

# BULLETIN

OF THE THOMAS PAINE SOCIETY



NO. 2. 1987

## THE ANNIVERSARY

THE 250th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Paine has come and gone, although further celebrations are planned to mark it.

The event passed without official recognition either in the United Kingdom or the United States. Perhaps, considering the nature of the present government in the United Kingdom this is understandable, for much of what Paine advocated would not find favour with a cold and heartless regime. But why was it ignored in the United States, which Paine did so much to create? He was that nation's first secretary for foreign affairs, first to use the name United States in print, wrote an essay which dramatically helped to formulate reasons for independence as well as other works which boosted spirits when they were low. When a nation deliberately forgets those it owes so much to then something is radically wrong with such a state.

But the anniversary was not forgotten by ordinary folk throughout the world, as the programme printed in our last issue demonstrates - and it was not complete, for other events have now been notified, not least local meetings in various places.

From the outset it was the policy of this society to promote joint ventures (the state of our funds made this essential whatever else), and such was the case. There was a success, and we are grateful to other organisations for their cooperation.

The Leicester meeting was a splendid success. The historic main hall of the Secular Hall in Leicester, now normally used as a dance hall, was packed with people from many parts of the Midlands (and further afield), to hear TPS Vice-President, Tony Benn, give an inspiring talk on Paine which related his ideas to the present day. Mr. Benn poured scorn on the refusal to issue a special stamp to mark the event by referring to the special issues planned for 1987 by the Post Office, most of which will mean, and can never mean, anything to the average United Kingdom citizen. How many, for example, have any interest in the Order of the

Thistle, a useless bauble issued to pander to a few privileged and mostly useless individuals. Yet this junk is having not one stamp dedicated to it but a whole set! But, of course, Paine was a republican, and this fact brings to the fore perhaps the *real* reason for any official failure to commemorate him - many of *his ideas are still political and social dynamite.*

Mr. Benn touched on the importance of republicanism, stressed the value of free speech, now increasingly under threat, and related Paine's ideas to the present day.

The audience was representative of a wide spectrum of opinion and the platform party included representatives of the Labour Party, trade unions, local council, the National Secular Society, the Nationalist Press Association and, of course, our own TPS.

In Nottingham the celebration took the form of an exhibition at the Central Library, a display planned to last two weeks but extended for a further week. In Alford, the local library in cooperation with the TPS and the local Civic Society put on a display which accented Paine's links with the Lincolnshire town.

For the future there is a conference in Sheffield and possibly a meeting and exhibition to be held in Coventry, to be organised by William McIlroy, editor of *The Freethinker*, who lives there. We shall circulate more information on this as it becomes available.

In Portugal the anniversary was celebrated with a conference at the University of Minho which had been organised by TPS member, Professor Helio O. Alves. The TPS was asked by the British Council to suggest an academic speaker for the conference and recommended Dr. Edward Royle, one of our members. His address to the conference was titled, "Paine and the French Revolution in 18th Century England". Professor Jack P. Green also addressed the conference, speaking on "America and the Revolutionary World of the late 18th Century". There was a commemorative exhibition, which was officially opened by the University Vice-Chancellor. A Paine dinner was also held, attended by the speakers, the Vice-Chancellor, two deputy Vice-Chancellors, the British Consul at Oporto and other dignities. Professor Alves has promised more particulars and photographs, which we hope to publish in our next issue.

Our member, Irving Israel, reports that the special events he presented in San Francisco were both splendid successes, particularly the reception accorded to *The Age of Reason* presentation. He hopes that something may develop for future activities, meanwhile, Irving plans another presentation on June 8 and 9, as well as July 4 and 5. These presentations will be for the benefit of the St. Anthony's Dining Room in San Francisco, which feeds the poor and destitute every single day of the year". Irving has written a play entitled, "Thomas Paine is in the Univers", which is being considered for presentation by a leading San Francisco theatre.

