerably from cultivation, the benefits of which belonged, by right, to the improver - that is, as a general rule, to the landowner, large or small. The solution, therefore, was not, as some had already begun to argue, the public ownership of land, but an inheritance tax of 10 per cent - more where land was not in the direct line of descent - to be used to finance cash grants of £15 to all on reaching the age of 21, and an annual pension of £10 to everyone over the age of 50. The same pension would also be available to the disabled. The interest of this pamphlet lay not only in its detailed proposals, which completed the social security programme outlined in Part 11 of the Rights of Man,¹ but also in the underlying philosophy which rejected a return to an agrarian society and fully accepted, indeed welcomed, the part played by manufacturing industry in promoting the general welfare.

Paine's ideas on economics and finance were of a piece with his approach to politics. Applied science and the development of industry could bring undreamed of benefits to humanity, but only so long as their fruits accrued to the labouring men and small property owners who were, in his view, the creators of wealth. The economy would grow best in conditions of "sound" finance. Wars, paper currency not linked to gold, inflation and a rising national debt made up a complex which redistributed wealth in the interests of the rich.

On this ground and within these limits it is difficult to say that Paine was wrong.

1. The edition of Thomas Paine's Key Writings edited by Harry Hayden Clark (Hill and Wang, New York, 1965) announces on the front cover that The (sic) Rights of Man is published, along with other writings, "complete", perversely omits the entire social security programme of Part 11.

JAMES HAROLD CROFT

IT is with deep regret that we have to report the death at an early age of James Harold Croft, Founder Member and Member of the Council of the Thomas Paine Society.

Harry, as he was known to most of his friends, played a leading role in the moves to form the Society. He gave freely of his time in producing material for circulation, addressing the many envelopes needed and as well as lending us his large printing machine set up the type for printing various items used in connection with the inaugural meeting. Harry accepted nomination for Council and was elected, since then he played a very active role indeed, one could almost say that at times he was assistant secretary of the Society in everything but name. Members who visited the Rights of Man Exhibition in Nottingham last year will recall seeing his tall, pipe smoking figure in attendance, what they did not know was that he gave up a week of his annual holiday to do the job.

Harry Croft had many other interests, though politics loomed large among these. An active debator he served on the Committee of the long established Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society - though he never gave an address to that body. As a member of the Labour Party Harry took a keen interest in national politics, though he tended to be associated with the more militant "left wing" and its associated organisations. With interests such as these it comes as no surprise to discover that Harry was a great bookman. He was, almost until his last days, buying books and it is almost no exaggeration to say that his home, a converted shop which seemed continually to be having structural changes made, was held up by books, pamphlets and journals. The library was mainly political and was very strong in pamphlet material and runs of obscure left-wing journals and Harry hoped one day to write a book on the "sects" within the British Socialist movement. However, Harry for all the time given over to the TPS, politics and his beloved books found time to enjoy music and over the past year had become increasingly interested in folk music. He bought several instruments and taught himself to play them, among these was a guitar and Harry taught himself to master this with a skill many professionals might well envy.

The unexpected death of Harry Croft takes from our Society a very valued member; his aid will be greatly missed. As a good friend of mine I shall miss him personally. On behalf of the Society the Secretary sent our condolences to Harry Croft's father and sister.

R.W.M.

CITIZEN TOM PAINE -

or HOWARD FAST versus THOMAS PAINE.

Howard Fast's fictional biography of Thomas Paine, Citizen Tom Paine has probably brought Paine's name to the attention of many who would not normally taken much interest in him. As a biographical work, though fictional it claimed to present the details of Paine's life and work, it did so in such a manner as to create a figure that only can be said to be one out of Fast's imagination rather than the Paine we know from history. The re-publication of Fast's book in paperback format, as has recently taken place, will once more present to the general reading public a false image of the great reformer and thus we feel it timely to re-publish the following reviews and extracts in order to show what some critics thought.

Psychology and Syrup by T.A.Jackson.

From PIEBS, May 1945.

Who or what Howard Fast may be I do not know, and cannot guess. I cannot even hazard a conjecture whether he is American, British, or neither. But I am quite certain he should not be allowed to do things like this. A novel I can stand as well as the next man; even when it takes known historical personalities for its central figure. A biography rightly done is both pleasant and profitable. A book that is neither the one nor the other - which is far too factual for fiction, and far too fictional for fact - a book which has the reader guessing half the time as to whether a given incident actually happened, or merely expresses the author's notion of what might have happened, or ought to have happened - a book of this kind is "neither flesh nor fowl nor good red herring"!

