

The People.

VOL. VII, NO. 46

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1898

PRICE 3 CENTS

EDITORIAL

The Farce at Wilkesbarre.

By DANIEL DE LEON

For over a week dispatches have been appearing in the public press giving an account of the “trial” of Sheriff Martin. These dispatches would be funny, were not the subject-matter the tragic one it is, and were they not a symptom of future “Hazleton” scenes, to be followed by similar Wilkesbarre farces.

No one approximately informed upon law and approximately mature in judgment can fail to see through the thin disguise of “Law and Order” with which the Hazleton butcher is being cloaked. The thing may be called a “trial.” In fact it is a farce.

But how else should it be?

In the first place, the indictment is only nominally against Sheriff Martin; it is really against the capitalist criminals of Luzerne County, that set {put?} him up to the crime, and against the whole capitalist class of the land that applauded the wholesale murder committed by him. Sheriff Martin in the prisoner’s dock represents not himself alone; he represents the whole capitalist class.—Should they and their political and legal lackeys not put all the energy they can into the adding of insult to the shades of the murdered miners? Can a man be blamed for trying to free his neck from the noose he deserves?

In the second place, the legal lackeys of the capitalist class in Luzerne County have authority to perpetuate the second crime they are now enacting, and that will speak Sheriff Martin free; that authority they have from a class of men whom the credulous miners have set up in authority—the Ratchfords, Fahys and who not—a gang of stupid and corrupt labor fakirs, who, in convention assembled, carefully abstained from even touching upon the Hazleton tragedy, much less denouncing it, but found time and profit in putting in good words for the “philanthropic mine owners” who gave them credentials to go about “collection moneys” for what? for the strikers? No, to pay themselves their own salaries and run bills!

Look at it any way one wants, the farce of a trial now going on in Wilkesbarre is a theme for a tragedy, a subject for a painter—depicting the setting sun of Capitalism in a blaze of blood-red and sulphurous clouds.

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

Uploaded November 2003