### NEW ROCHELLE SUCCESS

THE celebration of Paine's 250th anniversary was organised in New Rochelle by the Thomas Paine National Historical Association at the Beach and Tennis Club on January 29th. Regretably the Guest of Honour, Sir Richard Attenborough, who is to make a film of Paine's life, was prevented by illness from attending, and sent the film's script writer, James Duff to stand in.

Three hundred people attended the dinner, proceeds from which will go towards the modernisation and extension of the Thomas Paine Memorial Museum in New Rochelle, and the refurbishment of his former home in the town.

Following the dinner the President of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association, Richard B. Tuttle, Jr., addressed the assembled guests, following which the Baroque Trio (Mary Helton, (*harsichord*), Carl Hane, Jr. (*rlute a bec*) and Richard Steuermann (*violoncello*) entertained using 18th century instruments. Frances Sternhagen and Charles Francisco then gave a concert reading based upon Paine's writings. James Duff followed. A message from the President of the United States praising Paine was also read out.

### CORRECTION

Reference the review of Alex Gardner's book, *Son Jesus and Big Father*. We sincerely regret that an incorrect price for the book was given along with the wrong address for orders. The price is £5 per copy (including postage and packing) NOT £2 as given. Orders should be sent to the

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

January 12, 1987

I am delighted to send greetings to the members of The Thomas Paine National Historical Association as you celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of your organization's namesake.

In the bleak December of 1776, Paine wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."

Among his many forceful and cogent writings, it is perhaps by these words that Americans best remember Paine. And with good reason. They provided invaluable inspiration for the men of the Continental Army at a time when the American Revolution seemed in danger of being crushed.

But Paine did not just talk a good fight. He labored long and tirelessly to raise funds and equipment for the colonial forces, even to the point of impoverishing himself, fulfilling his own words that, "Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it."

Tom Paine deserves our tribute above all for his eloquent and timeless defense of the value of freedom. In this age in which some people question whether any value is worth great sacrifice, whether any ideal is worth fighting for, Paine reminds us that a free society is well worth whatever price must be paid to achieve and preserve it.

I commend your Association for keeping alive the spirit of this great champion of human freedom, and I join you in honoring him. You have my best wishes for a memorable celebration.

God bless you.

Ronald Reagan

author at Henneferstr. 19 B, D-5205 Sankt Augustn 1, West Germany.

The book has an additional 19 page addenda which, with an earlier addenda, adds a total of 70 pages to its 145. The new addenda is written in the authors stimulating style and consists of seven short but connectd essays under the following headings: Threats of Son Jesus, Origin of the Lord's Prayer, Big Father(s) of Babylonia, A forerunner of Calvin's juvenile Thought Police, One Hell of a good time in Heaven, AIDS - a divine scourge? and Psychic phenomena and sub-atomic particles.

This is a book which can be recommended. You may not agree with some of the author's views on certain subjects, but they irequently make you think hard.

### **SMOKER ON PAINE**

ON Sunday February 8, National Secular Society President, Barbara Smoker, reviewed the religious press on the BBC radio programme, Sunday. I was pleased to hear her take the opportunity to express with considerable force a protest at the failure toissue a Paine commemorative postage stamp.

### **WELCOME**

WE warmly welcome the following new members:

Thomas Lybass, 145a Kensington High Street, London, W8 7RL.

Elsie and Sola Valentini, 2 West Church Street, Bordentown, N.J. 08505, USA.

Mrs. Jeanne Sheriff, 3 Horse & Groom Cottages, Colton, Norwich, NR9 5AB.

Norman Giffard, 43, Redvales Road, Bury, Greater Manchester, BL9 9PT.

William McIlroy, 14 Coundon Road, Coventry, CV1 4AW.

Alex Acheson, 83 South Knighton Road, Leicester LE2 3LS.

Mrs. E. Bachelor, 350, Barkham Road, Wokingham, RG11 4DE.

