

to revoke certain kinds of economic contracts agreed to by a preceding legislature and another party. This, however, did not mean that a contract could last forever. A legislature could not grant a contract forever, for the simple reason that the present generation could no more bind its children to economic contracts than it could set up a government for posterity.

Paine knew that by joining the pro-bank forces he would invite the charge that he had sold out the people. Such charges were made. A representative from the West referred to him as "an unprincipled author, who let his pen out for hire," and a writer who called himself "Atticus" attacked him as a turn-coat, adding: "I cannot conceive in the wide extent of creation, a being more deserving of our abhorrence and contempt, than a writer, who having formerly vindicated the principles of freedom, abandons them to abet the cause of a faction, who exerts the little talent which Heaven has allotted him, . . . to vilify measures which it is his duty to respect, and . . . [devotes] his pen to the ruin of his country."

These attacks did not halt Paine in his determination to fight the battle to the bitter end, and his will was strengthened by the realization that if the farmers had turned against him the city mechanics and artisans as well as merchants and bankers supported him. The urban workers also opposed paper money legislation fearing the effects of inflation on their living standards and favored the continued existence of the bank as essential for business expansion which meant employment opportunities. In a series of letters to the Philadelphia papers Paine attacked the repeal of the bank's charter and called for its restoration.¹²

¹² Paine's letters to the press during the controversy over the bank appear in the second volume of the present edition of his writings. For an interesting discussion of the conflict in Pennsylvania over the bank, see Janet Wilson, "The Bank of North America and Pennsylvania Politics, 1781-1787," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. LXVI, January, 1942, pp. 3-28.

Paine's role in supporting the bank and in calling for a stronger Union has been cited by several recent students as proof of his conservatism before he left America in 1787, and it is argued that during this period he tended to align himself with men like Hamilton, John Adams, Robert Morris and others who were known as conservatives (see Harry Hayden Clark's introduction to *Six New Letters of Thomas Paine* and J. Dorfman, "The Economic Philosophy of Thomas Paine," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. LIII, September, 1938, pp. 372-386). Neither of these writers take into account the fact that Paine's views were supported by the urban artisans for whom he was a spokesman. Moreover, to argue that Paine's economic objectives were much the same as Hamilton's is entirely to ignore the fact that Paine, even in the bank controversy, wanted property to serve the welfare of all classes in society, while Hamilton always spoke out for protection only for the