

EDITORIAL

THE CASE OF RUDOLPH KATZ.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE imprisonment of Rudolph Katz, the leader of the late I.W.W. silk weavers' strike in Paterson, presents a certain issue, the significance of which towers even above the significance of the back-yard relation into which the Republican-Democratic municipal authorities of Paterson have accommodated themselves towards the mill of the labor-plundering firm of Siff & Cohen.

Katz was arrested under a peculiar statute—a statute that, while intended to punish petty offenses of peace-disturbance, enables a petty magistrate, at his discretion, to inflict punishments so severe as even to exceed the jurisdiction of higher tribunals, the arbitrary action of which is checked by juries and the right of appeal.

To illustrate—

If two men—A and B—are at the same hour brought before the bar, one of them—A—in an action to recover a \$25 debt, and the other—B—on the charge of “disorderly” conduct, the law enables A, in case the suit goes against him, to set in motion the whole machinery of the law upon appeal; whereas, if B is decreed guilty by the petty magistrate and sentenced the full limit, one year in jail, B has no redress on appeal. He was not tried by jury; the statute gives him no right to demand a jury trial; he has been sentenced to a long term, so long as to equal a sentence on felony;—and yet, all he can do is to demand a review of the “regularity” of the proceedings against him. If the form of the proceedings was “regular,” the magistrate’s action is not reversible. B may have committed a slight transgression only. It matters not.

Socialism has pointed out and demonstrated that Class Rule holds Property more precious than Life, hence, also more precious than Liberty. The practical working of the code of Class Rule is to raise Property to supremacy, and abase Man to dependence. Under Class Rule Property rules Man, not Man Property.

The case of Katz illustrates the ignominy. Even if, indeed, he were guilty of a slight transgression, the law allows him no redress, tho' sentenced to 6 months' confinement; while, were he a judgment creditor for as small a sum as \$25 he could enjoy all the guarantees that the bourgeois law hedges "threatened property" with.

That Katz is wholly innocent; that his incarceration is an act of arbitrariness which justifies the summary removal of all the "legal" culprits in the case—all that only goes to underscore the fact that the New Jersey statute is a legitimate fruit on the Upas tree of Capitalism.

The Case of Katz is in itself a platform. It is a platform that condenses the Platform of the Socialist Labor Party and the Preamble of the I.W.W. It is a platform from which, in this campaign—whether the efforts to liberate Katz succeed or not—the hammer blows of the S.L.P. ballot should shatter all opposing candidates in Passaic county above all, and send Rudolph Katz to Congress.

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