

PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND THE STANDARD

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LOUIS F. POST had been candidate for district attorney on the local ticket of the Labor party. He, too, was defeated. Carrying the sad tidings from the *Herald* bulletin board to campaign headquarters, the two men rode uptown on the front platform of the streetcar.

Knowing his friend's deep faith in Divine Providence, Post suddenly asked George, "Do you see the hand of the Lord in this?" And George, looking at him "with an expression of simple confidence," instantly replied, "No, I don't see it, but I know it's there."<sup>1</sup>

The two men arrived at the United Labor party headquarters to find their co-workers crushed by the political defeat. But George at once sprang to the little platform to encourage his despondent followers, who afterward clustered around him—first weeping, then cheering—to grasp his hand.

"Through strife, through defeat, through treachery, through opposition," he said a few nights later at a meeting of the Anti-Poverty Society, "the great cause will go on. There is something behind it more powerful than we; there is something behind it that will urge it on, no matter what we may do or what we may not do. . . . When a truth like this comes into the world, when it gets as far as this has done, then the future is secure."<sup>2</sup>

George's showing in the New York State election, where he admitted the hand of Providence, was owed to factors besides his Republican and Democratic opposition.

The year before, on May 4, 1886, an event in the neighborhood of the Haymarket, in Chicago, had shaken the country. A mass meeting called by a group of avowedly violent-action Anarchists, who however had devoted their gathering to advocacy of the eight-hour day with ten-hour pay, ended in a bloody riot. While the speakers were descending from the truck

they had used as a platform, a bomb hurtled into the ranks of a body of policemen who had suddenly appeared and ordered the crowd to disperse. One officer was killed. Many others were wounded. Swift retaliation followed, with the death of one civilian and injury to dozens. This tragedy, with its resulting toll of eight dead and at least eighty-two wounded,<sup>3</sup> threw the whole country into a ferment which continued during the long criminal trial of eight Anarchists before a jury chosen from 981 talesmen.

Henry George had expected to draw much of his voting strength from among the groups today vaguely defined as "left-ists." The stand he took as a consequence of the Haymarket trials certainly prejudiced his chances of election with support from this quarter. Some of the circumstances of the case, therefore, need to be recalled here.

Defense attorneys for the eight Anarchists did not deny that the accused men had for years advocated the use of force. They did not deny that the accused had, on that very May 4, printed and distributed exhortations "To arms!" and "Revenge!" and "Workmen arm yourselves and appear in full force!"<sup>4</sup> The Chicago area in that year was a center of much industrial unrest and some considerable unemployment. Clashes between laboring men and Pinkerton detectives hired by employers were not infrequent. At the trial the defense could not even deny that one of the accused had been making bombs, similar in workmanship to the one that was hurled into the policemen's ranks.

But the defense did deny there was *proof* that any one of the eight defendants had thrown this particular bomb.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the prosecution contended that although there might be no proof that one of these men had thrown the bomb, all eight were responsible for its having been thrown.

The eight were found guilty on October 9, 1886, and were condemned to die. The case was then carried to the Supreme Court of Illinois, where on March 13, 1887, the judgment of the lower court was affirmed.

In October, 1887,<sup>6</sup> in Union Hill, New Jersey, a public meeting was held to express sympathy with the men who now faced the gallows. Police broke up the meeting. Outraged at this invasion of free assembly and free speech, George wrote a protest in *The Standard* and also urged, publicly and privately, to the Governor of Illinois, that the death sentences be commuted to life imprisonment. He had believed the Anarchists were unjustly

accused of the crime until he read the "summary of evidence which is embraced in the decision of the Supreme Court of Illinois."<sup>7</sup> One of the eight men originally accused had committed suicide. George's mind was changed. He wrote in *The Standard*:

It was not indeed proved that any of the seven men threw the bomb, nor even was it proved who did throw the bomb, but it was proved beyond any reasonable doubt that the men were engaged in a conspiracy, as a result of which the bomb was thrown and were therefore as guilty as though they themselves had done the act. . . .