Mr. J. Broome, 238 Denton Lane, Chadderton, Oldham, OL9 8PE.

Mr. & Mrs. Jack Boddy, 36, Station Street, Swaffham, Norfolk, PE37 7HP.

Mr. McIlroy is editor of *The Freethinker*.

Elsie and Sola Valentini live in Paine's Bordentown home, where he had a home from 1783-1803. They welcome visitors but arrangements to visit must be made in advance.

### NEW PUBLICATIONS

Professor Helio O. Alves has recently published (in Portugese) an interesting paper entitled, *Cultural self-determination of the urban worker in England. One example: Sheffield, 1791-1792.* The author discusses the concept of popular culture and shows how in Sheffield, during the period mentioned in the title, Paine's influence help to create the true beginnings of a popular culture amongst urban workers.

*Essays on Thomas Paine*, edited by Ian Dyck, will be published this year by Croom Helm. More particulars when available.

A book of Paine interest is planned by Penguin, I am told. No further information presently available.

### WILLIAM COBBETT

The William Cobbett Society (17, Arle Close, Alrestord, SO24 9BG), will hold a re-run of Cobbett's rural ride in the Gloucester area. No date has been fixed yet but it will probably be some time in July.

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The logo used for the Lewes (Sussex) Paine 250th anniversary celebrations.

## Exhibition commemorates 250th anniversary of Thomas Paine

**YESTERDAY** (Thursday) was the 250th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Paine, an event being commemorated by an exhibition in Alford library this week. This article explains the town's connections with the Customs Officer who later made his mark in the New World.

by Leslie Hendry

THOMAS Paine was born at Thetford, Norfolk, and educated at the grammar school there.

On leaving school he intended to go to sea, and did actually follow that career for a time. But he married a Dover girl whose father was an Excise Officer. This prompted him to apply to join the Excise Service. He was accepted and sent to Grantham to serve his apprenticeship.

It has been known for a very long time that when Paine completed this he was posted to Alford, and that he was sacked from there and left in rather a hurry. But until recently that was just about all that was known of this part of his career.

However, a few years ago, a retired senior officer of HM Customs and Excise, who previously had been based at their HQ, got permission to do research into his records with a view to writing a book about Thomas Paine before he emigrated to the American Colonies.

He is Mr George Hindmarsh, who is now living at Purley, Surrey, and a prominent member of the Thomas Paine Society.

### Smuggling

He has spent much time going through the old documents and records and compiling the data, which had never been really documented in over 200 years.

He found out that Paine arrived in Alford on August 8, 1784 to take up his official duties as the Excise Officer for the Alford area.

The whole coastline and district were rife with smuggling at the time, cargoes of brandy, wines, spirits and other merchandise of continental origin were landed on the open beaches to avoid the duties which were payable if they were legitimately landed at the ports.

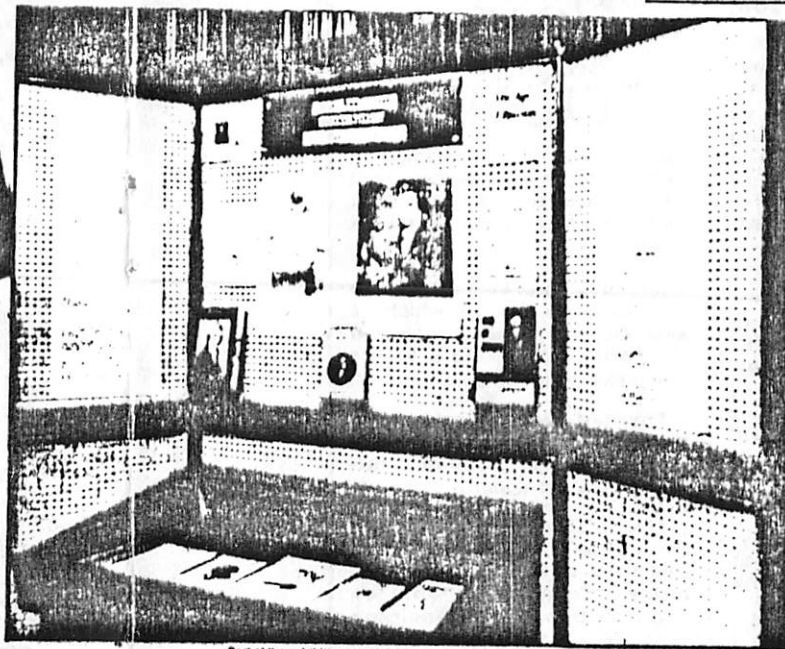
Paine established his office in the Old Windmill Inn, and his horse, for which he received an allowance, was stabled behind the inn. At this time the inn was a two-storey detached roof building, but in 1850 it was partially demolished, and the parts retained were incorporated into the present structure. The third storey was added in 1880 when the name was changed to the Windmill Hotel.

