

time a movement was initiated by the Directory to crush the remnants of the radical forces among the masses to pave the way for the unchallenged rule of the upper classes. In an effort to overthrow the counter-revolution and to seize power to wield it against the upper classes, the radical forces, led by Babeuf, made preparations for a *coup d'état*. Included in the program of the Babouvists were the demands for the abolition of inheritance and the confiscation of the properties of counter-revolutionists, of those who had accumulated wealth from public office, of persons who neglected to cultivate their lands, and of individuals who lived without working. The conspiracy was discovered and crushed in May, 1796.

This was the situation when Paine's *Agrarian Justice* was published. He did not go as far as Babeuf, although he approved of the objective of the insurrection in aiming to remove social inequalities in property. Paine held that there were two kinds of property: natural property (the earth in its uncultivated stage), and "improved" property. He had no intention of taking away "improved" property, but argued that the "earth, in its natural uncultivated state was, and ever would have continued to be, *the common property of the human race.*" The introduction of private property added, through cultivation, a "tenfold" value to created earth. At the same time, however, it "dispossessed more than half the inhabitants of every nation of their natural inheritance, without providing . . . an indemnification for that loss, and has thereby created a species of poverty and wretchedness that did not exist before." To remedy this situation and assist the persons thus dispossessed, Paine maintained that every proprietor "of cultivated land" owed to the community a ground-rent for the land which he held. With this sum Paine aimed to set up a National Fund, out of which there would be paid to every person, "when arrived at the age of twenty-one years, the sum of fifteen pounds sterling, as a compensation in part, for the loss of his or her natural inheritance, by the system of landed property," and "the sum of ten pounds per annum, during life, to every person now living, of the age of fifty years, and to all others as they shall arrive at that age."

The system he proposed, Paine maintained, would so organize civilization "that the whole weight of misery can be removed." It would aid the blind, the lame and the aged poor, and at the same time guarantee that the new generation would never become poor. And all this would not be achieved through charity. "It is not charity, but a right," he cried,