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EXAMINATION

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Mr. Paine's Writings.

By WILLIAM FOX,

AUTHOR OF AN ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF GREAT
BRITAIN, ON THE PROPRIETY OF ABSTAINING
FROM WEST-INDIA SUGAR AND RUM.

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An Address to the People of Great Britain, 26th Edition.

I Presume not to denominate this little tract an answer to Mr. *Paine*, because I do not mean to undertake what that gentleman seems to expect from his opponents: I certainly shall not attempt to convince the soldiers and sailors that to have their discharge, and their pay continued for life, will not be preferable to the present system. Labouring men will certainly approve his plan of having their families supported by the public, as thereby they may be enabled to spend two days more in the week at the alehouse; and, when fifty years of age, receive an additional pension from the public, which may still diminish the necessity they may be under of continuing their labour. That these plans should be received with avidity is not very extraordinary, and that Mr. *Paine* should select them from his work, and circulate them in the public prints, as a specimen of his book, and as the ground on which he challenges his opponents to meet him, is very natural. I shall certainly concede to Mr. *Paine*, these important points: I shall not attempt to prove that *ten pounds a year is not a very good thing*; I shall merely content myself with shewing, that money raised and applied in the manner he proposes, would be a very bad thing indeed for the public: and, as it is his financial arrangements which he seems to consider as his strong hold, I shall venture to take this bull by the horns, and consider Mr. *Paine's* merit as a financier.

But properly to appreciate his merit in this line, it is certainly requisite to ascertain in what light he is to be considered, for on that, in a great measure, will the merit or demerit of his work depend. As an English financier, his plan is profligate and absurd in the extreme; but if he be considered merely as an American partizan, promulgating an illusory plan to destroy the peace, trade, and happiness of this country, that the trade and navigation of his beloved America may prosper on our ruin, then indeed is there meaning and consistency in it. The wisdom of his speculations depends on the probability of our having the folly to adopt them, but their absurdity is so extreme that it may be doubtful whether his propoling them evince most his hatred or his contempt, for this country.

Every author who had before written on the finances of the nation, every individual who had made them the subject of his consideration, have uniformly considered our national debt, as threatening the greatest mischiefs to this country. Judge *Blackstone* considered it as even endangering our liberties: it is true we have not yet experienced those fatal effects, but they are not therefore less inevitable, however uncertain may be the period in which they may take place. The difficulties and disadvantages under which the commerce of other countries has hitherto laboured, prevented our own, from being affected by the weight of taxes arising from our national debt, as it is comparative incumbrances which operate on the commerce of nations.

America presents to our view a country whose commerce is totally free from incumbrances. Want of population, and capital are its sole obstacles; but these obstacles are continually diminishing. An Englishman would, therefore, naturally have said (possessed of a flourishing and extensive commerce) it is incumbent on us, assiduously to guard it against every danger, to render it secure that it may be transmitted as a permanent blessing to succeeding generations: we have hitherto enjoyed it almost unrivaled, the nations of Europe, possessed of natural advantages for trade and manufacture, have been hitherto oppressed by governments, which by rendering property insecure, necessitated manufactures and commerce to fly to us for refuge; and Holland, the only country in Europe where property could be deemed secure, laboured under such natural disadvantages, and a load of taxes, even greater than our own, that we had little to fear from her, as a commercial rival. But however flourishing, however advantageous, our present situation may be, we are not warranted to look on it as permanent. Commerce and manufactures are of a transient nature, and it is incumbent on us to guard against those circumstances which may endanger our possession. However deranged the present state of France, and however long that derangement may continue; yet it doubtless will be succeeded by a state more favourable to commerce than the antient system: and however injurious their system of finance may be, yet it can be but temporary, as their national debt is converted into a mass of paper, of which the state is obligated to discharge neither principal nor interest. America, almost incumbered with naval stores, wants only a capital to render her a formidable commercial rival; it is true, considerable may be the lapse of time, before either America or any of the European nations will be in a situation to rival our trade and manufactures: but to that period it is incumbent on us to look: till then we are secure of a pre-eminence. It is necessary to avail ourselves of our present situation, that the prosperity we enjoy may be secured to our posterity.

