

Simon Middleton, "Inventing Money in Early Pennsylvania."

The first sensible analysis of exchange value as labor-time, made so clear as to seem almost commonplace, is to be found in the work of a man of the New World where the bourgeois relations of production imported together with their representatives sprouted rapidly in a soil which made up its lack of historical tradition with a surplus of humus. That man was Benjamin Franklin, who formulated the fundamental law of modern political economy... [and] declares it necessary to seek another measure of value than the precious metals, and that this measure is labour.

Karl Marx, *Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*, (1859)

One of the first economists, after William Petty, to have seen through the nature of value, the famous Franklin, says this: Trade in general being nothing else but the exchange of labour for labour, the value of all things is... most justly measured by Labour... Franklin is not aware that in measuring the value of everything "in labour" he makes abstraction from any difference in the kinds of labour exchanged – and thus reduces them all equal human labour. Yet he states this without knowing it.

Karl Marx, *Capital*, volume one (1867; London, 1976), 142, note 18

Introduction.

On 10 April 1729, the twenty-three year old Benjamin Franklin published *A Modest Enquiry into the Nature and Necessity of a Paper-Currency*, a pamphlet advocating for an additional issue of paper money to lift Pennsylvania out of the latest recession in its trade, chiefly with the Caribbean plantation colonies.¹ Pennsylvania issued its first public bills in 1723, in response to the credit crunch brought on the collapse of the South Sea Bubble (1720-21). The debate over the introduction of supplementary issues of paper money divided the province for the next six years.²

¹ *A Modest Enquiry into the Nature and Necessity of a Paper-Currency* (Philadelphia, 1729), The Franklin Papers at Yale, Digital Edition.

² The South Sea Company, the brainchild of the Tory leader, Robert Harley, was established in 1711 as an alternative to the Whig controlled Bank of England and to refinance the crown's debt after twenty years of war. In 1713 the Company secured a thirty-year monopoly for what was expected to be a hugely profitable trade, shipping upwards of 4, 500 enslaved people a year to Iberian Spanish America. Julian Hoppit, "The myths of the South Sea

Franklin made two, related arguments in favor of a new issue. First, that the recent collapse of land values and farming incomes showed that a provincial prosperity depended on there being “a certain proportional quantity of money” in circulation regardless of its form. Second, that as long as the notes were backed by provincial land and labor their value need not depreciate or “sink.” This was true of the “nature of value and money in general” which “Men have invented” to provide “a Medium of Exchange.” Although traders had long been “fixed upon gold and silver” as this medium, such metals were of no more “certain permanent value” than Pennsylvanian corn sold at its “natural price.” Indeed, the riches of any country ultimately depending upon the labor which produces the commodities upon which their commerce depended, and trade being no more than the exchange of labor for labor, “the value of all things is... justly measured by labour.

Modest Enquiry was the longest, single text that Franklin had published to date, and his first substantive foray into political economy.³ He likely took his understanding of the labor theory of value from William Petty, especially *A Treatise of Taxes and Contributions* (1662).⁴ The notion that labor inputs during production endow commodities with value which is later realized in exchange was taken up by subsequent political economists, including Adam Smith and David Ricardo and early socialists, such as Robert Owen and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Franklin's reference to labor and value earned him a couple of mentions by Karl Marx, given in the header quotes. By the late nineteenth century, however, scholars schooled in theories of marginal utility were keen to stifle any association between Franklin and what they regarded as the "socialistic" conception of labor value.⁵ Marginal theorists equated value with buyers' wants and desires which could be calculated mathematically and plotted on graphs showing movements in supply, demand, and prices. It was this level of specificity – regarding the "transformation" of production inputs to exchange value measured by price – that eluded labor theories and burnished the marginalists'

Bubble,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Sixth Series)*, 12 (2002), 141-165; Helen Paul, *The South Sea Bubble* (London, 2010).

³ The *Journal of a Voyage* (1726) charting his return from London is longer, at roughly 10k, but written intermittently, and *Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity* (1727) is 5.5k words.

⁴ William Petty, *A Treatise of Taxes and Contributions. Shewing the Nature and Measures of Crown Lands, Assessments...* (1662; London, 1685), chapter four section 18.

⁵ Francis Newton Thorpe, *Benjamin Franklin and the University of Pennsylvania* (1893), 142-43; William Achenbach Wetzel, *Benjamin Franklin as an Economist* (New York, 1895), 30-31; Francis Newton and Lewis J Carey, *Franklin's Economic Views* (New York, 1928), 6-16, 41.

claims to a scientific approach.⁶ With this in mind, pioneer Franklin scholars emphasized his reliance on Petty as the earliest advocate of "Political Arithmetick" located within an emerging liberal political economy. In 1905 Max Weber bolstered this characterization, opening his influential essay, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, with a selection of the printer's maxims concerning the virtues of self-reliance, punctuality, and repute in money making. After 1930, and publication of the first English edition of Weber's essay, it was this Franklin -- calculating, aphoristic, and the embodiment of the Calvinist work ethic -- who predominated in the scholarly and popular mind.⁷ It was an image that sat well with an impression of the era as witness to emergence of an ideology of possessive individualism and the foundations of modern liberal democracy.⁸

In the last half century or so Franklin's reputation -- as an exemplary American striver, founding father, racist enslaver -- has risen and fallen depending on the tenor of historiographical debate.⁹ However, his earliest writing on money and political economy has largely rested where it was laid at the turn of the twentieth century. Recent considerations of *Modest Enquiry* emphasize Franklin's youthful experience of the Massachusetts' currency debates and the influence of pro-paper advocates such as the Reverend John Wise, a puritan supporter of a private bank scheme led by "Landed Men, and Great Merchants." Franklin's broader intellectual grounding, and his faith in self-interest and a society founded on mutual needs and interests, continues to be associated with the big names of early English political economy, such as Thomas Mun, William Petty, John Lock to name but a few. The labor theory of value is less prominent and, until recently, was considered to be so comprehensively discredited that even Marxist commentators wondered if there was anything worth salvaging from what was once presumed a central tenet of Marx's account

⁶ One the emergence of the "Austrian School," Geoffrey Ingham, "On the Underdevelopment of the 'Sociology of Money'," *Acta Sociologica* 41, no. 1 (1998): 3-18. For a contemporary critique of labor theory of value and the virtues of marginalism, Dave Elder-Vass, *Inventing Value: The Social Construction of Monetary Worth* (Cambridge, 2022).

⁷ Weber's citations all come from texts published after *Modest Enquiry*, when Franklin's career was secure. For example "the good paymaster is lord of another man's purse" from *Necessary hints to these that would be rich* (1736) and others from and *Advice to a Young Tradesmen* (1748). Nian-Sheng Huang, *Benjamin Franklin in American Thought and Culture, 1790-1990* (American Philosophical Society, 1994). Lawrence A. Scaff, *Max Weber in America* (Princeton, 2011).

⁸ Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America; an Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York, 1955); C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford, 1962), 1, 3, 258, 270.

⁹ Carla L. Mulford, "Appreciating Benjamin Franklin," *Early American Literature* 52, no. 3 (2017), 729-748.

of the expropriation of workers' surplus value.¹⁰ Franklin is firmly located within an emerging discourse of "early modern liberalism," connecting him to David Hume, Adam Smith and, according to some, even John Maynard Keynes and modern approaches economic stimulus.¹¹ The more *Modest Enquiry* becomes enveloped in this liberal tradition, however, the more we are diverted from considering Franklin in his immediate context, his audience, and why he made the arguments he did, including the emphasis on the labor theory of value which caught Marx's attention more than a century later.

Marx's mentions of Franklin were more than gratuitous, surviving years of tortuous manuscript revisions to make it into his published work. Moreover, although these references have usually been read as admiring, they had a critical edge.¹² In 1859, Marx criticized Franklin's conception of labor value as derived from naturalized inputs of time and effort, rather than his own more abstract conception of "exchange value as labor-time." Eight years later Marx wrote approvingly of Franklin's identification of value with labor, but again noted the young printer's lack of understanding of the wider implications of his observations. In this second citation, in *Capital* volume one, Marx included Franklin's observations within a broader discussion commodities, value, and the myth of self-reliant individualism rendered in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which Marx used to parody classical political economists' simplistic accounts of labor value and de-socialized individuals. Charting the rise of this *homo economicus*, Marx argued, these accounts were equivalent to fiction in the way in which they obscured the real history of primitive

¹⁰ The last study to consider Franklin on labor theory value and relation to Marx was John R. Aiken, "Benjamin Franklin, Karl Marx, and the Labor Theory of Value." *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, (1966), 378-84.

¹¹ Carla J. Mulford offers a comprehensive survey of Franklin's liberal origins and impact, *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* (New York, 2015), 48-74, and Eliga Gould referred to problematic identification of "early modern liberalism" in his review, *Early American Literature* 51, no. 2 (2016): 501-505. Alan Craig Houston, *Benjamin Franklin and the Politics of Improvement* (New Haven, 2008), 41-47. For connections to modern stimulus packages and Keynes, see Richard A. Lester, "Currency Issues to Overcome Depressions in Pennsylvania, 1723 and 1729," *Journal of Political Economy* 46, no. 3 (1938), 324-375; Katie A. Moore, "America's First Economic Stimulus Package: Paper Money and the Body Politic in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1715-1730," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 83, no. 4 (2016), 529-557; Tracy Mott and George W. Zinke, "Benjamin Franklin's economic thought: a twentieth century appraisal," in Melvin H. Buxbaum ed., *Critical Essays on Benjamin Franklin* (Boston, 1987).

¹² Jonathon Sperber discusses Marx's tortuous revisions, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (New York, 2013), chapter ten; David Harvey also addresses Marx's reworking of his observations and arguments, *A Companion to Marx's Grundrisse* (Verso Books, 2023), introduction.

accumulation -- the enclosures of common land, the terrors of colonization and slavery -- that preceded the development of capitalism. Marx's key concern was distinguishing between the violence required to exploit peasants and enslaved workers, and the extraction of surplus from formally free workers who were the legal equals of their employers. The distinction was crucial to the related question that vexed Marx and his predecessors in classical political economy: how was profit and extraction of surplus value consistent with the principle of system-wide value equivalence of market exchanges? Marx's answer was that the commodification of labor power under capitalism produces a new and distinctive form of surplus, the aforementioned "exchange value as labor time." It is this form of value which exceeded the cost of deploying nominally free labor power and which, in the process of competitive production, accumulation, and investment, was transformed into capital.¹³ Thus Marx credits Franklin's identifying the salience of a labor theory of value in his colonial context, but he pairs him with Defoe as an advocate of an emerging and unconsciously violent perspective of bourgeois economics.

Recent historians have offered differing interpretations of arguments concerning political economy in the early eighteenth century. One influential perspective also considers the era as witness to a shift in economic ethics associated with market activities, emphasizing the anxieties associated with public credit, paper wealth, and what many considered a break with longstanding identification of civic virtue and moral personality with land based personal independence. This was especially evident in the 1720s, and the attacks by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, in *Cato's Letters*, and country party Tories, such as Henry St John 1st Viscount Bolingbroke, on political corruption and immorality.¹⁴ More recently, a recasting of the liberal narrative has described the triumph of a Whig political economy, which was inspired rather than cowed by the new commercial society, and which advocated an expansive economic vision based on labor,

¹³ For the recent rehabilitation of Marx's understanding of the connection between labor and value, see Andrew Kliman, *Reclaiming Marx's Capital: A Refutation of the Myth of Inconsistency* (Lexington, 2007); Fred Moseley, "M - C - M' and the End of the "Transformation Problem," *Continental Thought & Theory: A Journal of Intellectual Freedom* (2017), 424-452, and commentaries by Michael Beggs, "Zombie Marx and Modern Economics, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Forget the Transformation Problem." *The Journal of Australian Political Economy* 70, (2012): 11-24 and Gregory Slack, "Marx's Argument for the Labor Theory of Value," *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 53, no. 1 (2020), 143-156.

¹⁴ J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985), 230-31.

manufacturing, and the market in national and imperial economies.¹⁵ There are traces of both these interpretations in Pennsylvania's paper money controversy and Franklin's resort to the labor theory of value in *Modest Enquiry*. However, the literature that best captures the character of the colonial debate sits somewhere between the two and features historical subjects who were impatient with the old order and interested in pursuing new opportunities, while often unable to break free of the thrall of longstanding ethical rationales concerning legitimate and illicit gains.¹⁶

This moral ambiguity was evident from early on in Pennsylvania, which was settled in 1682 by Quakers boasting high-minded religious principles and activism. However, settlers and their wealthy governing elite soon clashed over what constituted legitimate gain and, briefly, even the use of enslaved labor. In the early eighteenth century these differences were dampened by the rise of a provincial oligarchy, mostly off the back of the fur trade with Native American traders and Pennsylvania's supply trade to the plantation colonies and the West Indies. However, when the South Sea Bubble broke it exposed the colony's underlying commercial frailties and reawakened earlier controversies regarding commerce and the Christian duties, this time in the context of the debate concerning the introduction of a paper currency.¹⁷ In the 1720s, however, the increasingly hackneyed debate between proprietary and provincial merchant versions of mercantilism were enlivened by a disruptive governor, William Keith, who weaponized popular resentment in favor of paper money and against the provincial elite. This inflamed tensions and prompted an unprecedented print war. By 1728-29 the province was deeply divided and needed a rationale for the expansion of paper money that could neutralize popular resentment and proprietary overreach, while restoring the dominance of a conservative provincial Quaker oligarchy. It was in this context that Franklin's *Modest Enquiry*, and advocacy of paper money based on the value of provincial labor, struck a chord.

¹⁵ Steven C. A. Pincus, "A Revolution in Political Economy," Maximillian E. Novak, *The Age of Projects* (Toronto, 2008), 115-139, and his *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven, 2009).

¹⁶ Jacob Viner, *The Role of Providence in the Social Order: An Essay in Intellectual History* (Princeton, 2015); Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism Before Its Triumph* (Princeton, 1981). More recently, Dwight Cochrane, *Raving At Usurers: Anti-Finance and the Ethics of Uncertainty in England, 1690-1750* (Charlottesville, 2016); Koji Yamamoto, *Taming Capitalism Before Its Triumph* (Oxford, Press, 2018); Mark Knights, *Trust and Distrust: Corruption in Office in Britain and Its Empire* (Oxford, 2021).

