

The People.

VOL. V, NO. 27.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1895.

PRICE 3 CENTS.

DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {129}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—I wish you would read the campaign documents that the Socialist Labor Party is issuing. They are full of points as an egg is of meat. They are clinchers. They are excellent!

BROTHER JONATHAN (*hesitating*)—Well, they may be excellent for people who have plenty of time to read. But for the masses they are no good.

U.S.—If a man won't read, he certainly can't be reached. You must make an argument in a document, and an argument needs space.

B.J.—I don't take any stock in those "arguments," as you call them. Socialism can be put in a few words, without argument.

U.S.—For instance.

B.J.—I'll show you. Scatter millions of leaflets with these few words:

"Socialism wants the happiness of all men, and justice to all. Vote that ticket."

That could be read in the shake of a lamb's tail, and understood, too.

U.S.—And do you mean to tell me that, if you were not yet a Socialist, and such a slip of paper were to fall into your hands, you would kerslap turn around and vote the S.L.P. ticket?

B.J.—Hem—yes!

U.S.—You would?

B.J.—Why not?

U.S.—Because all other political parties also claim they aim at the "happiness of all



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men and justice to all.”

B.J.—I know they do, but they lie.

U.S.—Would you say that every single man who says that a Chinese wall of protective tariff would make us all happy, lies?

B.J. (*after a pause*)—No. There is Tom Narrowhead who thinks so; and I believe the fellow is honest.

U.S.—Or would you say that every man who stumps for free trade as a means to happiness, is a liar?

B.J. (*after a longer pause*)—N-o. I know Jack Rattlebrains; he certainly believes that free trade is the sole way to universal justice.

U.S.—And don't you know Nic Featherweight? Is he dishonest when he swears by free coinage as a panacea?

B.J.—Well, no; he, poor fellow, is honestly ignorant.

U.S.—And Tim Crosseye, the village single gold standard advocate; what of him? Is he dishonest to expect affluence for all by that means?

B.J.—I can't say he is. I know him. He is an honest fellow. But knows nothing.

U.S.—And Bob Dryrot, the single-tax spouter over across the way. He says the millennium will surely be upon us with the advent of single-taxism. Is he a liar?

B.J. (*fidgets about for a while*)—No; he is not a liar. He is honest enough; but, Lord, the man is off his nut.

U.S.—Or could you perchance pronounce Obediah Watercan a dishonest liar, because he holds that if alcohol were abolished we would have as many millionaires as citizens, and the kingdom of Justice on earth?

B.J. (*feeling quite uncomfortable*)—Why, no. I wish everybody were as honest as he. Let's take a walk and drop the question.

U.S.—Drop it! Not much! I wish you to tell me whether you believe that even among all these fellows now going about with “Individual Freedom” buttons, and who claim that if one had all the rum he wanted on Sundays and other days he would enjoy “justice” and be happy, whether even among this crew there are none who are not liars.

B.J. (*resignedly*)—I'll admit I was wrong when I claimed that all the people who held views differently from the Socialists are liars. I admit that there are honest, though

misguided, people among them all.

U.S.—Now I'll let you down from the stump on which I treed you—

B.J.—And we'll take a walk.

U.S.—Not yet.

B.J.—But I give in.

U.S.—You have only given in that all our adversaries are not liars. But you have not yet given in that the arguments that Socialists use are necessary, though they be longer than your proposed short slip. Tell me, just explain to me how you will convince a man who believes in the honesty of any of these that are wrong.

B.J.—Hem!

U.S.—Could you do it without an argument?

B.J.—No, I couldn't. But I would make it short.

U.S.—Just as short as the subject allows. Would you make it shorter than that?

B.J.—No. Only the subject allows of much more shortness than the documents used.

U.S.—There is where you err. You have been spoiled by the “American Hotel plan” on which our capitalist journalism is run. In an “American Plan” hotel, you get served a hundred different dishes; not much of any; you barely get a taste of each; can't, therefore, be certain of their tastes and good or bad qualities. Result, popular indigestion. Just so with our “journalism.” It dishes up a myriad of subjects; a scrap of each; you get a smattering of all, nothing sound or complete of any. The result is mental indigestion.

B.J.—I must say that I do feel as though my head was swimming when I get through any of these papers.

U.S.—Mental indigestion is your ailment, and yet you don't know it, you hug its cause.

B.J.—More truth than poetry in that!

U.S.—Now we may take our walk, with this last warning. If you want health, eat a good meal; if you want knowledge, read a thorough article.

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

Uploaded October 2007

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