

The influence of *Rights of Man* was by no means confined to England. In America, for example, it became the book of the hour, greatly influenced the rise of the Democratic-Republican Societies, and in turn was scattered broadcast throughout the country by these popular clubs.¹⁷ Thomas Jefferson welcomed the book as an antidote to the "political heresies" of the reactionary Federalists and, when attacked for upholding Paine's principles, wrote that he merited the same censure visited upon the author of *Rights of Man*, "for I profess the same principles." Philip Freneau, editor and poet of the Jeffersonian movement, ran excerpts from Paine's work in his *National Gazette*, and proudly announced on May 31, 1792, as his reason that "there is no American newspaper but might, with credit to itself, now and then occupy part of a column with extracts from a work that so forcibly inculcates the genuine principles of natural and equal liberty." Freneau even wrote a poem entitled "Lines Occasioned by Reading Mr. Paine's Rights of Man," in which he assured the author that America would "Remain the guardian of the Rights of Man."

In the meantime in England a storm was breaking over Paine's head. As Paine himself pointed out later, the first part of *Rights of Man* was met by the government with "profound silence," because they "beheld it as an unexpected gale that would soon blow over." When the Second Part appeared, they tried at first to follow the same course, but their silence had no "influence in stifling the progress of the work." As long, however, that it was published in an expensive edition they were not too worried. But when it began to be distributed in cheap editions at cost, the attitude changed. From "that moment," wrote Paine, "and not before, I expected a prosecution, and the event has proved that I was not mistaken."

There is more to the story. At first Premier Pitt tried to prevent the publication of Part II by bribing the publisher. When this failed, the government sponsored and paid for the publication of a slanderous biography of Paine. Then the press began to raise the false bogey of Jacobinism and instituted a cry against seditious doctrines said to be circulated by emissaries from France who were bribed by "Paris Gold" to overthrow British institutions. Mobs were inspired to burn Paine in effigy; individuals were instructed to wear boots whose hobnails were

¹⁷ In his excellent study of these popular societies Eugene P. Link says that it was "the internationalist Thomas Paine who deserves the credit for fathering the democratic societies." See his *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800*, New York, 1942, p. 104.