¹⁷ Kristen Beales, "The Pennsylvania Bubble: Quakers and the Pennsylvania Land Company in the Era of the South Sea Bubble," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 54 no 1, (Fall, 2020), 121-141

Benjamin Franklin arrived in Pennsylvania in 1723 and after an eighteen month sojourn to London in 1724-1726, returned to Philadelphia in the midst of the dispute concerning paper money. His pamphlet appeared at the end of this lengthy dispute during which Franklin was mostly focused on securing the patronage necessary to make his start as a printer. His emphasis on the labor theory of value as a secure foundation for public finance and trade reworked mercantilist views of provincial potential in ways that allowed him to advocate for increasing the money supply to a level at which all freeborn European colonists could pursue their interests. This had radical overtones, and gestured towards Pennsylvania's earlier religious mission, implying that ordinary settlers and their ventures would explore and justifiably exploit the colony's providential possibilities and limits. By advocating for the local management of money, Franklin also articulated a powerful sense of provincial autonomy within the empire, the implications of which became apparent over the next generation. However, as Marx discerned, *Modest Enquiry* also articulated a conservative, bourgeois vision, holding at its center a fictive and desocialized colonial subject similar to the eponymous *Crusoe* and subsequent classical political economy. Franklin's optimism regarding the future cultivation of the seemingly endless supply of land took did not register the claims and occupancy of Indigenous communities. Just as his valorization of Pennsylvania's farmers and artisans work took no account of the value produced by enslaved workers in the Caribbean which provided the markets for Pennsylvanian produce and the real underpinning for the value of their paper currency.

Value and usury in Penn's "Holy Experiment."

Arguments concerning the production and distribution of value in Pennsylvania began soon after the colony's founding, on the basis of the charter granted to William Penn, on 4 March 1681. Proprietary charters endowed holders with privileges to govern limited only by the proviso that their administration be not "repugnant" to the laws of England.¹⁸ Penn was in his late thirties and considered a crusading figure in the Quaker movement, within which piety implied more than just an inward devotional experience, and depended greatly on friends' ongoing interactions with

¹⁸ Vicki Hsueh, *Hybrid constitutions : challenging legacies of law, privilege, and culture in colonial America* (Durham, 2010); Richard J. Ross, *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500-1850* (New York, 2013).

each other and neighboring outsiders.¹⁹ The prospect of a New World colony attracted attention across European pietist communities and Penn plunged into his role as the architect of a colonial "Holy Experiment." He promised that ordinary freeholders would be able to vote and qualify for public offices, and live as "sober and industrious People" in a community "govern'd by laws of yr makeing." In this way, the spiritual knowledge and "love and harmony" made possible by the indwelling spirit would be communicated and experienced within a well-regulated community.²⁰ Earning money from work and investments that served the community was a Christian and virtuous act, but Quakers were also cautioned against too great a focus on worldly affairs. Thus George Fox taught that when a man "wrongs his neighbors he wrongs himself" and all should "do unto others as he would they should do unto him." By the 1680s lending at interest was no longer considered usurious in English law, but many, and especially communities of zealous protestants, subscribed to a broader sense of the term which counselled against benefitting from cynical management and manipulation of future outcomes. As the gospel of Luke reminded believers, "if you lend only where you expect to be repaid, what credit is there in that? Even sinners lend to each other to be repaid in full."²¹ At the outset, William Penn warned against covetousness, noting "the Love of Money or Riches... is the Root of all Evil."²²

The problem was that the new colonial proprietor was also determined to supplement his already considerable personal fortune with colonial quitrents, and this required financial backers with ambitions of their own. Between July - October 1681 Penn awarded 30,000 acres to 300 or so

¹⁹ In the preceding decade or so, Penn had suffered abuse and imprisonment, authored fifty books, pamphlets, and broadsides and travelled to Europe where he became something of a celebrity amongst Dutch and German pietists. Patrick Erben, "William Penn. German Pietist (?)," in Andrew R. Murphy and John Smolenski, *The Worlds of William Penn* (Rutgers, 2019), 232-248; Richard Alan Ryerson, "William Penn's Gentry Commonwealth: An Interpretation of the Constitutional History of Early Pennsylvania, 1681-1701," *Pennsylvania History* 61 (1994), 393-428.

²⁰ *Penn Papers*, 2: 84; Scharf, *History of Philadelphia*, 88-89; Hazard, *Annals*, 30-32; Smolenski, *Friends*, 42 and ch 2 passim.

²¹ George Fox, *Journal of George Fox* (London, Thomas Ellwood, ed, 1696), 26-27, cited in Alfred L. Brophy, "Ingenium Est Fateri Per Quos Profeceris: Francis Daniel Pastorius' Young Country Clerk's Collection and Anglo-American Legal Literature, 1682-1716," *The University of Chicago Law School Roundtable*, vol. 3, issue 2, (1996); Dwight Codr, *Raving At Usurers: Anti-Finance and the Ethics of Uncertainty in England, 1690-1750* (Charlottesville, 2016), 2. New Testament in Luke 6: 34 - 35.

²² William Penn, *A Discourse DISCOURSE Shewing the Nature and Discipline Of the HOLY Cross of Christ*, 2d. ed., (London, 1682), 245, 244-72.

investors, mostly land-owning gentry and merchants some of whom were established in Barbados and regarded Pennsylvania as a suitable extension of their New World interests. These wealthy Quakers envisioned themselves at the head of a social hierarchy sustained by deferential farmers and artisans whose role was to produce the crops necessary to provide for marketable surpluses with which the province would pay for imported necessities. In 1682 and 1683 twenty-three ships brought 3000 colonists who were seeking a new start, 600 of whom settled at Philadelphia. Around the same time, the First and Second Frames of Government were issued, reflecting the more socially-conservative vision.²³ New clauses diluted earlier commitments to popular sovereignty, favoring a council elite officials who possessed of the necessary "Wisdom, Virtue, and Ability."²⁴ In the spring of 1684 Penn returned to London to defend his title in boundary disputes with neighboring Maryland. Once home, he became embroiled in the controversies surrounding the Exclusion Crisis and then the Glorious Revolution, preventing his return for fifteen years. In the interim the colony boomed under the leadership of an increasingly self-regarding Quaker oligarchy led by Thomas Lloyd, a gentlemen and graduate in medicine and law from Jesus College, Oxford. Keen to realize what they regarded as just gains, Lloyd and his associates disregarded Penn's idealistic, communitarian land schemes, took up the choicest tracts of land, and subdivided them into dispersed and unequal farms and smallholdings.

The prioritizing of spiritual practices soon yielded to economic interests and the search for gain. Just as in early New England, the availability of land in Pennsylvania drew migrants flush with coin from the pre-departure asset sales, creating lively markets for supplies. Independent merchant importers disregarded the commercial privileges awarded to pioneering bodies, such as the Society of Traders, creating resentments that endured for decades.²⁵ Provincial administrators and investors recognized the potential for grain and commodities to find "a good market in Barbados, Jamaica, and the Carib Islands," and like other northern colonies Pennsylvania's business model largely depended on earning specie and trade value in Caribbean markets. The authorities

²³ Penn, *Some Account of the Province of Pennsylvania* (1681); "Concessions" granted to First Purchasers (1681), Penn Papers, 2: 81-82, 98, 132. Pennsylvania legislators considered placing a ceiling on laborers' wages at the founding, but ultimately decided that "every Man may agree with his Artificer to his best Advantage," Hazard, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 8th, 1: 9-10.

²⁴ Smolenski, *Friends*, 67; Nash, *Quakers and Politics*, 42-50; Tully, *Forming*, 28-36.

²⁵ Gary B. Nash, "The Free Society of Traders and the Early Politics of Pennsylvania," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 89, no. 2 (1965), 147-173.

introduced monetary innovations to foster the development of local production and markets, manipulating exchange rates of foreign coins to attract "money to promote trade, and make payments more easy."²⁶ Observing that in the "infancy of things" it was necessary that local crops "pass in lieu of money," they designated hemp and flax as "Current pay, be-twixt Man and Man" at four and eight pence per pound; other grains and provisions served as similar commodity substitutes "accompted as Current pay" at market prices.²⁷ Contracts agreed at other rates risked been held as void in local courts which provided legal remedies for colonists, knitting dispersed communities together as part of a shared monetary and legal culture.²⁸ Speculators bought up land and settled newcomers with bare reference to the proprietor, whose quitrents went uncollected or were settled with commodity "current money" leading to civil suits. Thus one Quaker yoeman, John Simcock, who had gone to jail in England rather than pay unjust tithes, insisted that since "country produce" was made lawful pay Penn and his collectors would have to accept his payment in corn or find a local jury that would make him pay in specie.²⁹

Migrants arrived from England and across Europe and wrote home in the hope of attracting others to join the venture. In 1683, Franz Daniel Pastorius, a highly-educated lawyer and writer from Windsheim in Franconia, led a group to settle at Germantown near Philadelphia. His letters and commonplace book give a sense of the settlers' piety, hopes, and ambitions. Philadelphia's sat on the banks of two navigable rivers, Pastorius wrote to correspondent back home, making it ideal for trade links with nearby settlements but also markets in London, Rotterdam, and down the Rhine to Frankfurt on the Main, Wesel, and Duisburg. From just thirteen households in 1683, he reported, the community had grown to fifty in five years; new arrivals could expect to secure fifty acres at a minimum quitrent which was theirs to keep "as if he had purchased the land in perpetuity for himself and his heirs."³⁰ Craftsmen were in demand and

²⁶ In 1683 it was enacted that the rate of sterling should be advanced 25 per cent, While New England money was rated at par. Pieces of eight were to pass for 6 shillings, Peru pieces for 5sh. 8d., "Caroluses" and "Jaco-buses," for 30 and 32 shillings respectively, Spanish pistoles for 20 shillings, ducats at 11sh. 6d., and lesser coin proportionately. They also punished those clipping or otherwise impairing the value of the coin, was fixed at a fine of £100 and imprisonment for a year. Nash, *Quakers*, 56-63; Levy, *Family*, 125-130, 145-47

²⁷ *Charter to William Penn and Laws*, 102-25, 128, 140, 162, 229; Horle, *Lawmakers*, 1: 31.

²⁸ William M. Offutt, *Of "Good Laws" and "Good Men": Law and Society in the Delaware Valley, 1680-1710* (Urbana, 1995).

²⁹ Nash, *Quakers*, 96; Horle, *Legislators*, 1: 673-674; *Charter and Laws of Pa.*, 145, 238, 275; *Col Recs*, 1: 558.

could expect good wages; servants who completed their terms and children who came of age also received fifty acres and citizenship. Pastorius looked forward to economic self-sufficiency. It was true, he noted, that early on there was "nothing but wilderness" and they had to "pay rather dearly of our own money to have food supplies brought over from [New] Jersey." However, now they could provide for themselves and even "serve neighboring communities" with what they produced. There was enough to send their surplus grain and cattle to the Caribbean in exchange for "for brandy, sirup, sugar and salt" and to trade with Native American suppliers for high quality furs which they sent back to England. They held annual trade fairs although "not for the sake of profit or grievous usury," but "in order to keep our money in the province" and "enable any of those among us to purchase whatever another has produced beyond his own needs," so that need not sail "over to neighboring islands, carrying their money with them."³¹

Other accounts emphasize the struggle to achieve Pastorius's vision. Thomas Tryon, a London-based shepherd turned hatter and mystic, whose vegetarianism and writings later influenced a young Benjamin Franklin, warned migrants not to focus on attempts to "enrich ourselves" and to concentrate on building houses, trade, and manufactures that were "Temples of Holiness and Righteousness."³² In a similar vein Thomas Budd, a Quaker trader, published a comprehensive review of Pennsylvania's geography, climate, and flora, and the commodities that could be sold to the West Indies and England and ensure the "Planters enrichment," the "Merchants advantage," and the "benefit of the Inhabitants in general."³³ Budd also outlined a monetary scheme, seemingly based on Virginia tobacco notes, in which a public store took in harvests of hemp, flax and linen and issued the producers notes which could then "pass from one man to another all one as Money." This "Bank of Monies and Credit" would enhance liquidity by

³⁰ See his *Beschreibung Pennsylvaniae* and Alfred L. Brophy, "Notes and Documents: The Quaker Bibliographic World of Francis Daniel Pastorius's Bee Hive," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 122, no. 3 (1998), 241-291.

³¹ J. D. Weaver, "Franz Daniel Pastorius (1651-C. 1720): Early Life in Germany With Glimpses of His Removal to Pennsylvania (Colonial, Seventeenth-Century, German-American, Pietism, Authoritarianism)" (Ph.D. University of California, Davis, 1985), 355-359, 361-65.

³² Tryon see *ODNB*, "Wisdom's dictates: or, Aphorisms and rules, physical, moral, and divine, for preserving the health of the body, and the peace of the mind..." (London, 1696), 6, and also "The planter's speech to his neighbours & country-men of Pennsylvania," in which he raves at "Meat-eaters were 'digging their *Graves* with their own *Teeth*." Later influence on Franklin, especially his book, *The Way to Health* (1683) describing an ideal commonwealth, in Bunker, *Franklin*, 92-93.

³³ Budd, 30

facilitating the assigning of notes, bonds, and bills of exchange, and providing mortgages for families wishing to purchase a few thousand acres. In this way, Budd set out in a long and detailed text, the income from interest on loans could provide for public schools so that the children of "the poor and Indians" would receive "like learning with the Rich People."³⁴ Neither Tryon nor Budd underestimated the challenges facing the colonists, but both considered their plans achievable if only there was "a good understanding to those that are in authority amongst us" and those who already had a "great store of Money" invested in their co-religionists now living in a "distressed Condition."³⁵

By the late 1680s the powerful Quaker oligarchy and wealthy settlers' single-minded pursuit of their own interests seemed to many to jeopardize the religious ideals and the general good. Those who could afford to do so took on indentured servants or hired laborers to produce grain and other saleable commodities, leading to the lively local markets for servants, wage and price inflation, and disagreements concerning commodity money substitutes. Debtors who could not settle their obligations were subject to a term of compulsory service.³⁶ Their status approaching that of enslaved people imported by wealthy Quakers, prompting criticism from those who opposed slavery. Leading Quakers, including William Penn, had been active as enslavers since the Barbadian sugar boom in the 1660s. They took the view that their African bondspeople were natural slaves who could be legitimately coerced to work and disciplined, as long as they also

³⁴ Budd, 5. Quaker, had come to Burlington in 1678 where he rose quickly as member of the council and holding various public posts charged with collecting assessments and regulating lands and, a member of the council, delegated in 1684 to return to England to negotiate regarding borders. When he returned he made a deal with Bradford to publish a comprehensive analysis of the colony.

³⁵ Budd, "Good Order Established in Pennsylvania and New Jersey," 1688, 30, 44-46, 51, adapted methods described in Yarranton, Andrew, " *England's improvement by sea and land To out-do the Dutch without fighting, to pay debts without moneys, to set at work all the poor of England with the growth of our own lands.*" (1677). Budd scheme maps to Blackwell's in design and conceptualization most like both were following trends in London and colonies since Potter and Wise. Barbon: "The rich are fed, clothed, and housed by the labour of other men, but the poor by their own; and the goods made by this labour are the rents of the rich men's land (for to be well fed, well clothed, and well lodged without labour either of body or mind, is the true definition of a rich man," in *Apology for the Builder; or, A discourse shewing the cause and effects of the increase of building* (London, 1685), also his *Discourse on Trade* (1690); Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith*, 73. Budd scheme similar to one proposed by Proudhon in 1840s, Stefan Eich, *Currency of Politics*, 110.