It seems by the evidence provided by the old records that Tom Paine was too effective as an Excise Officer, and soon fell foul of the locals, who all regarded smuggling as a legitimate sideline to their agricultural and other interests. They much preferred an Excise Officer who knew when to look the other way when the situation required it.

So they got rid of him on some pretext that he was not checking dutiable goods properly. The Excise Board sacked him, and he left Alford on August 29, 1785.



A portrait of the man himself — Thomas Paine.



Part of the exhibition to celebrate the birth of Thomas Paine.

# Town salutes 'the Godfather'

So he was only there for a year and three weeks, but what happened to him in that time seems to have conditioned his thoughts for his subsequent career. If he had been happy in Alford, got on well with the inhabitants of the area and stayed here, the subsequent history of America might have been very different.

### Injustice

There is no doubt that he was unjustly dismissed. The records unswayed by Mr Hindmarsh prove it. Further proof is provided by the fact that when he got

and one day while attending a scientific lecture in London he was introduced to Benjamin Franklin, who was visiting England. Franklin told him of the opportunity available in the new country, and Paine was inspired, and sailed in 1774.

His talent for expressing himself in print soon ensured him the job of editing an influential newspaper. He became the close friend and colleague of Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington, and other founding fathers.

He is a hero in American eyes, who regard him as 'the Godfather of America'

to London he was reinstated by the Excise Board and posted to Lewes in Sussex.

He served there efficiently until he emigrated to the American Colonies in 1774, but he never got rid of the sense of injustice.

The vital part played in Paine's career by his posting to Alford, and the fact that his headquarters here had been positively identified by Mr Hindmarsh's research was brought to the attention of the Alford and District Civic Trust by the Thomas Paine Society, who fixed the present plaque on the wall of the Windmill Hotel. The plaque was unveiled at an appropriate ceremony on American Independence Day, July 4, 1981.

Thomas Paine was also very interested in science,

His pamphlet "Common Sense", did a great deal to prepare the American Colonies for independence, and the transferring of their loyalty from Britain to the United States of America.

### Museum

It was in fact the man who suggested that name for the new country.

He was secretary and right hand man to George Washington right through the War of Independence, and afterwards was appointed U.S. secretary for Foreign Affairs, a post he held for three years. Then for a year he was clerk to the Assembly of Pennsylvania.

He later wrote his two great books "The Rights of Man" and "The Age of Reason", which 200 years later

are still being published and have been translated into many languages.

Tom Paine died on June 8, 1809 in New York. His farmhouse at New Rochelle, a suburb of New York is preserved to this day, and is owned by the American Thomas Paine Society. It's a museum to Paine.

He is a hero in American eyes, who regard him as "the Godfather of America". A recent (1984) issue of U.S. stamps bore his portrait, and hundreds of American books and articles have been published about him. And he is in U.S. school books.

