

of liberty. Paine, spokesman for the city artisans and mechanics, took his stand with the friends of the constitution he had helped to write. In articles to the press he defended the document and attacked those who sought to deprive the people of their democratic rights.⁶

Paine also spoke for the people, especially the artisans, in his articles denouncing monopolizing practices which caused the cost of living to soar and were responsible for reducing the morale of workers who found it difficult to secure wage-increases. He was present at a mass meeting held on the 27th of May in the State House yard where a series of resolutions were adopted denouncing combinations "for raising the prices of goods and provisions." He also served on a Committee of Inspection before which leading merchants suspected of unscrupulous business methods were forced to appear.

In the State elections which took place on October 12, 1779, the Constitutionalists won a resounding victory and, as a reward for his part in arousing popular support for the Constitution, the new Assembly elected Paine its Clerk. Actually, his position was more important than the name implies, for he was the close friend and advisor of Assembly leaders and influenced important legislation.

In his new position Paine soon had an opportunity to see one of his dreams realized. Late in 1775, in his short article entitled "A Serious Thought," he had looked forward to the day when God "shall have blest us, and made us a people *dependent only upon Him*, then may our gratitude be shown by an act of continental legislation, which shall put a stop to the importation of Negroes for sale, soften the hard fate of those already here, and in time procure their freedom." Five years later, as Clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly, Paine wrote the "Preamble to the Act Passed by the Pennsylvania Assembly March 1, 1780," which provided for the gradual emancipation of Negro slaves in the state. It was the first legislative measure passed in America for the emancipation of slaves.

While serving as Clerk, Paine was called upon to read to the Assembly Washington's appeal, dated May 28, 1780, for assistance to pay, feed and clothe his troops. "I assure you," Washington wrote in this letter, "every idea you can form of our distresses will fall short of the reality. There is such a combination of circumstances to exhaust the patience

⁶ All of Paine's letters and articles on the Deane controversy appear in the second volume of the present edition of his writings. For excellent background material see Robert L. Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania*, Philadelphia, 1942.