When the book is about Tom Paine - an historic figure who gives the widest scope for a genuinely critical historical appreciation, the reader's irritation and disappointment is exactly proportioned to the

magnitude of the theme, and the high value of the result that, by correct methods, might have been attained.

Tom Paine had a hand, and a prominent hand, in three revolutions - one of which did not quite come off. He played a decisive part in the American Revolution which brought birth to the USA. He played a noteworthy part in the great French Revolution; and if there was no revolution in Britain and the United Irishmen failed in their attempt in Ireland, it was not the fault of Tom Paine. His American pamphlets are less well known in Britain. But his Rights of Man and his Age of Reason are both in print (as true in 1967 as 1945 Ed.) and still sell readily.

Such a man deserves better treatment than to be made the victim of amateur psychologising drenched with sentimental syrup.

Tom Paine's historical significance is, that being in a revolutionary epoch, he felt in himself and expressed in plain everyday speech just exactly what were the highest hopes and aspirations of the revolutionaries. It was not due to any freakishness, or any malformation of his mind or disposition, that he acquired the name and fame that he did. On the contrary; it was because he was richly endowed with native common-sense, and was abnormal only in the sense of being uncommonly average and normal, that he was able so successfully to hit the general taste and feeling of his age.

Howard Fast, for all one can discover from his work, has neither sense of history nor interest in its processes. He tries to "explain" Tom Paine wholly from within. Having no sense of the immensity of the world-crisis which Paine reflected, Howard Fast has to discover the immensity in Tom Paine himself and his subjectivity. He has, in short, to make him a monster to account for the monstrous popularity achieved by his writings. And to account for the "monster" his own theory has postulated, Howard Fast has to invent all sorts of circumstantial horrors - of ill-treatment and poverty - and offer these as an excuse.

The poverty scenes in early youth, the degeneration, debauchery and squalour, are all fictional, and only too obviously "lifted" from the writings of Daniel Defoe - notably from "Colonel Jack". They have neither warrant nor excuse in an alleged "life" of Thomas Paine.

Much too much is made of Paine's personal uncleanness - which was never alleged against him in his lifetime except by a suborned slanderer during his last declining years - and of his alleged addiction to drink in which Paine at most conformed to the customs of the "gentlemanly" society of his time. There is no evidence at all to support the view (and plenty to the contrary) that Paine drank habitually as much as Fox,

Sheridan, or William Pitt. Yet no enemy of these men would dream of building a biography on the theme of perpetual drinking, and still less of inventing an elaborate excuse for this "failing".

The truth seems to be that the author, Howard Fast, has accepted at their face value the suborned slanders of "OJ.dys" and others - the slanders which Moncure Conway meticulously and decisively refuted in minute detail - and has sought by means of invented incidents and bogus "psychology" to find a sentimental excuse for the "momster" Paine of the slanderer's imagination.

Howard Fast shows no sign of having consulted Moncure Conway and he is totally ignorant of those passages in Wolfe Tone's autobiography which refute decisively his picture of Paine in Paris after the Terror.

Howard Fast's work is slightly worse than worthless.

"...Howard Fast wrote the novel Citizen Tom Paine, in which Paine appeared in the character that his opponents during his life-time sought to fix on him".

Argus (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia) 19/5/45.

"...when it comes to the greatness of Tom Paine, (Fast) is touching on something with which he unable to cope, because he can neither share nor understand it...Mr Fast is not at home in England at all, neither in flash-backs to Paine's life before going to America, nor during the period, when between his first (American) and second (French) revolution, he wrote, here in London, in an upstairs room in a pub, named 'The Angel' in Islington - a book, he called 'The Rights of Man'.Mr.Fast might have consulted G.D.H.Cole. There is no reason why his ignorance (of William Cobbett's bringing Paine's bones to Britain - Ed.) should be turned into a platform for his sneers".

Paul Potts, Common Wealth Review, April 1945.

"Citizen Tom Paine is popular or nothing. To me it was unfortunately nothing, for I feel no confidence in Mr.Fast's lively rendering of a sensational career. It is all here in a way - the American Revolution, the French Revolution and all the violent, often dingy vicissitudes, but we get mostly scrapings from the surface, uncooked and too highly seasoned".

Illustrated London News, 5/5/45

"In spite of all the biographical details about Paine, the thoughts and emotions, the complex inner life which must have agitated a man like Paine, are scarcely more than hinted at."

Scotsman, 19/4/45

HOWARD FAST - a few more reviews

"Howard Fast's biography is like one of these Hollywood pictures which, in their adolescent craze to improve on life and make it 'box-office', pervert it beyond recognition. Thomas Paine's life was natural 'box-office', and there was no need to build round him a log-cabin-to-White House story of an uncouth village lad who just failed to become a Cabinet.