In this country where a freedom of speech which extends almost to license is seldom interfered with, and where all political power rests upon the will of the people, those who counsel to force or to the use of force in the name of political or social reform are enemies of society, and especially are they enemies of the working class. What in this country holds the masses down and permits the social injustice of which they are so bitterly conscious, is not any superimposed tyranny, but their own ignorance. The workingmen of the United States have in their own hands the power to remedy political abuses and to change social conditions by rewriting the laws as they will. For the intelligent use of this power they must be aroused and reason invoked. But the effect of force, on the contrary, is always to awaken prejudice and to kindle passion.<sup>8</sup>

Not satisfied with his own opinion, George sought the legal advice of Judge James G. Maguire, who also studied the summary and was convinced that the Anarchists were guilty. This confirmed George in his decision. "Our bench is not immaculate," he wrote, "but I could not believe that every one of the seven (judges) men, with the responsibility of life and death hanging over them, could unjustly condemn these men."<sup>9</sup>

A final appeal was made to the United States Supreme Court, where, after a six-hour hearing, the Federal judges denied a writ of error. The Governor of Illinois refused to pardon the condemned men, and on November 11, four of them were hanged. George felt more sorrow over the tragedy and understood the deep cause of it more profoundly than those who were accusing him of heartlessness. "With the mass of the so-called Anarchists," he wrote in *The Standard* on November 19, "anarchy is not a theory but a feeling that workingmen are oppressed by an intolerable class despotism, and that the breaking down of gov-

ernmental power by acts of violence is the only sure and speedy way of release. Anarchy is the child of despair. It is the impulse of men who, bitterly conscious of injustice, see no way out."

George thought that anarchy was a foreign importation, born of repression and class governments abroad, and that the newcomer would soon lose his anarchism "if he found here that political liberty brought social justice." But this was not always the case. "What great bodies of the foreigners who come here actually do find," he wrote, is that our political equality is little better than a delusion and a mockery, and that there exists here the same bitter social injustice which presses down the masses of Europe. . . ."

Who was to blame for the attitudes of violence? *The Standard* article went on:

And if it is true that there are among working men many who are disposed to condone acts of violence when committed by those who assume to be the champions of oppressed labor, is it not true that there is the same blind class feeling among the well-to-do? When Pinkerton detectives shoot down strikers; when superserviceable policemen club Socialists, is there any outcry from those who deem themselves conservative?

The Anarchists are not our most dangerous class. Back of the men who died on Friday in Chicago with a fortitude worthy of a higher cause; back of the men who sympathize with them in their deed, is a deep and wide sense of injustice. Those who are most responsible for the existence of this are those who, having time and opportunity and power to enlighten the public mind, shut their eyes to injustice and use their talents to prevent the arousing of thought and conscience and to deny any peaceful remedy that may be proposed.<sup>10</sup>

Several of George's friends, including Post, later declared that if he could have had access to the full testimony in the case and not merely the summary, he would have had greater belief in the probable innocence of the Haymarket rioters. *The Standard* articles which condemned both extremes doubtless lost him votes even though he was accused by other radicals of "simply trading his earlier sympathy with the condemned men for votes."<sup>11</sup> But he was philosophical about it all, writing von Gütschow that "the man who acts solely by conscience must often be misunderstood and seem to others as if he were act-

ing from low motives, when in reality he is acting from the highest."<sup>12</sup>

The campaign of 1887 behind him, George turned to national affairs. President Cleveland, in his message to Congress, had advised a reduction of the tariff. It was a plea for tariff reform, not a demand for free trade, but George liked its courage. Since the Tilden campaign in 1876 he had fought to abolish the tariff. He had written a 356-page book discussing protection and free trade and now he felt he could serve his cause much better by supporting Cleveland for re-election than by supporting a candidate nominated by the United Labor party who could not possibly win. In *The Standard* he wrote:

