

## book reviews

Frederic C. Howe, to that of Post. Howe was instrumental, as Wilson's appointed Commissioner of Ellis Island, in humanising the treatment of immigrants coming through that facility. Howe had gained his political credentials working in the mayoral administration of the Henry Geogist mayor of Cleveland, Ohio, Tom L. Johnson. Howe's book, *The Confessions of a Reformer* (1925) is an extraordinary commentary on the Progressive era and the emergence of liberalism in the United States.

The one person who, in my mind, ranks close to Henry George as lifting Paine's torch of cooperative individualism is only alluded to in passing by Professor Kaye. This is the philosopher Mortimer J. Adler. Among his accomplishments over a life that spanned nearly a full century, Adler served with Robert M. Hutchins (Chancellor of the University of Chicago and later founder of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions) as co-editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and as creator of the Great Books reading programme that continues to this day. Professor Kaye notes that as the United States entered the Second World War "a radio series on the 'Great Books of Western Civilization' dedicated a program to contrasting [Edmund] Burke and Paine on liberty." Adler's book, *The Common Sense of Politics*, written in the 1970s, is well-described as an update on Paine's *Rights of Man*. I have long felt these two books ought to be required reading for

any student of the liberal arts.

Paine's extensive body of work provides us with much to ponder. His willingness to seek truth and write objectively about what he found, regardless of the consequences to himself and his own standing in the world community, is a standard desperately needed today. Professor Kaye concludes that "conservatives do not - and truly cannot - embrace him and his arguments." Certainly, those who today call themselves conservative do not embrace the same moral principles as did Paine. Paine believed in universal moral principles. A world plagued by artificial scarcity continues to adhere to moral relativism - to the false principles of ethnic nationalism and pseudo-religious group sovereignty. Paine would certainly be dismayed that we have achieved so little after so much sacrifice.

Central to Paine's morality is the principle that the earth is our equal birthright; from that principle all law must arise. No person or groups of people have a greater claim to any portion of the earth - and its natural resources - than any other. Ground rent must be paid for the privilege experienced when the community (thought of in its universal sense) grants to some exclusive control over any portion of the earth. Absent this, those who labor - who produce goods and provide services - are at the mercy of the landed. Paine called for what I describe as a "labor and capital goods theory of

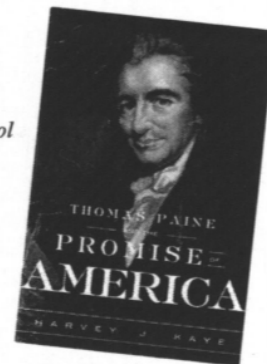
property" buoyed by public policies remedial in character (eg, inheritance taxes and the establishment of citizen trust funds). He put his faith in participatory democracy to allow citizens to decide the proper responsibilities of government; on what public goods and services ought to be provided out of the revenue raised by fair and equitable taxation. He is, without question, the father of cooperative individualism.

I join with Professor Kaye in hoping the expanding interest in Paine and his ideas will serve to stimulate a more sincere public discussion of what constitutes the just society. The revolution Paine helped to ignite is far from completed, and in many ways has been subverted beyond recognition. Despite what Paine wrote, the times that try men's souls have yet to come to a close. **L&L**

Harvey J Kaye: *Thomas Paine and the Promise of America* is published by Hill & Wang. ISBN

0 8090897 0 X.

Ed Dodson is the director of the School of Cooperative Individualism. He is the author of the three-volume work *The Discovery of First Principles*.



## Plan B: try again, fail again, fail better

Geoffrey Lee is not convinced by Plan B2.0 and looks forward to its next version.

*Plan B2.0* is subtitled *Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*. The 2.0 indicates that this is an updated and expanded version of the 2003 edition. Plan A is, of course, the path on which we travel at the moment. We know where that

is leading us - to the day when the oil runs out; to global warming and rising seas; to dangerous climate change and to serious water shortages. One alarming picture the author paints is of the Aral Sea where the shoreline has retreated 165 miles from its original

ports, where ships lie stranded in the sands and the salt concentration in the shrunken sea has killed all the fish.

The Plan B solution includes wind power, gas-electric hybrid fuels, solar cells, reforestation, biomass, and stabilising population. Already, Brazil produces 40% of its automotive fuel from sugarcane-based ethanol, and China is the first country where fish farm output (*with its own issues - ed*) exceeds oceanic catch.

Although Plan B may alleviate our current and future global problems it is doomed to failure in its attempt to cure poverty and reduce the gap between rich and poor. The author estimates that Plan B requires an additional annual expenditure of \$161 billion. He points out that the world is now spending \$975 billion annually for military purposes. But if the

additional money is to come from governments under present arrangements, then the financial beneficiaries will be the landowners not the dispossessed poor.

Lester R. Brown, who is president of the Earth Policy Institute, seems never to have heard of Henry George or land value taxation. Unless he can write geogist economics into *Plan B3.0* we shall not be able to solve the fundamental problems that will undermine all his ecological and environmental proposals. **L&L**

Lester R. Brown: *Plan B2.0* published by WW Norton & Co. ISBN 0 3933283 1 7

The author's organisation has concerns similar to the US-based Earthrights Institute to which the editor directs him: [www.earthrights.net](http://www.earthrights.net)

