

The *Post's* Utopia 1872-1875

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During the '80s and the '90s, Henry George's decades of world recognition and wide influence, the author of *Progress and Poverty* was saluted sometimes as *the* American economist, the one man who better than any other summed up the condition and the spirit of his country. Sometimes also, too frequently for comfort, he was greeted with contempt. The Duke of Argyll tagged him the 'Prophet of San Francisco,' and writers in the British quarterlies and American professors of economics were the ones who habitually snubbed him. Of course George's ideas were the principal reason for their rejecting him. But in the eyes of such people, George's background and training, and his evangelical fervor, helped justify distaste and distrust. Why respect a man preaching the reconstruction of society whose school of economics had been California newspaper experience and little else?

The irreducible truth was, of course, that at no stage of his career did George achieve just the same reassuring kind of recognition as a professional economist may claim. He had no membership in the guilds of scholars — in the social-science associations which were formed in the '70s, or the professors' organizations in the '80s and '90s — the connections that give kudos and some security to men of learning. He had no university certificate or at-

tachment. Nor did time and place fall right for him to be a member of one of those rare fraternities of mind which now and again join creative men into epoch-marking circles. Nothing was ever available to him like Franklin's Junto or the Transcendental Club of earlier generations, or the Metaphysical Club to which belonged his younger contemporaries in thought, the early pragmatists of Cambridge and Harvard, or like the Bloomsbury set which meant so much to John Maynard Keynes before the

Second World War. The Bohemian Club was as near as Henry George of San Francisco could come to that kind of thing.

Yet the American newspaper has been a mighty institution of education and intellectual achievement, famously so for Philadelphians and New Yorkers — for the Franklins, the Careys, the Greeleys, the Danas, the Raymonds of American mind and leadership. The history of the development of Henry George's mind may be read fairly as a case in point. Between 1872 and 1875, especially, on the *Post*, his writing broadened and deepened and strengthened. We have already seen him as a student of government documents and of the leading journals; so likewise in a broader reading of the *Post* we discover a thinker taking sides on books and general ideas. Philosophy, in the sense of the main thought currents of his age, was not too weighty for him to tackle. So also economics, going beyond the range of California's immediate concerns; so politics, conceived as institutions as well as party conflicts; and so again the links of ideas which cross-connect the main chains of social thinking.

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From the beginning, George had as an editor always coupled his critiques of land monopoly with the plea for free trade, the very first article of his personal economic faith. In his own *Post* he enlarged upon the free-trade idea exactly at the time when he was changing his opinion about private property in land. The staples of California, gold and wheat, naturally seek a world market, George said in editorials; and likewise the major imports, textiles and metal goods, were more economically purchased from British sources, specifically in the overseas markets of Australia and British Columbia. Why should Congress put up obstacles to this natural give-and-take?

The editor did not hesitate to drop from the general to the concrete, and to fight questions where local interests were concerned. He ridiculed the early orange growers of Los Angeles, who wanted a customs duty on foreign citrus fruit; he denied that a tariff would assist the new wineries of the upper state, and he had a heated exchange on the issue with a Petaluma newspaper. This was his attitude toward agricultural tariffs.

On the industrial side, he explained with satisfaction that the San Francisco *Post* was printed on California-made stock, which was manufactured with San Joaquin straw and Nevada soda, without benefit of tariff preferences. And, paying his disrespects to the elite of the city, he pronounced to be incomprehensible the attitude of the merchants of San Francisco who accepted the pro-tariff argument, when they should have been able to see that business would double if only the city were a free port. Henry George's argument was much the same, and just as good, as the case made by the free-traders of the cotton-producing South during the generation before the Civil War. Right national policy, he was saying, would allow a region — any region — to sell and buy in the markets of the world without paying tariff tribute to the manufacturers of the northeastern United States.

But George did not permit anti-tariff to be degraded to a purely regional level. The *Post* always presented free trade as a universally desirable policy, and as a cause with a meaning and a theoretical justification. By this time the studying editor understood that America's school of nationalistic economics — which Henry C. Carey had been maturing in book and newspaper writing for four decades — was his enemy set of ideas. And a *Post* review of an anti-tariff book by a Rochester journalist, Isaac Butts's *Protection and Free Trade*, shows that in addition to Wells's reports he knew at least a few books on his own side of the argument. In contrast to what he would think a decade later, when he himself brought out a book with a title almost the same as Butts's, George at this stage forced no great meaning into the distinction between the two degrees of opposition to the protective tariff: 'The battle of *free trade*, or a *revenue tariff*, is a battle for the whole; the battle of protection is not a battle, but a robbery of the many on the part of the few.' Tariff reduction and freedom of trade, both impulses promised a paring down of economic monopolies, to the editor's way of think-

ing; and at this early and less doctrinaire stage of his writing either was a good cause.

By reason of his taking up certain problems directly, and of the implications of what he said about industry and trade, writing for the *Post* carried George far toward rounding out his conception of the roles of capital and the capitalist, and of those of labor and the trade-union movement, in

the economy. No need to recapitulate how his crisis thinking of 1869 and 1873 had brought him through the rough-hewing stage of this phase of his ideas. As of the key year, 1873, his prime loyalty to working men — whom he practically identified with the citizenry at large — remained as always the anchor of his thought; and also by now he had decided that there was no contradiction in believing that great virtues and great faults were interwoven in the going practices of the private ownership and operation of capital. Though at this time the large swing of his thought favored the individual free enterpriser — and asserted that the businessman as much as anyone would gain from land-value taxation — one or two local matters turned him toward public utilities again, and toward new exceptions to the rule of private ownership.

Both illuminating gas and water distribution came into San Francisco affairs and *Post* editorials, and as was natural the water problem led to a fight. George would have agreed with the recent, authoritative word of Professor Paul Taylor, who says that water control ranks with land policy and immigration as one of the top few decisive influences which have shaped social growth in California over an entire century. Though as city man he did not write very much about the famous water needs of the semi-arid valleys of the state, he was aware of them, and sometimes made very modern and conservationist-sounding proposals in favor of impounding and distributing the mountain waters for irrigation.⁷ But he could not have avoided the policy questions posed by the Spring Valley Water Company, the private-monopoly firm which supplied San Francisco. At the time when George started the *Post*, that company's fourteen-year-old contract was expiring; and the company's high rates raised the issue whether a new contract should be written, or whether San Francisco should declare independence and set up a public system.

George took on the role of the muckraker, and his findings were startling. Water cost one-seventh to one-sixth as much as the rent of an unfurnished house in San Francisco; the city was obliged to have its sewers cleaned by hand at 50 cents a barrel, instead of by flushing; the operating costs of hydraulic elevators ran much too high. Comparing San Francisco with the East and the Middle West, the newspaper called attention to the fact that several cities now owned and operated their own water works at

rates a fraction of San Francisco's; and contrasting itself with other papers, the *Post* noticed that the others criticized San Francisco's water situation when the legislature was not in session, but kept quiet while it was meeting. An editorial said that the *Post* could produce proof that the Spring Valley Company had 'fixed' the *Call* and the *Bulletin* in friendly editorial attitudes. 'There is not in the world so outrageous, so exacting, so soulless a monopoly, as the Spring Valley Water Company.'

At first the *Post* did not want San Francisco to take over the water business. The reason was more a fear of paying extortionate prices for the old capital equipment than anything else; the paper had perhaps some hope that a new private company would save the day. But in the course of a long newspaper debate it switched completely to a municipal system. The paper proposed that the state authorize a bond issue, the proceeds to go either to purchase the old water works or to build a new one, whichever might prove more advantageous. It would be hard to think that other and greater editorial decisions did not have something to do with this one, for the *Post*'s recommendation for city ownership was made to the 1873-4 session of the legislature, the one to which the *Post*, the *Bee*, and the *Union* addressed their solutions of the land-monopoly problem — the *Post* now opposed in principle to the private ownership of land.