³⁶ *Statutes at Large*, 1:63-64, 65, 133; *Charter to William Penn, and Laws*, 152; Priest, "Creating an American Property Law," 413-21.

received instruction on Christianity.³⁷ However, Tryon and others denounced the enslavers and also the growing inequalities between richer, middling, and poorer families which allowed some to enjoy illicit gains and live comfortable and respectable family lives, while others were unable to maintain households and parent their children according to accepted mores.³⁸ In 1688 Pastorius and the residents of Germantown issued a formal protest against slavery on moral and political grounds, connecting it to usurious practices in the colony.

If in Christian Doctrine we abide, then God is surely on our side; But if we Christ's Precepts transgress, Negroes by Slavery oppress, And white ones grieve by usury (Two evils, which to Heaven cry), We've neither God, not Christ his son, But straightaways travel Hellwards on.

The Yearly Meeting rejected the Germantown protest for having "so General a Relation to many other Prts," but discontent grew with what many regarded as a dispiriting focus on gain and perversion of the original vision.³⁹

In 1688, Penn, re-asserted his authority in Pennsylvania by appointing a non-Quaker lieutenant governor from outside the provincial clique. John Blackwell was a Cromwellian military veteran, who had left for New England following the revocation of his Irish properties at the end of the Civil Wars. Shortly after arriving, he noted the exorbitant wages and prices and the exploitation of the local population by Quaker merchant importers and creditors, quipping that the "hosts of Musqueetos are worse than armed men" but the "men without Armes worse than they... each praying with his neighbor on First Days, and the preying on him the other six."⁴⁰ Blackwell

³⁷ For quakers and slavery see, Brycchan Carey, *From Peace to Freedom: Quaker Rhetoric and the Birth of American Antislavery, 1657-1761* (New Haven, 2012).

³⁸ Levy, *Quaker Family*, 136-40

³⁹ Kirsten Block, "Cultivating Inner and Outer Plantations: Property, Industry, and Slavery in Early Quaker Migration to the New World," *Early American Studies* 8, No. 3 (2010), 515-548; Katharine Gerbner, "Antislavery in Print: The Germantown Protest, the "exhortation," and the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Debate on Slavery," *Early American Studies* 9, no. 3 (2011), 552-575; Alfred L. Brophy, "Notes and Documents: The Quaker Bibliographic World of Francis Daniel Pastorius's Bee Hive," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 122, 3 (1998), 241-291, especially the bee hive essay on usury. Marianne S. Wokeck, "Francis Daniel Pastorius," in *Horle Lawmakers*, 1: 586-90.

⁴⁰ Joseph Dorfman, "Captain John Blackwell: A Bibliographical Note," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 69, no. 3 (July 1945), 233-37. Nicholas B. Wainwright, "Governor John Blackwell." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* Vol. 74, No. 4, (1950): 457-472. Original Letters and Documents," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 6, no. 3 (1882): 363-64. In 1691, assemblymen in New York discussed a similar

recommended a public land bank and paper money scheme, adapted from a plan first proposed in Massachusetts, as a more amenable foundation for provincial commerce.⁴¹ But the concerted opposition of Lloyd and his associates ensured Blackwell's departure after only eighteen months. The Quaker oligarchy's administration appeared unassailable. However, in 1691 an influential minister, George Keith, provoked a dispute concerning the practice of faith which galvanized opposition to the provincial elite. The theological disagreement concerning the conception of Jesus Christ as both God and a man and his relationship to the Inner Light was so arcane that Keith's opponents accused him "specious pretence" and modern historians still puzzle over the details.⁴² However, while the recondite detail of the dispute concerning faith was likely lost on the majority, Keith's challenge to Pennsylvania's leadership drew considerable support from discontented middling farmers and artisans and divided the colony on questions of economic justice and slavery through the 1690s. In the absence of the kind of administration and monetary schemes imagined by Budd, Blackwell and others, the ambition to build a new Jerusalem on the banks of the Delaware had fallen victim to the power and interests of a merchant oligarchy.⁴³

In 1699 Penn returned, once again seeking to restore his authority and interests. Pennsylvania's population had quadrupled to fifteen thousand, many were internal migrants escaping the wars in New

bill to regulate the "Extravagancy of tradesmen and labourers wages that work by the day," though they too decided against implementing wage regulations. O'Callaghan, *Journal of the Legislative Council of the Colony of New-York*, 1: 5.

⁴¹ John Blackwell], "A Model for Erecting a Bank of Credit, etc. (London, 1688)," in Andrew McFarland Davis, ed., *Colonial Currency Reprints, 1682-1751*, vol. 1 (Boston: Prince Society, 1910), 154-88. Blackwell also contributed to monetary debates in London in the 1690s. John Blackwell, *An essay towards carrying on the present war with France* (London, 1695). Keith J. Horsefield, "The Origins of Blackwell's Model of a Bank." *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 23, No. 1, (1966), 121-135. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 103, refers to William Penn scheme to form a land bank and supply paper credit in early 1700s. Nettles, *Money Supply*, 174-175.

⁴² Thomas Ellwood challenged Keith in his *An epistle to Friends. Brielly commemorating the gracious dealings*, (London, 1693), 7, 13, also Anon, *A solemn protestation against George Keith's advertisement... against... Quakers*, (London, 1697). Responses from Keith and his support, Keith, *False judgments reprehended*, (Philadelphia, 1692), 2 and Budd, *A brief answer*, 3 and Budd, *A true copy*, 6. For continuing debate regarding meaning of dispute, Madeleine, Ward. "The Intellectual Context for the Development of Quakerism, 1647-1700," (D.Phil, Oxford University, 2017).

⁴³ George Keith, *An Exhortation & Caution to Friends Concerning Buying or Keeping of Negroes* (n.p. [William Bradford], 1693), p. 1. Tully, *Forming*, 69-78; William Frost, *The Keithian Controversy in Early Pennsylvania* (Norwood, 1979; Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers & Slavery* (Princeton, 1985), 18-32; Kenneth Andrew Shelton, "The Way Cast Up: The Keithian Schism in an English Enlightenment Context," (Ph.D., Boston College, 2009), 282-85; Katharine Gerbner, "'We Are Against the Traffik of Men-Body': The Germantown Quaker Protest of 1688 and the Origins of American Abolitionism," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 74, 2 (2007), 149-172.

England and New York. Initially Penn sought to confirm the crown's and so his prerogative. When this failed he switched to advocating on behalf of provincial rights. A 1701 Charter provided for a provincial governor, appointed by the proprietor, and an elected Assembly of twenty-six representatives drawn from Philadelphia but mostly the Quaker dominated three rural counties. The governor's council could offer advice but, unlike other colonies, had no status as an upper house and did not validate laws proposed by the Assembly. Philadelphia also got a new corporate charter, providing for a self-perpetuating common council which served as a municipal and judicial authority. The reforms established the ground for decades of political wrangling between advocates for provincial and proprietary rights.⁴⁴ By 1712 Penn's prospects looked so poor that he began negotiations to sell his interest to the crown for £12,000, but was thereafter incapacitated by a stroke.⁴⁵ The colony's fortunes improved following the Treaty of Utrecht (1713-15) and the rise of West Indian supply trade. Prosperity calmed political discontents, and entrenched the authority of the Quaker merchants and landowners whose self-serving mercantilist vision prevailed. Pennsylvania competed with New York and Massachusetts, who laid duties on their exports and cried up local exchange rates to draw their specie away.⁴⁶ Still Pennsylvania boomed, drawing thousands of Scots-Irish and German migrants in search of land, and making Philadelphia the fastest-growing city in the British Empire.⁴⁷ In 1718 Penn died, penniless. Penn's passing launched a decade-long dynastic struggle between his first and second families, during which the colony confronted divisive issues relating to over land sales, frontier security, and the introduction of paper money following the collapse of the South Sea Bubble.⁴⁸

Jacobite mercantilism.

⁴⁴ *Papers of William Penn*, 4: 565-66; Nash, *Quakers and Politics*, 217. Also between mostly Anglican and Presbyterian Lower Counties, who regarded Quakers with suspicion and campaigned for separate Assembly

⁴⁵ *Papers of William Penn*, 4: 725-26.

⁴⁶ 1704 Proclamation Act prompted an inter-colonial competition to retain specie in which Pennsylvania lost out Shepherd, *History*, 403-4; *Penn Archives First*: 1, 157.

⁴⁷ Aaron Fogelman, "Migrations to the 13 British North American colonies," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (1992), 691-709, and his *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement and Political Culture in Colonial America* (Philadelphia, 1996). Also Patrick Griffin, *The People With No Name: Ireland's Ulster Scots, America's Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689-1764* (Princeton, 2001). McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 228 - 29.

⁴⁸ Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 106-10; Silver, *Savage Neighbours*, 46-48.

One of Penn's last acts was to appoint William Keith as lieutenant-governor in Pennsylvania. Keith was from a minor branch of a venerable Highland family, who had served for six centuries as retainers to the kings of Scotland. Unsurprisingly, Keith followed James II into exile in Paris after the Glorious Revolution, but had to return to London in 1703-4 owing to diminished family fortunes. Keith was a Jacobite, who identified with a conservative Enlightenment: he was interested in new knowledge and innovation, but committed to the legitimate monarch as the strongest bulwark against threats from foreign powers, political corruption, and declining public morals.⁴⁹ By 1713 he had trained as a lawyer, married well, and through a connection to the Tory minister, Robert Harley, secured the post of Surveyor-General of Customs for the southern American colonies at five hundred pounds per annum. He was a vigorous crown official, brushing aside challenges to his collection of the customs revenues in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, Bahamas, and Jamaica.⁵⁰ Keith considered England's American colonies as subaltern territories dedicated to producing primary crops and providing markets for domestic manufacturers. In 1715, he lost his position to a Whig purge of Tory appointees, but managed to land the job of Lieutenant Governor in Pennsylvania arriving in Philadelphia in 1717. For a time he worked well with the proprietors' representatives and allies, including James Logan, who had come to Pennsylvania as Penn's secretary in 1699 and thereafter rose to prominence as the family's leading representative on the provincial council, while also serving as mayor of Philadelphia and making his fortune in the fur and merchant trade. Isaac Norris, Logan's ally and also a prominent merchant, considered Keith a man "of Sense and Humanity" although early on he observed that his "way of living" might require greater "maintenance" than previous incumbents. Little did either man imagine just how much maintenance Keith would require.⁵¹

⁴⁹ The Keiths of Ludquharn served the kings of Scotland as Earls of Marischal, or stalwart retainers, and were implicated in Pretender plots in 1704 and 1715 – the latter forcing Keith's father and other relatives to flee and live out their lives on the continent, William Speck, "William Keith, 1669-1749," *ODNB*. On conservative Enlightenment, Max Skjönsberg, "David Hume and the Jacobites," *The Scottish Historical Review* 100, no. 1 (2021), 25-56; Paul Kleber Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People, 1688-1788* (Cambridge, 1993); Margaret Sankey Szechi and Daniel Szechi, "Elite Culture and the Decline of Scottish Jacobitism 1716-1745," *Past & Present*, 173 (November, 2001), 90-128.

⁵⁰ Thomas Wendel, "The Life and Writings of Sir William Keith, Lieutenant-Governor of Pennsylvania and the Three Lower Counties, 1717-1726," (Ph.D. University of Washington, 1964), 3-5. In Jamaica, Keith's actions in pursuit of 8,000 pounds in prize money owed to the crown caused "a good deal allarm'd the Tradeing part of the Island," *CSP*, 1714-1715, 158, 216, 219.

⁵¹ Wendel, "Life of Keith," 39.

Pennsylvania had suffered periodic specie dearth before, but nothing prepared the province for the collapse of the South Sea Bubble which deprived them of currency they considered “Sinews of life and Trade.”⁵² In Philadelphia shipyards fell silent, and the number of vessels clearing the port plummeted from 130 to 79 in 1721-23. Farmer and artisans' incomes and land values collapsed and debt litigation soared.⁵³ While the Penn family in London bickered over the division of the estate, Keith saw an opportunity for the himself and the crown. Like other colonial officials, he favored a more unified administrative approach to the Indian trade and defense against the French in the west. He was particularly critical of provincial merchants, whose pursuit of their own "trading interests" and determination to "crush their neighbours" hampered effective governance. Keith was fond of observing that "unanimity is the life of business," and he had no qualms about combining his private ventures with public projects, for example surveying lands not yet ceded by their Native occupants as sites for future ironworks and gristmills.⁵⁴ He also relished his social status. In 1721, he inherited his father's title, dropped the “Esq” from his signature, and thereafter signed his letters as the “Baronet and Governor of the Colony of Pennsylvania.”⁵⁵ He issued executive proclamations that handed monopolies to supporters, removed the Penn's official appointees, and provided a charter of incorporation to the City of New Castle in the Lower Counties.⁵⁶ His critics suspected Keith “to be very much in a state of

⁵² In February 1717 upwards of two hundred Pennsylvania residents petitioned the provincial Assembly regarding “the want of running Cash” during the post-war boom and importation of “sundry merchandizes and Especially servants” which had drained “the province of the currant Coyn,” in *Miscellaneous Collections, Petitions relating to coinage/currency, 1717-1848*, Box 4b, folder 2, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (hereafter, HSP).

⁵³ 1718-24 the silver prices for local wheat fell by a third and Jonathan Dickinson, a Jamaican Quaker merchant, noted “Our trade is sunk, our money gone and what Shipping comes in brings little goods.” See, Hazard, *Register of Pennsylvania*, 6; Wendel, “Life of Keith,” 135. Committee of Grievances reported the following spike in suits on the Sheriff’s docket, rising from 431 in 1715-16 to 588 the following year and then 627 and 847 in 1719/20 and 1720/21 in C. W. MacFarlane, “Pennsylvania Paper Currency,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 8, (1896), 50-51. Surveys of the effects of South Sea Bubble collapse in Lester, “Currency Issues;” Schweitzer, *Custom and Contract*, 115-16; Nash, *Urban Crucible*, 117-27.

⁵⁴ Keith's views on colonial administration, *CSP* January 1719 - Feb 1720, 6, 32-41, quote at 36; Representation Lords of trade to the King concerning his colonies, September, 1721 in *DRCNY*, 5, 590-630, Pennsylvania discussed 603-606. Wendel, 43; Logan to Joshua Gee, 8 October, 1724, PPOC, 1, 169; Aaron Graham, *Corruption, Party, and Government in Britain, 1702-1713* (Oxford, 2015).

⁵⁵ For change in signature compare proclamations made in 1720 and 1722, *Penn Archives, Eighth*, 2: 1335, 1442.

