

# The People.

VOL. V, NO. 3.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 1895.

PRICE 3 CENTS.

DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {110}

By DANIEL DE LEON

**B**ROTHER JONATHAN—I hold that if a man once enters upon the path of reform he should move to the head of the line and not stop at little things.

UNCLE SAM—You hold rightly.

B.J.—This thing of tinkering up an old system is all wrong.

U.S.—Right again.

B.J.—Either the motto: “Let well enough alone,” and then a man should jog along the old beaten path; or the motto: “Away with all wrong,” and then a man should not stop at half measures.

U.S.—You are in good trim this morning, old boy. You talk sense.

B.J.—And you accept these principles as proper?

U.S.—Each and every.

B.J.—Then I want you to get out of the Socialist Labor party and walk with me into Nationalism.

U.S.—Not quite so fast. Why?

B.J.—Because Nationalism is more radical than Socialism. As you admitted yourself, a man should either lie low or move with the head of the procession.

U.S.—That’s just what a man should do, and if there is anything more radical than Socialism a man should take up that and drop Socialism. If Nationalism is more radical than Socialism we should be Nationalists and not Socialists. But is it?

B.J.—Of course it is.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—What makes you think so?

B.J.—Doesn't Socialism stand upon the principle, "To each according to his deeds?"

U.S.—Yes; cripples, children, the sick, etc., excluded.

B.J.—I meant to make the exception. Its general principle is, however, "To each according to his deeds."

U.S.—Yes. Each shall have the full returns of his labor. If he does not choose to labor he is free to starve.

B.J.—Nationalism, on the other hand, says: "To each according to his needs." I call that much nobler,—much more radical.

U.S.—Let's leave aside the question of "nobility," and stick to that of radicalism. If I understand you rightly, you hold that Nationalism is more radical than Socialism because it would have what you consider to be a more humane system of distribution than Socialism.

B.J.—Exactly.

U.S.—Well, even though the Nationalist system of distribution were better, you still would be in error to call that "radicalism."

B.J.—I am not.

U.S.—Radicalism affects causes, not results. A radical movement is one that goes to the root of things, not to the upper branches and leaflets of results. The system of distribution never has been, never can be the basis of a social system. The system of production together with that of ownership is the root of all social structures. Granting, to speak very broadly, that Nationalism does go to the root of the question in that it would overthrow the system of private ownership in the means of production, and establish that of their collective, social ownership, even then it would not be MORE radical than Socialism, at best it would only {be} AS radical as Socialism.

B.J. (after a little reflection.)—Well, in that case Nationalism is as good as Socialism. Why not then be a Nationalist as soon as a Socialist?

U.S.—For very good reasons.

B.J.—What may they be?

U.S.—They may all be condensed in the homely warning not to count your chickens before they are hatched.

B.J.—That is a good warning, but I don't see its application.

U.S.—I'll show you. Do you remember in our revolutionary days, when the British were still on our soil, how many different plans there were advanced for our system of government?

B.J.—Too many to number.

U.S.—Yet these were divided into two main categories. One set wanted a centralized government; we might call these the Federalists; another set wanted a decentralized government; we might call these the Confederationists.

B.J.—That was about it.

U.S.—And you remember how some started wrangles upon that subject while the British were still in possession?

B.J.—Yes indeed.

U.S.—And which was then the voice of wisdom? The one that said: "The question whether we shall have a centralized or decentralized government is predicated upon our freedom from England. To put the British out is the first thing to do. If we don't succeed, all questions concerning the 'form of government' fall through. Let those come together who are not bothering about how we shall frame our government, but who want first to take possession of our country."

B.J.—I now see where the warning about not counting unhatched chickens comes in.

U.S.—So likewise to-day. The question is to put the capitalists out. Without that we have nothing. Those who now bother about how distribution should be conducted in the oncoming social system are like those who bothered about what form of government we should have before we were free. Nationalism is dominated by the thought of distribution; Socialism is dominated by the thought of acquiring possession of the nation's machinery of production. Hence Socialism is the most radical and the most practical of all modern movements for freedom.

B.J.—Right you are. We should first hatch our chickens, and like sensible men be Socialists up to the handle.

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

Uploaded October 2007

[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)