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EDITORIAL

QUIBBLES AND INCANTATIONS WILL NOT STEAD.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE more thoughtful of the capitalist heads, both in the land and this city, indulge in no giddy school girl hilarity over the election and inauguration of the Low Administration in Greater New York. They are glad, no doubt; but their gladness is toned down by their knowledge of the under currents that brought about the overturn of Tammany, and the installation of the present regime. Their knowledge misgives them that the Low victory may be a transient phenomenon. They do not so much apprehend a reaction, in the direction of Tammany, as a progression in a direction that suits them least of all. Their mind misgives them that the economic forces that, at the last election, threw up a Low capitalist-to-the-handle Administration, may, at a future and not remote election, throw down this and set up an Administration of the class, that, in the late electoral battle, only served as food for cannon. In the language of the New York *Evening Post*, the soberest of capitalist organs, the Low victory is explained in this paragraph:

“Public administration has been left to the hap-hazard audacity of politicians. With all their official waste and extravagance and plundering, the resulting high taxes have been submitted to by merchants and bankers, on the tacit ground that it was cheaper to pay than to take time from their own business to bring about a reform. But these conditions are now changing. Commercial opportunities are narrowed, comparatively, and a leisure class blessed with public spirit is increasing. As the returns on capital fall, men of means are compelled to look more closely to economy in public affairs. A whimsical economist has attempted to make out a law of municipal morality rising as the rate of interest declines. It is not wholly fanciful. Americans have been too absorbed in pursuit of the numerous and glittering prizes of private business to give as much attention as they should to municipal business. But they are now turning their minds that way more resolutely than ever before. It is almost a measure of self-defence. They cannot afford any longer to be swindled and robbed, and

comfortably to say, ‘Hang the expense!’”

This explanation is an admission. It evidently is not intended for profane eyes. It is a denial of the anti-Socialist language that the *Post* habitually indulges in. It is an admission that its anti-Socialist language is mere matter of routine. If, “the returns on capital fall”—as the *Post* admits—how must not the case be with that ever increasing class who have no capital? Their earnings must and do fall too. If a falling of the returns of capital has finally had for its effect to force the Capitalist Class to retrench in the matter of the luxury of hired politicians, and themselves become the politicians, is it less likely that the Working Class, driven by a steady falling of earnings, will similarly come to the conclusion that they should forego the luxury of carrying the idle Capitalist Class on their backs? Is it less likely that the Working Class will decide that it is about time to dump that parasite class,—just as the capitalists dumped the parasitic Tammany Hall, and for the identical reasons?

Surely not. And the *Post* so understands it. And so understanding the case, it tries to palsy the revolution with quibbles and incantations. In its closing passages on the change of Administration, the *Post* says:

“Better men in office are, in fact, the good old Anglo-Saxon remedy for abuses in office.”

No doubt “better men in office” is the remedy. So was Cromwell a “better man in office” than Charles I.; so was the Continental Congress, that met in Philadelphia in 1776, “better men in office” than the British Crown and Parliament. When a class has come to realize that its income is falling, and it has got tired of that, and it has discovered the trick, it, indeed, forthwith proceeds to put “better men in office.”

Nor will such quibbles as “better men in office” set the approaching Revolution a-woolgathering; least of all will such incantations as the Anglo-Saxon myth paralyze its limbs. “Better men for office” are at this very time being drilled throughout the country to bounce the Low class.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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