

In the fall elections of 1786 Paine's position was upheld by a majority of the voters. A few months later the bank's charter was restored.

In April, 1787, Paine left for Europe to promote his plan to build a single-arch bridge across the Schuylkill river in Philadelphia. He expected to remain abroad no more than a year and to spend most of his time in France where engineering was best understood. He met Jefferson in France, was hailed as a friend of Franklin and a distinguished writer and became acquainted with leading scientists and political liberals. The Academy of Science appointed a committee to study the plans for his bridge and, after an investigation this body reported that "Mr. Paine's Plan of an Iron Bridge is ingeniously imagined, that the construction of it is simple, solid, and proper to give it the necessary strength for resisting the effects resulting from its burden, and that it is deserving of a trial . . ." The report was presented on August 29th. The next day Paine left for England.

In the land of his birth Paine visited his aged mother at Thetford, met and was enthusiastically received by Charles Fox, Lord Landsdowne, Lord Shelburne and Edmund Burke, and began to make plans for the construction of his bridge. But soon he was thinking less and less about his bridge and more and more about the exciting events in France.<sup>18</sup> Science, after all, could not flourish without democracy.

The news of the French Revolution filled Paine with joy. But he was not surprised. He had never regarded the American Revolution as a local affair, "but universal, and through which the principles of all

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"rich and well-born." See the excellent refutation of J. Dorfman's contention by Howard Penniman in the *American Political Science Review*, vol. XXXVII, April, 1943, pp. 244-262.

Although Paine and Hamilton both supported a stronger central government at this time, it must be remembered that the former, like Jefferson, did so because he believed that it was necessary to preserve Republicanism in America. He certainly would never have favored the type of central government proposed by Hamilton in the Federal Convention. Evidently the Hamiltonians thought so too, for they were not anxious to have Paine attend the Convention. Unlike some present-day writers they did not regard him as a conservative.

<sup>18</sup> Paine's bridge was eventually constructed in England, but he himself received no credit for it and made no profits. When Sir Robert Smyth, Paine's friend, attempted to secure some reward for the original inventor, he received a letter from a subscriber to the construction company admitting that "the first idea was taken from Mr. Paine's bridge exhibited at Paddington." Nothing, however, could be done to compensate Mr. Paine. Thomas Paine to Thomas Jefferson, October 1, 1800, Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.