At the showdown in Sacramento, San Francisco's delegation failed to unite and pull for reform, and finally an act was passed too friendly to the Spring Valley Company. But for George as thinker, something had been gained. Certainly he had developed and recorded his disposition in favor of a city's owning its essential utilities. And, as he now spoke for free water for city residents — much as he was to speak a dozen years later, amid fame and ridicule, for free in-city transportation in New York City — we may judge it likely that he had already thought through to his later theory, that the collective economic gain created by urban living should be drawn upon, by collective not individual charge, to support the extra services required by people who live and work in cities.

As in the matter of land monopoly, so in that of water monopoly, George marched with other reformers. It is not too much to call him an early municipal socialist. That is, he was a leader of the one, very limited, type of socialism which has been widely and willingly assimilated into

American life, as today's situation of city utilities across the land — considerable public ownership and much control indicates.

As for Henry George's thought on the labor movement, his writing in the *Sacramento Reporter* and some of it in the *Post* has already given us the timing and the essence of the most class-conscious thinking he ever did. A quotation will show how near he verged, for a minute, to the spirit of European socialism. On 8 December 1871, that is when the paper was new, the *Post* said that, though 'not prepared to take our stand squarely upon the principles of the European Internationals,' it would endorse their general proposition that the existing constitution of society is radically wrong and vicious, and that what the world needs far more than any mere reform in government or a reform of any special abuse is 'a reorganization under which every man's interest will not be, as it now is, opposed to his neighbor's.' Such an idea is nothing to be brushed aside by calling it names — socialism, communism, or agrarianism. It is simply 'an attempt to set aside the principle of *competition* on which society is now based, and to substitute for it a system of the state as in the main a family, in which the weaker brother shall not be pressed to the wall.' America's 'exaggerated individualism' demanded change, the editor was certain.

This is George's maximum Marxism. The mild flirtation lasted for two or three editorials, no longer, and took place shortly before the International Workingmen's Association moved from Europe to America, to die in peace and isolation. But no love affair ever developed, quite the contrary; and as early as June 1872, George's reaction had begun. At that time, while speaking strongly for trade unions, the *Post* urged that the strike be reserved as an emergency weapon, to be wielded only at last resort, when it becomes 'the only means left to the workingman for the amelioration of evils fastened upon him by centuries of injustice.' George's *Post*, like George's earlier papers, pleaded for milder methods: for the eight-hour day, for instance, not as a revolutionary idea as some insisted, but as the moderate democratically inspired proposition it really was. In 1874 George built an editorial around an amusing news story concerning a meeting between William Sharon, a mining entrepreneur, and a committee of his employees. First serving the laborers sherry, Sharon had lectured them against the eight-hour idea, taking as text the iron law of wages. Quoth the capitalist:

‘Labor is a commodity which will not keep’; wages follow supply and demand just like the price of grain. Not so, retorted the *Post*: labor can affect the supply of labor, by the eight-hour day, and it can affect demand for labor by its own purchasing power for goods and services. Again George’s early perception of the economy-of- abundance idea had cropped out, not a prominent thread but one of the longest in his editorial writing.

The stand of the *Post* was for labor rather than of the labor movement, and against abuses rather than against capitalism or capitalists. This is dramatized by its role in what it called the ‘*Sunrise* Horror,’ in the fall of 1873. The *Sunrise*, a merchant ship, put into San Francisco out of New York, burdened with hate. During the voyage the discipline or torturings by captain and mate had caused three seamen, who had been kidnaped in the first place, to fling themselves overboard to drown. Word got around San Francisco, but no United States marshal or other official made a move. Then Henry George swore a complaint in federal court; he retained W. H. L. Barnes as attorney. His editorials pleaded that the American sailor’s grievances were unique; that his discipline was more cruel than the Negro slave’s had been, his condition harder than a British seaman’s. His hardship lay in the sanctions of law which kept him bound according to his articles for long voyages. Simple repeal would make the difference, the paper said. Let all the special statutes lapse. Then seamen would be ‘free to claim their wages and leave the ship whenever the anchor was down.’ This would set up a bargaining situation to persuade owners to provide decent conditions and food aboard ship, and it would give sailors equal footing with other workers in a free society, to keep or change their jobs.

While its editorial page discussed general questions of maritime labor policy, the *Post*, abetted by the protests of the *Alta California* and the *Bulletin*, fought the present fight. When the mate of the *Sunrise* disappeared, the paper offered a reward of \$400 for his capture. Meanwhile the court action went on: Captain Clarke was convicted, fined \$5000, and sent to jail for fourteen months. This was much too light, the *Post* said, but the paper took pride in having started the wheels of federal justice. The *Sunrise* dropped from the columns with an appeal for starting a Society for the Protection of Seamen. The *Sunrise* affair, according to the San Francisco *Chronicle’s* historian of the city’s journalism, made Henry

George heard across the land and around the world. It was the second event of that kind, for about the same thing can be said of the fight with the Associated Press and Western Union.

We have now gone far enough to see that the editor of the *Post* envisaged the economy as divided by a boundary. In front lay the area of competitive business. In general he regarded conditions there as sound, and, in the tug and pull of capital and labor, he believed private enterprise capable of producing abundant goods for all. Behind the boundary line, in the area of monopolism, George pictured a predatory situation. Of course his several reform proposals had a single strategy, which was to put an end to private operation there. He counted on two of his tactics, free trade and land-value taxation, to push back the boundary. Then, where the boundary could not be moved and natural monopolies could not be denied, he made his proposals for public ownership at appropriate national or local levels.

If present-day readers feel that George's total picture of the economy as it was working was pretty dark, and his means for brightening it quite extreme — even disregarding the Marxist coloration of 1871 and 1872 — they may be assured that contemporaries other than Will Green sometimes thought so too. Picking up one of the *Post*'s obiter dicta on the distribution of wealth, for instance, the *Sacramento Record* called Henry George a communist. The furious editor replied in an editorial of 10 June 1874 '*that everyone has a right to the wealth he produces or earns,*' but that the *Post* had never spoken for an equal division. 'Until we could guarantee to all equal intelligence, equal industry and equal prudence it would be as foolish to ask that as to ask that water should run up a hill as well as down.'

One understands that George's critics thought him radical. And yet on fair and complete reading of the *Post* there can be no doubt of his sincere belief in business and capitalism. Commenting on something Herbert Spencer had said, George was able to agree, 5 September 1873, that modern industrial organization was really 'about as good as present human nature allows,' and to say that a change of social spirit and policy, not an altered social structure, was what he wanted. To avoid depressions he believed that high wages, which he was sure accounted for California's staving off hard times a year and more after the East collapsed, were the right preventative; and that a program of public works, instead of doled-out food as in New York, offered a reasonable restorative. We should have our economic 'New

Declaration of Independence,' he said, when America stood for the right of every man to have a job, and to earn according to the product of his labor.

As for the ordinary operations of the business system, George had ideas which followed a middle lane, or rather moved in dual lanes, of reform and high-powered entrepreneurial activity. In the year of specie resumption, the old critic of the national banking system reverted to policies he had put into the *San Francisco Times*. Resumption he still as always wanted; a system of hard money 'that cannot fluctuate in value' was his fixed idea. But the policy of restoring coin to circulation by withdrawing federal greenbacks, which cost the government no interest, while retaining the system of the national bank notes, which required interest payments at two levels and which involved high costs and private monopolism, drew his fire. Acknowledging as he had in 1868 some debt to Ohio leadership in ideas of finance (Democratic leadership this time), he wrote again in behalf of an expansible and contract-able money system. Properly set up such a system would operate automatically, he said, 'by the demands of trade, which may easily be done by making currency convertible into bonds, and bonds reconvertible into currency.'