⁵⁶ Thus he removed James Logan as Clerk to the Council, appointed David Lloyd, as Chief Justice, and settled German immigrants on proprietary lands. Logan to Joshua Gee, Oct. 8, 1724, Penn Papers, Official

independency," and in the aftermath of the bubble he confirmed their worst fears when he launched a scheme to take-over of the colony.

Keith's support for provincial paper money was crucial to his plan, and for a time it won him important allies, not least the Quaker merchant, Francis Rawle. Rawle was nearing sixty when the recession hit, and had a long history of antagonism with Keith's chief opponents in the proprietary party and ruling oligarchy. Rawle was a constitutional conservative, who considered the original 1683 Frame of Government as the legitimate foundation of provincial authority. So much so, that when William Penn had briefly lost his charter in 1692, Rawle favored royal rule under the Tory governor, Benjamin Fletcher, over the claim of the provincial Quaker leadership led by Thomas Lloyd.⁵⁷ Through marriage and family connections, Rawle became involved in the defense of the Society of Traders. He also joined the Keithians in the schism of the 1690s. Rawle was the kind of Quaker who took cautions concerning the combination of commerce and spiritual life to heart. His support for the introduction of paper currency was revealing. In 1721, writing as a "lover of the country, Rawle diagnosed provincial ills as the result of a specie dearth resulting from a balance of trade deficit, which he blamed on the poor quality of Pennsylvanian flour (compared to New York's) and the wanton import of rum and molasses, which was consumed as rum and used as a commodity money substitute. This had led to disorderly commerce and reliance on the "scandalous custom...of endless trust and beggarly discount." He recommended inspections to improve the quality of exports and duties to reduce imports. Echoing schemes first set out by Budd thirty years previously, he also called for a limited issue of money backed by land and "public authority," arguing that it did not matter whether the money be made of "pewter, silver, spelter, brass or paper" as long as it made "pay... more ready and punctual." This would free Pennsylvania of its dependence on credit and commodity money substitutes which ruined "the common people" their "Trades and Callings discouraged and valued at nought" and the province at

Correspondence (PPOC), I, 169, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP); William B. Rawle, "The General Title of the Penn Family to Pennsylvania," PMHB, 23 (1899), 60-68, 224-240, 464-482; New Castle charter, Patrick Gordon to John Penn, Oct. 22, 1726, PPOC, I, 247. By the middle of the decade he was treating the Lower Counties as a private preserve. Richard S. Rodney, "Delaware Under Governor Keith: 1717-1726," *Delaware History*, III (1948), 1-25; Wendel, "Life of Keith," 160-164.

⁵⁷ See Francis Rawle biographical essay, Horle, *Lawmakers*, 2: 875-879; Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 100.

large which was regarded "by all Foreigners, as a Country beggarly and scandalous, not worth Trading with."⁵⁸

Pennsylvania held annual Assembly elections, usually in early October, and they were often rambunctious affairs. The poll in 1721 was especially vigorously contested and provincial voters ousted thirteen, mostly wealthy, assemblymen associated with the proprietary party, and put in relative political novices representing rural and artisanal constituencies. Jonathon Dickinson and Isaac Norris, who between them boasted a dozen Assembly terms, were replaced by William Tidmarsh, a Quaker smallholder from the outskirts of Philadelphia, elected his first and only term, and Benjamin Vining, an Anglican sea captain and shipbuilder in his late thirties, who had previously only served one term as a city representative.⁵⁹ Thereafter the new Assembly received petitions from "sundry Merchants, Traders," and "considerable Number of Inhabitants," seeking relief from the credit squeeze. In response, the legislators offered various, populist measures, most of which were described in Rawle's pamphlet: they reduced port and legal fees and millers' charges, restricted the hiring out of slaves, and introduced annual elections for tax assessors; they raised duties on imported liquors and molasses and on exported deer skins, lowered interest rates from 8 to 6 per cent, monetized hemp as a commodity substitute, and cried-up local coin values.⁶⁰ They held back from issuing paper money although the pressure grew, not least Keith who advocating for lower interest rates and take the side of provincial debtors over their impatient creditors, declaring that it was not "the Great, the Rich, nor the Learned that compose the Body of any People" but the "poor laborious and Industrious Part of Mankind."⁶¹ In December 1722 he wrote to the Board of Trade, making the case for a public currency that would restore colonial markets for British manufactures and which was only opposed by a handful of lawyers and those

⁵⁸ Francis Rawle, *Some Remedies Proposed, for the Restoring the Sunk Credit of the Province of Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia, 1721).

⁵⁹ Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, *The Journals of Henry Melchoir Muhlenberg*, 3 vols, (Philadelphia, 1942), 2: 517, in Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, 1: 238; Horle, *Lawmaking and Legislators*, 2: 992-993, 1030-32.

⁶⁰ *Penn Archives, Eighth Ser.*, 2: 1353, 1361, 1390-1391, 1394-1395, 1398, 1414-15. Shepherd, *History of Proprietary Government in Pennsylvania*, 400-415.

⁶¹ *Penn Archives, Eighth Ser.*, 2: 1381, 1386, 1459-60; Wendel, "Life of Keith," 140-14.

he cast as "a few rich usurers here," who were "violently bent on opposing the people's inclination to paper money."⁶²

Despite Keith's populist advocacy and a growing lobby within and beyond the Assembly, the case for paper money remained far from clear cut. Early on a majority of assemblymen were clearly intent on trying the usual remedies for the decline in trade, sticking with tried and trusted monetary fixes such as expanding current money commodity substitutes to include wheat, beef, pork, hemp, and flax which would "pass on all Occasions as ready Money."⁶³ Moreover, those who would end up as the most vociferous opponents of paper money -- such as James Logan and Isaac Norris who suspected Keith of weaponizing the issue to stir up "a Levelling spirit" -- did not initially reject proposals for provincial bills outright. Their chief worry was the lack silver to back provincial notes.⁶⁴ In January 1723 Logan submitted a lengthy, legalistic memorandum organized under eight "heads" in which he noted parliament's disapproval of tampering with currency and that the Bank of England's "Exchequer Bills" were considered "equal in Value with Silver." If the province was determined to produce its own paper notes, he recommended that "whole sum struck [should] be but small," secured by sound collateral, and quickly "sunk" or redeemed in a "just Manner." Logan was unable to conceive of public paper bills as anything other than a risky version of a personal note. Whereas specie and commodities possessed intrinsic value, public paper no more than a promise to pay at some point in the future and, in Logan's view, could not work outside a circle of those who could be relied upon to pay their debts. Without this backing, public paper promises were unlikely to be fulfilled or, even worse, they would be satisfied with yet another bill and so circulate endlessly. Like Rawle, Logan cast the commercial downturn and declining balance of trade in terms of personal exchange and public morals, and especially the need to curb provincial appetite for imported rum. "Commonly people become wealthy by

⁶² Keith to the Council of Trade, 18 December 1722, marked as received on 5 February 1723 but not "read" until 13 June, *CSP*, 1722-23, 189. See, Wendel, "Life of Keith," 138 note 12. Keith maintained his view even in later life, recalling how "all the European Goods imported, as well as the Bread and Flower, or Country Produce, were bought up and engrossed at a low Price, by a Cabal of only four or five rich Men, who retail'd them again on Credit at what Rate they pleased, taking Advantage of the People's Necessities and Circumstances; by which Means they soon got the whole Country into their Debt, exacting Bonds of every Body at 8 per Cent. which was then the legal Interest," in Sir William Keith, *A Collection of Papers and Other Tracts Written Occ on Various Subjects* (London, 1740), p. 212.

⁶³ Thus a petition from Chester County to the Assembly proposed "that the Current money of this province be raised and *not* to make a paper currency," *Penn Archives, Eighth*, 2: 1462. Emphasis mine.

⁶⁴ Logan wrote to Henry Gouldney in 1723; Wendel, "Life of Keith," 143.

Sobriety and Industry," Logan wrote, "and poor by Luxury, Idleness, and Folly."⁶⁵ Early on it might have been possible for these different stakeholders to work out a compromise, as they ultimately would in 1729. However, over the next four years Keith's populist campaign to harness the popular call for paper money to his own cause provoked a rancorous debate affording us some insight into what were considered the province's political economy alternatives.

In January 1723, Keith previewed his position in a memorandum satirizing Logan's legalistic presentation and denouncing his discussion of credit as akin to "Mathematicks" and presented with such "Subtilty of an Artlet Truth or Falsehood" that it was surely "misapprehended by the plainest, and general speaking... Part of Mankind."⁶⁶ In the Assembly a "Long debate" addressed Logan's concerns and there was broad agreement on an issue of fifteen thousand pounds in paper notes, to be loaned out in sums of no more than one hundred pounds at five per cent interest "for the benefit of the poor [and] industriousness sort of people."⁶⁷ The notes were legal tender for all debts, and counterfeiters were subject to having their "ears cut off," or receive thirty lashes on their bare backs and be fined or sold into servitude. Three hand-picked commissioners oversaw a new General Loan Office, managing loans secured by mortgages on land and property and taking in notes as they circulated back as public payments.⁶⁸ Writing privately, and rising above Keith's taunts, Logan sounded upbeat, observing that "if we have no more of it" then the paper currency "may prove rather useful than injurious to us." His tone quickly changed, however, when Keith authorized a second issue of five thousand pounds by the Lower Counties, emphasizing their controversial semi-autonomy from Pennsylvania.⁶⁹ Next it was rumored that Keith was organizing two political organizations to organize in favor of the governor and paper money: a Gentlemen's Club for his substantial backers, and the "Tiff Club," named for a Scottish

⁶⁵ *Penn Archives, Eighth Ser.*, 2: 1469-72.

⁶⁶ *Penn Archives, Eighth Ser.*, 2:1474-83; Wendel, "Life of Keith," 142-45.

⁶⁷ Act accompanied by other remedial legislation favoring debtors and interest set at 5 per cent over a 8 year redemption period. The security provisions were more conservative than Keith suggested and favored those who were already landowners in *Penn Archives, Eighth*, 2: 1478, 1514, 1520, 1524. "A Paper containing the further Sentiments of the Gentleman, Merchants &c," *Penn Archives, Eighth*, 2: 1486-93.

⁶⁸ *Pennsylvania Statutes*, 1722-23, 324-38, 360-62, 389-407; Wendell, "Life of Keith," 146-47.

⁶⁹ *Penn Archives, Second*, 7: 81; Logan to Goldney, 27 Feb 1723, *Penn Archives, Eighth*, 2: 1510.

drink taken liberally at their meetings, for artisan supports who were also known as the “leather aprons.”⁷⁰

In September Logan used his position as justice for the grand jury in the Philadelphia court of quarter sessions to issue a sixteen page address, warning of a growing threat to the balance of power within the government which was the province's "greatest human blessing." Without such balance the weak would become the prey of the strong, there would be no justice in exchange, and working people would be unable to live sober, frugal, and industrious lives and "will undoubtedly become poorer."⁷¹ Logan prepared to sail for London, to raise the alarm with the Penn family regarding Keith's machinations. Even as he did so, the positive effects of the paper money issue were clear. Merchant vessels returned to Philadelphia, the wharves were busy, and shipwrights and associated trades built twice the number of vessels than the year before.⁷² The 1723 Assembly elections returned Rawle to office, along with David Lloyd, an old adversary of Logan and the proprietary interest. Lloyd supported further issues of paper money in part to fund public works in Philadelphia.⁷³ In the Assembly a mixed group "Keithians" produced pro-paper money reports, drafted legislation, and organized the votes. Logan denounced them as "mobbish" rabble rousers. In reality, they were an eclectic group, comprising physicians, blacksmiths, farmers, and small traders. Some were stalwart Quakers, others Anglicans; some had officeholding experience, others were political novices. Most were in their mid 30s-40s and had come to the colony in their teens or early twenties. Several owned multiple city lots and houses, in addition to small holdings in nearby townships such as Northern Liberties. Some were importers and traders, with shops on Front Street and so first-hand experience of the impact of currency shortage on a retail trade. Others had served as Anglican vestrymen and church wardens, arranging relief for those pitched into poverty

⁷⁰ Isaac Norris to Joseph Pike, October 28, 1728, Norris Letters; Joan de Lourdes Leonard, "Elections in Colonial Pennsylvania," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 11(3), (1954), 385-401.

⁷¹ James Logan, *Charge delivered from the Bench to the Grand Jury*, Court of Quarter Sessions (Philadelphia County). Pennsylvania, (Philadelphia 1723).

⁷² *Penn Archives*, Eighth, 3: 1795-96. These figures were cited in 1751 after Franklin's survey of city records and tax books, *Penn Archives*, Eighth, 4: 3515-3520. On recovery, Richard A. Lester, "Currency Issues to Overcome Depressions in Pennsylvania, 1723 and 1729," *Journal of Political Economy*, 46 (3), (1938), 324-375. Tonnage increased from a low of 3531 to 6655, and ship building up from 10 vessels and 458 tons to 19 and 959 tons from 1722-24. Vessels putting in at Philadelphia, which had fallen to 96-99 in 1722-23, increased to 119 and then 140 in 1724-25, taking the tonnage back above pre-crash levels.

⁷³ Roy Norman Lokken, *David Lloyd, Colonial Lawmaker* (Seattle, 1959), 210.

by the recession; some were trying to launch new ventures, establishing gristmills and furnaces or investing in salt imports to produce salt-cod for West Indian plantations.⁷⁴ In short, they were men on the make and civic improvers with ambitions for themselves and the community.

In December 1723 Keith wrote to the Board of Trade, again making the case for paper money as "no other than an artificial and harmless contrivance to make perishable commodities produced by our labour legal tender in all dealings amongst ourselves."⁷⁵ The same month the pro-paper assemblymen legislated for a further emission of £30,000, easing the terms by extending the loan period from eight to twelve and a half years.⁷⁶ Also they pushed for greater liquidity, calling on the commissioners to increase the maximum loan amount to two hundred pounds -- if they still held notes four months after they were printed. When "diverse Inhabitants" complained of being excluded from consideration because they held their estates "on Ground-Rents" rather than freehold, Keith insisted they be given loans, declaring that "whatever Construction the Lawyers" of the legislation, loans should go to all "industrious and frugal Inhabitants" who contributed to the "Conveniency and Enlargement of the City." The public notices, promised in the legislation, detailing notes issued and redeemed failed to appear; instead the colony's only newspaper, the *American Weekly Mercury*, carried notices urging loan applicants to arrange for suitable collateral.⁷⁷ Conservatives reacted bitterly to the relaxation of controls over what they now considered "our rotten paper money" and a "Vile paper Currency." For opponents the issues of paper money were fast becoming the "contrivance & refuge of Bankrupts and designers" and an

⁷⁴ Collective portrait of Keithians, includes Job Goodson, William Monington, John Kearsley, Thomas Tresse, Edward Horne, Lodwick Sprogle, Morris Morris Thomas Rutter in Horle, *Lawmakers*, 2: 396-400, 510-13, 554-60, 700-704, 750-755, 908-11, 937-40, 1011-15,

⁷⁵ *CSP*, 1722-23, 310, 388-89.