To effect this, it is absolutely necessary we should in some mode discharge our national debt; otherwise the payment of the interest must inevitably sink our trade and manufactures. Whenever France or America shall possess a large commercial capital; when France shall become so settled in its government, as to afford a temptation to our monied men to transfer their capitals and vest them in the commerce manufactures or agriculture of that nation, the incumbrances under which we labour must have a strong tendency to produce this effect. Hitherto, and especially lately, such has been the state of Europe as to occasion a great influx of the floating cash of the continent to be vested in our funds: this has more than counterbalanced the portion of the interest due to foreigners; the payment of that interest has not therefore been felt: but when the continent of Europe and America, shall open a temptation to employ this capital, England

will be as a bank to be drawn on for that purpose; and even the payment of the interest of the national debt due to foreigners, and much more the withdrawing their capital, will produce the most fatal consequences, exclusive of the consideration of that capital being withdrawn from us, to be employed in swelling the commerce of rival states.

On the contrary, were we to avail ourselves of the present increasing state of our commerce to discharge the national incumbrances, we should then be enabled to enter into a fair competition with either America or France, however favourable for commerce their circumstances may prove; and being in prior possession, there could be no temptation for withdrawing those capitals already vested in our trade and manufactures, which will then be unincumbered. The common expences of our government, would be supported by those internal impositions which the public good would require us to continue, and England would in fact become a mere free port, whose trade and manufactures would in such case be rather increased than diminished, by the increasing prosperity of other states.

Such would be the reasoning of an Englishman, anxious for the prosperity of his country. What is the proposal of this American partizan, Mr. *Paine*? as might be expected from such a character, exactly the reverse. He proposes, *continuing our national debt, our excises, our customs, and all our taxes, to be hung as a dead weight on our commerce and manufactures for ever*: extremely modest to be sure! by continuing our taxes our navigation will be burdened, and thereby give an immediate encouragement to the American shipping; and our national debt will form a standing fund, to be drawn on gradually, as America shall hold out an inducement to Englishmen to fix their residence in that country; this at present operates but slowly, we are not yet quite certain of the pre-eminence of that country over this; many of us require better evidence of it than Mr. *Paine's*; but certainly many persons of property may in time be induced to exchange countries, and in that case money in our funds is the best adapted for that purpose, and therefore Mr. *Paine* very properly advises us for that purpose to reserve it.

Upon the same principle he wishes us to contemn, and trample on a landed interest. To improve the land of England he knows must be a permanent advantage, no emigration can carry that away to America, he therefore tells us the landed interest needs no care to be taken of it, and proposes that all land should pay an additional tax, and in case any person possessed of an estate of £.500 per annum, should by draining, manuring, inclosing, building, embanking, or other expensive improvements, presume to improve it, the said offender should as a penalty pay a double tax for such improvement, the tax or penalty to increase with the improvement; thus if a gentleman has an estate of twelve thousand pounds, if he improves it to thirteen thousand, half the improved, or additional thousand is to be paid

to the public; and, if he should dare to extend his improvements above a given standard, the whole of it is to be forfeited to the state. Mr. *Paine* was an exciseman in *Suffex*, he saw there a great deal of poor waste land, of very trifling value to the community, he saw also land which had been equally useless, converted into valuable farms, producing both food and labour for an immense number of people, he knew also that important as these improvements might be to the public, yet were they so expensive to the individuals who effected them, as frequently to injure their fortunes, and rarely to return an interest for the money so employed. It is peculiar to agricultural improvements, that to the public they must be beneficial, whatever they may be to the undertaker: with great propriety Mr. *Paine* therefore levels, not only his arguments, but his wit also, against them. He says, *we talk of taxing luxuries, surely a large estate is a luxury*: very witty to be sure! and it will certainly be expedient to prohibit the luxury, a large estate, when Mr. *Paine* will prove the prohibition to be beneficial to the community, or even to the poor. The barriers of property are secured for their benefit, and were these barriers trampled under foot, the millions of the poor would be the principal sufferers; was Sir *Richard Arkwright's* luxury of fifty thousand *per annum*, beneficial to him alone, or to the thousands and tens of thousands, who were thereby provided with labour and with food; and were he deprived of it, would the public be benefited? Is the Duke of *Bridgewater's* canal a luxury, which justice and the national good call on us to seize as a forfeiture to the state, to deter others from similar improvements? When Mr. *Paine's* national convention shall be assembled, when the illiterate, and the profligate shall be assembled to make our laws, when those who are destitute of property shall be called on to control and regulate the property of others, these plans might probably take place. Mr. *Paine's* sarcasm on a landed interest, would not be lost, he tells them it is *the only interest that needs no particular protection*. He says, "*It is the only one for which the common prayer of mankind is put up; and the only one that can never fail for want of means.*" That when the farmer wants rain, people may wish for it, we will admit; but something more is requisite to render the earth productive; had Mr. *Paine* lived all his life in America, his observations on this head might have been the mere result of ignorance; there indeed the farmer or occupier needs little protection or encouragement from law; law or government can scarcely injure him.