Though long an opponent of the San Francisco Hamiltonians for deflation, George now admitted — while the national depression was growing but before the California crisis of 1875 — that the time had come for the interest rate to fall. But, always the resister, he wanted no 'jackass bill' passed by the legislature to hurry the process. Fencing with the *Call*, the *Post* said that, 'The legislature can no more regulate the rate of interest than it can regulate the winds, the rains, or the tides.' George's main proposal for providing financial service for the people was postal savings banks. This idea is related to his case for interconvertible bonds and money: a slight extension of federal policy — postal savings were actually to be made the law of the land among the mild reforms of the Taft administration — would bring the resources of banking closer to the grass roots of the economy. In like vein he compared the presence of one building and loan society in San Francisco with 2000 reported in London; and, taking up a reform which had been a quarter-century agitating in eastern labor circles, he urged the advantages of purchasing homes on the co-operative principle by means of small installments. He welcomed as suggestive some schemes

of the Grangers for going into banking; but he questioned the merit of preferential interest rates, and suggested that the Grangers ought to separate, not combine, the functions of investment and commercial banking.

While he thus asked for more spread and democracy in the policies and institutions of banking and credit, George also admired the going machinery of free private banking. He never boggled at mere bigness of operation. The suspicious may better be told, ahead of the story, that the *Post* was booming on a loan which had bought a wonderful new printing press. But, before this, in 1872 the paper compared the mighty enterprise of Chicago businessmen with that of San Francisco's cautious ones: if the capitalists would wake up, pull together as they should, and be more liberal about it, the city would go ahead, he said. As occasion invited, George scolded the local moneybags, for instance, when they denied credit to a promising glassmaker, or when they themselves speculated in foods; and he praised them when they financed the Palace Hotel, or moved toward a new telegraph line.

William C. Ralston, the head of the Bank of California, and speculator of speculators, entranced him. When, the day after his bank had been forced to close by the run introduced by the crash of the Comstock bonanza, the body of that handsome man was found in San Francisco Bay, the *Post* believed that the death stirred San Francisco like none since Lincoln's. Though odor of scandal was rising, George defended Ralston as a businessman, against the charges in the *Bulletin* and the *Call*. He limned him as 'pre-eminently a Californian. He possessed in excess the qualities which gave special character to the men who gathered here from all parts of the world and made this state what it is — the energy and dash, the generosity and extravagance, the propensity to bold movements and great enterprises, rather than to slower and more cautious methods.' Less than three weeks after the collapse, the *Post* cited the quick reopening of the Bank of California as signifying the recuperative power of private banks operating in a system of hard money.

As equal to an Olympian, George loved a generous capitalist. While few in early California were minded to make great gifts to the community, the *Post* praised Edward Tompkins, who in 1872 made the first endowment to the University of California. The paper compared him to W. W. Corcoran

of Washington, founder of an art gallery, and asked readers to consider what it would mean for California if the richest men gave for the public good. When, before long, James Lick did just that (we may disregard certain shortages of fulfillment, and remember the great observatory on Mount Hamilton), the *Post* praised him warmly. This was the kind of spirit that had thrived better in the Greek city-states than in America's republic so far, Henry George observed.

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Henry George's very earliest ideas had been Christian, and his first teen-age resistance to these ideas had been directed at evangelicalism's intensity. In California we have discovered him making assertions that he believed in immortality and spinning stories about occult experiences at sea. But for a period of years nothing markedly Christian appears in the record. The dedication in New York and the Oakland vision seem to have focused his moral intensity. Apparently he let wither his membership in the Bethel Methodist Church where he was converted and married, and in his San Francisco life he sought no substitute for that, or for old St. Paul's.

From the middle years with the *Post*, however, we have his son's word that Henry George experienced a deep renewal of religious feeling. Parenthood was part of it. The father who took the boys out on the bay and read poetry and discussed affairs in the family circle now insisted on morning and night prayers for the children and encouraged hymn singing at home. New faith, Henry George, Jr., says, was born of his finding himself, stabilizing his ideas. 'He had turned from a religion that taught either of a Special Providence on the one hand or of a merciless fate on the other. Now all the fervour of his spirit went forth in the belief that social progress is governed by unchanging and beneficial law.'

While the *Post* confirms in a large way the son's impression, it suggests also a good deal more: a complicated mind and conscience; a mood not always optimistic; and an inclination to move, explore, judge, and choose among the crowding thought currents of the decade. Editorial comment on books and ideas, and occasional book reviews which, though not signed, were almost certainly written by George, supply the evidence that his mind was reaching out in philosophic and religious, as well as in economic and political, directions.

What the later *Post* had to say, for instance, about the man of intellect George had once praised without stint, tells much of the arrival of an almost absolutistic philosophical point of view. Though still pleased to speak of John Stuart Mill's activities in behalf of land reform, to say that the English libertarian 'endorsed the principles upon which to tax nothing but land is based,' Henry George discovered a failure of nerve in Mill. He could not understand a reformer's logic which carried so far with his own, yet stopped short of speaking for an actual taking over of the income of land for the community. George was wise enough to acknowledge the rightness of a certain amount of moral relativism. Mill's saying that private property in England had so long assimilated land with capital and other forms of wealth that to reduce private values in land alone would be capricious and unjust, George understood and reported. He said freely, too, that the newness of property rights in California land rendered them more available to capture. 'Our state is young, our lands but partially occupied, and whatever injustice we might do in this way [of appropriating land values] will be less than we would do at any future time.' Yet, with all differences admitted, the editor likened Mill to those Americans before the Civil War who, hating slavery, nevertheless opposed the

anti-slavery crusade — the kind of people he had known at St. Paul's in Philadelphia.

Mill's death, and the posthumous appearance of an American edition of his *Three Essays on Religion*, widened the gap of thought. The *Post's* review, which was a kind of summing-up of the old master, described the book's skepticism as something which fell short of either atheism or faith, a state of mind too condescending and too reserved to be inspiring or even very interesting. For George, the noblest British lion had left the stage a mouse. The human and moral qualities he now admired he stated in a review of Senator Charles Sumner's collected volume of prophecies, *Prophetic Voices about America*; he praised the abolitionist's 'manliness,' his 'Miltonic intensity,' and his capacity for combining with 'severe public virtue and eminent legislative capacity, a genius for art and letters.'

In reviews of the two huge histories by the two able and patriotic historians of the same surname, George displayed appreciations appropriate

to the writings. It was not the old neighbor of Independence Hall in him alone but also the patriotic idealist who was stirred by George Bancroft on the American Revolution. And the Californian in him responded to Hubert Howe Bancroft's record-making achievements as writer of Hispanic American and Pacific coast history. That a San Franciscan could now produce and publish such monuments of learning elicited from George a statement of the ideal which we know he had cherished as a personal ambition, at least since *Our Land and Land Policy*: 'There is no work so great as a great book ... And a book like this, which brings to a condensation and a summary any branch of human knowledge, which focuses, as it were, into a grand intelligible picture the scattered rays of experience and research, has the strongest promise of immortality.'

While current history writing gratified George, current popular science and scientific philosophy troubled and challenged him. Under the editorial heading, 'Scientific Materialism,' on 11 September 1874, the *Post* discussed in detail Professor John Tyndall's presidential address before the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Perhaps this is the first, surely it is the earliest clear signal that George at maturity realized he would have to go to war with a major thought current of his age. He credited Tyndall with frankness, said that the great physicist had made a 'candid but repulsive' affirmation that science knows no need to find God in the universe. Quote the San Francisco *Post*: 'The sufficient answer to any materialistic theory is involved in its very statement — it springs spontaneously from the consciousness of man. The investigator who concentrates his gaze on one drop of the infinite ocean of existence may become so involved in the machinery of creation and life as to lose all sight of its purpose and aim.'