I regard the general discussion of the tariff question as involving greater possibilities of popular economic education than anything else. And as I have often said when myself standing as candidate, what I care for is not how men vote but how they think. . . . I will support Mr. Cleveland, not as the best thing I would like to do but as the best thing I can do. When the wind is ahead the sailor does not insist on keeping his ship to the course he would like to go. That would be to drift astern. Nor yet for the sake of having a fair wind does he keep his yards square and sail anywhere the wind may carry him. He sails "full and by," lying as near the course he would like, as with the existing wind, he can. He cannot make the wind, but he can use it.<sup>13</sup>

Most of George's supporters in the New York State campaign agreed with him, but some of them preferred to stick with the Labor party. One of these was Father McGlynn. Although an ardent free trader and on friendly personal terms with Cleveland, the priest did not want to ally himself with the Democratic party since it was represented in New York by Tammany Hall, which had played an influential part with Archbishop Corrigan in attempting to crush the Single Tax movement and those who espoused it. George, in refusing to try to make a national party out of the United Labor party, believed however that "parties are not to be manufactured; they grow out of existing parties by the springing forward of issues upon which men will divide." By supporting Cleveland he thought he could "bring the whole subject of taxation, and through it the social question, into the fullest discussion."<sup>14</sup>

The split over Cleveland also split the Anti-Poverty Society. For the sake of harmony, George and his followers withdrew. He wrote in confidence to von Gütschow: "You of course only know what had appeared in the papers, and I, as far as possible, have refrained from 'washing dirty linen in public.' . . . The truth is our little [United Labor] Party early developed a little 'party machine' using to the full measure his [Dr. McGlynn's] influence. . . . I would not assent to this, and finally the Dr. and the machine which was really using him, read me and my friends out of the Party and the Anti-Poverty Society. I would not contest this, but with my friends, left the whole thing to them."<sup>15</sup>

Despite the "pain" of separation from McGlynn, George felt that his movement was "rid of the floatwood and the people who aim to use a movement as soon as it begins to show influence." Besides, he had plunged whole-heartedly into the Cleveland campaign, speaking many times in New York and in other cities for his own absolute doctrine of free trade. Some of Cleveland's supporters, however, were fully as protectionist as the Republicans. The Single Taxers for their part argued so strongly that the tariff reform men felt constrained to temper this preachment by chanting, as they marched in Democratic party parades

Don't, don't, don't be afraid—  
Tariff reform is not free trade!

When Cleveland and Thurman lost to Harrison and Morton, George believed this was due to the lack of radical, aggressive tactics on the part of the Democrats.

Despite his seeming preoccupation with politics, George was quite as occupied as ever with his editorial duties. Louise Crane, who as a young girl had been William T. Croasdale's secretary in *The Standard* office, speaks of the editor:

I never heard from anyone in or around that office any word about Mr. George that was not a tribute to some of his many noble qualities, save from the compositors who used to swear, not at him but at his manuscript. It used to be common talk that Mr. George never sent back a proof without margins filled with his closely written script. One day they threatened to cut the margins off, top, bottom and sides, but an inconsiderate foreman interfered. They might swear but they loved him, as we all did.<sup>16</sup>

Mrs. Crane tells a story which illustrates the patience of Louis Post, and not incidentally the kindness of Henry George:

He [Post] had written an article for *The Standard* and had sent it to the office by a messenger, who had lost it en route. Croasdale was furious. The door opened and a mite of a boy, with tear-stained face, appeared. There followed a terrible ten seconds for the poor child before the door opened once more, this time to admit the dignified figure of Henry George, champion of the weak. Putting a hand on the boy's shoulder he offered him a coin, and, pushing the sobbing wretch out of the room, he looked over at Mr. Post who had seated himself at the desk. Croasdale's eyes followed his, and approvingly he said: "That's right, Post—writing a complaint. Have the miserable whelp—"

"Complaint?" asked the imperturbable Post, with a chuckle. "I'm re-writing the article."<sup>17</sup>

After the McGlynn sensation the circulation of *The Standard* had leveled off at approximately 25,000 copies. Because of high costs and its inability to attract advertising, the paper brought the owner little money. Election defeats not only cost circulation but also "took the spirit out of many of our most earnest friends through the country," George wrote his friend von Gütschow in San Francisco. "I would have been unable to continue, but for the generous assistance of some friends—particularly of Tom L. Johnson of Cleveland."<sup>18</sup> Indeed, George had contemplated giving up the venture a few months after starting publication. He feared that he was not doing his best work and thought "the strain of the last two years has been very great and has made me much older." But things brightened after the presidential election, *The Standard* began to gain back some circulation, and now "hopefulness and consciousness of doing something" was "succeeding the first dispirited feeling."<sup>19</sup>

This was in late 1888. Soon afterward, William Saunders, now a Member of Parliament, came to the United States on business and took George back to England with him for a short holiday.

