

gotten, or at least postponed."⁸ Paine was not merely willing to forget or postpone but even to cooperate with his former enemies to rescue "the fairest cause that Men ever engaged in."

National unity meant unity among the states as well as among different classes. Paine, therefore, turned his attention late in 1780 to the problem of eliminating state antagonisms and rivalries in the hope that he could convince them to cooperate for the well-being of the entire nation. The immediate issue that aroused his attention was the delay in the ratification of the Articles of Confederation because of a conflict over claims to land in the west. Congress had adopted the Articles on November 17, 1777, and submitted them to the several states for ratification. Maryland, having definite western limits, refused to ratify the new frame of government until Virginia ceded her claims to western land to the national government.

Paine's pamphlet, *Public Good*, published in Philadelphia on December 30, 1780, demolished Virginia's claims to land in the west, contended that the land should belong not to the individual states but to the United States because they had been secured by the united effort of all the states during the war, and concluded by calling for a stronger central government. He urged the convening of "a continental convention, for the purpose of forming a continental constitution, defining and describing the powers and authority of Congress."

Two years later, in 1782-83, Paine spoke out again for a stronger central government and once again emphasized the need to adhere to "the principle of union," which he correctly regarded as "our magna charta—our anchor in the world of empires." In an effort to obtain a revenue to carry on the war Congress proposed a five-per-cent duty on imported articles, the money to be used to pay the interest on loans to be made in Holland. Unanimous consent of the states was necessary to grant Congress the power to levy this duty, and, when Rhode Island refused her assent an *impasse* was created. In this situation Paine once again demonstrated his grasp of the needs of the time by publishing a series of letters addressed to the people of Rhode Island urging them to consent to the five-per-cent impost plan. Signing himself "A Friend to Rhode Island and the Union," he reminded his readers that all the embarrassments faced by the new Republic "are ascribable to the loose and almost disjointed condition of the Union. . . ." We need "to talk

⁸ Philip S. Foner, editor, *George Washington: Selections from His Writings*, New York, 1944, pp. 22-23.