Fast's book is described as a 'novel'; much of his invention is excellent dramatic stuff, but some of it is so far removed from any basis of historical fact that it might just as well have been about Robert Burns.....

The invented character of the rough peasant and drunken, borrhish genius is plugged, as if these imaginary characteristics were the symbols of genius. This is not a picture of Thomas Paine; a pity, because the author has much sympathy for Paine, which he alienates with his extraordinary conception of this great English democrat."

Adrian Brunel, Cavalcade, 7/4/45.

"It is a pity that Mr. Fast's obviously well-meaning novelised biography of one of our country's greatest democratic warriors should have fallen for the old, discredited myths of his supposed dirt and drunkenness and in general should display him as a figure of pathos."

Allen Hutt, Daily Worker, 29/3/45.

"Mr. Fast has set out to write a popular biographical novel and, as such, he has provided all the cinematic thrills of Paine's exciting life, but he has missed his chance of writing a best-seller by substituting a false and unattractive caricature for the real Tom Paine. He has portrayed the great English democrat as a hulking, hook-nosed man with 'slab-like peasant hands,' as a dirty, drunken, ill-mannered, unshaven, untidy, clod-hopping genius with 'oddly twisted eyes.' All this is just not true.

One is reminded of Theodore Roosevelt's dismissal of Paine as a 'filthy little atheist,' which was described as 'the triple lie,' for Paine was notably clean; he was five feet nine or ten in height, and to his dying day he was a deist. He was certainly not unshaven, untidy and ill-mannered; if he had been he would not have been the guest or close friend of Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Monroe, La Fayette, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the Duke of Portland, Edmund Burke, and at least a hundred other famous and eminent respectable personalities of his time - even Louis XVI met and liked the republican Paine. As for the allegation

of drunkenness, which was the invention of Paine's political enemies, it has been disproved in J.M.Robertson's scholarly monograph on the subject. This senseless slander, together with the other inventions, Mr.Fast repeats ad nauseam as if they added 'character' to his picture of Paine..... The facts are in Mr.Fast's book, but not the man. Mr.Fast does not lack sympathy for the man, but he does lack understanding."

Ian Swift, Tribune, 13/4/45.

"Giving passage to drink is unconscious humour of the author. He has given passage to it to such an extent that in the course of his two hundred and fifty pages Paine appears forty times in an inebriated condition! 'Once, for ten days, he had only enough control of himself to crawl down to the tavern for more brandy.' Really, on this showing, the title of the book might have been 'The Seditious Sot,' 'A Fuddler for Freedom,' or 'The Democratic Drunkard.'..... What then is the explanation of Citizen Tom Paine ? It should be noted that it first appeared in New York in 1943. No doubt the author thought a dramatic vivid presentation - these qualities cannot be denied - of a well known Anglo-American was a good hit with a war on. Perhaps he knew very little about him - it is remarkable that there is not a line of Preface retailing the sources that were tapped. It was a hurriedly painted portrait, with an amusing indifference to facts...."

W.Kent, The Freethinker, 1/7/45.

T H O M A S P A I N E S T A M P .

The United States Post office has officially announced that a 40 cent stamp honouring Thomas Paine will be put on sale in Philadelphia on January 29th. - this is Paine's birthday. The following day it will be placed on general sale throughout the country.

The Thomas Paine Society is pleased to hear this news, it is the culmination to the efforts by many, many individuals and organisations that Paine should be honoured so by the nation he did so much to bring into being. The Society will seek to make first-day covers available to members at cost. Details will be given in a newsletter.

I was delighted to find in my colleague Peter Paterson's book "The Selectorate," an excerpt from which appears on page 8, Tom Paine's wonderful description of political manoeuvring: "the pantomime of hush."

It is as apposite today as when it was written 178 years ago.

Sunday Telegraph, 1/10/67.

Book Reviews

THE PICTURE STORY AND BIOGRAPHY OF TOM PAINE by Grace Neff Brett.
(Library of American Heroes). Colour illustrations by R.C.Frankenberg.
Follett Publishing Company, Chicago. \$1.95.

I am delighted that children these days are being treated to a great number of excellent books - books, in which they can discover pleasure and stimulation for their receptive minds. My delight was doubled, when I received Mrs. Grace Neff Brett's The Picture Story and Biography of Tom Paine. Here is a faithful account for children from ten years up - or, in my view, for adults as well - of the important parts of Paine's life, but with an understandable bias on his life in America, during the struggle for independence.

