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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {255}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I want to give you good advice.

UNCLE SAM—Although I would prefer money to advice, just now that the war is raising the price of everything, I'll take your advice. What is it?

B.J.—Well, it is to disconnect the Socialist Labor party from the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance.

U.S. (a smile spreading over his face)—And with what end in view?

B.J.—With the end in view of helping the party to grow. You must admit that the connection of the S.L.P. with the S.T. & L.A. keeps its vote down.

U.S. roars aloud.

B.J.—Why do you laugh?

U.S.—I laugh because you tickle me; because you seem to be a gay and festive cuss to make such a proposition.

B.J.—Don't you want to see the S.L.P. grow?

U.S.—Of course, I do; and it does grow!

B.J.—Well, it does grow, but not very fast.

U.S.—I know that if, instead of 54,000 votes we had polled last year 200,000 it would have been faster growth.

B.J.—Just so; why don't it yet poll any more than it does?

U.S. (looking B.J. straight in the eyes)—I'll tell you, by thunder! Because you and more like you, who claim to be Socialists, don't vote the ticket; and don't vote it because



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you allow your small trade interests to frighten you, one year, in favor of McKinley, lest your paltry bank account be wiped out by free coinage; another year, in favor of Tammany lest the police interfere with your stand on the outside of your show-window, and so on. It does make me hot to find fellows like you, throwing the blame for our not growing any faster upon the S.T. & L.A., while S.T. & L.A. or no S.T. & L.A. your own votes are not given to the S.L.P. but are controlled by interests that have no place in the Socialist camp. Get off with you!

B.J. (with a where-in-thunder-did-he-find-out-how-I-voted face)—Hem! Well, hem!

U.S.—That’s unpalatable truth; isn’t it? But it is straight goods.

B.J.—Now, don’t get too wild; be sensible.

U.S.—Admit that you voted for McKinley in ’96!

B.J.—Well—yes—I did; but—!

U.S.—And admit that you voted for Tammany last year!

B.J.—I did; but—!

U.S.—Shame upon you! How dare you look me in the face?

B.J.—Do you think that everybody is born for a martyr?

U.S.—No; but neither should so many be born for darned liars, and try to make believe the fault of the S.L.P. not growing faster is some other cause than their own treason to the principles that they claim to have at heart.

B.J.—Well, I’ll grant that; but you should not find fault with either me or my friends who don’t vote the S.L.P. ticket as yet. You don’t know how many workingmen there are in this country who still have some little property; it is not yet here like in Europe; it will come, I know, but that day is not yet.

U.S.—What of that? What conclusion do you draw from that?

B.J.—Well, that all of us who still are in the middle class must be pardoned for voting as we do.

U.S.—That’s no conclusion at all. I’ll tell you what conclusion is inevitable from your premises:

1. Either this country is not yet ripe for a Socialist movement, and then the S.L.P. should furl its banner and wait.—A view which I can’t accept, for the reason that the

overwhelming majority of the working class here are now wholly stripped of property, and the attempt is well worth making to endeavor to have the middle class understand that its property is bound to slip through its fingers into the hands of the capitalist class, and leave it stranded unless it join the Socialist movement, and obtain its full share of the ample fortune that the Socialist Commonwealth offers.

2. Or this country is thoroughly ripe for a Socialist Labor party, i.e., for a party of proletarians and of those, who, without being proletarians, are sensible enough to throw their lot therewith and stand by it through thick and thin; and then all such as you should be fired, and the movement rid of the drag, such as you are to it.—I hold to this conclusion.

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

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