



DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {8o}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I am under the impression that you oppose the People's party.

UNCLE SAM—Tooth and nail.

B.J.—Is there really no good whatever in it?

U.S.—That is another question. Anything that denotes the breaking up of the employing class has much that is good in it. Populism records the secession of the middle class from the big capitalists. As such it is a beautiful apparition. It is a symptom that capitalism has reached the point of disintegration, and is now going to pieces.

B.J.—Then, why should you fight it?

U.S.—The political field is not a ballroom. The party that sets up a ticket hostile to another is a hostile party; you need not call its members horse thieves and liars, but they are your political foes, and must be treated as such.

B.J.—But I am sure this principle is too rigid to apply to Populism.

U.S.—Why?

B.J.—Because it goes your way.

U.S.—It does? In what respect?

B.J.—I recognize that the 16 to 1 free coinage plank not only does not go your way, and, if carried out, would bring untold suffering to the workers—

U.S.—And the Sub-Treasury—

B.J.—That, too, is reactionary. All such demands only look to keeping alive the



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system of small production, and are not in line with the demands of Socialism.

U.S.—Then you agree with me.

B.J.—Not quite. Populism has other demands besides—

U.S.—Progressive ones?

B.J.—Yes, in your line.

U.S.—Which?

B.J.—It demands, for instance, the nationalization of railroads, telegraphs, etc.

U.S.—You think it does?

B.J.—Certainly. Here you have it (showing the Populist Omaha platform).

U.S.—Is this the only ground on which you hold Populism goes my way?

B.J.—Yes, the only one, and it is quite enough.

U.S.—If that ground is knocked from under you, where would you be?

B.J.—Nowhere; but it can't be knocked from under me. Here it is, black upon white.

U.S.—Just wait and see. How long has Peffer been in the Senate?

B.J.—About three years.

U.S.—And Jerry Simpson, how long has he been in Congress?

B.J.—About as long.

U.S.—And Allen?

B.J.—About two years.

U.S.—Now, then, during all these three years have you heard of any of these Populist standard bearers propose a bill for the nationalization of the roads, telegraphs, etc.?

B.J.—Hem—hem.

U.S.—Were these men sick in bed or stricken with the lockjaw during all that time?

B.J.—N-n-n-o.

U.S.—They were bright and kicking, and quite garrulous. One of them made a speech fifteen hours long. All have had the floor. All have presented bills. But never a bill came from them for railroad nationalization. The propositions they had to present were exclusively of the sort you yourself recognize as reactionary and harmful to labor, were they not?

B.J. looks embarrassed.

U.S.—Now, what does that mean?

B.J.—Hem—I—er—

U.S.—Did you ever look into the show windows of a hurrah clothing store?

B.J. (looking up surprised)—What has that got to do with it?

U.S.—Now, have you ever looked into such a show window?

B.J.—I have.

U.S.—Did you see clothing only?

B.J.—No; they exhibit pictures, flowers, pianos and what not.

U.S.—Do they deal in such things?

B.J.—Not at all; they deal in clothing.

U.S.—Would it be sensible to expect them to supply you with pictures, pianos, flowers, if you went in and asked for that?

B.J.—Certainly not, only a fool would expect that.

U.S.—Now, then, why do you think they display in their show windows things they don't deal in?

B.J. (beginning to see the drift of Uncle Sam's questions)—Well—now—er—hem.

U.S.—They display such things to attract attention, is it not so?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—To catch gulls with?

B.J. (with frankness)—That's about the size of it.

U.S.—Now, then, the putting into their platform things their representatives do not demand is a sign that the Populists use such "demands" only in the way that hurrah clothing stores use flowers, pictures, pianos and other things that they don't deal in—to attract attention and catch gulls.

B.J.—It never struck me that way. But right you are.

U.S.—Both in aims and methods Populism and Socialism are distinct. Socialism moves on to progress with the straightforward methods of progress; Populism moves backward, with the methods of the small trader.

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

Uploaded October 2007

slpns@slp.org