

CHAPTER 31

A Season of Discontent

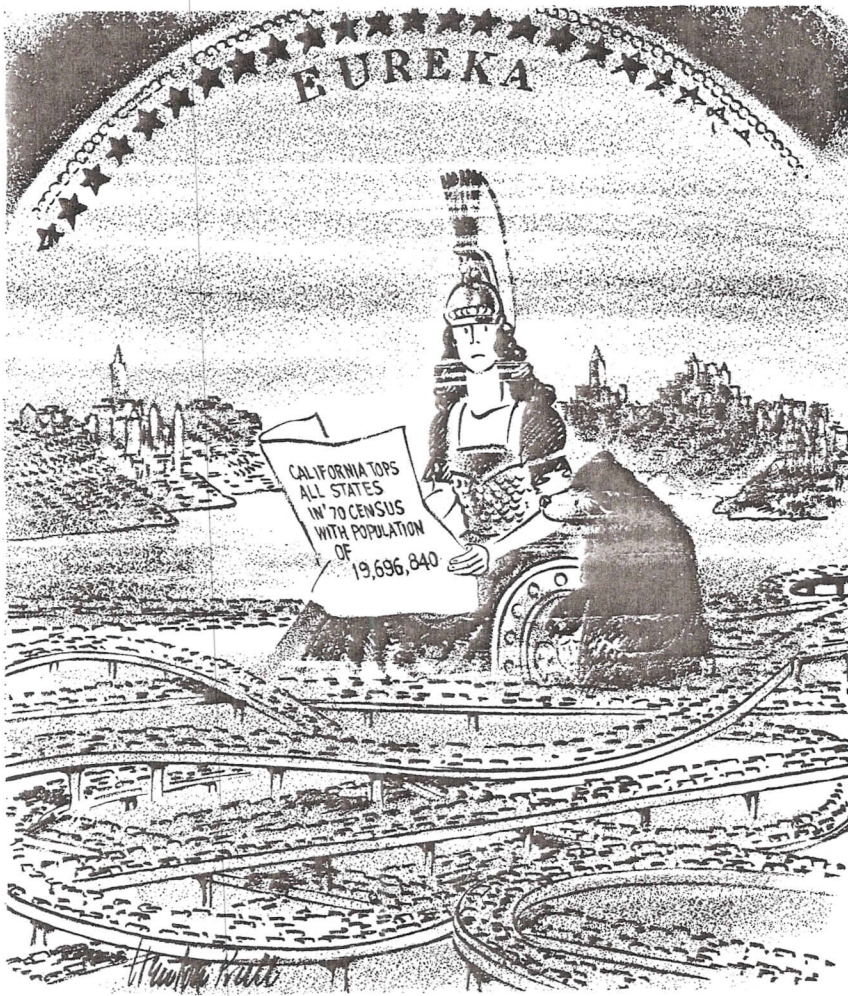
The social history of California in the 1960s is a study in contrasts. In the prosperous early years of the decade, California became the most populous state in the Union, culminating more than a century of phenomenal growth.

The 1960s were also years of unprecedented social ferment. Beginning at Berkeley in 1964, college campuses around the state were rocked by a series of student strikes and protest demonstrations. Many young people, alienated from a society they regarded as corrupt and decadent, turned to drugs and adopted unconventional styles of dress and behavior. The unpopular Vietnam War added immensely to the sense of youthful alienation and became the focus of a nationwide antiwar movement. The Watts riot of 1965 was evidence of another kind of discontent, and the following year the radical Black Panther party was organized in Oakland.

By the decade's end, the population growth of California had sharply declined. Changed economic conditions as well as a kind of malaise, which affected the state and its image, contributed to a dramatic slowdown of migration to the state. In the 1970s the historic pattern of growth reasserted itself, but even then the rate of growth remained below that of previous decades.

The Growth Rate: Peak and Slowdown

Through the first half of the 1960s, economic opportunity continued to combine with the amenities of mild climate, scenic beauty, and California's romantic reputation to attract new residents from other states at the rate of almost 1000 a day. (See Color Plate 16.) When California passed New York and became the most populous state late in 1962, Governor Edmund G. Brown proclaimed a 4-day celebration—"California First Days"—and called for "the biggest party the state has ever seen." Communities across the state staged local celebrations, and at Truckee an official delegation ceremoniously welcomed the latest carload of newcomers as they crossed



The 1970 census confirmed that California was the most populous state in the union. This prescient cartoon by Newton Pratt in the *Sacramento Bee* illustrates some of the problems of preeminence. (Courtesy of the Sacramento Bee.)

the state line. Not everyone viewed California's rise to preeminence as an occasion for celebration. Californian Earl Warren, then United States chief justice, warned: "I would not celebrate with fireworks or dancing in the streets. Mere numbers do not mean happiness."

The growth of California's population was urban—or rather suburban—and was greatest in the southern part of the state. By the mid-1970s more than 90 percent of the people of California lived in areas that the Census Bureau listed as "metropolitan," and thus California was the nation's most urbanized as well as most populous state. Los Angeles County was the most populous county in the nation, and the city of Los Angeles was second only to New York as a center of industrial employment. Orange