In that country where only three or four millions of people have to range along a coast two thousand miles long, and can extend their possession inland, without limits, there indeed the farmer has only to select the richest of the land, he can neglect the sterile soil, and leave it in the state it came from the hand of nature: if additional plantations be wanted, still the other is neglected, he has only to inquire in what part of the immense

continent, the hand of Heaven has scattered the richest mold; of that he takes possession, and has only to expel and murder the original inhabitants. But in England, where we have eight millions of people on a spot of ground inferior in size, even to one of the thirteen states, the case is totally different; here I have seen a moss, which had lain useless probably from the flood, converted into fields, and yielding crops equal to the richest soil; yet thousands of acres of similar land still lay round it in its original state, because the owners were deterred from engaging in the expensive process: many of these undertakings originate in a laudable ambition of our landed proprietors to improve their estates, as no pecuniary returns can possibly compensate them. Is then the landed interest, the only permanent, the most important interest of the state, to be trampled on, degraded, and insulted? Are we to be told it needs no peculiar protection, it has the prayers and wishes of the community, and it will therefore bear taxes, penalties, and forfeitures?

On this subject Mr. Paine spends many pages, he commences it at page 100, by commenting on Mr. Burke's nonsense. "That the House of Lords is the great ground and pillar of the landed interest." But Mr. Burke's text and Mr. Paine's comment are equally absurd. The Feudal Barons indeed sat in Parliament in right of their baronies, so did the Bishops and Abbots in right of their temporalities; the Bishops do so still; but the temporal Lords bear no resemblance to the Feudal Barons, they now sit by authority of the King's writ, it is not requisite for them to have an inch of land, many of them have none. Their influence and weight they derive from their landed interest, not from their privilege as Lords. The possession of land in this country, by giving influence in the House of Commons, frequently procures them seats in the House of Lords, but if no such House existed, their influence in the Commons, which gives them their real importance would be the same; and as in that case they would sit in the House of Commons themselves, the landed interest would acquire additional weight, in that House, where ever since the revolution it has much needed it. It is the House of Commons, which by its constitution, should be the pillar of the landed interest, as every member is required to have a landed estate; but that is so trifling, and frequently nominal, that since the increased weight of the monied interest, the landed interest has been oppressed by it.

Mr. Paine to establish the position of the weight of the landed interest, says, "the only use to be made of this power (and which it always has made) is to ward off taxes from itself." And to support this proposition, he fabricates such a monstrous collection of false statements as to our taxes, as might surprize those who have not read his "Common Sense:" where to induce congress to build a fleet, he calculates the expence of building the English navy at less than half the real cost, and to support this estimate he quotes a book printed in 1758, thereby conveying an idea that the

estimates were of that date; but he carefully kept concealed what was stated in the book itself, that the estimates were of the last century, when the materials and labour of ship-building, were at half the present price. Such is the celebrated Mr. Paine, who boasts he possesses an heart that knows no guile.

As we are now coming to a statement of facts, which considerably affect the veracity of this great man, we will be somewhat particular. In page 109 he states that our annual taxes in 1066 was £.400,000. In 1166 £200,000. In 1266, £150,000. In 1366, £130,000. In 1466, £100,000. He then pronounces an eulogium on our ancestors for their republican economy in taxes. "That the people would not be imposed upon, but kept the government in awe as to taxation." For my own part I am not much inclined to accept this compliment of Mr. Paine's on our ancestors, till he points out those taxes, or at least some one of them, which were repealed during those centuries. I have read all the statutes of that period, but I do not recollect any shop-tax, or commutation being set aside. Many complaints are to be found of taxes being levied, and promises that only the old ones should be extorted, but their abolition, nobody except Mr. Paine ever discovered. But is Mr. Paine, who talks so familiarly about the feudal system, so totally ignorant of it as not to know that it was from that system, and not from taxation, that the Conqueror and his successors derived their revenue. He held 1422 manors, which, according to Sir R. Cotton, had belonged to Edward the Confessor. The revenue of these demesne lands, according to Ordericus Vitalis, came to the immense sum of £.387,265 per annum, only £12,735 short of what Mr. Paine states to be the whole of his revenue.

