

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 1, NO. 11.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, JULY 11, 1900.

ONE CENT.

DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM AND BROTHER JONATHAN. {321}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—Don't you think the working class ought to become revolutionary?

UNCLE SAM—In what respect?

B.J.—That they should lay in a supply of Winchester repeating rifles.

U.S. (looking disappointed)—Is that what you consider “revolutionary”?

B.J.—Yes. Isn't that the proper and only thing to do?

U.S.—No.

B.J.—Do you believe in revolution?

U.S.—Yes.

B.J.—Are people not revolutionary when they get ready to shoot?

U.S.—See you here. Do you remember when the traitor Tories in this country “laid in supplies” of guns?

B.J.—I do; the scalawags.

U.S.—Do you remember when the copperhead slaveholders “laid in supplies” of guns at the election of Lincoln?

B.J.—I do; I remember how even in the North such Bourbon sympathizers with the Copperheads as August Belmont and the New York *Herald* did likewise, and got ready rebel flags to welcome rebels in New York.

U.S.—Those people were all “ready to shoot,” were they not?

B.J.—Y-e-s.

U.S.—Would you say, therefore, they were “revolutionary”?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—Hem—er—

U.S.—Let me give you a pointer. The revolutionary spirit is manifested not by METHODS, but by AIMS; not by the HOW, but by the WHAT. Methods are like alphabets. You can spell bad as well as good words with the alphabet. Men, the most reactionary in the world, may take to their guns and be “ready to shoot.” To determine whether a man is revolutionary or not, enquire WHAT he wants, not HOW he wants it.

B.J.—I see.

U.S.—Now, then, what do these working people want whom you think should be “laying in supplies of guns”?

B.J.—They want to overthrow monopoly.

U.S.—By nationalizing the monopoly?

B.J.—Hem—er—

U.S.—As far as they have uttered themselves they want to overthrow the large concentrations of the means of production, and restore the old-time system of small production.

B.J.—Exactly.

U.S.—And that is not REVOLUTION, that is REACTION. The system of small production is antiquated and unfit for civilization. Civilized man needs plenty of wealth; plenty of wealth is not possible under the system of small production; plenty of wealth is possible only under a system of largely concentrated means of production.

B.J.—But we have such a system now, yet see how poor the people are.

U.S.—They are poor, not because of the large concentrations of the tools of production, but because those tools are private property.

B.J.—And you would call “revolutionary” what?

U.S.—The modern revolutionist, the revolutionist now needed, is he who moves to overthrow, not the large aggregations of means of production, but their private ownership, and transform that into public, collective ownership. He who would overthrow the large aggregations of the means of production and restore the system of small individual production is not revolutionary, he is, on the contrary, an arch reactionist; he would throw civilization back at least 100 years.

B.J.—Then you don't take any stock in this "laying in of guns" and "shooting" business?

U.S.—None at all. Men may shoot right and they may shoot wrong. Let me know what a man wants, and I'll tell you whether or not he will shoot right.

B.J.—But he may want the right thing and want to shoot for the right thing.

U.S.—In that case he will vote for the right thing first. Let me give you another pointer, Brother Jonathan: If in this country all those, or even one-half of those who are interested in bringing about the right thing, i.e., the Socialist or Co-operative Commonwealth, vote for it, there will be no need of shooting. The capitalist class is a coward class. Soon as it sees a vigorous demonstration at the ballot box for Socialism, it will pull up stakes and like a detected thief slink away.

B.J.—Then let us all cast our votes solidly for the Socialist Labor Party, for Malloney and Remmel!

U.S.—Yes, one and all. That is the most revolutionary act possible, and the most sensible withal.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded March 2009

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