He had last visited England in 1885, and he found that in the interim much progress had been made in the advancement of his ideas. The visit lasted only two weeks but it was scarcely a holiday. He spoke before gatherings of clergymen of various denominations, before the Knights of Labour at a meeting near Birmingham, before the Council of the Financial Reform Association, and before several other meetings of mixed groups.

The effect of this brief tour, George's fourth in Great Britain, was so important that friends extracted from him a promise to return soon and make an extended speaking campaign, with expenses guaranteed. After a few weeks in the United States devoted to lecturing and to attending a tariff reform conference as a delegate from the New York Free Trade League, he departed for England in March, 1889, with his wife, his two daughters, and a young friend, Mary Cranford.

Beginning with a joyous greeting at Southampton from a large group who came out on the tender to meet them, the Americans had an unforgettable experience. They were entertained graciously and traveled about England and Scotland. George spoke often. Perhaps his outstanding address was one entitled "Thy Kingdom Come," delivered in Glasgow City Hall <sup>20</sup> under the auspices of the Henry George Institute. It was more of a sermon than a speech:

Early Christianity did not mean [said George] in its prayer for the coming of Christ's Kingdom in heaven but a kingdom on earth. If Christ had simply preached of the other world, the high priests and the Pharisees would not have persecuted Him, the Roman soldiery would not have nailed His hands to the cross. Why was Christianity persecuted! Why were its first professors thrown to wild beasts, burned to light a tyrant's gardens, hounded, tortured, put to death by all the cruel devices that a devilish ingenuity could suggest? . . .

What was persecuted was a great movement for social reform—the Gospel of Justice—heard by common fishermen with gladness, carried by laborers and slaves into the Imperial City. The Christian revelation was the doctrine of human equality, of the fatherhood of God, of the brotherhood of man. It struck at the very base of that monstrous tyranny that then oppressed the civilized world; it struck at the fetters of the captives, at the bonds of the slave, at the monstrous injustice which allowed a class to revel on the proceeds of labor, while those who did the labor fared scantily. That is the reason why early Christianity was persecuted. And when they would no longer hold it down, then the privileged classes adopted and perverted the new faith and it became, in its very triumph, not the pure Christianity of the early days, but a Christianity that, to a very great extent, was the servitor of the privileged classes. . . . There has been no failure of Christianity. The failure has been in the sort of Christianity that has been preached,



This tour through England and Scotland was trying, for all of his lectures save only the "Moses" which he had delivered first in San Francisco years before were extemporaneous.

Sidney Webb wrote to him on March 8, 1889: "I want to implore your forbearance. When you are denounced as a traitor and what not, by Socialist newspapers, and 'heckled' by Socialist questioners or abused by Socialist orators, it will be difficult not to denounce socialism in return. But do not do so. They will only be the noisy fringe of the Socialist Party who will do this and it will be better for the cause which we both have at heart, if you will avoid accenting your difference with the Socialists."<sup>21</sup>

George did not accentuate the differences between the Single Tax and socialism at the debate which he and H. M. Hyndman held at St. James's Hall in London.<sup>22</sup> Rather, he spent most of the time allotted to him in explaining his own philosophy and school of economics. He followed much the same strategy at the National Liberty Club in a debate which he held with Samuel Smith, M.P., who defended established interests and attacked the Georgist program as immoral.

