

The People.

VOL. VII, NO. 25.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1897.

PRICE 3 CENTS.

DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {218}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—What is martial law?

UNCLE SAM—Martial law is the régime that prevails under a state {of} war; civil law and its procedures are suspended, and summary orders are enforced.

B.J.—Then there is martial law in Hazleton, Pa.?

U.S.—What makes you think so?

B.J.—A bench warrant has been issued from one of the Pennsylvania courts to arrest the murderer, Sheriff Martin, but the military commander, Gen.

Gobin, forbids the serving of the warrants. Don't that indicate martial law?

U.S.—Certainly that does.

B.J.—Then also, the Constitution and the laws guarantee the right to keep and bear arms, but Gen. Gobin has forbidden the carrying of any. Is not that martial law?

U.S.—That certainly is.

B.J.—Then, the right of peaceful assemblage and petition is a civic right; is it not?

U.S.—So it is.

B.J.—But Gen. Gobin does not allow it. What is that but martial law?

U.S.—'Tis martial law, sure.

B.J.—Now, then, what I don't understand is this: in the face of actual martial law this Gen. Gobin declares there is no martial law there, and that he is only under the orders of the civil authorities.

U.S.—There is nothing confusing about that.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—Well it does puzzle me, and I call it an outrage.

U.S.—That comes from your not yet having submitted your head to thorough house-cleaning. If you had swept from it the cobwebs of ideology with the broom of fact, the handle of which is, in such matters, inscribed with the motto: “Unquestioned Might is Unquestioned Right,” you would understand it all quick enough.

B.J.—Then you mean we workingmen have no rights?

U.S.—None whatever that you throw away, or care not to maintain.

B.J.—But I am not throwing away my rights; here I am foaming at the mouth at this Hazleton outrage.

U.S.—To foam at the mouth is not to maintain a right; foaming at the mouth is not even an evidence of understanding a right. You have, on the contrary, given all the evidence I need to show me that you have not the remotest conception of your rights, or even what a right is.

The “Right” that expects to be respected by others, against their own interests, without providing itself with the “Might” to enforce itself is a booby.

You and the rest of the working class, being the overwhelming majority, have the power to vote yourselves the military and all other powers into your own hands. You have not done that. You persist in voting into power the capitalist class through its Republican, Democratic and Citizens’ Union political parties. You thus give them the Might, and they use that to protect their own interests. What are Constitutions, what are laws except things to enable the ruling class to rule and protect their interests. Place yourselves in power, then you give evidence that you understand Right, and then it will be enforced.

Don’t now go about snickering and foaming at the mouth, crying “Outrage!” Gen. Gobin, the murderer Sheriff Martin are committing no act that is not in obedience to a mandate issued by yourself and all the workingmen who vote any ticket other than that of their own class—the Socialist Labor party ticket!

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

Uploaded February 2008

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