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## Graft vs. The Same Thing (October 13, 1903)

Galveston, Texas, [Oct. 13, 1903]

In taking a general survey of the political situation on the eve of the various state and local elections that are to be held this month and next, we are struck with the mixed condition of things that prevails almost everywhere, and the curious alignments that are being made in the field of capitalist politics for the approaching raid upon the spoils of office.

Even the remnants of the Populist Party<sup>1</sup> that were supposed to be dead seem to have been only in a state of suspended animation and have come back to life again and are now applying liniment to the stiff joints and will soon be ready to limp back into the ring again and offer their “reform” nostrum for the salvation of the world.

In Colorado, Texas, and some other states, Populist conferences have been held and resolutions adopted that sound like a voice from the catacombs. What populism really needs is an undertaker with a long spade and an airtight concrete coffin that stays buried.

The sorry spectacle the Populists will present this year and the still sorer figure they will carve will perhaps convince them that they are dead and ought not to be walking about in their grave clothes.

In Ohio the situation is extremely attractive, equal to a hippodrome and as full of incident as a circus with a menagerie attached. The other day Mark Hanna, next to the greatest labor leader in America, and candidate for re-election to the United States Senate, lost his temper, probably from sheer envy, in discussing Tom Johnson,<sup>2</sup> and declared the rich single-taxer “the anarchist leader of the socialists who were responsible for the assassination of President McKinley.” This paragraph is a gem of the first water. It is also a true index of capitalist politics — rank idiocy with froth upon its craven lips.

There is no hyena that would be guilty of tearing his dead friend from his grave that he might expose his death wound as a plea for votes to secure an office for himself.

While Hanna and Johnson and their allies are hammering each other around in the ring in their great one-act farce entitled “Stand Pat vs. Municipal Reform,” the Socialist Party of the Buckeye State, led by that honest and fearless working class advocate, Isaac Cowen,<sup>3</sup> their candidate for governor, are waging a vigorous and effective campaign throughout the state and my advices lead me to believe that the results will be of the most gratifying character to themselves and the party at large.

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The curious turn things have taken in New York City politics and the complications resulting therefrom combine to make that fight so unique as to attract the attention of the whole country. Of course there is a monumental issue involved and the working class especially are vitally interested as to whether they shall be robbed under “McClellan’s *partisan* administration or fleeced under Low’s<sup>4</sup> *business* administration.”

Great issue this is that appeals to the patriotic sons of America! More succinctly stated it is “Graft vs. The Same Thing.” The pure and simple labor leaders of New York will doubtless find this a campaign rich with picking for the faithful who know when and where to keep out of politics.

Let the Tammany Tiger and the Low Gastrutis [sic.] have it out. In either case the worst will win. The only difference is the armor plate hypocrisy of the Low odorless machine.

The reform (!) administration of Low speaks for itself — it requires no special commendation — it is *low* enough.

If we have got to have one or the other, give us that without the “reform.” We have tried all the capitalist parties and they are all alike —only more so when they have a moral spasm and hoist the banner of “reform.” Then clap your hand on your pocketbook, if the “reformers” haven’t already got it, and make for the tall timber.

The old parties take turns about “reforming” each other. The “reform” arty is usually the one that has been turned out and wants to get back to the public cribs and troughs again.

The hubbub over the spoils in New York will doubtless absorb most of the interest lying around loose, and the din and roar may for the moment drown the clash of the class struggle, but it is only for the passing hour. These entanglements and collisions in the old parties will increase and from each of them there will be jarred loose an element that is bound to

gravitate toward the Socialist Party and take its place in the revolutionary army of international socialism.

The post office scandals, the shameless plunder and spoliation of the Indians by the Dawes Commission and other government agents paid and sworn to protect them against other thieves, and countless other cases of crime and corruption in the high offices of the state and nation, Republicans and Democrats alike, all serve to corroborate the Socialist charge as to the essential rottenness of capitalist politics.

Private ownership of the means of production and distribution is the prolific source of political corruption. Workingmen do not debauch the politics of the nation. They have no incentive for so doing. With the capitalists it is otherwise. They have to buttress their private economic interests, in conflict with the collective interests of the community, with moral mire and political putridity, and to talk of "reforming" this sort of thing, a la Low, is like spraying a cesspool with eau d'cologne.

In all this the socialist sees the working out of the social and economic forces and his serenity is undisturbed while his faith is increased and his determination intensified. The fall elections in the several states will register the rising tide of socialism and supply a new basis for comparison and calculation in determining the progress of the movement.

The Socialist Party is everywhere alert, active, and energetic and the vote this fall will doubtless indicate a long stride toward the goal.

Published in *The Worker* [New York City], vol. 13, no. 30 (Oct. 25, 1903), p. 1.

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<sup>1</sup> That is, the People's Party.

<sup>2</sup> Tom L. Johnson (1854-1911), a former member of Congress, was the Democratic mayor of Cleveland from 1901 to 1909. Johnson became a national figure as a civic reformer and prominent advocate of Henry George's single-tax economic scheme.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac Cowen, a former prohibitionist and member of the Amalgamated Iron and Steel Association of Cleveland, was business agent of the Cleveland Central Labor Union. Cowen headed the Socialist Party of Ohio's ticket as its candidate for governor in the elections of 1903 and 1905, finishing a distant third each time. He was regarded as a skilled public orator and was briefly a national organizer for the Socialist Party in 1907.

<sup>4</sup> Seth Low (1850-1916) was a progressive Republican who was a former mayor of Brooklyn and president of Columbia University who won election as mayor of the consolidated city of New York in 1901. He was defeated by Democrat George B. McClellan, Jr. in the 1903 campaign.