Its story-book style ensures that no youngster, glancing at it, will be afraid it is dry history. But this style is in no way untrue to the character of Paine and the facts of history. Mrs. Brett told me recently, during her first visit to Britain, how she became Paine, while writing the book. A good writer might do this anyway, but I mention it for two reasons.

I could see from the way she told me how much she had enjoyed the experience (so much so that she is now preparing a longer work on Paine). The second reason goes back to 1943, when Howard Fast's Citizen Tom Paine was published in America, a book which is still quoted by people who should know better. Fast wrote his historical novel, and signally failed to produce from his imagination anything much more than a caricature of Paine.

My late father, himself a writer and, as a film scenarist, not averse to mixing fiction with history, defended Fast's right to invent scenes and dialogue, in which Paine was featured - so long as they were in character. Fast committed the sin of giving even further twists to the prejudiced slanders, levelled against Paine and produced an inexcusably false portrait.

Once bitten, I was shy about approaching Mrs. Brett's book. But I need not have feared, as she is scrupulously right in the way she had approached her subject. When Thomas Paine opens his mouth in her book, his words - his kind of Quaker words - authentically issue from him. I do not wish to insult her by merely saying that she passes the test of not being inaccurate!

She shows Paine's great qualities - his caring in youth about the shame and torture of a young neighbour with her head and feet locked in the local stocks, his caring about all men's rights, his personal bravery,

HIS scientific achievements, and the way, when he was full of his subject, that his thoughts flowed with the ink in a simple, direct language that every man would understand. She shows these qualities, and makes them exciting.

As an adult, I should have liked a longer book. Though I have read many longer biographies of Paine, I can truly say that I understand him better from having read Mrs. Brett's fine work.

Christopher Brunel.

- NOTTINGHAM CHARTISM, NOTTINGHAM WORKERS' IN REVOLT DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. By Peter Wyncoll. Illustrated. Wrappers. 60pp. Nottingham Trades Council, 1966. 3/6.

When I first read this work in manuscript about a year or so ago I thought then that it merited publication, indeed, it was hoped that the TPS could undertake this, alas for such a hope the financial position of the Society did not allow it. The Nottingham Trades Council have now stepped in and underwritten the cost of publication, a fitting gesture as the Chartist Movement was strongly working class in character.

- Peter Wyncoll commences his work by drawing attention to the social and economic conditions of the period, in setting Chartism in its historical setting he does not fail to stress its historic roots; his points for example about Luddism are refreshingly clear of the bias shown against that movement by even Socialist historians - and some politicians. The people who constituted the Chartist Movement came from several backgrounds, "superior craftsmen", as the author terms them, Northern textile operatives and workers employed in "domestic outwork" (framework knitters). Wyncoll holds that the link between the three groups was the first group, and that many of these had some theoretical knowledge and were motivated by factors other than the immediate needs of the time. They were conversant with the works of Paine and Cobbett, one, James Sweet, a Nottingham bookseller (or as the author calls him later, newsagent) and barber being an "embryo early Socialist" and taking the chair year after year at dinners honouring "the great English Socialist Tom Paine".

Chartism, as its well attended gatherings testify, was a mass movement. Yet I question the author's contention that its main theme, historically, "was the attempt to create a cohesive sense of class unity". That it created a sense of unity in that it produced a collective identity of interests is possibly true but only in a mass sense for a limited period. However, factionalism was ever present and as the Chartists had no clear

But policy, as Wyncoll points out, and as there existed no Socialist Party, the working class found its loyalties divided. Thus the loose unity brought about by Chartism fragmented all too easily, as 1848 demonstrated. On the other hand the author shows that Chartism did not fizzle out like a damp squib, it carried on but with an increasingly mute voice. We may find Lenin's observation that Chartism was "The first broad truly mass and politically organised proletarian revolutionary movement" questionable on historical grounds, yet it certainly shows a great deal more perception than demonstrated by a number of English historians past and present.

The booklet goes into detail about the many battles fought between various groups as well as indicating the splits in the Chartist Movement itself. The leading characters in the local drama are given flesh and blood by Mr. Wyncoll. These individuals were a mixed bag and in the case of several Chartists one cannot help but think that they let down those who put so much faith in them. Fergus O'Conner, the leading Chartist, after his election as a Member of Parliament, went out of his way to assure society of his respectability; he was, according to an Address to voters after his election, for the altar and for the Throne. He was not willing to wage a "battle against wealth which is fairly and honourably accumulated..."

Peter Wyncoll concludes his valuable study by demonstrating from recently discovered correspondence that a group of working class militants "directly descended from the Chartists" were active in Nottingham and had direct contact with Karl Marx. The outcome of this was the establishment of a Nottingham Section of the International Working Men's Association. The leaders of the International in Nottingham had, Wyncoll writes, "learned the lessons of Luddism and Chartism well..."