Along with asserting his own idealism — a theistic kind which might be spelled with a capital 'I' — George rediscovered and asserted also some of the more particular values of his religious upbringing. The recurring pessimism, which was a part of his new maturity, he first conceived in quite material terms: that America was ruining its future by wasting the domain. But even in that discovery his language echoed the Christian sense of sin and responsibility in which St. Paul's had trained him. And especially when he discussed the more purely moral problems, the old presumptions came

out. On the matter of how the federal government was behaving, for instance: 'The American people punish honesty and reward corruption. Get money, get power — get it no matter how it is got — that is the lesson we are teaching our children, even while we are teaching them to repeat old phrases we have robbed of all their meaning.' Though he once made occasion, as will be recalled, to express his loyal fondness for the service and the prayer-book of Protestant Episcopalianism, most of what he said about churches was contemptuous. He could not abide the low-grade moral concerns of the ones he saw about him in the city. They thought they were doing their duty, the *Post* said, when the preachers declaimed against Sabbath-breaking and drunkenness. Most of all he protested the property-class loyalties of the Protestant clergymen. According to the *Post*, they made apologies for Chinese immigration; they speculated — the paper gave names — in land and shares; they prostituted good talents for pulpit oratory in making 'shallow attempt' to reply to 'Darwin or Huxley, or to get rid of such historic facts as are damaging to their sect or profession.'

Entertaining such a picture of the ordained of Christ in the community, George had to enlarge his own philosophic dimensions to find an answer he believed in, against materialism of the type voiced by Tyndall. Not Charles Darwin, not the first-class thinkers were colored by it, he said in an editorial of 6 March 1875. But many were. From some reading or acquaintanceship — Thomas Starr King, the Unitarian, is the present writer's guess — George found reason to believe that, while scientists of his day were becoming more dogmatic, men of true religion were becoming less so. What light could science throw on the truly grand questions of life, he wanted to know, better than the wisdom of Job, or Socrates? Angered at the moment by San Francisco revivals carried on by Protestants and Paulists, he inquired also: Was Jesus joking when he said, 'Sell all thou hast, and give to the poor?' The so-called Religion of Humanity of that day seems to have impressed him.

His new breadth and depth involved more world awareness than at any stage of his career so far. Reaching out from the comparisons between California and Ireland, which he had been making frequently since 1869, the editorial mind discovered events of interest around the world. The *Post* was up-to-date when it notified its readers of the rise of the land-reform

movement in Melbourne, with a plan to have land nationalization in Australia. And, a couple of times as in his earlier papers, he waxed prophetic and hopeful about Russia in its similarity to the United States. 'Opposite in many things, they still have much in common.' Predicting the twentieth century — and probably borrowing from Tocqueville to do so — George foresaw two 'colossi, each a continental power, which might, if they chose, divide the world between them.' When, as he was about to quit the *Post*, he learned that in Russia the Tsar was ordering certain Polish landlords to sell out at fixed prices to the tenants, he ventured that, if this kind of thing persisted, Russia, 'with the forms of an unlimited monarchy will soon in reality become the most democratic of civilized nations.' *If emancipations persist!*

International goodwill sometimes fostered deeds of kindness. In 1874 the offices of the *Post* were used by a committee — promoted also by the *Examiner* — which raised \$300 for the relief of striking agricultural workers in England. Henry George contributed \$5. And, close at home, when a local problem popped up — which flags to display on the Fourth of July — the editor called for those of many nations, the Union Jack included. This annoyed the *Call*; and that paper's saying that Henry George's flag was 'English' not American gave the *Post* a chance to render a bit of biography and idealism. 'By birth and parentage,' Henry George was pure American. 'If [he] could never have gotten beyond the prejudices of early association, he would probably be an intense Native American, and would hate everything British with a hatred only understood by those who know what bitterness the personal tradition of two wars left on the Eastern seaboard. But he is enough citizen of the world to know that that which is good and beautiful and admirable in manhood is monopolized by no country or religion, and utterly to despise that miserable, narrow-minded prejudice which thinks a man is either better or worse because of his birthplace or faith.'

'Citizen of the world' — his daughter's favorite phrase for him. Truly George's mind had adopted such a sentiment while he edited the San Francisco *Post*.

It would be a formula which overlooked facts already presented in detail to say that the political ideas of Henry George of the *Post* were equal to the sum of his economics and his religion. Yet, outside the area of party loyalties, inherited and acquired, there would be truth in the proposition. In George's own words, written for the Fourth of July 1874: 'The great American Republic must be a republic in fact as well as form; a Christian republic in the full grand meaning of the words ... till time shall come when warships, and standing armies, and paupers and prisons, and men toiling from sunrise to dusk, and women brutalized by want, and children robbed of their childhood shall be things of the dark past.'

There is utopianism but no fully developed conception of government explicit in the *Post*. All governments, European and American, the editor eyed with suspicion. The comment just quoted followed an editorial of a few days earlier, one that had been inspired by a German report telling of six million men under arms in Europe, 'kept in a state of idleness at the expense of producers that they may be ready to cut each other's throats.' Though not at all a pacifist, George always thought that men put at arms, and held in readiness when not needed, represented incredible waste and immorality. In 1874 he condemned the army of the United States as too large, and as undemocratic and extravagant. He called for reduction to 2000 or 3000 well-paid, picked men, all treated and imbued with a spirit of equal opportunity, like the old French army.

Next to an inflated military, a civilian bureaucracy disturbed him most. He criticized customs houses everywhere, especially the San Francisco one; and, in the same bracket, the Navy Yard at Mare Island.

Yet the anxieties of a Jeffersonian failed to move George to the last ditch of opposition to the machinery of government. He had a bit of Thoreau in him, not a great deal. As political philosopher, he spoke on the *Post* in established dual character, that of visionary combined with patriot, in the old Manifest Destiny style. As a reformer he believed always that government must be ready to make mighty changes in society, and as Manifest Destiny man he asserted confidence that the American federal system could be extended almost indefinitely. The constitution of 1787 was so designed as to be right, he said, for any population, into the 'hundreds and perhaps thousands of millions,' and right for any land mass up to 'a

grand federation of the whole continent and perhaps the world, bringing into reality the long dream of peace and brotherhood.'

To be elastic but not overburdened was George's idea of how a large government in Washington, or anywhere, should be. What he said about the income tax, when a congressman proposed renewing the Civil War measure, is a case in point: 'Theoretically the income tax is next to the land tax, the best and fairest which can be levied, but in practice it becomes a tax on conscience, and a large part of it is consumed in collection.' Thus the dilemma of the *Post*: government had to be assigned unprecedented tasks of social reconstruction yet doubts about the human race demanded that power locations be few and little concentrated, and that men at the controls be kept not too long, and not too available to temptation. In George's own words: 'Our representative system is a failure ... We tax too many things. We elect too many officers ... The preventive evils which affect this country are owing to the attempt to do too much by means of government and convert it into a sort of Special Providence.'

Though moral generalizations came spontaneously from Henry George, much blueprinting of what government ought and ought not do, Jefferson and John Adams style, would hardly have been applicable to editorial writing. To be a newspaperman, George had to indicate practical choices. Thus the *Post* affirmed belief in states rights: 'It believes in local self-government as the only means by which the unity of so great a country and so numerous and diverse a people can be permanently maintained.' The paper asked for new strength on both the executive and the legislative sides of state government.