⁷⁶ *Penn Archives*, *Eighth*, 2, 1545; Wendell, "Life of Keith," 149.

⁷⁷ *The American Weekly Mercury*, April 9-16, 1724, 4, and March 7-16, 1727, 2. The 1723 legislation established separate committees to audit the accounts of various treasurers and tax collectors and the trustees of the new loan office, *Statutes At Large of Pennsylvania*, 3: 324-38. This updated former provision dating back to 1712, for a committee of accounts to report at the Assembly's first meeting each October, in addition to hearing other financial reports that came in through the year, *Penn Archives*, *Eighth*, 2, 1039, 1042-43; Horle, *Lawmaking and Legislators*, 2: 11-13. In 1727 the rigor of audit procedures was brought into question by the sudden death of Evan Owen, a city and provincial representative and tax collector, whose accounts were judged to have discrepancies and £471 due to the county treasurer, Horle, *Lawmaking and Legislators*, 2: 791.

“abuse on all Creditors,” particularly the Penn's, whose supporters petitioned the Assembly to insist that their quitrents and other debts be paid in sterling rather than paper.⁷⁸

Franklin in Philadelphia and London.

In the spring of 1723 seventeen year old Benjamin Franklin fled his apprenticeship in his brother's print shop and travelled to New York and then Philadelphia, arriving in October in the midst of the recession and burgeoning dispute concerning paper money. In his *Autobiography* Franklin remembered seeing empty properties in fashionable neighborhoods, such that it seemed like the "Inhabitants of the City were deserting it one after another."⁷⁹ He sought work with Andrew Bradford, the official printer and publisher of the *Mercury*, but ended up in a print shop run by Samuel Keimer, recently arrived from London where he had been a follower of the Camisards, also known as the French Prophets. In his *Autobiography* Franklin was unremittingly critical of Keimer, whom he considered “very ignorant of the World” with “a good deal of the Knave in his Composition.” Keimer's affairs do seem to have been a little chaotic, but he had enjoyed success in London, before ending up in debtors' prison, and boasted connections to writers such as Daniel Defoe, whom Franklin much admired.⁸⁰ Following his arrival in Philadelphia, Keimer continued to innovate, and was first colonial printer to produce copies of Trenchard and Gordon's *Cato's Letters*. After a chance meeting with William Keith, then at the zenith of his influence, Franklin agreed to go to London and secure type and printing supplies with which to become established in Philadelphia. When he could not secure backing from his family, and having already running up personal debts, Franklin accepted a letter of credit from Keith. Despite his lack of a position, Franklin was sufficiently confident about his future to propose marriage to Deborah Read, before sailing for London in November 1724.

⁷⁸ Isaac Norris to John Askew, February 15, 1724, also Norris to Noar, June 20, 1724, to Ann Coaksley, July 30, 1724, to Robert Price, October 31, 1724, and to Mord Maddock, October 3, 1724, all in Letters of Isaac Norris, 1716 to 1731, 369, 381, 383, 395, 399.

⁷⁹ Franklin, *Autobiography*, 41.

⁸⁰ On the French Prophets, see Jordana Rosenberg, *Critical Enthusiasm: Capital Accumulation and the Transformation of Religious Passion* (New York, 2011); Owen Stanwood, *The Global Refuge: Huguenots in an Age of Empire* (New York, 2020); Keimer's career and connection to Defoe, Maximillian E. Novak, *Daniel Defoe: Master of Fictions: His Life and Ideas* (New York, 2003), 492-500

In London, Franklin soon discovered that Keith's introduction was worthless, but over the next nineteenth months he secured well-paid work in city print shops and refined his craft. The studious young colonist arrived in the midst of a stream of published books, pamphlets, and essays concerning political economy and money which likely influenced his writing of *Modest Enquiry*. Some were reproduced from earlier debates relating to the recoinage and establishment of the Bank of England in the 1690s. John Asgill wrote in support of paper notes as a "Necessity that either must be done or a worse thing will ensue for want of it," and like others identified land as the source of national wealth.⁸¹ Others were new and contemporary controversies concerning money and intrinsic value. Thus Jonathan Swift celebrated *Drapier's Letters* protested a scheme by William Wood, a Birmingham ironmaster, who obtained a royal patent to supply Ireland with copper coin which Swift feared would drive out silver.⁸² In 1725 Franklin met the Dutch emigre, Bernard Mandeville, author of the infamous *The Fable of The Bees* (1714), which compared society to a hive and mankind to bees bound together less by moral rectitude than by their individual and competitive pursuit of their self-interest. Mandeville was inspired by Pierre Bayle, and the view that human action was motivated by self-love and pride, and controversially argued that private vices could produce public virtues such as the creation of employment and wealth. In 1723 he reprinted his essay, which was especially controversial given the financial scandals, as part of a celebrated exchange with Francis Hutcheson who pushed back on self-interest theories arguing for a God-given moral sense that naturally predisposes men to live together and directed their behavior in search of others' approval. In 1725 Franklin wrote a *Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain*, a philosophical essay in which he is generally considered to have Mandeville's position, although he later disowned his essay which is now usually considered an act of teenage rebellion.⁸³

⁸¹ John Asgill was a lawyer, parliamentarian, prolific pamphleteer, and associate of Nicholas Barbon. His pamphlet was originally published in 1696 and reprinted in the wake of the South Sea Bubble, *Several Assertions Proved, in order to create another species of money, than gold and silver* (London, 1720), 7-8; also James Hodges, *Considerations and proposals for supplying the present scarcity of money and advancing trade* (Edinburgh, 1705).

⁸² Jonathan Swift, *Drapier's Letters to the People of Ireland Against Receiving Wood's Halfpence, 1724-25* Herbert Davis edit., (Oxford, 1935).

⁸³ Goodwin, *Franklin in London*, 29; *Autobiog*, 40-43. On Bayle, Mandeville and Franklin, see Wootton, *Pleasure*, 111-24; Bunker, *Young Franklin*, 175-78. Hutcheson and Scottish Enlightenment in Alexander Broadie ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, (Cambridge, 2003), Luigi Turco, "Moral Sense and the Foundations of Morals"; Franklin in this debate, Anderson, *Radical Enlightenment*, introduction and 35-38. Francis McKee, "Francis Hutcheson and Bernard Mandeville," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 3, (1988): 123-132.

Franklin was a particular admirer of Daniel Defoe, whose work he had read, and plagiarized, while still an apprentice in Boston.⁸⁴ Defoe wrote quickly and voluminously about all manner of topics, and as a political journalist dwarfed his contemporaries in terms of output and notoriety.⁸⁵ He worked as a pen for hire, for both Whigs and Tories, and was particularly known as a commentator on political economy.⁸⁶ Modern biographers credit his reporting of real events -- for example *The Storm* (1704) and *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) -- with developing a new observational style, combining naturalism, new science, and economics in prose that was part political tract and part sermon on the manifestation of divine providence in the affairs of man.⁸⁷ Like Mandeville and others, Defoe viewed individuals as fundamentally selfish and self-interested, but also capable of socially beneficial actions. In his first book, *An Essay on Projects* (1697), Defoe defended public-private initiatives and the people who backed them from charges of scheming, corruption, and usury. Instead, he recast the projectors as problem solvers and risk takers who pursued uncertain ventures -- such as the schemes for widows pensions and highway improvements -- with the potential for public good.⁸⁸ Defoe was similarly fascinated by the potential of public and private credit. A fierce critic of manipulation by stockjobbers, "biters," and usurers, Defoe also extolled the virtues of credit for extending commerce to new areas and thereby developing the potential of the providential economy.⁸⁹ Overall, Defoe evoked an "economic sublime," in which gains were licit when earned from ventures that tested an individual's ingenuity against worldly uncertainties and divine providence. Thus he celebrated manufacturing as a process whereby mere

⁸⁴ For example, writing as Silence Dogood Franklin recycled ideas from Defoe's *Essay on Projects* (1697) in short pieces published in the *New England Courant* the year before he left Boston.

⁸⁵ Bacscheider, *Daniel Defoe*, 44-47,

⁸⁶ Maximillian E. Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1962), chapter one; Bacscheider, *Daniel Defoe*, 65-68.

⁸⁷ Annette Hulbert, "Defoe's Storm Forms," *Digital Defoe* 11, no. 1 (2019).

⁸⁸ Codr, *Raving*, 107; Maximillian E. Novak, *The Age of Projects* (University of Toronto Press, 2008), introduction.

⁸⁹ In 1701 published a pamphlet relating to machinations between supporters of the Bank of England the East India Company, *Villainy of Stock Jobbers Detected*, "raising and sinking them at the Pleasure of Parties and private interests is more prejudicial to Trade in general" than either side could make amends for *Villainy of Stock Jobbers Detected and the causes of the late run upon the bank and bankers discovered and considered* (London, 1701), 17-18; Novak, Defoe, 570.

mortals reworked raw materials so they lose the "Appearance of their first Quality, assuming New Names and Figures, as the several uses," and in so doing came closest to the transforming power of God. Similarly, trade fulfilled the divine will by promoting intercourse and distributed of goods via mutually-advantageous exchange around a world that God had created with disparate peoples inhabiting distinctive geographies and enjoying access to varied natural resources.⁹⁰

This notion of the economic sublime and an ethics of uncertainty featured in *Robinson Crusoe*, published as the popular fascination with the possibilities of distant colonies drove up the stock of Law's Mississippi Company and the South Sea Company to dizzying levels. The eponymous hero -- an English adventurer, merchant, and enslaver with a plantation in Brazil -- is marooned by a shipwreck for twenty-eight years on an island somewhere in the Pacific. As the novel was published, Defoe was involved in the announcement of a new colony at the mouth of the Orinoco River. His description of the flora and fauna in *Crusoe* was so realistic that some readers thought he was describing a real place. In the novel, Crusoe relies on his ingenuity to build a comfortable lifestyle (raising goats, making pots and bread, even building a woodland "country seat") such that he not only builds a tolerable life, but ends up as king of the island and served by a slave, Friday.⁹¹ In reality, Defoe was skeptical regarding the investment opportunity of the South Sea Company and the *Asiento* -- which gave the Company license to supply slaves to the Spain's American colonies. Like some of his contemporaries, Defoe opposed slavery in principle and considered the keeping enslaved people in ignorance of scripture as evil, hence the Crusoe's religious instruction of Friday. However, he accepted slavery as justified by the interests of those involved in the trade and for the benefits it brought the English and their empire.⁹² The novel's central ethical issue relates not to Crusoe's enslaving of Friday, but his defiance of his father's wishes that he stay home and follow a safe, respectable, and financially-secure life. Instead the youthful protagonist leaves for a life of adventure in which he ends up marooned. His subsequent redemption confirms him as a hero for rejecting his father's complacency and placing his faith in his individual ingenuity and providence. Crusoe is a risk taker whose prudence and calculation in

⁹⁰ Maximillian E. Novak, "Defoe and the Economic Sublime," *Digital Defoe* 14, (2023): 35-42; Jesse Edward, "Defoe the Geographer Redefining the Wonderful in A Tour Thro' The Whole Island Of Great Britain," in Judy A Hayden, *Travel Narratives, the New Science, and Literary Discourse, 1569-1750* (Farnham, 2012), chapter ten.

⁹¹ Paula R. Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe: Ambition and Innovation* (Lexington, 2021), 215-17

⁹² Novak, *Defoe*, 528

pursuit of gain is shielded from characterization as mere covetousness by his willingness to submit to the uncertainties of fortune and divine will.⁹³

During Franklin's London sojourn, Defoe was at the height of his powers, writing sequels to *Crusoe* and joining in the excoriation of financial corruption suspected in the collapse of the Mississippi Company and South Sea Bubble.⁹⁴ It is hard to imagine Franklin *not* being influenced by Defoe's printed output and exploration of themes relating to economic sublime and providentialism. Defoe gave Franklin and his peers a religious ethic that met their need to believe in God in the same way as their parents, while not necessarily sharing the older generation's unquestioning faith or being able to "prove" divine existence.⁹⁵ Almost half a century later, Franklin began his *Autobiography* with a narrative structure that imitated *Crusoe*, beginning with a son defying his father's wishes and thereafter featuring passages, such as the description of the journey from Boston to Philadelphia, which came so close to Defoe as to strike some historians as an homage.⁹⁶ Towards the end of Franklin's time in the capital, Defoe's writing on England's economic potential and social problems likely also have struck a chord with the young and still struggling printer. It was common for commentators, such as Mandeville, to blame the poor for their condition and to favor regulations that kept the indigent in their place and if necessary force them to work.⁹⁷ However, Defoe was more sympathetic to the plight of those caught up in adverse conditions not of their own making, for example supporting the Spitalfields silk weavers in their lengthy protest against the East India Company and the imported calicoes that ruined their trade.⁹⁸ In his *Complete English Tradesmen* (1726), Defoe also affirmed the contribution of the middling sort that Franklin aspired to join, and provided detailed advice on how to negotiate risk they faced in an increasingly uncertain world.

⁹³ Codr, *Raving at Usurers*, 105-119, 131-32; Here I am paraphrasing Paula Backscheider judgement of Defoe's influence on his readers, *Daniel Defoe*, 224.

⁹⁴ Novak, *Defoe*, 572-573.

⁹⁵ Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe*, ?? Sean D. Moore, *Slavery and the Making of Early American Libraries: British Literature, Political Thought, and the Transatlantic Book Trade, 1731-1814* (Oxford University Press, 2019), on Cruso and slavery acceptance for later readers.

⁹⁶ Bunker, *Young Franklin*, chapter eight.

⁹⁷ Mulford, *Benjamin Franklin*, 94.

⁹⁸ Novak, *Defoe*, 628-629.

After nineteen months in London Franklin's own fortunes were on the wane. He had arrived with "15 Pistoles" -- Spanish gold coins with an equivalent sterling value of thirteen shillings -- and his printing work paid well. However, his reserves were quickly "consum'd" by small loans made to James Ralph, an idle and unreliable Philadelphia friend with whom he lodged. Franklin's salvation lay with Thomas Denham, a Philadelphia dry goods merchant whom he had met on the voyage over; it was also on his trip to London that Franklin first encountered the prominent Pennsylvania lawyer, Andrew Hamilton, who would also figure in his future. Denham offered to take on Franklin as a clerk back in Pennsylvania, employing him "to keep his Books... copy his Letters, and attend the Store." Franklin calculated that his earnings would be lower than his wages as a compositor, but judged Denham "a better Prospect" and sailed for home, arriving in Philadelphia in October 1726. In the event, he only worked briefly for Denham, who died from pleurisy within the year. Keimer had prospered during Franklin's absence -- not least from his publishing of Keithian contributions to the printed debate -- and was in "a better house, [and] a shop well supply'd with stationery, plenty of new types."⁹⁹ Franklin still considered Keimer a bad businessman, however, he was tempted back by the promise of "large Wages by the Year" to supervise the "raw, cheap hands."¹⁰⁰ Over the next few months the two men quarreled frequently and Franklin impressed several "principal people" from New Jersey who used Keimer's shop to print their provincial currency. However, he played no part in the print struggle that had blown up around the time he had left for London and which would occupy provincial politics over the next three years.

