

The People.

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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {315}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—Did you read the account of the horrible Bull Pen in Idaho where the Republican together with the Popo-Democratic officials united to commit murder on the working class?

BROTHER JONATHAN (*with a supercilious nod of the head*)—All these troubles and wrongs don't surprise ME. I am a Socialist myself. I have looked into all these things long ago.

U.S.—Have you, too, studied the social sciences?

B.J. (*with haughty disdain*)—"Social sciences." Bother! Why call things by such big names? I don't need any "social sciences" to tell a hog from a handsaw. What others may need study to acquire, comes to me natural—

U.S.—That's very lucky.

B.J.—I see what goes on, and I draw my own conclusions. Other people, puffed up people, put their conclusions in language that none can understand. Now, you see, I don't. The puffed up and conceited people have so little real thought about them that they must make it appear a whole lot—

U.S.—There are such people.

B.J. (*with much self-importance*)—Yes, there are. Such people take a grain of thought, mix it up with a bushel of bran, to make it look plentiful, and they hold that up to your nose. Now, I am not like those people. Not I. That's not my build—

U.S. And what is your build?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J. (*looking as if he knew by heart all the books in the Astor Library*)—My build is very simple. Instead of confusing thought I make it very clear. Instead of complicating a thought by a whole lot of irrelevant matter, I simplify it. That's my build. And so you will find every time that the problems that seem most puzzling to the people, and that your so-called learned men wear themselves out to a bone to comprehend, are no puzzles to me; I grasp them readily, and I present them in a way that every one can understand on the spot, without any effort.

U.S.—Why, that's immense!

B.J. (*with great self-complacency*)—I should think so, (*waving his hand over space*). I'll illustrate. There you are all tangled up in the Bull Pen and in Social Science, and the woods are so close to you that you can't see the trees. You don't understand what's the matter. Now I'll boil it down for you and make it all plain. The whole thing resolves itself into a very little maxim, plain, clear, lucid—

U.S.—Out with it and enlighten me!

B.J.—(*throwing back his head and tipping it from side to side*)—It is this: “Greed is organized, but altruism is not.”

U.S.—(*claps his hand to his stomach*)—My buttons!

B.J.—Ain't it simple? Do you need to ask any further questions after that explanation?

U.S. (*who has thrust his tongue into his cheek to keep from laughing, looks with wonderment at B.J.*)—No, indeed, upon such an answer or explanation, all further questions are superfluous.

B.J. (*evidently tickled by the praise*)—You think so, don't you?

U.S.—Yes, indeed. And yet, coming to think of it, I'd like to ask you a question.

B.J.—Put it. I don't know the question I couldn't answer.

U.S.—Did you vote the Socialist Labor Party ticket last year?

B.J.—Pooh!

U.S.—You didn't?

B.J.—No!

U.S.—Or the year before?

B.J.—No; nor the year before that. I never voted the Socialist ticket. In '92 I voted for Harrison; in '96 I voted for Bryan.

U.S.—And yet you call yourself a Socialist?

B.J. (*with assurance enough to move a mountain*)—Of course I am. Why, I was a Socialist long before you were in knee-breeches. I know all about Socialism. One don't need to vote the Socialist ticket or be a member of the Socialist Party to be a Socialist. That's all unnecessary. You are a Socialist if you are a Socialist. That's all. I preach Socialism all year 'round. That's the best way to bring it around.

U.S.—And what about your maxim, the one you just propounded: “Greed is organized but altruism is not”?

B.J.—That maxim is all right.

U.S.—Doesn't it imply that organization implies power, and that the best principle in the world, if lacking organization, is impotent?

B.J. (*Looks like a rat in a trap*).

U.S.—Now, sir, listen to me, I let you rant away, and gave your vanity full rope. I now propose to pull in the rope with you noosed at the other end. You are no exception. You typify a class of people to whom words are cheap and unmeaning, and who are constantly turning up their ignorant noses at the Socialists. Your maxim is rot to all intents and purposes. It explains nothing. It furnishes no clue to the cause of the present social disorder, and, consequently, it furnishes no clue to its solution. Nevertheless, taking it as it stands and in connection with your pooh-poohing the organization of Socialism, you have squarely buffeted yourself. In one breath you deplore the lack of organization in what you sentimentally call “Altruism,” and perceive that the power of what you sentimentally call “Greed” lies in organization, and in the next breath you not only make light of organization, but admit that you have been giving aid and comfort to organized “Greed” by backing it up with your vote. I don't care to be hard upon you, sir; but you and the not a few incorrigibles and conceited jackanapes like yourself are like the gravel in the shoe of the Socialist Movement. You are too insignificant to be quarreled with, and yet are bothersome. You are good for nothing but to be shaken off.

I wish you good day.

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

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