Will he now be so obliging as to inform us what were those heavy taxes at the conquest, which by the virtuous struggles of the people during four centuries were reduced to a fourth part. The fact is exactly the reverse of Mr. Paine's statement. This revenue of the crown arising from the demesne lands rapidly decreased, because they were continually granted away by the successive monarchs to their favourites; thus the revenue of the crown decreased as he has stated, but it had nothing to do with taxation, except to increase it, for as the grant of these lands impoverished the crown, it became necessary to levy taxes, and to call Parliaments for that purpose. Could Mr. Paine be ignorant of this? certainly not, if he ever read a history of England. But we have not yet done with his Scale of Taxation, for as he found by his former series, that the virtuous resistance of the people to taxation increased for four centuries, he tells us the three last centuries prove that the national character of the English has changed. We did indeed suppose that since the time of Richard the third, we had changed, and we presumed for the better: but this it seems is a mistake; and it is rather remarkable, that both Mr. Burke and Mr. Paine should concur in

a desire to make us look back with regret to the happiness enjoyed by our ancestors in the 14th and 15th centuries. Mr. *Burke* tells us, that *since the 14th century we have scarce made any improvements in our government*; and Mr. *Paine* asserts that “*it would have been impossible to have dragooned the former English into the excess of taxation which now exists.*” Indeed it gives me great pleasure that I can heartily concur with him in this sentiment: firmly am I persuaded that at the period of which he speaks (1466) it would not have been in the power of bloody King *Richard*, to have dragooned the people of this country into the payment of seventeen millions of money, even had he striped them of all their property: it may even be doubted whether the fee simple of this Island would then have sold for that sum. The nation, as Mr. *Paine* justly observes, has since that time undergone a great change; we are now unfortunately in such a situation, that government can dragoon us into the payment of this immense sum.

It must be observed that Mr. *Paine* has very easy and commendous rules for forming a judgment on subjects, which some people suppose to be of some difficulty. Thus to judge of a government and its administration we are to look at the amount of taxes. Mr. *Pitt*, he says, *boasts of how much revenue, whereas the boast ought to be how little*: judging by this rule certainly our government deserves all the rancour Mr. *Paine* has expressed. It certainly is the worst government, and Mr. *Pitt* is the worst minister that ever existed; and what is still worse, he does not seem disposed to mend and notwithstanding Mr. *Paine*'s advice, he still continues plundering us of more and more every year. When Mr. *Paine* published his book, he stated the revenue at seventeen millions, this year it is said to be eighteen. If so it is extremely obvious, that in the course of a single year, our government is grown exactly a seventeenth part worse, and the minister in precisely the same proportion, more boyish and profligate. As the gross amount of our taxes thus appears to be the proper scale by which the defects of our government are to be estimated, it will follow, not only, that our government is the worst that ever existed, and that it has been gradually growing worse for above three centuries, but that if, in case of a war, the produce of our permanent taxes should decrease from fourteen millions, their present amount, to half that sum, which is extremely probable, it will then be equally evident, that our government is improved, and that its administration is only half as bad as at present. Such is the nature of the reasoning of this profound logician.

It is remarkable that notwithstanding these exclamations as to the amount of our taxes, yet there is one of them Mr. *Paine* seems much to regret to find so low; and so extremely anxious is he to convince us of it, that he hazards assertions, which not only every person the least acquainted with the subject knows to be false, but which are so extravagantly absurd, that the most