Print and money politics 1724-29

In the summer 1724 James Logan returned from London and delivered a letter from Hannah Penn to Keith, placing him under the supervision of the council and expressly prohibiting further issues of paper currency.¹⁰¹ Penn's instructions were private because she and Logan knew that by setting the council over the governor they directly contravened the 1701 Charter. Penn's

⁹⁹ Bunker, *Young Franklin*, 206.

¹⁰⁰ Lemay, *Franklin*, 322-23.

¹⁰¹ Keith to be put under restrictions, Logan to Salkeld, 1 December 1725, *Penn Archives*, *Second*, 7: 89-90. Logan also brought letters from Joshua Gee and Henry Gouldney, proprietary trustees, who called out Keith's behavior. Logan submits letter, *Col Recs Pa*, 3: 236-237; Hannah Penn instructions in *Penn Archives*, *Eighth*, 2: 1624-25; 5

orders also disregarded a recondite English legal doctrine concerning the protection of stewards acting under oath to the king, when exercising delegated authority in good faith.¹⁰² When he opened the Assembly, Keith alluded to the restrictions placed on "your Governor" for alleged "Acts of Maladministration," even though he had always worked with the "People's Representatives." Keith and his supporters then published Penn's letter, prompting uproar and the formation of an anti-proprietary alliance which united Philadelphia's artisans and middling traders with David Lloyd and his support in the Quaker backcountry.¹⁰³ The campaign on behalf of provincial rights intensified the controversy concerning the introduction of paper currency. Up to this point, key protagonists had mostly limited their public speech to when moments when they acted in an official capacity, thereby observing polite limits and legalities. Thus Keith's interventions came in his speeches to the Assembly and formal proclamations, which he occasionally had printed as handbills. Similarly, Logan spoke out as a magistrate advising the grand jury concerning English legal precedent.¹⁰⁴ After the publication of Penn's letter, however, antagonists moved beyond their formal roles and political print became more unruly and antagonistic. Writers aped the English press, especially *The Tatler* and *Spectator*, using literary devices such as dreams, letters, dialogues, parodies and fables to appeal in appeals to "the people" as the ultimate arbitrators of legitimate authority.¹⁰⁵ Over the next year or so, both sides dug into their positions, launching prolix constitutional arguments in handbills and pamphlets like shells fired at enemy lines. However, given the general consensus amongst elite commentators concerning fundamental character of the provincial economy, for example the need to restore the balance of trade and curb popular appetites and spending, there was little room for meaningful disagreement. Consequently, the

¹⁰² Keith letter to Penn, *Penn Archives, Eighth*, 2: 1625-28. For venerable heritage of this objection to the proprietor having a negative vote, see Thomas Lloyd's *A Seasonable Advertisement to the Freeman of this Province* (Philadelphia, 1689); Lokken, *David Lloyd*, 39.

¹⁰³ *Archives, Eighth*, 2: 1600-2. Keith Speech; *Archives, Eighth*, 2: 1608, 1610, 1613, 1676, 1707; Smolenski, *Friends and Strangers*, 258. Image of the published letter in my files, APS 2013

¹⁰⁴ For use of grand jury address in Tudor and early Stuart England, C. W. Brooks, *Law, politics and society in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2008). 156-58.

¹⁰⁵ Schapin, *Social History of Truth*, chapter 5; Alison G. Olson, "Pennsylvania Satire Before the Stamp Act," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, vol. 68, no. 4 (2001), 507-532.

debate, such as it was, quickly descended into *ad hominem* attacks, calling out opponents as bad-faith actors whipping up populist fury at elite threats to provincial rights.¹⁰⁶

In 1725 the Assembly introduced a Re-emitting Act, providing for the re-circulation of bills that had been taken in and were supposed to have been destroyed.¹⁰⁷ This further departure from the original, and more cautious, legislation steered public debate back to paper money. In his *Ways and Means for Inhabitants of Delaware to Become Rich*, Francis Rawle celebrated the pro-paper lobby as "honest men and... Patriots" and the currency as "the vital spirit and blood of the body politic."¹⁰⁸ To restore the balance of trade, Rawle called on inhabitants to refuse payment in West Indies' rum and to satisfy their thirst with drinks brewed from local barley. Paper money could replace the "Trading currency... we were so far drained of," but it needed careful management lest an oversupply "prove an injury to creditors." Paper notes were not intended to encourage "Chimerical Notions of imaginary Riches" amongst the middling sort. Their role was to produce commodities for exports – wheat, barley, oats, hemp, flax, tobacco, rice, timber, copper, iron, and horses – which Rawle described across sixty-five pages.¹⁰⁹ Ever the populist, Keith's pamphlet, *A Dialogue from Mr. Robert Rich and Plowman*, was more combative, featuring a merchant who thought that paper money "has almost ruined the country" and a farmer who is astonished at such "strange news." The two characters traded insights into the competing priorities of merchants and farmers. Rich argued for tighter controls to improve balance of trade, thereby negating the need for a paper currency. Plowman observed that without public notes ordinary colonists were left as "prey to extortioners and lawyers," concluding that Rich's proposal was tantamount to an offer to "grease the fat sow in the arse and starve the pigs." At which point Rich took his leave, calling back to Plowman that "you are not fit to further discourse."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ For example, Lloyd, "Allegations Against Proprietary Govt," Tully, *Forming*, 68-80; David Lloyd, "Vindication of the Legislative Power," 19 March 1725 in *Penn Archives Eighth*, 2: 1681-89; Wendell, "Life of Keith," 173. For legal arguments Lloyd *Further Vindication*; Lokken, *David Lloyd*, 218-20.

¹⁰⁷ The Act also provided for the emission of an additional £10,000 to replace defaced notes maintaining the value in circulation at £45,000, *Pennsylvania Statutes at Large*, 1726: 38-52; Henry Phillips, *An Historical Sketch of the Paper Money Issued by Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1862), 10-11.

¹⁰⁸ Horle, *Lawmakers*, 2: 879; *Votes* 2: 452, 454. Rawle also distanced himself from Keith's encouragement of the Lower Counties' independent issue of paper notes.

¹⁰⁹ Francis Rawle, *Ways and Means for the Inhabitants of Delaware to Become Rich...* (Philadelphia, 1725);

¹¹⁰ *A Dialogue Between Mr. Robert Rich, and Roger Plowman* (Philadelphia, 1725).

As the print war continued, contributors abandoned their usual reliance on the authority conferred by their offices and emphasized their personal virtues and moderating spirit in contrast to their opponents. Rawle cast himself as a disinterested and balanced observer who offered counsel on commercial uncertainties not as "dogmatically determined, but modestly submitted to the judicious" who were able to see paper money's positive effects for themselves.¹¹¹ Keith proudly proclaimed his lack of "learning" in comparison to his enemies who offered "fanciful conceits" and "imaginary supposition" in their pursuit of power. Charging Logan (and by implication Hannah Penn) with a "wicked and pernicious design" concealed by "the smooth name of secrecy," Keith noted that the "good agreement" that "so easily and cheerfully subsisted between the governor and the people's representatives" was "hateful to the envious and proud man."¹¹² David Lloyd joined the governor, denouncing their opponents as ambitious men who crave "power under the conceited pretense of... superior knowledge." It was rumored that the proprietor was broke and intended to sell the colony to a group of "well fed" exploiters which was why they attacked Keith's defense of "the People's Rights and Privileges" by printing "a set of most Notorious Untruths, full of scurrility."¹¹³ For the other side, Logan and Andrew Hamilton cast Keith as intent on "animating the Common People against the Council and the merchants to very great degree" in order to promote the paper currency and his own designs "in opposition to the true interest of his Majesty subjects... and the English merchants trading thither." Logan cautioned the public to use their reason to evaluate "whatever is delivered to us... as a matter of faith without the use of exercise of our understandings."¹¹⁴ Writers on all sides lamented the vituperation and feared its corrosive influence on the public's ability to discern the truth and make the rational judgements necessary to save the province from tyrants or mobs. They routinely appealed to popular reason, backing their

¹¹¹ Francis Rawle, *A just rebuke to a dialogue betwixt Simon and Timothy, shewing what's therein to be found. Namely levity, perversion, and detraction* (Philadelphia, 1726)

¹¹² Keith, "Defence of the Constitution," *Archives, Eighth*, 2: 1659- 71; Wendell, 172.

¹¹³ William Keith, *A Just and Plain Vindication* (Philadelphia, 1726); David Lloyd's exchange concerning English case law and the rights of deputies, arguments rambled on through legal minutiae that none but the most ardent struggled through. (Lloyd, *Vindication of the Legislative Power and Logan, Antidote*).

¹¹⁴ *The Case of the heir at law and executrix of the late proprietor of Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia, 1726), Evans no 2735; Hamilton suspected as publisher, noted by Amory, H. A. H., David D. (2009). *A History of the Book in America*. Univ of North Carolina Press., chapter 8; Logan, *A More Just Vindication of the Honorable Sir William Keith Bart* (Philadelphia, 1726), and *Remarks on Sir William Keith's Vindication* (Philadelphia, 1726).

arguments with long-winded considerations of provincial and European history, the example of other colonies and Atlantic traders, and lessons from scripture.

The character of political print was homologous to the paper notes which became the focus of the controversy. Depending on one's perspective, both led to either truth and prosperity or deception and ruin. Political pamphlets and hand bills provided information upon which the colonists were invited to base their reasoned decisions, but could also be misused to spread misinformation and downright lies and undermined the public's ability to discern reality and exercise their judgement. Similarly, printed paper money that promised financial liquidity and market incentives, could also lead to fake fortunes and commercial disaster.¹¹⁵ For all their mutual invective, however, Keith, Logan, Lloyd and the rest inhabited the same social world and largely shared commitments to elite rule and popular deference. Keith bluffed and blustered, but he was no social leveler. Similarly, and notwithstanding his administrative concerns, Logan was happy to lobby for paper money payments to pay the city's debts -- including obligations owed to him. For all the bitterness of their print war the distance between Rawle's moral commerce, Keith's populism, Lloyd's constitutionalism, and Logan's Swiftian acerbity was moot, especially when the salutary effects of paper money on local commerce became clear. By 1726-27 the politics turned on specific policy alternatives, such as the volume of notes and redemption terms, the proprietor's insistence on payment of quitrents in specie, and who would direct provincial political economy. Keith was a threat, because he was intent on using his popular support to justify a takeover. When his plan backfired, he was harried from the colony and a strengthened Quaker oligarchy was reinstalled and remained in power until the crisis of the Seven Years' War (1756-63) that led to the American Revolution.

In March 1726 Keith heard he had been replaced by the 81 year old Patrick Gordon who arrived in June. Jobless and with creditors circling, Keith campaigned for election to the Assembly as a representative of the Lower Counties and Philadelphia. In the October elections he won a seat and his supporters, celebrated their victory by burning the pillory, stocks, and market stalls despised by the city's butchers.¹¹⁶ Two weeks later, on the opening day of the Assembly, Keith

¹¹⁵ Timothy H. Breen and Timothy Hall, "Structuring Provincial Imagination: The Rhetoric and Experience of Social Change in Eighteenth-Century New England," *The American Historical Review*, 103 (1998), 1411-1439.

made a bid for the speakership, entering the city at the head of procession of “about Eighty Horse composed of Butchers, Taylors, Blacksmiths, Journeymen Apprentices, Porters and Carters marching two and two... some Ships in the River firing their Guns.” Isaac Norris observed that Pennsylvania was undergoing nothing less than a "revolution."¹¹⁷ In the event, Keith lost to Lloyd who was backed by the representatives from Bucks and Chester counties and had already decided that he preferred a proprietary government to an administration headed by Keith.¹¹⁸ By the following March Keith's challenge was over, and he sailed for London under cover of darkness on a ship docked at Newcastle in the Lower Counties.¹¹⁹ Shortly thereafter, Rawle died, further weakening the Keithian.

In 1727-28 the recovery led by earlier issues of paper money was stalling, and the economy was heading back into recession with a growing and hungry population swelled by the arrival of hundreds of German Palatine families.¹²⁰ As usual the cash dearth meant falling prices for wheat and land and slow markets, bringing a new round of petitions calling for a new issue of paper notes.¹²¹ After four years of fighting, there was no love lost between opposing factions. When Lloyd manipulated the Assembly elections to exclude the pro-paper Keithians, the mudslinging resumed

¹¹⁶ Patrick Gordon to John Penn, Oct 17, 1726, in Wendel, "Keith-Lloyd Alliance," ???. Logan reported to John Penn that "in this factious town where the lower rank of People, Sir William's Partisans are the most numerous, he was elected . . . all ten members for the County and City but one are Keithians, as they are now called. . . ." James Logan to John Penn, Oct. 17, 1726, *PPOC*, I, 237; Norris in Isaac Norris to Joseph Pike, August 28, 1728, *Norris Letter Book*, 515; Wendel, "Life of Keith," 181.

¹¹⁷ Isaac Norris wrote "we have Mobs, Bonfires Gunns, Huzzas-a Keith for Ever In Immitation of yor famous Sacheverell [and] we have Itinerations and processions too," Isaac Norris to Jonathan Scarth, Aug. 21, 1726, *Norris Letter Book*, 474-475.

¹¹⁸ *Penn Archives*, Eighth, 3: 1787; *Votes*, 3: 37-38, 40, 42, 46; Wendel, "Keith-Lloyd Alliance," ???: James Logan to John Penn, 17 Oct, 1726, *PPOC*, I, 237-247. John Smolenski, "From Men of Property to Just Men," *Early American Studies, An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 3 issue 2 (2005), 253-285.

¹¹⁹ Lokken, *David Lloyd*, 229; *Penn Archives First Series*, 1: 18.

¹²⁰ *Pa Col Recs*, 3: 318, 323, 327,28, 331.

¹²¹ In January the merchant, Samuel Powel Jr. noted "The pay here grows worse than when I Left Philadelphia [for a visit to England] and Goods Sell Lower." The following month, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported that "Money here seems very scarce. Trade has been long in a deep Consumption, her Nerves relax'd, her Spirits languid, her Joints have grown so feeble, that she has had of late so terrible a Fall that she now lies bleeding in a very deplorable condition," 18 February 1728; Lester, "Currency Issues to Overcome Depressions in Pennsylvania," 360-63.

