

**THE CITY WHERE
CRIME IS PLAY**

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The City where Crime is Play by John Collier & Edward M. Barrows

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JOHN COLLIER & EDWARD M. BARROWS

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The People's Institute
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FOREWORD

A CITY OF THE HOMELESS

NEW YORK is a City of the Homeless. This is the comprehensive human problem of New York. This is the great *remediable* cause for crime. This is the strength of Tammany Hall. This is the need for socialized recreation.

New York is not merely a city where nearly the whole population lives in flats and hotels. For the home elements, which the tenement cannot furnish, are not furnished by dance halls, saloons or moving-picture shows, or by the street where most of the children play. New York could still remain a tenement city, and yet it could be a home city. Centers could be provided, around which the human interests could meet and organize themselves; for the essence of *home* is not merely a place, but a friendly group with something worth while to do.

This report deals with the fact that New York is a city of the homeless, and points out remedies which lie at hand—remedies which if made fully effective would cure much of the crime, much of the corrupt politics, the waste of young women's lives and hopes, and the disintegration of the family, conditions which now stare New York City in the face.

The People's Institute here offers a summary of experiments and investigations which have been carried out over a term of years. Most of the facts are facts of common knowledge. But facts may be known to everyone, and yet their meaning or consequence may be ignored. This report is not primarily a research document, although the chapter on Juvenile Delinquency contains new facts of a profound significance. The report is addressed to those who dwell in the midst of immigration, of tenements, of politics which is organized through the saloon, and of commercialized amusement—those who, taking these things for granted, are inclined to take for granted the evils which grow out of them.

A new administration has taken the reins in New York. This administration was elected on a constructive platform. It gained power through the most sweeping reform victory in the history of New York. It is pledged to efficiency, and it is not likely to fail in its pledges.

But there is another kind of service to which the new administration is not definitely pledged. This service is not less vital than efficiency, and is more human. *It is the development in New York of those elements of home life which, in a great city, can only be provided through public enterprise.*

It will be easier for the new administration to establish efficiency than to establish human contact. But it will be easier for it to remain in power through establishing human contact than merely through establishing efficiency.

What is **Tammany Hall**—the type of politics represented by Tammany Hall? We know what Tammany Hall is from the standpoint of city government, but what is Tammany Hall from the standpoint of the common man, woman and child? Tammany Hall does not succeed because it is wicked. The weakest thing about Tammany Hall is its wickedness. The weakest thing about good government in New York has always been its lack of human contact, and of distinctive social policy.

Tammany Hall, looked at through the personal eyes of the wage-earning masses, is a social and human resource.

Scientific views about government, and lofty civic ideals, are recent acquisitions, and only a minority have ever attained them in New York City. But everyone is human; everyone is social. Everyone needs a local, personal and human connection with the city government. Tammany, through its district organization, provides this local and human bond. Tammany uses its power to exploit the city, but this is a fact which does not mean much to the plain man, who first of all requires the human and the social.

Tammany Hall is a means through which our sumptuary laws, inflexible and often out of relation to the people's need, are made adjustable to the neighborhood and racial peculiarities of New York. It may be that Tammany, while mitigating the severity of law, also extorts blackmail, but the mass of those who are loyal to Tammany Hall are more interested in the mitigation than in the blackmail.

In this city, where human relationship is not taken account of

by business, by the schools, by commercialized amusements, or by any of the dominant institutions, Tammany Hall stands for human relationship. Tammany Hall provides a social center and a benevolent institution—social during the man's ordinary life, benevolent in his time of trouble.

Tammany Hall's wickedness is its weakest part. Tammany's strength is due to Tammany's good points. Tammany satisfies many requirements essential to human life itself and characteristic of most of our people. These requirements, which Tammany Hall satisfies, are really the center of gravity of our local civic life. Without its essential humanity Tammany Hall would be innocuous. Alas that the human and social loyalty of the people should be claimed only by an agency whose historic purpose is to exploit New York City!

To shatter Tammany Hall politically is not to shatter Tammany Hall humanly and socially. Tammany Hall needs to be absorbed. No mere centralized programme of government—no possible programme of mere efficiency—can compete with Tammany Hall in the social and human field. What is the new Administration going to do in the face of this fact?

The following report tries to answer these questions, with reference to immigrants, children, adult boys and girls, and family groups. It is a programme for the economic, social use of existing public properties.