ignorant mult suspect their falſehood. In page 100, he ſays, “ *notwithſtanding taxes have increaſed and multiplied upon every article of common conſumption the land-tax has diminiſhed. In 1788 it was £.1900,000 which is half a million leſs than it produced, almoſt an hundred years ſince* ” And he gives us a reference to Sir *John Sinclair* in a note. This reference is perhaps the moſt extraordinary inſtance of literary effrontery exiſting. He does not give us the amount of the land-tax at the time mentioned in the text. He does not produce a ſingle year in any King’s reign, from the conqueſt to this time. He does not do this, becauſe there is not one can be referred to, but what would directly falſify his aſſertion. An appearance of evidence was all he wanted, and preſuming the bulk of readers, would read his text without troubling themſelves to compare it with his note, he gives, for the amount of the land-tax at the revolution, the ſum which in the time of the civil war, was levied on all property, and every ſpecies of income, by the republican army. Had the aſſertion in the note been true that the republic in 1646 raiſed two millions and a half on the land, what would it prove, but the tyranny, oppreſſion, and injuſtice of a republican government. Would it ſerve Mr. *Paine*’s argument to ſhew that the republic in one year aſſeſſed on the land, more than was levied on it during the whole reign of any one of the *Stuarts*. But the fact is not ſo. Mr. *Paine* to induce us to plunder the landed proprietors, does not ſcruple to ſlander even republicanifm itſelf. The republic in the laſt century was certainly tolerably diſpoſed to puniſh the landed men for their adherence to monarchy: but they never thought of doing it to the extent Mr. *Paine* alledges. I have the aſſeſſment for 1657 now before me, it is a general tax on every ſpecies of property, land included, at ſixty thouſand pounds per month: not a third part of our preſent land-tax; and inſtead of the land having been favored ſince the revolution, it appears that prior thereto there exiſted no ſuch thing as a regular land-tax. Lord *Coke* in his 2d. Inſt. page 77, gives an account of the antient ſubſidies and fifteenths: they were aſſeſſments on all property, real and perſonal, and till the revolution were levied only occaſionally. This mode was followed for ſome time even after the revolution. That in 1597 is called “ *an Act as well by a land-tax as by ſeveral ſubſidies and other duties.* ” It included a capitation of four ſhillings on all but paupers. This is about the period Mr. *Paine* alludes to, when the amount of the levy on all property, land included, was only about half of what Mr. *Paine* aſſerts was raiſed on the land only. The mode of aſſeſſing the land only was by degrees adopted ſoon after. The land proprietors were deemed enemies to the Hanover Succeſſion, and as ſuch they were treated. *Addiſon*’s *Fox-hunter*, and *Fielding*’s *Squire Weſtern* were intended to depict and ridicule them. The object of government, while revolution politics prevailed, was to raiſe a monied intereſt and depreſs the landed. The artifice with which

this plan was conducted is somewhat curious. After the revolution, though the acts were formed in the antient manner as an assessment on personal as well as real property, yet Dr. *Davenant* tells us, as people were suffered to give in what accounts they pleased of their personal effects and incomes, and government adopting no mode to render the assessment effectual, it by degrees became trivial: thus tho' by the first of *Queen Ann*, a *subsidy was granted on all personal effects, as well as land, and even the practitioners of the law were assessed at four shillings in the pound of their neat income*, yet was it so levied, that tho' it ought in the increased state of personal property at that time, to have raised some millions, yet it produced only £300,524. The assessment on personal property and income being become so inconsiderable, the levy was soon after discontinued, and the whole raised on the land. Yet is the old form still continued in framing the land-tax acts, they contain a general assessment on every species of property, except money in the funds. The commissioners are vested with extraordinary power, their decisions cannot be appealed from. The oath they formerly took was, "you shall cause the rates and duties to be charged on stock in trade, debts at interest, pensions, annuities, stipends, professions, offices, and the personal duty of four shilling to be duly levied according to your skill and judgment." This oath has been discontinued, that they might not perjure themselves, and they now only take the oath of allegiance. The act called a *Land-tax Act* is now trampled under foot, and totally disregarded by those who ought to execute it, and a tax is raised every year on the land, to the amount of two millions, in direct opposition to the very act, under which it is pretended to be levied. On what principle this act is thus uniformly dispensed with might call for inquiry, as much as those numerous abuses, of the existence of which Mr. *Paine* labours so much to convince us: it is now adduced merely to illustrate Mr. *Paine's* wonderful position, of the landed interest having been favored in respect to taxation since the revolution, and if he can spare a few moments of his valuable time, we might beg him to support his assertion, in page 101, "That before the coming of the Hanoverians, the taxes were divided in nearly equal proportions between the land and articles of consumption, the land bearing rather the largest share." Or rather will he shew that prior to within a few years of the Hanover Succession, there was any regular tax at all levied solely on the land. And it may also be asked, if a portion of any particular species of property can seized on by the state, on any other principle than that, on which Mr. *Paine* would instigate a national convention to seize upon the whole.

The landed interest, or as he chuses to call it "the Aristocracy, he says, are not the farmers who work the land, and raise the produce, but are the mere consumers of the rent; and when compared with the active world, are the drones, a seraglio of males, who neither collect the honey nor form the hive, but exist only for lazy

"enjoyment." And in page 103, "It is difficult to discover what is meant by a landed interest, if it does not mean a combination of aristocratical land-holders, opposing their own pecuniary interest, to that of the farmer, and every branch of trade, commerce, and manufacture." Notwithstanding the difficulty Mr. Paine is under of discovering the meaning of a landed interest, most people will imagine it to be very obvious; they will suppose it to mean, the interest of those whose property is vested in land; as a commercial interest means, the interest of those whose property is vested in commerce, or a monied interest, that of those persons whose property is vested in money, and its various securities, and they will be apt to ask Mr. Paine what necessary relation aristocracy or combination, has to a landed, more than a commercial or monied interest. Those who attend to our legislative proceedings will not easily discover this aristocratical "combination of persons in a common interest."

