

land marched on, in company with France and America, along the road which Paine, not Burke, had mapped out for her.

Enough of achievement for one man, surely — to understand the three great revolutions of his age before they happened, to bring politics home to the common people, to build a bridge of common idealism across the Atlantic and the English Channel. Yet this was not all. Scattered through his writings we can find hints, often much more than hints, of the other ideas which have given vitality to the democratic movement for the past one hundred and fifty years.

Almost a century before Lincoln, he sought to write into the American Constitution a clause against slavery. Long before even John Stuart Mill, he championed the rights of women. He was among the very first of English writers to espouse the cause of Indian freedom.

Well ahead of my old friends, Dick Crossman or Barabara Castle, he had a good plan for old age pensions. And how men in all our modern parties might tremble at his proposals for land nationalization; he wanted new laws for marriage and divorce. International arbitration, family allowances, maternity benefits, free education, prison reform, full employment — yes much of the Future the Labor Party has offered was previously on offer, in even better English from Thomas Paine.

Note how true these single syllables ring with the triumphant organ note of that last final word. "It is wrong to say God made rich and poor; He made only male and female; and gave them the earth for their inheritance."

In all history, there is no more curious story than that of Paine's blaze of fame, his pitiable fall, and then the slow but assured recovery of his reputation. But that recovery itself is chiefly his own achievement; it is due to the persistent potency of his pen. No master of the English language — with the exception of H. N. Brailsford in one brief, classic essay — has written his biography.

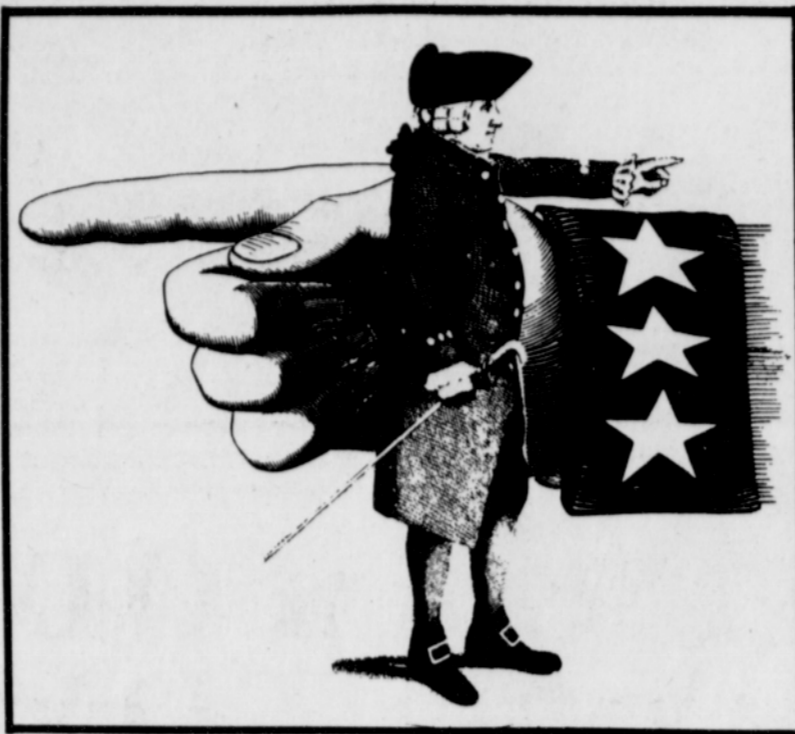
This is not intended as a reflection on Moncure Conway's excellent and well-researched two-volume work which, published in 1892, started the work of rehabilitation, after Paine and the Paineites had had to endure nearly a century of defamation on both sides of the Atlantic. And here for sure was an attempt by an American to repay the debt to "the Englishman" who wrote "Common Sense" and so described himself on the front page of the first edition.

But Conway's book, for all its many virtues, does not place Thomas Paine's life in its full worldwide setting, and none of the others who have written about him would claim to have achieved that spacious feat. He has not received the historical treatment accorded to all the other founders of the American Republic. Neither the United States nor the other country of his adoption nor his England have given him his due. No single country and no exclusive creed can claim him as their own, that is part of his greatness.

It is Paine's own writings which have made his name survive while the forgotten historians were busy expurgating it from the records; almost every great statesman or writer has found his way back to the source books. And yet even on this reckoning, as a writer, Paine has seldom had his due.

The curiosity is that his immortality could so easily have been foreseen. All the historians had to do was let his contemporaries bear witness. In an age when it took weeks to cross the Atlantic, he gained an international notoriety.

Hazlitt wrote: "In 1792 Paine was so great or so popular an author, and so much read and admired, that the Government was obliged to



suspend the Constitution and to go to war to counteract the effects of his popularity."

Of course, the exaggeration was intended, but was it really so wide of the mark?

The real crime of Thomas Muir, sentenced to Botany Bay for fourteen years, was the circulation he had given to Paine's "Rights of Man"; twenty-six years later Richard Carlile was put away to solitary confinement in Dorchester gaol for a similar offense. And even today no historian has fully unravelled how large a part was played by fear of the English Jacobins — with Paine as their most effective spokesman — in sending the England of William Pitt to war with revolutionary France.

Napoleon at one stage, as we have seen, had his own special view both of "Rights of Man" and its author, and the association shows how strong must have been the revolutionary temper of the young Napoleon. Paine himself was not deceived by the flattering "French charlatan", but Napoleon's measure of the man and his influence still stands.

