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EDITORIAL

THE CLOAK OF ANTI-TAMMANY.

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EVEN should it get no further, the anti-Tammany move now gathering to a head in this city has already made its bid for fame. It has exposed once more the holey-ness of that crumbling fraud-cloak, “the people,” in which it has already sought to wrap itself, by taking as its slogan: “Terminate the present regime of government for the benefit of the party, and establish government for the people.”

Just as, with an individual, what he wants badly at any one time becomes for him “justice”—although six months later he may call equally loud for the opposite sort of “justice”; just so any group of men, in the heat of straining for their common goal, become, to their own combat-fired minds, “the people.” History as shown this again and again. And while any one set may admit into the charmed circle of “the people” while the struggle is going on, any other set whose aid it needs, once the victory is won the lines are drawn tight again, and all but the original set are once more cast out, with the now classic remark, “H—l, you can’t count them as people!”

Which is what the anti-Tammanyites are preparing to say. Meanwhile their distinction between “government for the party” and “government for the people” is an absurdity. A party is the political expression of a part of the people, built in response to certain common interests. A government for the party cannot help, then, but be also for the people—meaning thereby that portion of the people which it represents, “its” people, so to speak.

What aches the anti-Tammanyites is not that the party is benefitting, to the exclusion of the people. Their trouble is that **their** party, and with it **their** people, are both excluded from the banquet table. The distinction they really mean to make is not one between a government for the party and a government for the people, but between a government for some one else’s party and people on the one hand, and a

government for their own party and people on the other. That is where the shoe pinches them.

Were the relations between them reversed, you would then hear Tammanyite using the same language that anti-Tammanyite is now spreading himself in. The difference between talk of “the people” from such sources, and the same words when uttered by the Socialist Labor Party, is a vast one. In the mouth of the latter only does the word “people” betoken a constituency worthy of the name—the numerically overwhelming, exploited working class, with whose victory the people will indeed become sovereign, because it holds no lower class subject to it.

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

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