-- both sides denouncing the other for constitutional illegalities.¹²² Gordon urged the Assembly to “extinguish the small remains of faction” but the “rude and disorderly” Keithians harassment of assemblymen on the street was such that by December the Assembly had to reconvene out of the city.¹²³ In truth the violence obscured a rising consensus concerning the need for a new issue of paper notes. Committees featuring representatives from previously antagonistic lobbies and influential newcomers, such as Andrew Hamilton, negotiated the size and conditions of a new issue of bills as the legislation proceeded through first, second, and third readings.¹²⁴ The only other outstanding and vocal objector was Gordon, who could see that the “whole country seems unanimous” in their “desire of an addition to our bills of credit” but who worried about his own position given the proprietor's orders. The Assembly debated, Gordon dithered, and the popular protests reach fever pitch, such that by 31 March the governor was required to read out Riot Act.¹²⁵ Quick action was needed, if the legislation for a new issue of paper currency was to make it through the Assembly before end of its session in May. It was in this context that Franklin sat down to pen his *Modest Enquiry*.

A Modest Enquiry.

¹²² To hobble the Keithians, Lloyd and his allies refused to fill the seats vacated by Keith and Rawle (citing a possible return of Keith and constitutional confusion); they also lobbied for the division of Chester County and creation of a new county, Lancaster, adding four additional rural representatives to the Assembly, Lokken, *David Lloyd*, 231.

¹²³ *PA Col Recs*, 3: 340-341. It is suggestive, however, that in calling on Governor Gordon to proclaim the riot act in force, colonial politicians blamed the popular mobilization on “outsiders” of “necessitous Circumstances.” *Votes of the Assembly*, 3: 1929-40; *Minutes Provincial Council*, 3: 293-94, 351-52; also in my notes: “1728 assemblymen gathered in city for opening of fall session (Keith gone), rioters assaulted them; different occasion mob threatened to level Logan’s home, stopped short after tearing off shutters and throwing bricks through windows. *Penn Archives, Eighth*, 3: 1910-12.

¹²⁴ The Assembly debated a proposal for 60,000 but voted against, and then agreed 50,000 current for sixteen years and at lower interest of 4%, to which rate they also proposed including notes outstanding from earlier emissions and legislation on re-emitting acts, *Penn Archives, Eighth*, 3: 1914, 1917, 1919-25, 1924-25, 1927; Bunker, *Young Franklin*, 233-24, 323.

¹²⁵ Gordon proposed an issue of 25,000, keeping total currency for province at 60,000, and interest of 5 per cent and ten year term, and also asked for provisions for sterling payments, especially for quitrents. The Assembly then proposed an abatement of ten thousand pounds, taking the total to 40,000 but insisted on the sixteen year term and 4%. They considered amendments, including allocations of a thousand pounds to the Provincial Treasurer and to the Assembly to construct a new house, and to the City of Philadelphia for various public projects, *Penn Archives, Eighth*, 3: 1929-30, 1933-38, 1955. Reading of Riot Act, Lieutenant Governor Gordon, “A Proclamation Whereas Several Dissolute and Disorderly Persons,” (Philadelphia, 31 March 1729), *American Historical Imprints*, 3201. W. Nippel, “Reading the Riot Act” : The Discourse of Law-Enforcement in 18th Century England,” *History and Anthropology* 1, no. 2 (1985), 399-426.

The best source we have for Franklin's activities in the years immediately following his return from London is his *Autobiography*, written forty-two years after the fact and unpublished in his lifetime. Unsurprisingly, scholars have mined the text for insights, commenting on Franklin's panache for self-presentation and the occasional mis-remembered details. For example, he reported that *Modest Enquiry* was decisive in a paper money controversy that we can see was clearly on the wane, and also that he was rewarded with the contract to print the notes, although this was not granted until a couple of years later.¹²⁶ However, the point is not to catch out an elderly statesman for embellishing his youthful deeds, but to compare the *Autobiography's* portrayal of these years to what we know from other sources to get a sense of Franklin's priorities as he sat down to write *Modest Enquiry*.

According to the *Autobiography*, early in 1728 Franklin quit Keimer's shop after yet another quarrel and set up for himself with one of his co-workers, Hugh Meredith, using capital provided by Meredith's father. He also established the Junto, a club of likeminded young men which convened weekly to debate conflicting sides of debates concerning morals, politics, and natural philosophy: one week the topic was paper money, and Franklin argued in favor. Thereafter Franklin recalled how he tried to cultivate a reputation as a hard-working printer. Through a Junto contact he secured part of a job that had proved too much for Keimer.¹²⁷ He also reprinted pieces published by Bradford, to demonstrate his greater skill. He planned a newspaper to rival the *Mercury*, but Keimer stole the idea and in October 1728 launched, *The Universal Instructor in all Arts and Sciences*. Late in 1728 Franklin wrote his "Articles of Belief and Acts Religious," a private

¹²⁶ Franklin recalled that *Modest Enquiry* "was well received by the common people... but the rich men dislik'd it" and when "their opposition slacken'd" he was rewarded with the contract to print the currency, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, edited by Frank Woodworth Pine (New York, 1916), 126-127. Keith Arbour debunked Franklin's claims concerning printing contract, "Benjamin Franklin's First Government Printing: The Pennsylvania General Loan Office Mortgage Register of 1729 and Subsequent Franklin Mortgage Registers and Bonds," *New Series*, 89, No. 5, (1999), 18-21. The *Autobiography's* authority as a master narrative still prevails in some accounts, which report Franklin's unreliable memory as fact, Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (Penguin, 2005), 45. Also, Ralph Frasca, *Benjamin Franklin's Printing Network: Disseminating Virtue in Early America* (Columbia, 2006), introduction.

¹²⁷ Lemay, *Franklin*, 1: 325-28. In one of the *Autobiography's* most celebrated episodes, Franklin impressed his neighbors by working into the night on the printing of William Sewel's *History of the of the Rise, Increase, and Progress, of the Christian People Called Quakers*, a 700 page folio and by far the biggest and most expensive book yet printed in Philadelphia.

affirmation of his faith indicated a move away from his materialist and skeptical position of three years earlier. Franklin cultivates influential friends, especially the lawyer and future Assembly speaker, Andrew Hamilton. When his business was threatened by a cashflow shortfall, he found backers to help settled his debts and bought Meredith out of the partnership. Some members of the Assembly suggested he write a pamphlet on paper money. Following the publication of *Modest Enquiry*, his fortunes markedly improved.

Apart from mentioning *Modest Enquiry* as a turning point, the *Autobiography* has nothing to say of the years of dispute concerning paper money. In a memoir which purports to recollect the details of brief conversations and even the look on a passerby's face, there is nothing on the annual elections and parades of Keithian tradesmen that ended in violent confrontation on the city's streets. If anything, Franklin stood apart from artisanal peers and his key concern was with securing patronage. The Junto, we now know, was a semi-secretive, self-improvement association with a restricted membership of upwardly mobile young men, several of whom were identified with the proprietary and elite Quaker factions.¹²⁸ Its name may have referenced the Whig opposition, and so implied a swipe at Keith's Jacobitism. Franklin's accusation of Keimer's perfidy also makes sense in the context of his anxieties concerning his lack of local backing. The *Universal Instructor's* fashionable science coverage of writers such as Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, and Pierre Bayle was entirely in keeping with Keimer's previous and subsequent journalistic endeavors, and only later became Franklin's stock in trade.¹²⁹ In February 1729, with debts to pay and a young family to maintain, Franklin petitioned the Assembly for a public printing contract, but was rebuffed. Next he printed a broadside of the governor, Patrick Gordon's, speech and distributed them gratis in an attempt to once again demonstrate his superior skill, but to no avail. Realizing that he would

¹²⁸ After an initial meeting in a tavern, the Junto convened in private houses, Lemay, *Franklin*, 239, 332-38. David S. Shields, "The Wits and Poets of Pennsylvania: New Light on the Rise of Belles Lettres in Provincial Pennsylvania, 1720-1740," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 59, no. 2, (1985), 134.

¹²⁹ Keimer's paper serialized Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopædia: or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (1728). This was one of the first general encyclopedias to be produced in English and inspired by Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (1697) it was part of inspiration for Diderot's later *Encyclopedie* (1751-72). Chester E. Jorgenson, "A Brand Flung At Colonial Orthodoxy: Samuel Keimer's *Universal Instructor in All Arts and Sciences*," *Journalism Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (1935): 272-277. Reference to Keimer stealing Franklin's idea to start a newspaper, *Franklin Papers*, 1: 111. By 1731 Keimer was settled in Barbados where he established the colony's first newspaper, the *Barbados Gazette*.

continue to struggle as long there were "two Printers who were establish'd," Franklin went on the offensive.¹³⁰

Over six weeks beginning on 4 February 1729, he penned eight squibs in the persona of Busy Body, a commentator on public morals whose socially-inferiority appealed to anti-elite sentiment. Bradford was glad to print Franklin's risqué essays in the *Mercury*, and hang on to his readership in the face of competition from Keimer's, *Universal Instructor*. The essays showed off Franklin's undoubted literary talent, comedic characters, Martha Careful and Caelia Shortface, ridiculed Keimer, and others cast Bradford as a dullard and satirized Pennsylvania's "Great Names."¹³¹ At the end of Busy Body 4, Franklin signaled his opposition to the Keithians, promising to publish a "true History of the Rise, Growth, and Progress of the renowned Tiff-Club," implying that Keith's influence was now a bygone "Would-be-something."¹³² In his final essay, Busy Body 8, Franklin also took a dim view of wishful approaches to local political economy, noting that too many colonists neglected "rational and almost certain Methods of acquiring Riches by Industry and Frugality" in favor of "idle Stories" that have them digging for hidden treasure, forgetting the wise words of an apocryphal Chester County farmer, that there is gold to be found in the land, but only if one digs no "more than Plow-deep."

By the end of March, as we have seen, Gordon was under pressure, not least from riotous demonstrations, to agree a new issue of new paper money. Bradford approved Franklin's final Busy Body essay, number 8, and then left town for a few days. Following an approach from "several considerable Men," Franklin added a section laying out the "Resentments of the People" aimed at "some Gentlemen, who are... Opposers of that Currency." In strong, class terms he called on the objectors to respond to rumors of a "Design to engross the Property of the Country, and make themselves and their Posterity Lords, and the Bulk of the Inhabitants their Tenants and Vassals."¹³³ Conceding that silver and gold were preferable to paper notes over the longer term,

¹³⁰ Franklin and Meredith petition for government printing, possible the next volume of the Pennsylvania Assembly's *Journal*, recorded by the clerk on 18 February, *Assembly Minutes* 3: 1928; Arbour, "Benjamin Franklin's First Government Printing," 8. *Autobiography*, 76.

¹³¹ Lemay, *Franklin*, 1: 388; Lemay notes language affinity between Franklin BB and Swift's *A Tale of the Tub* 1704.

¹³² Lemay, *Franklin*, 1: 245, 386-87; Wendel, "Lloyd-Keith alliance," 304; Waldstreicher, *Runaway America*, 59-61, 257 notes that most Franklin scholars accept Franklin's negative portrayal of Keimer.

¹³³ Lemay, 1: *Franklin*, 391

Franklin as Busy Body declared that this would only be achieved "if those who have the Management of Publick Affairs should have no Interests... separate from those of their Country." For now, it was "absolutely necessary to have a large Additional Sum struck for the Relief of the People in their present miserable Circumstances, and until such Methods of Trade are thought on, and put in Practice, as will make that Currency needless," which action Busy Body urged on the Assembly.¹³⁴ Cornelia Bradford, who was in charge of the shop during her husband's absence, was sufficiently alarmed by the outraged reactions of early readers to reprint the edition with a "Foreign Affairs" filler in place of Busy Body's final squib.¹³⁵ Over the following week, Franklin wrote *Modest Enquiry*. Although he signed as Busy Body -- BB -- it was taking a further week to print and stitch together an estimated 600 copies and then advertising the sale of the pamphlet in *Mercury*, at six pence a copy.¹³⁶

The *Modest* in his title positioned Franklin as a conciliatory commentator; he also wrote in a plain style, tackling a question that had become "abstruse and intricate" and so divisive. He aimed for compromise and a "Means of Fixing a Subject" to the satisfaction of all "my Countrymen." In this spirit, he eschewed comedy alter-egos and extravagant literary devices -- dialogues, fables, dreams and the like. Instead, he offered serious engagement with political economy, and broke with the various mercantilist approaches to managing colonial producers and consumers in the interests of restoring an advantageous balance of trade. Franklin's starting point was a providential economic landscape populated by self-interested individuals whose economic activity promised to increase commerce to everyone's advantage, as long as all were mindful of certain, natural conditions which defied intervention. For example, the manner in which a dearth of money "in any Trading Country" resulted in higher interest rates which it "is impossible by any Laws to restrain," and which drive down the price of land and its produce, discourages trade, and hands an advantage to neighboring "Countries" -- who enjoy lower rates. It followed, that there was a "certain

¹³⁴ The *American Weekly Mercury*, March 27, 1729. "The very Gentlemen who were at first most violent Enemies to that Currency, have lately, (particularly about the Time of the last Election) declared, freely, both in private Conversation, and publickly in Print, That they now are heartily for it.... it has been a great Benefit to the Country; and that it has not now one Opponent that they know of."

¹³⁵ *American Weekly Mercury*, 153, 6/11/29

¹³⁶ Demand for the pamphlet had dropped by the end of the print run and two years later Franklin sent a dozen remaining copies to his brother, James, in Newport. Clarence William Miller, *Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia Printing, 1728-1766. A Descriptive Bibliography* (Philadelphia, 1974); Arbour, *Franklin's First Government Printing*, 12.

proportional quantity of money requisite to carry on the trade of a country" and which, when set at the right level, resulted in low interest rates, and rising investment, land values, farm incomes, and provincial prosperity. The Latin motto at the head of his text, attributed to Persius, emphasized this ambition to reach a compromise on the management of money ensuring its right use, once it was established "how much it is fitting to bestow on dear relatives."¹³⁷

This starting point referenced the enduring ideal of monetary management -- redolent of the schemes advocated by Budd and Blackwell and dating back to earliest settlement of Pennsylvania and other North American colonies. Thereafter, it also freed Franklin from having to consider more inconvenient aspects of provincial political economy. Looking to a future where all the colonists were equally and powerfully influenced by "their particular interest," he was not required to counter the prolix accounts provincial precedents, the constitution, and common law that provided for the status quo. His reliance on the notion of a self-interested individual presaged other, supporting abstractions relating to money and labor value, and disallowed specific interventions on behalf of particular interests -- such as Keith's advocacy of lower and pro-debtor interest rates. Franklin drew on the authors and texts he had encountered in Boston and his time in London, in part to flesh out his starting suppositions but also, one suspects, to provide fashionable and authoritative support for his claims regarding the character and future of provincial political economy. In the second half of the pamphlet he explained why Pennsylvania's paper bills would retain their worth based on labor and land values. Before that, however, he set his opening contention concerning the consequences of scarcity/sufficiency of money in the familiar context of ship building which -- as any local shipwright, sailmaker, or mariner knew well -- was the foundation of the province's economy. Imagining a future in which cash was plentiful, Franklin anticipated a multiplier-effect of having vessels built and run out of the city as their "Pay Port," channeling the trade in provisions and goods to Pennsylvania. In passages clearly aimed at artisans and Keithians, he reconsidered Rawle's complaint concerning the remuneration of "Working Men and their Families" with "Goods in pay," which practice the Quaker merchant feared encouraged the wanton demand for rum which damaged the balance of trade. However, Franklin's sympathies

¹³⁷ The longer quote, from which the motto was taken read, *quis modus argento, quid fas optare, quid asper utile nummus habet patriae carisque propinquis quantum elargiri deceat*, Persius (34-62 AD) was Roman satirist and Stoic who was often credited with a moral seriousness that aimed to rise above the political rancor of his times, see Kenneth J. Reckford, *Recognizing Persius* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 7-8.

lay with the "Labouring and Handicrafts Men (which are the chief Strength and Support of a People)" who were doubly wronged when paid in rum and goods: first by being disadvantaged in the market and second by being unfairly accused of "Pride and Prodigality" by the very same merchant pay masters.

