

REMARKS ON ENGLISH AFFAIRS

This interesting article on English affairs appeared in the *Baltimore Evening Post* of July 8, 1805, and has never before been reprinted or even mentioned in any discussion of Paine's writings. It was preceded by an introductory comment by the editor of the *Post* which went: "The following excellent remarks upon English affairs, though the first we have received from our friend, we trust will not be the last. We feel highly gratified in having an opportunity to adorn our pages with an original from his pen, and beg that the Evening Post may be occasionally privileged with his lucubrations."

For concrete evidence that Paine wrote this article, see his letter to John Fellows, July 9, 1805, pp. 1468-1469 below.—*Editor*.

THE imaginary importance of the government of England, draws to a close. In the two last wars, that with America, and the other with France, she was defeated and disgraced in all her projects; and the present war, as far as it has gone, gives symptoms of a similar fate. There is evidently a madness in her councils (besides the royal madness) that has no foresight, and cannot calculate events.

One would suppose, that when a government goes to war of its own choice, and is the first to declare it (which was the case with the English government in the present war with France), that it had arranged all its plans, and had everything in readiness to put these plans in operation the instant it declared war. But this was not the case with the English government; for as it has put no plan in execution, the inference is, that either it had none, or those it had were too imperfectly formed to be executed. Take which of the inferences you will, and it shows the incompetency of the English government to the condition into which it has plunged itself.

It was laughable enough to see how the British parliament passed away its time in debating whether there was *cause* for war or not when they declared it. A ministerial victory in parliament does not decide a battle in the field. Philosophers and naturalists have to do with causes, and politicians with consequences. For example, it would have been madness in America to have declared independence, if she had not possessed the means of obtaining it, and the same may be said of every hostile declaration.

As far as inferences can be drawn from circumstances, the British government went to war from internal craft, and not from external policy. After the publication in England of a small work of Thomas Paine in the year '96, entitled *Decline and fall of the English system of Finance*, there was so great a run upon the Bank of England, that the bank could not stand it. The directors of the bank made their condition known to Mr. Pitt, who undoubtedly knew it before, but *farce* was become necessary. Pitt, in order to ward off the blow that threatened destruction to the bank, and also to the government, brought a bill into parliament to *restrain* the bank (for that was the term used) from paying its notes in specie; whereas the case with the bank was, that it could not pay—it had not wherewithal. This act, at first was only for a few months, but it was afterwards renewed, and continued to be renewed in every session from year to year. By the last renewal, the *restraint* (as it was called) was to continue till some time after the end of the war then going on. But when that time came, the bank could not pay any more than it could before; and therefore the government, after it had made peace, declared war again, and this was made a pretence for again shutting up the bank. That bank will never open for payment. Its ruin is as fixed as fate.

The same farce about *cause* instead of *consequence* was again acted with respect to the declaration of war against Spain. Pitt made a long and wordy speech of three hours, to show, in his way, there was *cause* of war, whereas it was the *consequence* only that should have governed him.

In a treaty between France and Spain, when the last war ended, it was stipulated that in case either should be attacked, the other should, as an auxiliary, assist her with a certain number of ships and land forces. This was commuted for in money, ^{and} instead of ships and forces, France agreed to take three millions sterling annually. The case therefore with Pitt ought to have been, not any thing about the *cause*, but about the *consequence*; that is, whether it was not better to let Spain fulfil her engagement in this manner quietly by commutation, than to force her, by a declaration of war, to join France with her whole force by sea and land. It is Bonaparte that is the gainer by this conduct of Pitt, who, by thus increasing the force of his enemy, has made that of England comparatively less.

When the family of the Bourbons reigned in France, the natural powers and resources of that country, which are greater than those of

any country in the world, were never effectually called forth. Voluptuousness, effeminacy and intrigue were then the deities of the court, and the nation was governed by mistresses and the favorites of mistresses. The case *now* is the reverse of what it was *then*. France, at this time, has for its chief the most enterprizing man in Europe, and the greatest general in the world; and besides these virtues or vices (call them what you please, for they may be either), he is a deep and consummate politician in every thing which relates to the success of his measures. He knows both how to plan and how to execute. This is a talent that Pitt is defective in, for all his measures fail in execution. His forte lies in making long speeches, and in planning intrigues that evaporate in disappointment and disgrace.

England, at this time, is in the most critical situation she ever was put in by France, and there is no foreseeing when or how it is to end. According to appearances, France may hold England in constant alarm and insupportable expence as long as she pleases, and that without any new expence or suffering any alarms herself; and by drawing off the English fleet from the defence of its coast at home, by sending her own on distant expeditions, she encreases the chance of a descent by gunboats. France could not do this till Pitt, by his ill policy, joined the navy of Spain to France.

The discovery that has been made of the embezzlement of money in the treasury by *Dundas* alias *Lord Melville*, will go a great way towards breaking up the present ministry. That Pitt was privy to this embezzlement, there can scarcely be a doubt; for as he held the offices of first lord of the treasury and chancellor of the exchequer, and was, in consequence thereof, the person who brings in the budget, that is, the annual statement of expences, he cannot be supposed to be ignorant of it, and if he was, it shows he kept a bad look out, and is not fit for the office of treasurer and chancellor. The answer also of their king, involves suspicion. It implies a knowledge of the transaction, for it says, that, "notwithstanding the clamor that had been raised against that nobleman (*Melville*), he trusted his *faithful commons* would soon see reason to express an opinion that his lordship had acquitted himself with the utmost anxiety for the welfare and salvation of the British empire." But neither his *faithful commons* as he calls them, nor his loyal subjects, as he sometimes calls the people, appear to believe a word of what he says, for they are pushing the matter still further on. *Melville* was first lord of the admiralty, and treasurer of the navy; and had the offi-

cial direction of naval expeditions. The ill news from the West-Indies, would arrive in England about the time of the discovery of this embezzlement, and will in their consequences affect the whole of the present ministry.

C.S.

OF THE ENGLISH NAVY

This article appeared in the Jeffersonian press of New York and Philadelphia in January, 1807, and was reprinted in *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays on Various Subjects by Thomas Paine*, London, 1819, pp. 208-209. —*Editor.*

THE boasted navy of England has been the ruin of England. This may appear strange to a set of stupid Feds, who have no more foresight than a mole under ground, or they would not abuse France as they do; but strange as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, and a little reflection on the case will show it.

The expense of that navy is greater than the nation can bear; and the deficiency is continually supplied by anticipation of revenue under the name of loans, till the national debt, which is the sum total of these anticipations, has amounted, according to the report of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the English Parliament, the 28th of last March, to the enormous sum of £.603,924,000 sterling; and the interest of the debt at that time was £.24,900,000 sterling.

What are called loans, are no other than creating a new quantity of stock and sending it to market to be sold, and then laying on new taxes to pay the interest of that new stock. The persons called loaners, or subscribers for the loan, contract with the minister for large wholesale quantities of this new stock at as low a price as they can get it, and all they can make by retailing it is their profit. This ruinous system, for it is certain ruin in the end, began in the time of William the Third, one hundred and eighteen years ago.

The expense of the English navy this year, as given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, last March, is £.15,281,000 sterling, above sixty-eight million dollars. The enormous expense of this navy, taken on an average