### Statue

Not unnaturally, the British for a long time regarded him as a traitor and did their best to forget him. His home town of Thetford apparently did much heart-searching before they put up a statue to him.

However, as Britain and U.S. have grown closer together over the years, he has become more appreciated for his original thoughts on man and his relationship to the world he lives in, and as someone really hundreds of years ahead of his time.

Work is proceeding on Mr Hindmarsh's book on Paine's career in England as an Excise Officer, and the chapter entitled "Thomas Paine in Alford" has been completed.

Mr Hindmarsh is quite willing to have this separately published locally as a booklet before the complete book is ready for publication.

In view of the local interest that this could generate it is hoped that this can be arranged in due course.



FORMER Labour leader Michael Foot was in Thetford yesterday to help celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of the town's most famous son, Thomas Paine.

Joining him at the celebrations for the radical political pamphleteer, were a host of other dignitaries, including Michael Uyehara, vice-consul to the American Embassy in London, and Jean Khalifa, French consul delegate at Cambridge.

### Leader

The chairman of the Thomas Paine Society, Christopher Brunel; the Lord Mayor of Norwich, Jill Miller; Ralph Roe, chairman of Norfolk County Council; and county, district and town councillors, also attended the event organised by Thetford Labour Party.

Mr Foot led the guests in laying posies of remembrance at the foot of the Thomas Paine Statue, outside King's House.

Earlier, a tribute to Paine and thanks to the Thetford Labour

# Foot in Paine tribute

Party branch for organising the event from party leader Neil Kinnock was read at a lunch at The Historical Thomas Paine Hotel.

Mr Foot is president of the Thomas Paine Society which he said was producing a book that would include Paine's works and make his ideas better known.

Thetford Labour Party chairman, Mary Page, said they were celebrating the birth of Thetford's greatest son.

The chairman of the Paine society said Paine's ideas had lived on and were relevant today. "So much of what he wrote is based on principles which is why his ideas have a lasting quality," he said.

## Paine dinner to proceed despite filmmaker Attenborough's absence

By Irene K. Boff

Staff Writer

Despite the illness of the scheduled guest of honor, the Thomas Paine National Historical Association will go ahead with a dinner Thursday night to celebrate the 250th birthday of the patriot author of the American Revolution.

Dinner Chairwoman Thea T. Eichler learned Monday that filmmaker Sir Richard Attenborough was ill and would not be able to attend the dinner at the beach and Tennis Club on Davenport Avenue in New Rochelle.

James Duff, screenwriter for Attenborough's planned film based on the life of Paine, will deliver a message for the ailing

English filmmaker.

"Three hundred people have tickets for the dinner," said Mrs. Eichler. "We are sold out. We really don't want to disappoint anyone."



Sir Richard Attenborough

Frances Sternhagen and Charles Francisco will give a dramatization from the writings of Thomas Paine at the dinner.

Mrs. Sternhagen, an actress who lives in New Rochelle, has many screen and stage credits, including a performance in the original Broadway production of

"On Golden Pond." Francisco has portrayed Thomas Paine in a one-man show.

The Baroque Trio will entertain on 18th-century instruments.

Proceeds from the dinner will help plans to modernize and expand the Thomas Paine Memorial Museum and to refurbish the interior and furnishings of the Thomas Paine Cottage, both on North Avenue in New Rochelle.

The buildings occupy part of a 277-acre tract given to Paine by the state of New York in gratitude for his services to the nation. Paine, whose "Common Sense" helped ignite the revolutionary spirit in Colonial America, lived on the tract — then a farm — late in his life.



Tony Benn, M.P. and IPS secretary Robert Morrell, in conversation at Leicester Secular Hall.  
Photo: Syd Henney.

