

# The People.

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DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {116}

By DANIEL DE LEON

**B**ROTHER JONATHAN—The *Co-operative Age* of St. Paul has the best motto yet.

UNCLE SAM—Which?

B.J.—“Neither Parties nor Men, but Principles.”

U.S.—I call that the worst motto yet.

B.J.—So you prefer men to principles?

U.S.—Not at all.

B.J.—Then you must prefer principles to men?

U.S.—Most assuredly I do!

B.J.—Then you agree with the motto.

U.S.—Was the motto “Not men, but Principles?”

B.J.—Yes, about that.

U.S.—No “about” will do. That was not the motto. The motto you quoted was: “Neither Parties nor Men, but Principles.”

B.J.—Isn’t that the same thing?

U.S.—Not by a jugful. Your motto, boiled down, means: “Never mind the means, if we are agreed upon the goal,” or in other words: “If we are agreed on the What, never mind the How.”

B.J.—And what objection have you to that?

U.S.—Were I 3,000 or 4,000 years younger, or even 100 years younger, I would be taken in by such a motto, but with the experience mankind has got by this time no one should be caught in that trap of words.

B.J.—Trap of words?

U.S.—Yes; trap of words. See here. Did you ever hear about Caesar, Brutus, Cassius



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and Antony?

B.J.—I did.

U.S.—What was the word upon the lips of Brutus and the other conspirators when, with their blood-dripping daggers, they marched to the market place after killing Caesar?

B.J.—“Freedom!” Wasn’t that it?

U.S.—Yes, sir. And what was the word upon which Antony, Augustus and Lepidus, the friends of Caesar, rallied the populace and the legions against the killers of Caesar?

B.J. (after a pause)—’Twas “Freedom!” wasn’t it?

U.S.—Correct. Did you ever hear about a row that took place in England once upon a time, in which one Charles I. and his cavaliers got into a tangle with Hampden, Cromwell and the Roundheads?

B.J.—Of course I did, and Charles I. and his went down.

U.S.—And do you remember the password of the Roundheads?

B.J. (enthusiastically)—“Freedom!” sir{,} “Freedom!”

U.S.—True. And which was the password of the cavaliers, do you recollect it?

B.J. (after a pause, a shadow of disappointment flitting over his face)—’Twas “Freedom!” too.

U.S.—Correct. Now let us take one more leading epoch. You remember our civil war?

B.J.—Certainly!

U.S.—What was the motto of the loyal North, lead {led?} by Abe Lincoln?

B.J. (enthusiastically, with flashing eyes)—“Freedom!” “Freedom for ever!”

U.S.—You are right. Now, do you recall the motto of the Bourbon South and Jeff Davis?

B.J. (after a long pause and with a you-caught-me-again look)—It was “Freedom!”

U.S.—We have now got in court sufficient facts on which to build.

B.J.—I see; the goal itself may be agreed upon—

U.S.—No, sir. The facts show that one can’t tell by a single phrase or word whether or not others agree with him as to the goal.

B.J.—I meant that.

U.S.—Antony and Brutus were seemingly agreed upon their goal—

B.J.—But they were not in fact.

U.S.—Roundheads and cavaliers were agreed—

B.J.—As far as their motto went.

U.S.—Lincoln and Jeff Davis both wanted “Freedom”—

B.J.—Yet their actual goals were quite distinct.

U.S.—It follows from all this that a man tells you nothing, at least, very little, if he only gives you his goal, or his “principles” uttered in a few words.

B.J. nods assent thoughtfully.

U.S.—Antony and Brutus both declared “Freedom” to be their principles, yet not until they also stated the means whereby they meant to enforce their principles could one tell exactly what they were after.

B.J.—That’s so; the “Freedom” Antony was after, being via imperial rule, was a very different thing from the “Freedom” Brutus was after, which was via democracy.

U.S.—Roundheads and cavaliers both declared for “Freedom” as their “principle”—

B.J.—Yes; and yet the “Freedom” that the cavaliers strained after, being via the continuance of feudal rule, certainly was a very different “Freedom” from that which the Roundheads wanted, which was via the overthrow of feudalism.

U.S.—“Freedom” was the “principle” of Jeff Davis as of Lincoln—

B.J.—I see it now. Though their “principles” were uttered in the same words they meant very different things.

U.S.—The “principle” of freedom via a disrupted nation was a horse of a different color from the “principle” of freedom via a united nation, eh?

B.J.—Very different.

U.S.—Not until a man tells you “How” he proposes to accomplish his “principles” has he told you anything. Agreed?

B.J.—I am.

U.S.—Now, then, parties, political parties, are the “means,” the “How” by which to reach the goal of a principle.

B.J.—I grant it.

U.S.—Accordingly, free traders and protectionist{s}, goldbugs and silver bugs, all

want the happiness of the people, just the same as we Socialists. “General happiness” is the principle of us all. And yet we know that the “happiness” to which all of them lead only means increased popular misery. Their “How” throws a light upon their “What.” The motto “Neither Parties nor Men, but Principles” is, accordingly, nonsense. Tell me what party you go with; that will tell me where you will land. The “men” may be all right, the “principles” may sound well enough, but if the “Tool,” the “Means,” the “Hows,” the “Party,” is all wrong, all the others are to no purpose. If the “Tool,” the “Means,” the “How,” the “Party,” is correct, all else will adjust itself to a good purpose. The Socialist Labor party is the tool that strikes and alone strikes for the right principle; all others would accomplish, whatever their “principles,” nothing but evil!

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

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