With correct history the *Post* remarked that the period of the American Revolution had meant a reaction against one-man power, but that in the nineteenth century the pendulum had swung back. It cited Governors Haight and Booth to show that a responsible man's high authority protects the people, Andrew Jackson style, and his veto gives security from the anonymous corruption of legislators. In that vein the paper preferred to have the state pay well for good administration, and it picked a little quarrel with the *Bee* to demonstrate the point. When the Sacramento paper congratulated California on having less expensive public servants than Great Britain, the *Post* estimated contrariwise that, though under the

English system California might pay the governor \$40,000 or \$50,000 (a fancy estimate), and San Francisco pay the mayor \$10,000 or \$20,000, the sheriffs in every county would not be collecting \$40,000 over and above their small salaries, and city supervisors would not be spending \$20,000 to be elected to an office with a \$100-a-month salary. One fears that George was more correct in his California than his British figures. He could not have pled a better cause with a less accurate comparison, for in his time the British paid their public servants, especially those in local government, very little.

As improvement for San Francisco, the editor prescribed legislation to fix large executive and policy-making responsibility in the office of mayor, as had recently been done in Chicago. And, for specific state economies, he suggested — of course not forgetting his most-wanted reduction of tax-collecting costs — the following: abolishing the offices of the state and county treasurers and assigning their jobs to the banks; combining the California offices of secretary of state and controller; reducing prison costs by developing prison industries; and other smaller items. The *Post* also proposed simplifications and reductions in the state judicial system.

Governmental efficiency and responsibility meant much to George, but more important to him were the politics of economic legislation and the effectiveness of public opinion. Six months before the *Post* was started, it will be remembered, he had been beaten in the election in which Haight went down; and his article on ‘Bribery in Elections’ was his response to that defeat. Here for the first time he took up the final major reform idea of his lifetime, the Australian ballot. Later, at full tide of his public leadership, he would make this reform the third corner of his triangle of reform: he would urge secret voting as the needful political leverage by which to lift the economic reforms, land-value taxation and free trade, into high politics.

In the *Overland* article of 1871 he was not ready to be so schematic. Thinking his way against corruption, he reasonably dismissed as unpromising any possible legislation to make criminals of the offerers of bribes. He urged instead a reform of procedure that would give the voter real freedom at the moment of voting. The Crown Colony of Victoria had done better than the great republic. If Americans would only follow suit — instead of the old-style party ballots handed out by party workers, give the

voters a general ballot and a chance to mark it unwatched and uncompelled direct bribery would be eliminated. The Australian procedure would have the extra advantage, George foresaw accurately, of encouraging independent, split-ticket, voting. As Anna George de Mille notes with pride, her father's *Overland* article preceded by more than a decade the American reform movement — to which he then contributed — that actually placed the Australian ballot in the statute books of the several states.

His stand was taken. But George did not assign much space in the *Post* to ballot reform; and he was selective, as many kinds of proposals were offered, about strengthening democracy by extending or refining political machinery. He approved, but only mildly, the notion of primary elections, intended to reduce the power of insiders in the parties. At this stage he was cool to votes for women. 'We are not advocates of female suffrage, nor particular admirers of the strong minded.' But he did hope that the feminist movement 'with all its froth and all its absurdities' — these were the days of Lucy Stone, as well as of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Clara Barton would promote the cause of equal pay for equal work. Economic improvement for women he really wanted, then perhaps political rights. Let women be cashiers, bookkeepers, and store clerks, the *Post* said — let them even be barbers, since the *Chronicle* wanted them. At top level, George recommended that women be chosen for seats on the school boards and for superintending positions in the school system. And in 1874, when George W. Julian and John Stuart Mill made news as friends of woman suffrage, the *San Francisco Post* softened to say that 'we care very little' whether they vote or not.

The new device of democracy which intrigued George most at this period was proportional representation. He argued that in California such a system would help reach desirable goals: the bypassing of the city political machines, and the giving of voice and weight to minorities in the state capitol. At this point George was doubtless thinking of the considerable minority that supported John Days's land reform bills, even when a Republican majority was dominating Sacramento. Whether or not land reform would have gotten farther, had the voting system been different, it is difficult to estimate.

Once a legislature was elected, George, in his role of editor and utopian, would have had it meet in almost constant session. The California arrangement could hardly have been more discontinuous: meeting for 120 days, every other year, each session shortly following the biennial election, but each election long after the last session. George proposed to have the legislature convened every month or every quarter. Continuing service, he believed, would lead assemblymen and senators to become acquainted with one another and to much better knowledge of the state, and so to such thoughtful legislation as would restore their branch of the government to its rightful first place.

Such tenets doubled and redoubled — over and above the necessity posed by the land-value taxation idea — the reasons the *Post* had for desiring a new constitution for the state. Here George's thought was far from unique; for constitutional reform was in the air. During the session of 1873-4, for instance, the *Alta California* wanted the legislature to initiate the two-year process of amendment. The *Post* called for a total rewriting. When a committee of the bar association, headed by ex-governor Haight, moved toward a constitutional convention, George's paper seconded; and, though his editorial page was not one to make much of the common plea that a voter's simple duty is to choose the best man, it did now make that plea. A constitutional convention, it very well said, ought to bring public opinion to a focus and draw the state's best minds into high public service. After this effort failed in Sacramento in 1874, along with land reform, the *Post* urged a convention again, in what was the last opportunity of George's editorship, during the state campaign of 1875. Again a failure; but just three years later, when in crisis conditions a convention was actually called, George would be ready to abandon work on *Progress and Poverty* to campaign and speak for a reform constitution.

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The characteristic ideas of what we have been explaining as the *Post's* utopia have all been reported: free enterprise without private monopolism, free trade, equal opportunity, an economy of abundant production for all, a Christian state, an idealistic culture, an efficient government, a democracy uncorrupt and sensitive to the people's needs. What George wanted was remote enough from things as they were in California. The mere statement

of visionary goals forces a present day reader of the *Post* to ask: of what practical use was it to assert such aims in daily journalism? Was George politically effective as a reforming Democrat in a city run mainly by Democratic politicians? Was he morally effective as an idealist addressing himself to a particularly materialistic sector of a materialistic culture, California in the age of Grant?

Part of the explanation lies in the *Post's* financial success. Readers must have liked what they were getting. Another part is the influence moral imagination may command in a community, even though it fails to reach its ultimate goals. The *Sunrise* affair is a case in point: the *Post* put a tyrannical sea captain in jail, when no other paper took the initiative. So also editor and paper got results in half a dozen cases, in all but one of which they must have been overwhelmingly right. It does seem that Henry George was fated say by the inner logic of his concern with land and labor in industrial areas — to be an urban reformer, concerned with all manner of things, whether or not relevant to land-value taxation and free trade, for about a quarter of a century.

In the first month of the existence of the paper, the *Post* smelled out corruption in the San Francisco police department. A strong editorial charged that policemen were conniving with gambling in the city. But the matter only simmered in the editorial pages until which was in so many ways George's year of decision, when investigating the facts led him and his partner to go to the infamous Mint Saloon on Commercial Street. John Vallance George, who was working for the *Post* at the time, tells the story, apparently from the principal's first-hand account. 'As they entered, James Gannon, an ex-detective and supporter of [Chief of Police] Crowley, tapped my brother on the shoulder, saying that he wanted to speak to him privately. My brother stepped inside with him, when Gannon said, "Let up on Crowley or there will be trouble," and when asked what he meant, the ex-detective seized my brother by the neck with one hand and slapped him in the face with the other. My brother tried to strike back, when Gannon reached down and drew a revolver.' Two city supervisors protected the little editor. Stuart Menzies, 'a very strong man' who accompanied George and Hinton, seized Gannon's shooting arm; and with the help of Supervisor McCarthy, 'pulled Gannon away.'