How grotesque, then, in the face of all this is the tale that Paine's reputation was something of a bubble. His strength was that he saw with shining clarity the forces changing his world.

History offers few examples of such confident and breathtaking foresight.

He always believed that the words he had written in some desperate garret forecast the shape of things to come. No cloud of uncertainty crossed his horizon — neither when he walked amid Washington's bedraggled and beaten armies nor when he was being hunted out of England for his high treason with William Pitt's policemen on his heels, nor even, on that most macabre occasion, when he waited in one of Robespierre's prisons to be taken to the guillotine.

That was an hour of disillusion and despair if ever there was one. He, the most merciless exposé of monarchy, had pleaded for the King's life in the name of mercy; and when his own life was at stake even his beloved America would not breathe a word to rescue him. Yet with his great argument on earth gone temporarily awry, Paine turned to put heaven to rights. He settled down in his overcrowded cell to write the "Age of Reason."

Of course, such faith was fanaticism, but it was the fanaticism of genius. Paine was proud, cocksure, incorrigibly combative and vain; vain, in particular, about his writings. (Who wouldn't be when all his major works sold at least one hundred thousand copies within a matter of months?). Nothing could shake his conviction that within his own lifetime or shortly afterwards — and thanks largely to his own Atlas-like exertions — the world would be turned upside down.

He knew he possessed the implement which could work the miracle — the power of free speech, free writing, and free thought. Nothing could induce in him a hairsbreadth of doubt; the bigger the bonfires they made of his books, the bigger would be the sales. No other figure in history can ever have believed in the power of freedom — and not merely its virtue — with Paine's single-minded intensity.

That was his secret. "Mankind," he said with his grand simplicity, "are not now to be told they shall not think, or they shall not read." And, incredibly, he was proved right, as near as mortal man can be.

Michael Foot is leader of Britain's Labor Party. This article has been reprinted from the Sunday London Times.

## LETTERS

### Prophecy

TO THE EDITOR:

Regarding the article by Walt Curtis in the 11 June, 1982 issue of the Times Eagle, I would like to offer another answer to the question posed there, i.e., "What does it mean when the prettiest mountain in the entire Pacific Northwest, maybe America, blows its top?" I was very intrigued by Mister Curtis' observation that it was a prophetic warning to mankind. I agree. Again he observed that eruptions of this nature have occurred before history was recorded. If the eruptions are prophetic, nuclear dismantling of arsenals could not have been the issue, even as recently as fifty years ago. What is the warning then?

Perhaps the answer can be seen in a pattern, the pattern of history. The Bible states there was a time when man lived in harmony with his creator and his environment. This history of man and his God goes on to state that man fell from the garden of Eden and the first significant act of man thereafter was when Cain killed his brother Abel. The account of murder and violence continues until we read in Genesis 6:11: "Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God and the earth was filled with violence." There was a result; destruction, full scale. Then is recorded what may have been the first volcanic eruption, "the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the flood gates of the sky were opened" (Genesis 7:11). This is of course the account of Noah and the Ark.

The earth was repopulated, but the heart of man was not changed as history (and a quick glance around) proves. Murder and violence toward one another continue unchecked by reasoning, education, medical science, peace marches, protests, petitions, etc. The picture is bleak. Death is inevitable, nuclear dismantling only wishful thinking in a storm of hatred and sin, whose fury began eons ago. Perhaps the arsenals will be dismantled, but isn't this rather like putting a bandaid on gangrene? Hasn't man always found a way to kill his fellow man? We know that the mere emotion of hate can actually kill a plant; what does it do to the lady at the store, whom we just can't stand?

The Bible does tell us that the earth will be destroyed by fire, but it does not leave us without a solution.

The solution? It is absolute in the person and work of Jesus Christ. If our hearts are the problem, then who shall change us, who shall free us from ourselves? Only our creator, the Living God, personified in His only son Jesus Christ. He has predicted our end in His word; let each of us look to His solution, for the gift

of eternal life is free to all who will believe. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth passed away." (Revelation 21:1)

BONNIE MIDDLETON  
Cannon Beach

### Survival

TO THE EDITOR:

Oregonians who read the newspapers know that of the sixteen thousand Southeast Asian refugees in Oregon, one-third are self-supporting, one-third are continuing to receive public assistance and one-third have recently been dropped from assistance rolls due to federal action.

My concern is this final group. Unable to speak English, living in an alien culture, lacking job skills, feeling lost, they retreat from public view.

They will survive this summer by such strategies as illegally selling food stamps for which they are eligible in order to obtain funds for even more needed necessities. (When one is poor enough, soap or toilet paper are necessities even at the cost of personal hygiene.) When fall comes, the suffering from cold, hunger and increasing health problems will mount.

It is true that suffering is no respecter of race, creed, or national origin or citizenship. It is also true that some persons are more disadvantaged than others.

Here are suggestions of things local citizens can do to help:

1. Contribute money, goods and services to local refugee agencies and get a tax-deductible receipt. All refugee assisting agencies are short-funded.
2. Seek out a refugee family and become friends. Help them to move out of isolation.
3. Provide job opportunities. Even if you are not a manager, you can hire a refugee for such home tasks as gardening.
4. Let your congressman know you object to the federal government's reducing its original commitment of thirty-six months of support to only eighteen months of support.
5. Commend Oregon officials, both public and private, who have provided leadership in seeking to change shortsighted federal policy.

DONALD R. PURKEY  
Chairman, Board of Directors,  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, Portland

Jane Hart Meyer



MOON FOR PICKING SALALBERRIES (ALSEA)

JULY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31