The monied interest since it has acquired weight in the legislature, has indeed given evidence, if not of a combination, yet of an active powerful attention to its peculiar interest. When at the close of the last war, they possessed twenty millions of navy bills, they were not content with having bought them at a great discount, and with government fulfilling the only compact it was under, the payment of the interest: they by their clamour and weight in parliament, compelled government to fund them, and in so doing to give them three millions more than the bills were worth, and more than upon any principle of justice or common sense they ought to have received: and this they effected in spite of the opposition of the minister himself. The landed interest may indeed in one sense deserve the epithet of drones, which Mr. Paine bestows on them. It will not be easy to discover any traces of their activity to guard themselves from injustice: possessed of a property of six hundred millions, they might be supposed to have some weight in the legislature; but little solicitous have they been to avail themselves of it. Theirs is the only species of property, on which an annual depredation is made, under the denomination of a tax. On them is quartered the whole body of the national clergy, though the original claim to tythe had no particular relation to land: the speculation of the stock-jobber, and the winnings of the gambler, are by the law of tythes equally subject to clerical claims, though for several centuries the clergy have fastened themselves solely on landed property. The rate to maintain the poor is really levied on them, for tho' it be levied on the tenant, the landlord's property is depreciated by every incumbrance with which it is loaded: hence it is evident that he maintains the appendages of the national religion; the roads, prisons, bridges, and almost all important public expences and tho' the possession of landed property be naturally of the simplest nature, yet the lawyers derive their principal support from its being involved in such a labyrinth, that they themselves are frequently lost in its

mazes. And lastly the whole of this vast property, is for near half the year converted into a vast common, to be laid waste and trodden under foot, by every individual who can call himself esquire, or who, by renting a shop in 'Change-alley, or a warehouse in Thames-street, to a given amount, can break the inclosures and spoil the crop of the best estate in the kingdom: and the law has been so careful to protect him in the trespass, that in case it does not exceed a given sum, the greater part of the expence of the action falls on the landed proprietor who presumes to seek redress for the injury. Mr. *Paine* attributes the game laws to the undue influence of the landed interest, and tells us "if there were a house of farmers they would not exist." It has been calculated that the damage resulting to one single county by the game laws, amounts to £.40,000 *per annum*. Will Mr. *Paine* inform us whether the county is not worth so much the less to its proprietors, and whether the rentals would not be increased if the game were not protected by law, for the amusement of the country attorney, the sporting parson, or the rusticated cit. Let us no longer complain of uncultivated land, of deserted villages, or of the slow progress of agricultural improvements; that they take place in a property so circumstanced, must be attributed to the patriotism, or the ignorance of the proprietor, who, after all these incumbrances and restrictions on his estate, is still farther controlled by capricious laws in the sale of the produce of his land.

It is somewhat extraordinary that Mr. *Paine's* partizans should be remarkably solicitous to disclaim the leading principle of their master. An equalization of *rights*, not of *property*, they pretend he contends for: but if there be any meaning in his work, it is, that all the most important boundaries of property should be trodden under foot, for if the most considerable branch of property, that of land and its improvement, is to be thus stigmatized, surely no other can be deemed inviolable.

That the earth in its natural state is equally the property of every individual born on it, we will readily admit; all men have an equal right to the use of it, and no man could be entitled to more, if the good of society did not require it. But the earth in a state of nature affords a miserable support to a small number of inhabitants: in the imperfect state resulting from mere occupancy, its benefit to man is inconsiderable, in comparison of the improved state of which it is capable. As then a transferable and permanent property in land is necessary for the support of an increased number of inhabitants, and as the increase of its inhabitants is the will of Heaven, it thence necessarily follows that that state of the earth should exist, which is necessary to adapt it to an increasing state of man; that is a permanent and transferable property. Hence this state of a landed property which Mr. *Paine* stigmatizes, appears to be of the most sacred nature, it must have a collateral existence with the