George did not prosecute, and perhaps considered himself the winner at the moment. He was described as a hero in the other papers; and there followed some kind of a police investigation of gambling and a degree of improvement in the situation. But reform did not cut deep enough to outlast a change of department administration. In the winter of 1874-5 the *Post* moved again, this time concentrating on the new chief of police, whose name was Cockrill. In the *Post's* own words and specifications; 'We have a plain duty to perform in exposing a Chief of Police who has disgraced his office and his constituents.' It is common knowledge that faro playing 'is conducted by friends of the Chief or his friends' friends, and that he fails to prosecute.'

Such a comment invited a suit for libel. But evidently court action was just what George wanted, as an opportunity to display the facts. At any rate he was ready, when Cockrill sued, to print a facsimile of a receipt which connected the chief's liquor business with the operator of a well-known faro table; and he also printed a facsimile of a promise, put in writing by Cockrill before election but not made good, that if elected he would appoint a certain Negro to a position as detective — a trafficking in offices which alone, George said, should put the chief in jail.

According to the *Chronicle's* news story, when this 'rare and racy' case came up, Cockrill, the plaintiff, acted 'slightly nervous and anxious,' and his counsel 'continually interposed objection to the testimony offered.' Meanwhile George, as defendant, 'amid considerable commotion among the sporting part of the spectators,' carried his role as if he himself were plaintiff. Apparently the reforming editor had an easy time. Though the judge ruled that the *Post* had not proved to be fact the exact phrases of its editorial, the court allowed that there could be 'no moral doubt that Cockrill was paid for conniving at gambling' in San Francisco. Further, the action brought evidence of 'dozens' of Chinese gambling houses in operation, the *Post* said; and the paper welcomed the next step, an investigation by a grand jury. This kept up the fact finding for an extra three weeks. Then, as an 'ignored bill,' the case of 'Henry George and W. M. Hinton, misdemeanor, libel,' was finally disposed of.

The grand jury commended to its successor a fresh review of the evidence of gambling, and of possible connections of the police with that

gambling. This fell short of full victory, yet the *Post* was fairly satisfied. The 'grand jury expresses the sentiment and belief of the whole community,' it said. Wheels within wheels, the *Post* had connected Chief Cockrill with the Fitch-Pickering-Simonton papers; and the editorial silence of those two, the *Call and Bulletin*, is tacit acknowledgment of a score by George.

Meanwhile, during the year 1872 especially, George displayed a commando-type of attack on other widely dispersed areas of civic wrong. Late in October, on the eve of the national election, less than a year after the 'Bribery in Elections' article, the *Post* condemned out of hand the newly compiled Great Register of the voters of San Francisco. It estimated 10,000 voters listed who had left the city, and 15,000 more listed in the wrong wards; and said that unless a voluntary organization would send challengers to every voting place, any amount of repeat voting would be possible. Within a month the *Post* blasted at the city hospital for bad food, bad nursing, and stealing from the patients; and very soon it renewed with force an old demand that the city's Industrial School, the boys' reformatory, be reorganized.

The *Post's* original charges against the school had been incompetent management, waste and graft, and an average cost of \$263.50 a year to keep each boy in a school which was a crime breeder. During the first ten days of December, on the occasion of an inspection by the city supervisors, the newspaper ran a new series of revelations. It also produced some very liberal suggestions. Developing a reform idea from Wisconsin, it proposed running a school on the cottage plan, with resident couples in charge of each group of boys. From a colleague who witnessed the event, we learn that Henry George went personally to the Industrial School, and, much as at the Mint Saloon, was threatened with a pointed pistol. In this effort the *Post* succeeded completely, by driving the school director out of office and out of the city.

Most of George's campaigns to clear out nests of civic corruption are self-recommending, and favorable judgment need not be withheld because the bulk of the evidence, though with occasional flashes of confirmation, comes from the *Post*. But one case at least is more complex. In this instance the institution where he alleged graft was the University of California, and George's opposite number, far from being a minor politician, was on the

way to becoming one of the great statesmen of American education, Daniel Coit Gilman. Yet the *Post* moved in on university criticism from the side of George's strength, his expert knowledge of federal land policy; his total lack of academic experience had little bearing on his effort. Doubtless, too, the editor was somewhat influenced by a member of the faculty, Professor William Swinton, with whom he had established a friendship while living in Oakland.

The professor, who was a brother of John Swinton, the New York labor leader and journalist, had a considerable record of accomplishments. Though short on teaching background, he was long on writing experience, as he had been a *New York Times* correspondent, and later an historian of the Civil War. He taught literature, and was something of a malcontent on the faculty. It is easy to guess that he encouraged George to criticize the university. At any rate, many months before Gilman came, the *Post* complained that the regents were laggard in developing the agricultural and mechanical studies to which their having accepted the benefits of the Morrill Act committed them. But the *Post* was not wholly critical. And it might well have been at the suggestion of a professor of literature that George paid warm respects to the great opportunities the state university had for developing a people's culture. For, though the *Post* was minded to fear that an old-fashioned 'college of polite learning' might emerge, it declared that the very existence of the institution ought to refute the supercilious who said that California was altogether materialist in spirit. The paper neatly made the point that Edward Sill, the gifted poet (whom Gilman soon appointed professor of English), was already producing verse across the bay.

Ideally a liberal editor would have recognized that Gilman, who arrived in the fall of 1872 from the Sheffield Scientific School, which was the new and practical branch of Yale, might become just the man to nurse along together in tender transplantation the scientific and the humanistic vines of learning in the new California environment. (He was presently to do just this, with famous success, at Johns Hopkins.) An editor who perceived this possibility would have been slow to anger and would have erred on the side of patience with the new project. On the other side, ideally the new president would have refrained from comment on social and

political questions not relevant to his office, and would have been extra careful about press reactions to university policy and expenditure.

Unfortunately, there was no ideality in these respects on either the San Francisco or the Berkeley side of the bay. On 1 July 1873, the *Post* pronounced in favor of certain public statements about land policy made by E. S. Carr, the university's professor of agriculture, an individual whose truculence perhaps surpassed Professor Swinton's, and who was also leader and historian of the Granger movement in the state. By legislature time the next winter, being on Carr's side meant being against Gilman, for the Grange was turning on pressure in Sacramento to have more practical subjects the Morrill Act again — in the curriculum, contrary to the president's policy. The Grange wished also to transform the university regents from appointive to elective officials. Within university walls the mounting tensions drove William Swinton, now Carr's associate, to resign his chair. It seems to have been almost foreordained that the *Post* would fight the university administration.

A crescendo of editorials, early in 1874, sounded the battle. The main thing was the *Post*'s allegation that the state had been swindled and the eight-hour law broken, in the building of North Hall, on the new Berkeley campus. The paper also said that the faculty had suffered serious loss when Swinton quit, and that the operations of the university were defeating the good intentions of Congress and the state legislature. The new university was charged with ignoring 'the idea of bringing science to minister to the daily wants and lighten the daily labors of the people; to marry as closely as might be the educated brain with the toiling hand.' George caught Gilman in a vulnerable opening, moreover, when, according to the *Post*, the president released an essay 'in which he presumes to give an intelligent account of various phases of civilization in the state,' and concluded with an opinion in favor of Chinese immigration.

George came face-to-face with university problems, and perhaps confronted Gilman and some of the regents personally, in February 1875, when an assembly committee investigated his charge of fraud. His contention was that Regent Merritt had unfairly arranged for business associates of his own to have the building contract, and that they had profited mightily. There are of record nearly 500 pages of assertion and

counter-assertion before the committee, but even so it is not clear how right or wrong George was in charging dishonesty to the Board of Regents. Yet it is certain that his article opened the investigation; and that, though the investigators refused to sustain him, the obstreperousness of the San Francisco Post helped decide President Gilman to leave California, even before he was called to the new Johns Hopkins.

