

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 11, NO. 254.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 1911.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

“CONFISCATION”!?!

By DANIEL DE LEON

K. *Lamity's Harpoon*, of Austin Tex., for this month is much exercised over how are the people going to own all the machinery, factories and other plants of production now held by the capitalist class. “We can't simply seize them,” says the *Harpoon*, because “that would be robbery, or at least confiscation—both wrong.”

The case of the *Harpoon* is not hopeless. Only six lines after it makes the above declaration of general principle, the paper acknowledges: “It is true that a small gang of men have ‘hogged’ the wealth of the world.” Despite the general principle which it starts with concerning the “wrongfulness” of seizing the plants of production now in the possession of the capitalist class, the *Harpoon's* own subconsciousness switches it straight upon a fact:—the present possessors have “hogged” their possessions. The recognition of this pregnant fact is solid ground on which to build, solid premises from which to reason onward. It sweeps away the sweepiness of the original general principle.

“Possession” may be nine points in law; but it is not ten; leastwise, is it nine times nine.

The mere fact of “possession” determines little, if anything. He who resists a measure because it is wrong appeals to equity. It is a principle in equity that he who appeals to it must come into Court “with clean hands.” The “hogger” can hardly be said to be clean of hands. To “unhog” the “hogger” can be neither “robbery,” nor “confiscation,” nor “wrong.” From these facts, and the unrefutable principles which lie imbedded in man's “horse sense,” there flow a series of sociologic principles that history has formulated into canons of a people's Life.

Going no further back that this country's Revolution—the Crown of Great Britain held possession over the thirteen colonies; and it exercised its possession up

to the handle by recalling charters at will, and taxing the colonies’ settlers as it saw fit. Here was a case of “hogging,” with the colonists as the “hoggees.” For a time these Hoggees submitted meekly. But all the while their subconsciousness, like that of the *Harpoon* at present, was at work; it struggled slowly out of the dark; presently, the full flood of the Light of History burst upon the minds of the colonists. By that light they read the sociologic principles that the struggle between Class and Class (Hogger and Hoggee) is not a struggle of abstract “Right” and “Wrong”; that the struggle is one of “Might,” to which the concept of “Right” clings so long at the “Might” prevails, and is turned into “Wrong” when, in the course of economic evolution, “Might” passes from the Hogger, that was, to the Hoggee of before; finally, and as a consequence, that every transfer of “Might” from the former Hogger to the former Hoggee—that is, every Revolution—brings in its folds its own code of ethics, turning the “confiscation” of before into “rightful seizure.” When that Light burst upon the pupil of the colonists’ minds’ eye, they took and held the colonies and the fullness thereof, without a cent’s indemnity to the Crown, as the “legitimate Right of a people to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

Nor need this philosophy unhearten the *Harpoon’s* sense of abstract Charity. Charitable beings there probably are, who, realizing the correctness of the historic course of events just sketched, might “throw up the sponge” despondently. The course of history here unveiled to them unveils to them nothing but a procession, or succession, of Hoggers unhogged by Hoggees, with no practical result other than the conversion of the former Hoggees into Hoggers themselves, as now witnessed in all its ripeness in this country. These charitable folks are in error.

Although the succeeding Revolutions never abolished, and could not have abolished, the Hogger, they were ascending rungs in a social ladder, the topmost rung of which, the now pending Social Revolution known as Socialism, enables, at last, the total abolition of hogging. Taking again our own American Revolution as an illustration, had the British Crown not had at home, and elsewhere, a large supply of Hoggees to fall back upon, then it—its Kings and Queens—would have had to do chores and washing for a living, in other words, it would have had to become a Hoggee itself, the moment the colonists threw it off their backs. The Socialist Revolution comes equipped with superior Charity. It affords the former

Hogger equal opportunities with the former Hoggee—the one who works may live, the one who can and won't shall die. Being the culminating Revolution of the long series whose ultimate scope was human, not Class, welfare, the Socialist Revolution, by the very law of its existence, can not choose but abolish Class Rule—the Hogger and his shadow the Hoggee.

The question of "robbery" or "confiscation" is one that the Socialist Revolution finds settled by, and the law of that Revolution's existence cleanses Socialism of the smut of uncharitableness that adheres to its predecessors.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded January 2012

slpns@slp.org