

EDITORIAL

## THE MILITIA IN LAWRENCE

By DANIEL DE LEON

**I**MMEDIATELY upon the start of the textile operatives' strike at Lawrence a detachment of the Massachusetts militia was ordered by Governor Foss to take charge of the city "for the protection of life and property," impliedly, of course, also "in the interest of morality and the family."

True to the objects concealed under these fair words, and, strictly following the precedents set by other militia corps on similar errands bent, the militia in charge of Lawrence placed wide public areas of the city under military rule. Contrary to the laws, national and state, provided for such emergencies, which require an Executive declaration, the militia in Lawrence practically placed the town under martial law by the grace of themselves. They forbade male pedestrians from crossing certain thoroughfares. With lascivious leers they held up cartridges to the women operatives, notifying them that that is what the strikers were to get, and then they aggravated the coarseness of the act by discriminating in favor of women and girls, allowing them to pass. Improving upon this, they strutted about with the girl friends that they had made, and attended balls given in their honor by "loyal employes." With the physical power to do so in their possession, and the affront of their presence, done to the majority of the residents of Lawrence, being whooped up by the *Lawrence American*, the militia in question performed, as it usually does, the function of a poultice for the incitation of riot—they themselves being the pace-setters.

At such times the question comes, What is the origin of the militia, what is its purpose, from what principle does it trace its justification, and to what legal enactment does it owe its birth?

The legal roots of the militia in the land are found in the Second Amendment to the Constitution. The Amendment provides: "A well regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms,

shall not be infringed.”

The clause obviously plants the militia upon the principle of freedom from foreign foes who might conspire to overthrow the freedom of the State. Moreover, as if to eliminate the error that a Tyrant could not spring up from within, the Militia is not made the objective of the Second Amendment. The objective is the right of the people to keep and bear arms. The object of the Second Amendment is the insurance of the people’s freedom. From the ranks of an arms-keeping and arms-bearing people the militia organization was to spring.

The apple, says the proverb, can not fall far from the tree. The militias of to-day, claimed to be apples found at the foot of the tree of the Second Amendment, are not the fruit of that tree. They are the fruit of another tree—the tree of Tyranny. The Second Amendment has been circumvented until there is to-day hardly enough of it left to recognize it. By a series of circuitous routes the right of the people to keep and bear arms has been infringed; by a variety of circuitous routes the militia, intended originally to be the emanation of an arms-keeping and arms-bearing people, has become the emanation of a thoroughly developed political, hence, class government, whereby to overawe a working class stripped of arms, a defenceless class.

By what right has the militia, sent to Lawrence, deported itself in the manner that it has done? By the right of Usurpation. The bourgeois has outgrown the knee-breeches and sandals of his infant days, the days when he had a mission to fulfil for freedom. Now the bourgeois is in long-pants, booted and spurred, the incarnation of the steel glove that holds not up, but smites Freedom.

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