The discussion led on to a consideration of who were against and for a new and large issue of paper bills. However, rather than denouncing elite objectors as exploiters -- as Keith and his earlier *Busy Body* essays had done -- *Modest Enquiry* reckoned their protests as understandable given existing market incentives. Prominent creditors were against paper money, because they had become dependent on lending money at high interest (even though it is against the law) and so lacked the "Courage to venture in Trade." Similarly, the wealthy who are interested in buying land, which is a "sure Advantage in a growing Country," objected to increases in paper money until the "Common People... will be impoverished" and obliged to sell their land cheaply. Thereafter these well-positioned land buyers are happy to allow a rise in the money supply, so they can resell their new lands for a high price. This is "not to be wonder'd at," Franklin observed, since "Knowledge of a Man's interests" make it possible to make "a true Guess at his Designs"; as the adage had it, "interest... will not lie."¹³⁸ Others who objected to a large issue of paper notes were similarly and understandably led by their self-interest: Lawyers, because the more debtors there are the greater the "Occasion to go to Law." Those who are in any way dependent on wealthy creditors, land speculators, and lawyers -- whether as officeholders, tenants, or debtors -- also must at least "appear to be against a large Addition" or risk their "present Interest hurt." On other side, those who favor more paper currency are not identified with particular groups and interests, but comprise an undifferentiated majority who delight to see new manufactures and are lovers of trade, both of which better serve the proprietary and imperial interest.

These remarks clearly distinguish Franklin's pamphlet from the earlier, print debate. His starting point of universal self-interested motives provided for a sympathetic presentation of grievances of pro-paper money tradesmen associated with the Keithian opposition. However, he also moved away from condemning objectors as exploiters who had previously been accused of

¹³⁸ J. A. W. Gunn traces this maxim to the 1640s and the transference of the Machiavellian idea of rational self-interest expected of sovereign princes to the public at large, see his "'Interest Will Not Lie': A Seventeenth-Century Political Maxim," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 29, no. 4 (1968), 551-564.

aiming to make themselves "Lords" and the ordinary colonists their "vassals." Creditors who cannot wean themselves off high interest loans and even land speculators who wait for the impoverishment of the "Common People" are not acting amorally so much as lacking the Cruso-like audacity to venture their fortunes in the providential economy. The dialing down of the populist class resentment and moral critique is most evident when Franklin referred to usury, which he used as a technical and non-judgmental term meaning putting money out at interest. Thus he argued that the investment opportunities that follow from a plentiful supply of money would provide current high-value creditors with "more Profit... than in Usury." Similarly, when rising immigration drives up rents, Franklin expected those who "in a Scarcity of Money practiced Usury" to be more likely to invest in house building and thereby create work for tradesmen. This is a far cry from the associations drawn between usury and slavery in the late seventeenth century and more recently Keith's inflammatory accusations during the pamphlet war. Franklin even gives the ever-unpopular lawyers a pass noting (contrary to his doctrine of the irresistibility of self-interested pursuits) that he has heard of some among them who "regard the Publick Good ahead of their own apparent interest."

In the second half of *Modest Enquiry* Franklin addressed "just Notions of the Nature and Value of Money in general." Once again, he uses ideas and concepts taken from earlier authors and texts, and his characterization of provincial political economy continues in the vein of Defoe's economic sublime: "Providence" having so ordered things that different countries and areas within the same country have different "suitable Productions" and that "Men have Genius's adapted" to different kind of manufactures and commerce which is "highly convenient and beneficial" to mankind. Next he offers commonsense and ahistorical account of how "Men have invented MONEY," to address the inconvenience of barter and the "tedious... Exchange of Commodities" choosing at different times "Gold, Silver, Copper, or Tobacco" to serve as means of "general Exchange." Thereafter a dense discussion follows, bits of which were lifted verbatim from Petty, concerning the commensurability of natural labor inputs in the creation of value: as one man digs to raise corn and the other to mine silver, both interact within a general context of supply and demand and "*caeteris paribus*" create exchangeable value.¹⁸⁹ This leads to his central claim that contrary to the previous mercantilist emphasis on a balance of trade and specie earnings, the

¹⁸⁹ Petty, *Treatise of Taxes and Contributions* (1662), 50.

"Riches of a Country are to be valued by the Quantity of Labour" available for purchase. In which case, given Pennsylvania's potential for population growth and bringing land under cultivation, provincial bills of credit will circulate with as much credit as those issued by the "Seats of vast Trade" in Hamburg, Amsterdam, and London.

It is at this point, as he imagines a future in which Philadelphia is an equal player with leading port cities, that Franklin is at his most abstract and furthest from the actual history of provincial political economy. Thus he invoked an origin account dating back to Aristotle, in which money is invented in response to the inconveniences of a barter economy, ignoring the credit, coins, and commodity substitutes that comprised current money conventions which had underpinned the domestic commerce of Pennsylvanian and other colonies over the preceding century.¹⁴⁰ This conjectural tale is integrated with the labor theory of value in the conception of money as "properly called a *Medium of Exchange*" because it is "through or by its means [that] Labour is exchanged for Labour, or one Commodity for another." The use of terms such as *caeteris paribus* and "medium of exchange," the latter only becoming synonymous with money in ensuing decade, indicate the twenty-three old commentator's eagerness to impress his older and higher-status figures and future patrons, demonstrating his facility with specialized and emerging terminology just as he had previously entertained with satire and wit.¹⁴¹ His aim, overall, was to offer a sanguine view of a future provincial prosperity based on freeborn settlers cultivating the land and producing commodities and manufacturers for export to the Caribbean.¹⁴² Whereas previously mercantilist models provided for channeling of specie and surplus value to provincial merchants and the proprietor, Franklin's empathy with working people, at least in his text, offered them a future of independence and prosperity. Looking back forty-two years later, perhaps it was this part

¹⁴⁰ Scott Meikle, "Aristotle on Money," *Phronesis* 39, no. 1 (1994), 26-44.

¹⁴¹ *Ceteris paribus* featured in discussions of natural science and political sovereignty and the work of William Petty, who is the likely source for Franklin, Joseph Persky, "Retrospectives: *Ceteris Paribus*," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 4, no. 2 (1990), 188-90; David Wootton attributes the earliest use of *ceteris paribus* in relation to systematic economic theory analysis to Richard Cantillon, *Essay on the Nature of Trade in General*, which was written around 1730 but not published until 1755, David Wootton, *Power, Pleasure, and Profit: Insatiable Appetites From Machiavelli to Madison* (Cambridge, Mass., 2018), 159-61. Franklin could have picked up the conception of money as a "medium of exchange" from 1714 Massachusetts debates, or an earlier, textual references from England's 1690s recoinage debate, when it was applied to describe the function of coin, see Simon Clement, *A Discourse of the General Notions of Money, Trade, & Exchanges* (London, 1695); Lemay, *Franklin*, 406.

¹⁴² Mulford, *Benjamin Franklin*, 83-84; Lars Magnusson, *Mercantilism: The Shaping of an Economic Language* (London, 1994), 134-135.

of the pamphlet that the then aging statesman remembered "was well received by the common people... but the rich men dislik'd it."

There was no sense, however, that the source of value created would be redistributed and Franklin never lost sight of conservative fears regarding the association between public paper notes and "Chimerical Notions of imaginary Riches." While labor might be the source and a convenient measure of value, the guarantee of Pennsylvania's bills of credit was in their backing as "*Coined Land*." As long as the legislature was careful to monitor the supply of notes as loans secured by land, other personal property, repayments that were "punctually enforced and executed," there was no danger of the bills sinking below their issue value. The colony would have the benefits of convenient paper exchanges, saving as much as "one fourth Part of the Time and Labor of a Country." However, in a closing section that again echoed Petty, Franklin laid out how the land values backed the notes provided for a minimum "Natural Standard of Usury," tied to a baseline figure of the estimated rent needed to buy a piece of land, since no one "will lend his Money for less than it would fetch him in as Rent if he laid it out in Land, which is the most secure Property in the World." This figure he set at 5%, assuming land purchased over twenty years, and while acknowledging rates might rise under certain conditions, reckoned 4% for loans from the public Loan Office would be "fully sufficient." For those concerned that these inexpensive loans would lead to a surge in population and husbandry, leaving the colony glutted with flour and other commodities, he offered the prospect of future and exponential provincial growth: "we can never have too many People (nor too much Money)," for when on "Branch of Trade or Business is overstocked with Hands" they will find employment elsewhere in the burgeoning provincial economy.

Franklin's pamphlet was original and effective inasmuch as it martialed novel concepts and arguments to side-step time-worn varieties of mercantilism and articulated an alternate conception of paper money founded on the value of provincial labor and land. As *Modest Enquiry* circulated, the Assembly stepped up its pressure on Gordon, threatening to cut his financial support unless he agree to a further and larger issue. On 8 May 1729, Gordon finally capitulated and declared his support for an issue of £30,000 redeemable over the ensuing sixteen years, ensuring that provincial bills became a permanent feature of the colony's monetary landscape. To save face with the Penn family, Gordon delayed printing the notes until September, ostensibly to give time for the

legislation to be sent to London and approved. He also insisted on careful controls so that the currency “be kept up to the Value... it was first struck” and not become “a publick Loss.” Andrew Hamilton, the speaker in the Assembly, agreed calling for “as exact a Computation as might be... of the Quantity of Paper Money now current amongst us” to ensure the new emission served to “carry on their Traffick.” The 1729 issue of paper money launched a new phase in the colony's development and a subtle shift the relationship between the Quaker oligarchy, a growing settler population, and the proprietary and imperial overseers -- locally and in London.¹⁴³ In Pennsylvania and elsewhere paper money notes were valued at rates connected to silver and gold because like coin they could be used to pay provincial taxes. By the middle of the eighteenth century all the northern colonies had introduced paper money to help with management of provincial government costs and trade, by turns celebrated and denounced for their character as community enterprises relying on provincial authorities, assets, and taxes.¹⁴⁴

We have to be careful not to overstate claims for novelty of paper money and its claims to provide community connections and opportunities for all. Insofar as a paper currency required political and constitutional foundations to enforce its status as legal tender exchanged at publicly acknowledged rates, the notes were little different from other money forms debated and revised within conventions dating back to the earliest settlements. Where public notes did differ was in their physical properties, which offered certain practical advantages and additional functionality, in comparison to specie and commodity substitutes alternatives, and so moved beyond the purview of current money conventions. Authorized and printed at will, in theory provincial notes need never be in short supply which is, of course, precisely what conservatives and hard money commentators feared. The availability and non-perishability of paper notes made them ideal for public finance and tax collection, as we have seen, but their value also rested on their utility as a new and reliable form of cash resting on the community's guarantee that every private obligation represented by a public note would be honored. It was this characteristic, emphasized by Franklin, that encouraged exchanges of farm and artisanal products exported to the slave plantation colonies in the

¹⁴³ Gordon's reticence is clear in exchanges with the assembly through March 1729, MacKinney, *Votes and Proceedings*, 3: 1929-1940; Gordon's speech, 8 May 1729, MacKinney, *Votes and Proceedings*, 3: 1963. Legislation is in *Pennsylvania Statutes at Large*, 1729, 4: 98-116

¹⁴⁴ Christine Desan, “From Blood to Profit: Making Money in the Practice and Imagery of Early America,” *Journal of Policy History* 20, no. 01 (2008), 26-46.

Caribbean, from whence Pennsylvania earned the specie necessary settle their London accounts. The growth of trade resulting from this introduction of liquidity encouraged tens of thousands Scots Irish, German and other migrants to come to the colonies, often through the port at Philadelphia, and to settle lands mostly taken from Native American communities.¹⁴⁵

However, as we shall see in the next two chapters, the utility of paper notes as cash not only not only encouraged market participation and economic growth, but also shifted the conception of exchange away from its former association with intrinsic value managed by local conventions and towards a notion of payments backed by community guarantees in which money value was crystalized as an independent structure. Previous exchanges involved commodities traded between subjects who were embedded in interactions -- political, familial, religious -- that created bonds and obligations between different subjects and constituted communities. The value of the commodities concerned and the relationships and behavior of individuals were what creditors evaluated, when deciding to extend credit. However, the need for such evaluation was clearly diminished when individuals paying even part of their account with public notes. In this case, as Georg Simmel observed, "The value of exchange given by one party has no direct value for the other party, but is merely a claim upon other definite values; a claim whose realization depends upon economic community as a whole and or upon the government as its representative."¹⁴⁶ This kind of money exchange created possibilities for arms-length dealing that proved a boon to Philadelphia's shopkeepers who, like others, had long struggled with perennial specie shortage but whose profession boomed in the 1730s and 1740s. However, for others the anonymity and objectification of money relations credit evaluations increasingly depended more on estimations of an individual's worth, rather than their relationships and social behavior, and as expressed through accounting and debt litigation produced increasing asymmetries in personal wealth. It was through this process that the form of value which arose from the deployment of enslaved and free labor in the production of commodities -- and which Marx identified as capital -- increasingly congealed.

¹⁴⁵ David McNally, *Blood and Money. War, Slavery, Finance, and Empire* (Chicago, 2020).

¹⁴⁶ Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, Tom Bottomore and David Frisby trans., (London, 1978), discussed in Kotaro Kanai, "Paper Money Controversy in Colonial New England: Cultural Contest Between 'Trusted Stewardship' and 'Possessive Individualism'," *Nanzan Review of American Studies*, 9 (1987), 33-57.