Soon after, the George family and a group of English, Scottish, Irish, and American friends went to Paris to attend a land reform conference called by Michael Flürscheim, an ironmaster of Baden-Baden whose great works turned out everything from inkwells to cannon. He had written George, "You have done more for humanity in these ten years than all the benevolent societies of the whole world."<sup>23</sup> George delivered the opening speech at this, the International Conference for Land and Social Reform. Translated from French to German and then into English, it read in part:

The land question, with which we are concerned, is the bottom question. It is the starting point for all reforms. It is an error to believe that the land question relates only to agriculture. It concerns directly or indirectly all who have to pay rent, all who produce and exchange goods. It concerns the townsman as well as the countryman, industry and trade as much as agriculture.

Everything that man produces comes from the land. It is the site of all production, of all living, of all labor. Without the earth man can do nothing.

Land monopoly is the primary cause of poverty. On the other

hand, land monopoly is the source of the accumulation of capital in the hands of the few. Through rents, royalties, tolls and tributes of all kinds which he takes under many different names, through the increase in value and the improvements of which alone he gets the advantage, whether they are the result of the labor of others or the natural effect of increase of population, the landowner acquires capital. This he then invests in the bank or in trade and industry, either in the form of loans, mortgages, stocks and shares, or in government and municipal bonds. In the course of time he builds up a tremendous financial concentration which presses heavily on the world of labor. It is from landed privilege that the great fortunes have sprung, which have become the means of oppression and exploitation. *The concentration of capital is the child of land monopoly.*<sup>24</sup>

This was in the summer of 1889. Paris was thronged with tourists drawn by the Exposition and by the new Eiffel Tower. But hardly had the Georges arrived when Jennie became dangerously ill with a combination of diphtheria and scarlet fever. At the first words of the doctor's pronouncement, every other family in the crowded pension moved out, bag and baggage, leaving the entire rent for Henry George to meet. When Mrs. George had nursed Jennie back to health with the assistance of a gentle little Sister of the Sacred Heart, George left the women-folk to occupy the large apartment house and went to Holland for a brief and very successful trip.

The anxiety over Jennie's health was followed by another worry—news of dissension in *The Standard* office. Henry George, Jr., had been acting as managing editor for more than a year. But now, while the real chief was away, two of the dominant personalities on the staff had begun to show disloyalty. T. L. McCready and J. W. Sullivan had published an attack on *The Standard's* policy in a new weekly, *Twentieth Century*, founded by the Reverend Hugh O. Pentecost, who had been a follower of Henry George. At the time Sullivan was not only a member of *The Standard's* staff but, with his wife, was living in the Georges' home during their absence abroad. McCready left *The Standard* office before George returned to the United States. Sullivan remained until he was personally dismissed. A few months later he circulated an attack in the Pentecost paper entitled "A Collapse of Henry George's Pretensions." It began with abuse and ended with the statement that *Progress and Poverty* was founded upon

Patrick Edward Dove's *The Theory of Human Progression*.<sup>25</sup> This charge of plagiarism was so widely noticed that George felt compelled to answer it.

In *The Standard* he reprinted the Sullivan attack, ignored the abuse, and contended in a twelve-column article that if similarity of thought and precedence in stating it proved that he had plagiarized from Dove, so Dove must have plagiarized from Herbert Spencer, and Spencer from Thomas Spence, as far back as 1775. George ended his article—and the controversy—with the statement:

What we are struggling for is no new and before undreamed-of thing. It is the hope of the ages. . . . To free men, what we have to do is not to make new inventions, but simply to destroy the artificial restrictions that have been imposed, and to come back to the natural order.

When I first came to see what is the root of our social difficulties and how this fundamental wrong might be cured in the easiest way by concentrating taxes on land values, I had worked out the whole thing myself without conscious aid that I can remember, unless it might have been the light I got from Bissett's *Strength of Nations* as to the economic character of the feudal system. When I published *Our Land and Land Policy* I had not even heard of the Physiocrats and the *impot unique*. But I know if it was really a star I had seen, others must have seen it too. . . . And as I have heard of such men, one after the other, I have felt that they gave but additional evidence that we were indeed on the true track, and still more clearly showed that though against us were ignorance and power, yet behind us were hope and faith and the wisdom of the ages—the deepest and clearest perceptions of man.<sup>26</sup>