With its accompanying illustrations and five Appendices the booklet is well worth the modest sum asked. It is a mine of valuable information culled from many obscure sources. Some readers may object to the bias shown to the Chartists by the author and speak of the need for objective treatment. Yet if a bias is present it in no way detracts from the value of the work, this, as the author clearly states, is not a "King history" but is concerned with the bitter struggles of ordinary men and women. If the author is in favour of one side his bias is justified and honourable.

Robert W. Morrell.

Copies of Mrs. Brett's book may be wanted by a number of readers, orders for it may be placed with Christopher Brunel, Flat 6, 134, Queens Gate, London, S.W.7. Cost including postage is about 22/-. Cheques etc. should be made out to Mr. Brunel and NOT the Society.

TOM PAINE - The La Mama Production of Paul Foster's Play

by Kenneth A. Hurren.

THESE, I thought moodily as I left the Vaudeville last week, are indeed the times that try men's souls. Actually, as I'm sure you know, the thought occurred first, in a conceivably more critical context, to the estimable Thomas Paine (1737-1809), allegedly the subject of the new work TOM PAINE, by one Paul Foster, in which the company of New York's Café La Mama are presently disporting themselves.

Mr. Foster interests me. He contributes a programme note in which he claims that, up to a year ago, he did not know who Paine was; and he goes on to imply that his lack of knowledge was the result of some conspiracy on the part of the American establishment of educationists, who were afraid to have Paine's revolutionary ideas discussed out loud. "Why," asks the remarkable Foster, "is he hidden away and out of sight? Why are we ashamed of him?"

I must assume that Foster genuinely believes that his own ignorance is typical of his countrymen (though he appears to have had no difficulty in laying hands on no fewer than 21 books on Paine), and he will doubtless be relieved to learn it is not. Obviously The Age of Reason and the Rights of Man are not studied in the kindergartens, but if Foster got through high school without knowing the titles of those works and who wrote them, and without being able to quote at least the more famous of Paine's utterances, he must have been dismally unique. My joy (as on the repentance of a sinner) that he has, these past twelve months, made lavish amends for his inattentiveness as a scholar is tempered, I'm bound to say, by a certain dismay at the manner in which his enlightenment is celebrated by La Mama.

Surprisingly, in view of the apparent motivations of the author, the piece is in no sense a dramatisation of Paine's career. Tom is represented on the stage (inordinately unappetisingly, as it happens), but Foster merely uses the man's words and ideas as a springboard into dark pools of surrealist fantasy. This is meat and drink to the nerveless, uninhibited, black-clad hirelings of La Mama, who seem to enjoy nothing so much as turning themselves into a writhing rabble. The unelevating text, with its infantile humours and naïve prejudices, is matched by techniques of performance and improvisation that might be charitably described as inept. It is almost incidental, but infinitely deplorable, that the exercise succeeds in reducing the story of a man of noble spirit, immense compassion and visionary wisdom to terms of crude burlesque.

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MRS. ROSE BARRAGAN.

After the declaration of the Republic in Spain, Rose Barragan and her husband, Jose Vincente Barragan, decided to spend their holidays in trying to help in schools for the illiterates - illiteracy being one of the many evils left behind by the monarchy. In Barcelona they took an inspirational lead in the most advanced ways of teaching people to read and write. When Franco defeated the Republic their house in London became a centre for all anti-fascists, whether from Spain or elsewhere, and they worked for the Spanish Republican Government, 92 Chepstow Road becoming a well-known address in wide circles of progressive thought.

They always helped political causes of the left, and, when some years after his death, I talked to Rose Barragan about the Thomas Paine Society's work, her first reaction was a wish to help by becoming a member. Though politically left-wing, their main work was humanitarian and educational. He was Senior Lecturer in Spanish at Queen Mary's College, University of London, and they both helped to compile Cassell's Spanish/English Dictionary (first published 1959).

Her house was filled with books, and it was especially sad that in her last years she was going blind. This did not daunt her; she listened to the radio, and was constantly prompted by something that she heard to write a letter to the BBC. Even from such a brief outline of this friendly, active old lady, (for I only knew her personally, when she had become old), one can understand her affinity towards Thomas Paine's spirit.

C.B.

NOTTINGHAM CHARTISM. Though we do not hold stocks of this booklet reviewed on pages 17-18, we will be happy to obtain (if possible) copies for any reader who requires them. Cost per copy is 3/6 plus 6d. postage and orders should be addressed to the Society but cheques and/or postal orders should be made out to R.W.Morrell. Payment must be enclosed with order.

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