#### *THETFORD FESTIVAL OF LIBERTY*

The Festival of Liberty to mark the 250th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Paine will be held in Thetford on Saturday, April 25, at the Carnegie Rooms, Markey Square, 2.30pm till midnight. There is ample nearby parking and for those who would like to stay overnight there is the Thomas Paine Hotel. Tickets for the event cost £2.50. Refreshments, including real ale, will be available throughout the event and various organisations will have stalls. There will be an exhibition of Paine memorabilia.

The programme will include a concert by Leon Rosselson and Roy Bailey, including several new songs. A ceilidh band - Stan's Last Custard. A drama documentary presenting readings from Paine and other material presented by a local theatrical company, Michael Foot will participate in this. There will also be singing and dancing.

Tickets will be available at the door. It sounds an exiting and attractive event - and for those who have not visited Thetford, Paine's birthplace, it would make part of a splendid weekend.

THOMAS PAINE AND POPULAR RADICALISM. Sheffield, April 10-11. Members should have received details of this very interesting conference. If not contact: Joan Keogh, Division of Continuing Education, University of Sheffield, 85, Wilkinson Street, Sheffield, S10 2GJ.

## THE THETFORD CELEBRATION

The irony of the absence of the editor of the *New Statesman*, and the reasons for that absence, was not lost on those commemorating the 250th anniversary of Thomas Paine's birth in Thetford, Norfolk, on January 29.\*

Those who were able to attend the celebratory luncheon included the Rt. Hon. Michael Foot, M.P., great advocate of Paine and no stranger to Thetford, Christopher Brunel, the Chair of the Thomas Paine Society; representatives of the United States and French embassies; Neal Ascherson of the *Observer*; Jim Herrick, Editor of the *New Humanist*; Chad Goodwin, local expert on Paine's life and works, and local dignitaries and councillors. The luncheon was organised by members of the Thetford Labour Party with the assistance of the Thomas Paine Hotel, which is built on the site of the great radical's birthplace. The prospective parliamentary candidate for South West Norfolk, Councillor Mary Page, who was in the chair, read a message of support from Neil Kinnock, and proposed the toast, "Thomas Paine and the Rights of Man".

Christopher Brunel, who, with his father before him, has done more to keep Thomas Paine's name alive than almost anyone else, according to Michael Foot, gave a lively account of Paine's life and thought, addressing the assembled company in true Painsian style as "Citizens". Then Michael Foot spoke eloquently of the achievements and principles of "the greatest exile", quoting from a well-worn copy of *The Rights of Man*. Representatives of the United States and France also spoke, recalling the part Paine had played in their revolutions. So it was an inspired and reverent company which made its way after the luncheon to the statue of Thomas Paine himself, shining brilliantly gold against the clear blue sky. Here local people, including school students taking part in a play based on Paine's life and work. After a reading by Michael Foot of passages from Paine's life posies of rosemary were laid at the base of the statue in remembrance of a great thinker and a man of action whose principles are as relevant today as they ever have been.

An exhibition on Thomas Paine will remain at the town museum, White Hart Street, until the autumn. A whole day of celebrations will take place in Thetford on Saturday, April 25.

A team from Scottish TV filmed some of the proceedings for a programme they are planning on Paine and Burke, to be shown later this year.

SUE LLOYD

\* For overseas readers who might not understand this comment a word of explanation is called for. The offices of the *New Statesman*, one of Britain's leading political weekly papers, were raided by the secret British political police, the Special Branch, on government instructions



Former Labour leader Michael Foot at the statue of Thomas Paine.

**THOMAS PAINE, a man who lived to some purpose.**

**Extended summary of lecture by Christopher Brunel,  
Chairman of the Thomas Paine Society, Sunday 25.1.87.**

How can a person, born 250 years ago, have any relevance to today? In Paine's day there was no TV, no nuclear weapons no Marxism, no national health service. But there were Kings and other despots, as well as religious bigots. Mrs Victoria Gillick had her 18th century counterpart in Mrs Hannah Moore. There was grinding poverty alongside great riches. As today, Britain was a society divided by class. There was imperialism. Ironically, George III treated the American Colonies as badly as Reagan's USA treats Nicaragua. There was a spirit around of scientific discovery.