increase of man, and to shake it, is to terminate that increase. The fecundity of the earth, under the cultivating hand of man, has scarce any limits from that savage state in which hundreds of acres are requisite to support an individual, to the support of many on a single acre: thus the earth appears to be wisely fitted by its maker to the increasing state of man: the earth in this improved state may be deemed almost a new creation; it bears no more resemblance to its original state, than the oak growing in the forest, to the oak when converted into a ship, and floating on the waves: it becomes as much a property, and it is a property which the good of society calls on us to sanction and protect, far indeed beyond any other. A capital vested in any other species of property, can be transferred from one part of the earth to another, the proprietor is a citizen of the world: but agricultural improvement must take place in confidence of the permanency and stability of those laws on the faith of which they were made, and if society innovate on this species of property, it violates that confidence which was reposed in it, and a confidence from whence it derives the most essential benefits. A capital vested in any other pursuit, requires not an equal confidence in the good faith of society, because the expectation of a reimbursement is far less remote: the compass of a few years limits our views, and circumscribes our hopes; and a disappointment will not result from any remote changes in the laws, or convulsions in the state: but the more operose improvements of the earth, must result from views far more distant, to build, plant, inclose, embank, and drain; to render the earth fruitful by combining its various soils, an inducement must be held forth, far beyond the fragil tenure of human life; the prospect of transmitting them to a succession of heirs, and if that succession be violated, or the property dilapidated, that implied compact is broken, on the faith of which the improvements were made.

With this obvious view of landed property before us, let us consider Mr. *Paine* stigmatising as useles drones, the proprietors of the most improved portion of this habitable globe. Men whose labour or whose property has converted this island into a residence for ten millions of men in all the various classes of civilized life; which originally would not have preserved a tenth part of the number, in a state of mere savage existence.

But these men it seems, are, "*mere drones, they are not the farmers who work the land and raise the produce, but are the mere consumers of the rent.*" This will deserve some consideration. The idea of a drone is that of a useles intruder into a well ordered society who lives on the spoil of it, and whom it is incumbent on the society to expel from amongst them. This certainly is the idea Mr. *Paine* means to convey to his national convention when it shall assemble, and as the labouring part of the nation will compose a great majority, perhaps ten to

one, what can be a more natural step for them first to adopt; than to expel from the hive, these mere drones, who do not raise the produce, but only consume the rent; and the idea must be extended still farther, for by a parity of reason, all are to be considered as drones, who do not labour themselves, but derive their support from the labour of others: that they pay the labourer his hire cannot be deemed sufficient, the land proprietor himself, or the person from whom he derives his title has done that, he has inclosed the ground to secure the crop, and the barn to receive it, but as he neither sows nor reaps it, he can from thence it seems derive no title to any part of it: thus the farmer himself, if he hires the labourers and derives a living from their labour and not his own, must be equally destitute of a title to the crop; the landlord's large capital and the farmer's small one are indeed both employed, and tho' without them the crop could never have been raised, yet is the labourer who sows and reaps intitled to the whole, all but him are mere drones, living on the labour of others.

Every other great class of property stands in the same predicament: the owners of shipping, are "*mere drones, they are not the mariners who navigate the vessel, they are the mere consumers of the freight.*" The heirs of Sir R. Arkwright will possess a luxurious property equal to most landed estates in the kingdom, they may like the land-holders let it, and become the mere consumers of a rent, and tho' Mr. Paine in his 141 page only proposes depriving them of a part, yet surely if he be consistent the whole ought to be forfeited. If a national convention adopt his principles they will consider as a luxury every estate from whence an income is derived without labour, and will convert the mere drones into useful bees, that is, into active citizens, or labouring men. Yet have Mr. Paine's partizans the assurance to tell us that Mr. Paine's principles, equalise rights only, and not property.

Mr. Paine in the same page, in which he says "*it is difficult to discover what is meant by a landed interest, if it does not mean a combination of aristocratical land-holders,*" immediately proceeds to admit its superior importance, "*it is the interest* (he says) *not of the policy, but of the existence of man, and when it ceases he must cease to be,*" and from thence infers, with that perversity of intellect which characterises his work, that it needs no particular protection. Most people would have drawn a different inference, they would have supposed that in proportion as it was important, it should be powerfully supported and sedulously guarded. Mr. Paine, indeed chooses to suppose that mankind possess a sufficient portion of wisdom to discern the public good, and virtue and fortitude enough to pursue it: but the history of mankind will hardly support his position. Turn-pike roads, broad-wheel waggons, saw-mills, and cotton-mills, however beneficial to the public, have not always received the

countenance, even of that part of the community for whose benefit they were particularly adopted, until use had rendered them familiar, and experience proved their utility. This observation applies more particularly to landed property, as the benefit the public derive from securing it, though the most important is not the most obvious: an act to seize on all the shipping of the kingdom, and divide it among the sailors, would be easily seen to be dangerous, because every one must know the very rumour of it would deprive us of our shipping: but Mr. *Paine* may suggest to a national convention, that no such danger can result from seizing on landed property; the improvements of the land exist, the barns are built, the inclosures made, and the soil improved, these cannot be conveyed away to another nation: to divide it among those who have hitherto laboured on it for a miserable existence, is a plan plausible at least.