The antagonism in California between the future greatest reformer and the future most creative university president of an epoch, both men in the preliminary stages of their careers, shows neither personality at his best. The academic man fell short of comprehending the moral worth of George's pro-labor protest, and the editor made no suitable effort to be patient and keep hands off while a young university wobbled in its first steps toward larger life.

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The one instance in which the *Post's* reformism did not pay, so far as the evidence tells, occurred in July 1874, not without drollery. In Alameda, across the bay, a Miss Sally Hart and companion, workers in the local-option movement, ran into obstructions while they were campaigning for a no-license vote in a local election. Rowdies threw firecrackers at them, and lifted skirts on seventy-year-old legs, and enacted a mock funeral of the ladies' cause. The *Post* blamed these bad manners on the encouragement of San Francisco German liquor dealers, and it came forward with a gallantry toward Miss Hart which no other San Francisco paper equaled. If the first local-option election could be swung by bribery and ruffianism, it queried, would not all local option be doomed?

The affair proved not too trivial. The *Post* printed 'a little secret history' which revealed that an intermediary had made it known that if the paper would oppose local option it would receive material benefits from the liquor dealers. Doing the opposite, the *Post* was boycotted in places where it hurt: saloon and grocery-store sales stopped, and many Germans dropped their subscriptions. In one week 1101 subscribers were lost and 959 new ones taken, and the *Post* started printing lists of stopping and beginning subscribers. After a week of this the Methodist *Christian Advocate* saluted the *Post* as the only San Francisco paper 'not ruled by the liquor interests,' and Henry George's paper became known as being for temperance. Not a

prohibitionist journal, it did print an estimate that the city of San Francisco had one saloon for each 100 inhabitants, and did demand a reduction. Quite consistent with its tax principles it proposed a very high license law, a tax for social control.

Thirty-odd years later a friend of Henry George said that the attack on the liquor interests marked the beginning of the end of George's regime on the San Francisco *Post*. This is possible but doubtful; and certainly the boycott of the saloons and stores was no more than a contributing cause to his withdrawal in 1875. Just before the Sally Hart episode the paper announced a circulation of 30,000. This may or may not be an entirely reliable figure, but it is three or four times what newspapers seem to have required to stay in business; and the *Post* presently decided to make a huge investment and expansion in basic equipment.

At the time the *Post* was being printed on the *Chronicle's* press, the fastest in San Francisco, and could hardly supply its customers. It announced its decision to purchase an up-to-the-minute Bullock press, which would print 26,000 copies an hour. An editorial thanked the public for the patronage 'which, in so short a time, has enabled the one-cent *Post* to place itself, so far as machinery is concerned, ahead even of the New York *Herald* and the London *Times* and *Telegraph*. With the new facilities it will be our aim to make the *Post* more than ever the people's paper of the Pacific Coast.' The *Post* reported in pride a transcontinental pat on the back recently given by *Leslie's Weekly*. Though a writer on that paper discovered more to condemn than to praise in the newspapers of San Francisco, and called the lot inferior to the better papers of the Middle West, he gave his best commendation to the *Post* — 'a smaller paper, which is bright, intelligent, and paragraphical, not entirely local.' When he suggested for the city an 'improved typographical newspaper,' the *Post* promised happily to supply just that need.

How did George and Hinton swing the deal? Twenty-four years later the business manager and partner testified that John Percival Jones, mining operator and speculator, who had not very long before moved from California to Nevada, and in 1873 was elected to the United States Senate from that state, had supplied the cash. For \$30,000 he was tendered three-

fifths of the stock of the company, and \$18,000 more comprised a loan for which he received notes.

Just exactly why the senator, a Republican, should have ventured so much in the *Post* there is no evidence to tell us. George's editorial praise for his hard-money principles does not seem to explain such an interest. If he bought in so that he might later take over the paper, he acted slowly; and if he bought to promote George's main ideas, he acted disloyally in the end. The San Francisco *Bulletin* had a Machiavellian explanation, that Jones merely 'wanted a paper to throw mud.' When that newspaper observed that if such was the senator's purpose, he had selected well, the *Post* simply denied that Senator Jones had a controlling interest, and denied also that he exerted or tried to exert any influence on policy.

On George's side, over and above the business connection, there appears a feeling, like his old attitude toward Governor Haight, that Senator Jones was a man of power who could be led into paths of righteousness. Shortly after the new press had been installed, the *Post* said that it believed that Senator Jones thought as it did on the points of free trade, land-value taxation, and the functions of government; and it saluted him as the senator who could, if he would, make himself the Cobden or Bright of the United States. So far as meets the eye it was the editor advising the senator, rather than the politician using the newspaper, which describes the relationship between Henry George and J. P. Jones for the remainder of George's editorship.

No more in private than in public, so far as the record goes, did George intimate that there was any limit on his enthusiasm for what the new investment had bought. The summer and fall of 1874 were full of excitement for a naturally impatient man. Only in October, after three months of hopes deferred, did the telegram come which announced completion and shipment of the press. It had been built in Henry George's native city by the firm that only a decade earlier had constructed the first press which would print in one operation both sides of the sheet as it came off the roller — the web-perfecting press. Meanwhile, as George wrote his mother, there was a plant to get ready and business expansion to manage. He had 'fire engine and boilers built and a new class of type made,' and anticipated that very soon the *Post* as enterprise would 'either burst up or get rich.'

The climax came at the turn of the year. On 28 December the *Post* moved along Montgomery Street to the corner of Sacramento. Three and a half weeks later a champagne party in the new offices, and the production of an eight-page Saturday edition by the press, celebrated the new installation. It was complete. A new lamppost specially decorated with a gilded eagle was set in the sidewalk outside; the business offices, the press, and tables for folding and mailing occupied the first floor; and the whole upper floor was arranged for editorial work and composition. Speaking tubes, dumb-waiters, and steam elevator connected all parts of the plant; there were stands for twenty-three compositors, and the ‘most airy and comfortable’ working space for newsmen in California. All this had been achieved, said the *Post*, by the strength of its own efforts and principles.

The expansion took place at a time of readjustment in journalism in the state. The Sacramento *Union* was about to sell out and consolidate with the *Record*; in San Francisco the cheaper papers were gaining, the *Chronicle* and the *Call*, while the older and more expensive *Alta* and the *Bulletin* were slipping. At least so the *Post* interpreted events, and everything confirms its judgment except about the *Bulletin*, which, much as George would have liked otherwise, was still making money. With steam up, and the new press rolling, the editor started a new weekly edition of the *Post* — weekly and ‘steamer’ editions were an old habit in San Francisco newspaper production — at the incredible price of \$1 a year. According to George: ‘We have put its price at the mere cost of white paper and press work with the intention of gathering a larger circulation than that of all the Republican papers combined, and think that at One Dollar a year you will find many persons who will wish to subscribe.’ To the public the *Post* offered the weekly in terms appropriate to Henry George’s economy-of-abundance ideas. Savings in presswork, in distribution, and in the mass purchase of supplies were said to make the offer possible. Seven months after starting George told a friend that things were working out well. The *Weekly Post* in October 1875 had more subscribers than any other newspaper weekly, and it was reaching the market it sought, the miners, farmers, and valley merchants of the state.

Meanwhile in late summer the *Post* Publishing Company, as the business was now styled, ventured the ultimate move into competition with the Fitch, Pickering, and Simonton group. On 20 August, one week before the crash of the Bank of California, it launched the San Francisco *Morning*

Ledger, a seven-days-a-week paper. George's hopes soared. Acknowledging as he had before that an evening paper could reach only so far, he fascinatedly believed that the new morning paper with the old Philadelphia name would soon overshadow the *Post* and become, it might be, *the* great paper of the Pacific coast. This time again, George ventured one-cent journalism. On the first day he printed 60,000 copies, the biggest edition ever put out on the coast. He announced that he would rely more on readers than on advertisers for support, and that he wanted the paper to be for everyone — for laborers to read on the way to work, and for businessmen and housewives.

