

EDITORIAL

## THE BUGABOO OF BOSSISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**I**T is not from the moral point only that the “Good Government” municipal brigade is despicable; it is equally so from the intellectual view point. As the municipal campaign approaches, the cry of “Bossism” increases, raised from that quarter. The cry has now reached the cartoon and the anecdote stage.

An anecdote now set in circulation is to the effect that an Italian who applied to a Judge for naturalization papers, and who was asked who made the laws of New York, answered promptly and with much candor: “Dicka Da Croka.” A leading cartoon in the same line represents Dick Croker to the right standing arms a-kimbo, a crown on his head and an ermine mantel on his shoulders. The ground on which he stands is marked England, and behind him is a poster inscribed “Wantage.” At the other end of the picture, on ground marked “United States—New York,” is a dove-cote with the inscription “Tammany Hall.” Up in the air, and flying from the direction of Croker in Wantage, England, to Tammany Hall, New York, is the Tammany leader Carroll, in the shape of a carrier-pigeon, carrying, fastened to a leg, a slate purporting to contain the municipal candidates whom King Croker has dictated for Tammany to adopt. Carroll is carrying the orders of “Boss” to the “Bossed.” Both anecdote and cartoon mark the “Good Government” intellectuals moral and intellectual bankrupts.

They are intellectual bankrupts, inasmuch as the natural inference that a thinking man would draw from their anecdotes and cartoons is just the reverse of what they are constantly claiming. They are constantly claiming that Croker is a dullard and ignoramus, and that Tammany Hall consists of bleating sheep. Now then, the cartoon in question, for instance, is a high encomium on Croker, and, by inference, quite creditable to Tammany Hall: If indeed, arms-a-kimbo, a man can, from such great distance and without physical power to enforce his behests, dictate to a large body, that man must have great intellectual powers and no ordinary degree of moral strength; and, inversely, it takes no slight degree of intellect and of

moral elevation for a large body to appreciate such a portent and accept his decrees. The cartoon amounts to a panegyric of Crocker and his men, from the “Good Government” gentry who decry both.

On the other hand, these gentry record their own moral bankruptcy in what is an obvious attempt to conceal the real source of Crocker’s power, seeing that, to reveal that, would be to uncover themselves: There is no mysticism about Tammany Hall. It is a hard matter-of-fact concern. Its members want a living without work, and in brigand style they avail themselves of the jungles of capitalism to organize themselves with that singleness of purpose: ditto, ditto are the purposes of the “Good Government” folks, only that they have less intelligence than the Tammany Hall band of brigands: these recognize the need of one-man power for the success of their felonious purpose, and evolve such out of their own midst, while the “Good Government” gang, being honey-combed with would-be Crocker, whom in their hearts they admire and would be only too glad to emulate, work at cross purposes, each trying to be the Crocker, and thus are unsuccessful as organizers, with the final result that the well organized set of Tammany brigands gets the best of the rabble of “Good Government” every time, —accidents, of course, excepted.

When the “Good Government” gentlemen howl “Bossism,” what they mean—each individual howler—is to get a chance to plunder the public crib for his own benefit, and to the exclusion of his helpers. Hence it happens that these reformers have regularly gone to pieces every time accident got them into power.

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