If legal sanctions and all the energy of the state be scarcely sufficient to preserve property, little veneration can we expect to be paid to it, when, as Mr. *Paine* proposes, all government and all law shall be dissolved, and the whole property in the nation shall be thrown into one mass to be disposed of at the will of the majority; when even plunder may assume the forms of law. It will then be in vain to urge, that the land, by having been secured to the proprietors for a series of years, has received improvements, by which it renders tenfold more than if the *usufruct* only had been enjoyed;—That those improvements had been made under an implied compact, that a permanent property in them was established; and that a violation of this property was an infraction of that implied compact, from whence resulted those improvements by which the earth was fitted to support ten times the number of inhabitants it would sustain if mere occupancy only had been enjoyed. It would probably be in vain to urge, that by seizing the improvements already made, all future improvements would be obstructed, for that in proportion as the property in land was insecure and limited, in that proportion would the motive to improve it be diminished.

As the increase of mankind is only limited by the means of their support, so is the earth capable of yielding that support to man in an almost unlimited degree. This island is perhaps in the most perfect state of cultivation of any part of the globe yet it is probably as inferior to the state of cultivation to which it may be carried, as its present state is superior, to even that of America itself. As therefore a permanent and exclusive property in land is that which will render the earth fit to sustain the greatest number of inhabitants, it follows that to preserve that permanent and exclusive property must be a principal object of laws and government, and in proportion as any system of government tends to weaken the possession of land, in that proportion it is unfit to be adopted in that advanced stage of civil society where the increase of man calls for an increasing means of support.

Mr. *Paine*, to stigmatize the landed interest, reproaches them with the restraints under which their property labours from the continuance of barbarous laws. The ancient military tenures, to which the land of the various countries of Europe was subjected, arose not from a disposition to benefit land-holders or the public, but merely to create a power that might defend the new made conquests: hence the holders of the lands were not suffered to alienate them, and they were limited in their descent to a single individual, that the strength of the military chief might not be weakened by dividing the estate, and for the same purpose during a minority they were seized into the King's hands. Mr. *Paine* seems to reproach the landed interest that it was delivered from the last of these restrictions, by the statute of *Charles* the second, for abolishing the Court of Wards, and then, to shew how perfectly absurd and inconsistent it was possible to be, he also insults them, in page 107 of the first edition of his second part (from whence all the quotations have been taken) because the law of entails and primogeniture still continues. I will admit those restraints to form what Mr. *Paine* terms, "a law of brutal injustice." The interest of the land-holder and the community, both suggest that his property should be secure, and his authority and control over it as unlimited as over any other species of property: that he should be allowed to alienate and to devise it to whom he pleases. But what ever hardships the landed interest may labour under from our present system of laws, they will hardly thank Mr. *Paine* for his interference, they will certainly prefer paying a fine to the crown for alienation, to being deprived of it altogether; and I believe most men, though they might wish for the liberty of disposing of landed, like other property, to whom they please, yet they will certainly prefer its descending to their eldest son, to its being, as Mr. *Paine* proposes, forfeited to the state, or disposed of by those who have no property of their own, and consequently whose interest in the state, can be but of a subordinate nature: for contrary to Mr. *Paine*'s assertion, no part of the community can have an interest in the laws and government of the country equal to the landed proprietors; none can have an interest so perfectly connected with its general interest: nor one who are so incapable of pursuing a partial, in opposition to that general interest. The landed proprietors not only possess the largest portion of national property, that on which the principal portion of wealth has been expended, but they are the only persons who have any material interest in the future state of this country.

When every individual can be supposed to have an equal interest in the state, and every class of mankind are equally concerned in the future and permanent prosperity of the country, then let every individual assume an equal share in its government: but ere we call the coal-heaver from his labour, and the coachman from his box to legislate, we have at least a right to some evidence that our laws will be thereby improved.—*FINIS.*