Though naturally there was a conformity of ideas with those of the *Post*, yet by announcements made and by areas of affairs omitted from the editorial page, it is plain that a more general and less opinionated paper than the *Post* was intended. Begun a week before a state election, the *Ledger* purposely omitted taking a party stand. Although operating painfully close to the promise of little advertising, the *Ledger* put up a good front. In October, after only two months of life, the page size was doubled to 25 inches by 17 inches, a bigger sheet than the *Post*. Like the *Post* it surrendered early the one-cent bargain, its price being raised to fifteen cents (a California bit) a week.

Imagination went into the paper, and particularly into the Sunday edition — Sunday journalism was still new and little developed in the age of Grant. Before the Bullock press, the *Post* had made a regular feature of its double-size Saturday editions: it included a bit of fiction and several departments of general appeal, such as the theater, for week-end reading. Now it turned that enlargement into the Sunday *Ledger*, and that edition was included in the subscription arrangements of both the *Post* and *Ledger*.

Pictures were the exciting thing about the new Sunday paper. Possibly taking a hint from a recent attempt in San Francisco to publish an illustrated weekly — a failure which the *Leslies* article said indicated an open area for journalism — George and his associates spread across the front page pictures which were a vast improvement over the blurred little cuts then familiar in newspapers. San Francisco was treated to a mirror of itself, as the paper carried, for instance, large clear pictures of the Palace Hotel, and of banks and other buildings. The *Ledger* varied the fare with interesting cartoons, too, some by Jules Tavernier, formerly of *La Vie Parisienne* and

the London *Graphic*. The claim is made for George that this was a world innovation, that the *Ledger* was the first Sunday paper anywhere to include pictures. Different from the *Post*, the morning paper carried an unusual amount of foreign correspondence, from Dublin, London, Paris, and Peru, for instance.

Not forgetting his principal stock in trade, Henry George solicited and received — too late for publication — from John Swinton of the New York *Sun*, a series of letters with a radical pro-labor interest. The journalist Swinton was probably a more brilliant writer than his brother, recently of Berkeley. George had known him in New York, during the mission for the San Francisco *Herald*. (Without a shred of direct evidence, it is easy to suspect, from this familiarity of 1875, that John Swinton had been the *Sun* man who, that spring six years before, supplied the Associated Press dispatches which George relayed to Nugent across the continent.) On 26 October, in behalf of the *Ledger*, George wrote his kindred mind: ‘I know that you and I think alike on important subjects, and that our religion is the same. New York is not only the grand center of the country; but it is also the type of all growing American cities of the future, and I believe a letter from there written by a man who thinks as you do will be not only extremely interesting but would do something to make people think. If you do conclude to write something, sign your name, not only that it would attract more attention to the letters, but would give them more weight. Our literary men are so universally the apologists and defenders of the House of Have, that what are dubbed agrarian sentiments are generally set down either to idlers too lazy to earn a living or to demagogues.’ This was George’s request. A little later, when the paper had failed, he explained to Swinton that, ‘The special thing I referred to in writing you was your “communism.” I wanted you to chuck in a little of that.’

The expansion of the Post Publishing Company outran Henry George in November 1875. The Bullock press had gone into operation half a year ahead of the closing of the Bank of California, and the *Ledger* had been started one week ahead. Perhaps the large general factors of financial crisis are sufficient explanation of failure; more than likely some fault lay in George’s individual decisions to expand, and yet again expand. Four years later, summing up his California career, he admitted remorse. In his own

words: 'tempted by the idea of a fine building and press we let in John P. Jones,' and, at the same time, thinking that 'the leadership of journalism on this coast' was truly within reach, we started the *Ledger* 'on a more expensive scale than ever attempted in San Francisco before or since,' and 'We strained our credit.' According to this reminiscence, George's wrong decisions had made all the difference in his own affairs. He had had a chance to sell earlier in 1875 for 'what to me was a fortune,' but at the end of the year had gone 'out without a cent.' Characteristically he concluded, 'Sometimes I wonder at myself for giving up so easily what I had won so hardly, but I suppose I was utterly worked down. However, it was good fortune in the guise of evil.'

At the moment he lacked this much philosophy. A woman visitor at the *Post's* office discovered Henry George in tears. Senator Jones, when he bought the new press, had promised, George told her, never to ask the editor to advocate a measure he did not believe in; but now 'he has asked me to do that very thing and I will not do it.' Retribution may have been possible. George considered himself free to insert in the *Post* such an *expose* of the senator's bad faith as 'would have ended all hopes of his getting anything' from the property. Mr. Hinton persuaded him not to try this, for the sake of the working staff, and in the end George wrote a sportsman like editorial, 27 November, which began, 'Circumstances which I cannot control ..

In San Francisco the rival papers did not grieve. Conspicuously, the *Bulletin* gave no notice, editorial or news item, to George's going. The *Alta California* merely said that George's and Hinton's work had given the *Post* 'the respectable position in journalism which it has obtained, and their withdrawal will be regretted by very many.' The *Sacramento Bee* of course spoke warmly, crediting George with having made 'the most brilliant paper yet on the Coast.' The *Colusa Sun*, Will Green's old paper, had a twisting series of compliments to pay on 4 December: 'Harry George, the founder of the San Francisco Post, who built it up and made it a power in the land, has been ousted from editorial control ... The change is, of course, the effect of some wheel within some wheel ... George maintained many notions that were not our notions, but we always believed that he was actuated by an honesty of purpose ... We maintain, while we do not consent to his doctrine, that such men are absolutely essential.' The *Sun* endorsed every word of George's valedictory of good faith.

Joseph T. Goodman, appropriately from Virginia City in Senator Jones' state, and appropriately a liberal Republican, took over the editorship of the *Post*. After this change the paper survived under its own name nearly forty years, until Hearst bought it and submerged it in the *Call*. Later the *Call* was merged with its old partner to make the *Call-Bulletin*, the present-day paper which combines the two names George hated most.

At the moment of his exit, the Sacramento *Bee* hoped that George would continue to contribute to the *Post* — and in fact the paper did carry on an anti-monopoly line of fire — and even George himself was not sure how deeply policy would be changed. Writing to Swinton a month later, on 27 December, he expressed uncertainty about Goodman's taking the letters which he himself had invited: 'How much radicalism they would print I cannot tell. They look on me as a pestilential agrarian and communist, and will avoid what they call my hobbies. But though they do not know it, the very aggressiveness and radicalism of the *Post* was its strength. In making a paper that will not offend gunny bags they will kill it, as you will in time see ...'

This letter, and one other to the same man, are George's real valedictory on a passage of his life. It will not hurt to put together sections from the two: 'Since I last wrote you a change has come over the spirit of my dreams. From running two dailies and two weeklies I am down to none. It is the old story, so I won't weary you with it, and in fact have not much heart to repeat it. The *Ledger* under ordinary circumstances would have been a success. Its reception was all that could be asked — but the extraordinary stringency induced by the failure of the Bank and intensified by the Virginia fire cut to nothing the advertising which a new paper can get, while depriving us of all aid. So we went down. And then while credit was strained and resources exhausted, the big fish in the *Post* company, John P. Jones — reached out — and took it in. A couple of months ago I reluctantly consented to put the price of \$36000 on the interest held by myself and partner. Now I just take a walk ...

'If I never do anything more I have the satisfaction of knowing that I perceptibly affected public thought, and planted ideas which will some day [change ?] into action ...

‘As for being depressed I am not — twenty four hours is enough to cry over spilt milk ...

‘It is all in a lifetime, and I have seen too much to think I can certainly tell what is good and what is evil fortune ...’