Thomas Paine was born, Thetford, Norfolk, 29th January 1737 into a family of contrasts, as well as into a world of contrasts. His father, Joseph, was a corset-maker and a Quaker. His mother, Frances, was Church of England and a fundamentalist in her religious ideas.

As a young man Paine had listened to a sermon, in which the Minister described God Almighty acting like a passionate man, in killing his own son, Jesus. If God acted like God had, reasoned Paine, he would have been executed; Paine with his devilish logic could see no reason why such a sermon should have been preached.

He left home for London, and got a job as a corset-maker, but all the while studying Philosophy and Astronomy. Science had a great influence on him. The analytical way of the scientist and the questioning way of the non-conformist came together in a very potent manner in Thomas Paine.

Paine joined the Excise Service and landed up in Lewes, Sussex, where he was was an active member of the local debating society, the Headstrong Club. Only as recently as 1965 a member of the Thomas Paine Society discovered that Paine had been elected to the Lewes Town Council, so revealing that Paine had a much earlier insight into details of local government than historians had previously believed. He became the national spokesman of the grossly underpaid excisemen. Paine wrote Case of the Officers of Excise which was a mild, reasonable plea for his fellow excisemen. The authorities framed Paine, but his friends helped him to escape to the security of London.

He attended science lectures in London and these led him to Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was impressed with Paine, and it was through Franklin that Paine landed in Philadelphia in November 1774. Opposite his lodgings he found a slave market, and with his usual devilish logic he wondered how old American colonists could complain of their enslavement by England, when they themselves kept slaves.

Franklin's letter of recommendation for Paine as a "ingenious, worthy young man" suggested he might become a clerk, assistant tutor, or assistant surveyor, but instead, he blossomed out as a brilliant journalist. For the Pennsylvania Magazine

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→ (this was denied but the present English government has lied too much for such denials to be taken seriously), after it had published information that had embarrassed the authorities, who were trying to hide a huge amount they intended to spend from the electorate. It reminds one of the Silas Deane affair in which Paine was involved.

he advocated international arbitration, then a novel idea; he was also the first to advocate national and international copyright; first to plead against cruelty to animals, and against the stupidity of duelling; first to suggest more rational ideas of marriage and divorce, and the first to demand justice for women.

After the bloodshed of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, he condemned England for her cruelty to Negro slaves, American Indians and other coloured people, and went on to make the then rather shocking statement: "The Almighty will finally separate America from Britain - call it independence or what you will". His book Common Sense (pub. Jan. 1776) was a revolutionary call for independence in clear, forceful prose and it led directly to the Declaration of Independence.

The pen, we often hear, is mightier than the sword - Paine did it both ways. This son of a Quaker joined the Colonist Army in the Flying Camp (a sort of SAS unit), and he continued as a campaigning writer with his Crisis Papers. George Washington realised the value of building morale, so he ordered the Crisis Papers, whenever they came out, to be read to the troops.

In his Life of Thomas Paine, Moncure Daniel Conway, wrote: "not a chord of faith, or love, or hope was left untouched". But there were trickier tasks for him, and he went to France to raise funds for the armies. He was successful, and, soon after his return America was declared free and independent... well, almost - not free for the Negro Slaves. What Conway so aptly called the corner-stone of the Declaration of Independence, a clause drafted by Paine, designed to free the slaves, was vetoed by the wealthy slave-owners of the South and those Northerners who supplied the slaves.

They persuaded Thomas Jefferson to withdraw this clause - they also never forgot its author, and when it was proposed that Paine should be in Washington's first Cabinet, they saw that this, too, was stopped; not only he opposed slavery, but he proposed adult suffrage - everyone one, landowner or not, should have a vote.

Paine took up science again - inventing a smokeless candle, which apparently did not succeed. To develop America more bridges were needed over rapidly-flowing rivers. Paine worked on the idea of a single-span iron bridge from bank to bank. As the foundries in America were not up to it - they had been kept down by Imperial Britain - he took his design to Paris in 1787 and then on to England. A bridge was built to his design over the Wear during 1793-6, generally called the Sunderland Bridge. Paine did not get the credit, no doubt because of his championing of the French Revolution.

In November 1790 Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France was published. Paine stopped everything to reply to this attack on the revolution. At the Angel Inn in Islington he started to write the first part of Rights of Man.

Rights of Man not only defended the French revolutionaries, but attacked the British Monarchy and laid down basic principles of democratic government. Organisations like the Society for Constitutional Information and the London Corresponding Society took it up and organised numerous editions up and down the country. The Establishment got worried, when cheap editions came out, and when in 1792 Paine published the second part of Rights of Man with its call to revolution, the Establishment launched its repression against distributors and sellers of the book - and against its author. There is one other important factor about Rights of Man, Part II; here is an extract "Many a youth comes up to London full of expectations, and with little or no money, and unless he gets immediate employment he is already half undone.... Hunger is not among the postponable wants, and a day, even a few hours in such a condition, is often the crisis of a life of ruin."

No Norman Tebbit to tell them to get on their bikes in the 18th century, but the basic problem was the same, and Paine proposed remedies. He drew up a blueprint for a welfare scheme with child allowances, old age pensions "not of the nature of a charity, but of a right", marriage allowances and limited funeral expense allowance.

The money to be raised through taxation and cutting down expenditure on the monarchy. At this time Paine began writing The Age of Reason. The book, hailed by generations of Freethinkers, was written, as he put it, to rescue "the theology that is true" in a period in France when religion, the Church and the Priesthood were under attack. It may appear strange that atheists have championed The Age of Reason in which he writes very near the opening "I believe in one God, and no more, and I hope for happiness beyond this life". The Age of Reason is anti-clerical, and anti-superstition, but his motive was to apply science to purify religion. His Rights of Man, said Burke, could only be answered by putting him on trial. His Age of Reason, attacking that other pillar of the establishment, the Church, was mainly answered by smears - stories of his uncouthness and drunkenness.

The only serious reply to The Age of Reason was that of the Rev. Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, An Apology for the Bible (1796). Written in a popular style, it acknowledged Paine's sincerity and even sometimes agreed with him. But Bishop Watson spoke of the "Wisdom and Goodness of God in having made both rich and poor".

This stung Paine into replying with his last major work, Agrarian Justice Opposed to Agrarian Law, and to Agrarian Monopoly (1797). It was not God, but civilization, which had produced both dazzling "splendid appearances" and "extremes of wretchedness". Rather than nationalise the land, argued Paine, the wealth that the land and industry created should be taxed, and the money distributed to every one at 21 shillings an annual payment to all at 50.

As Henry Collins wrote in his 1969 introduction to Rights of Man (Pelican): "Agrarian Justice brought Paine to the threshold of socialism, but it was a threshold he did not cross.... Paine's work contributed directly to the pool of ideas from which modern socialism emerged"

Paine stayed in France until 1802, when he returned to America. He continued writing, and died in New York on 8th June, 1809.

Some years before, he had written to George Washington about himself - "A share in two revolutions is living to some purpose".

Paine did live to some purpose in his lifetime and the value of his work has lived on. Much of its significance today being based on principle. Paine, as usual, has a nice turn of phrase on principles, in Agrarian Justice he wrote: "An army of principles will penetrate where an army of soldiers cannot- it will succeed where diplomatic management fail - it is neither the Rhine, the Channel, nor the Ocean, that can arrest its progress - it will march on the horizon of the world, and it will conquer".

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# THOMAS PAINE SOCIETY

43, Eugene Gardens, Nottingham, NG2 3LF, England.