

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 1, NO. 253.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 1901.

TWO CENTS.

DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM AND BROTHER JONATHAN. {370}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—If you are ready, I am ready to put a third hole into your Director of the Mint, Roberts.

BROTHER JONATHAN—I am ready, and anxious too, to see if you can put another hole into him as deftly as the two of the last two weeks.

U.S. (meditatively)—Let's see. The first shot ripped up his capitalist humanity, by nailing him as a beast of prey;—

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—And the second showed him up as a dealer in saw-dust when he claimed that increased production would do the workers any good. I think I showed you that, so long as this capitalist system, that Roberts upholds, lasts, increased production will redound to the interest of the capitalist class only, and Labor will be ever worse off.

B.J.—You showed that to perfection.

U.S.—Now set him up again and see me put a third hole through him and his St. Louis paper that quotes him so approvingly.

B.J. (pulls out of his pocket the clipping from the St. Louis paper and reads):—

“Director of the Mint Roberts made a good point in an address delivered last week. ‘It is the common error of those who attack the existing order of society,’ he said, ‘to treat of distribution as of more importance than production. But the real problem is to get more from nature. Careful statisticians have estimated that the total production of wealth for even so efficient a population as that of the United States including the yield of the



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soil, the output of the mines and all the earnings of capital scarcely exceeds \$2 a day for every person engaged in gainful occupations.' An equal division all around at the close of each day would greatly disappoint the socialistic theorists. Mr. Roberts points out that the amelioration of conditions must come from increased production."

U.S.—That's a fine target. It says there that a careful estimate of the wealth produced to-day shows that production is scarcely \$2 per capita, and, consequently, there is not enough to go around, and that, therefore, Socialists are wrong.

B.J.—That's what he says; and, do you know, I think he is right?

U.S.—Not so fast. What does that mean but to convey the idea that it is not possible to produce to-day more than so small an amount of wealth that there can be only two dollars per capita?

B.J.—It means that and nothing else.

U.S.—And what idea does that idea mean to convey but the idea that to-day production is carried on at its highest possible productive pitch?

B.J.—It can convey no other.

U.S.—Do the rafts of advertising agents, drummers and boomers produce anything?

B.J.—Nothing whatever.

U.S.—Do the armies, police corps, detectives, watchmen, lackeys, chefs, footmen produce aught?

B.J.—Nothing.

U.S.—Do the 5,000,000 unemployed in the land produce anything?

B.J.—Nothing.

U.S.—Do the squads of brokers, lawyers, notaries, etc., produce wealth?

B.J.—Not a pin's head of wealth.

U.S.—Do the capitalists produce wealth?

B.J.—Not at all!

U.S.—I don't need to go further. All these categories that I have mentioned, and scores of others that will readily suggest themselves to you, are idle hands.

B.J.—Absolutely.

U.S.—Is all the land of the country occupied in production?

B.J.—Not much! Unbounded areas are deliberately withheld from production!

U.S.—Is all the machinery, capable of being built, built and put into operation?

B.J.—Why no! Even inventions are kept under lock and key and not allowed to materialize.

U.S.—Now, then, it follows that the system under which so small an aggregate of wealth is produced, as this Roberts says, is an idiotic system, which condemns a large, a tremendously large portion of the population to idleness. With social opportunities (machinery and technique of production) that are marvelous; and with a volume of muscle and brains large enough to exploit these opportunities so as to afford affluence to all, the system which Mr. Roberts upholds smites with a palsy millions of these arms and brains, paralyzes much of the machinery, and blights whole tracts of land large enough for empires!

B.J.—That's so, by Jericho!

U.S.—It follows that the attitude of this Roberts and his St. Louis paper amounts to this: They first commit a crime, and then seek to justify the results of the crime with the crime itself: they first uphold a system of production that palsies the productive powers of the race, and then they seek to justify their niggardly system on the ground of the little wealth it produces: they first stand by a system that condemns the race to poverty, and then they oppose those who fight that system by using the very evil results of their system as an argument against the Socialists. Are not such people—

B.J.—They are veritable dealers in saw-dust!

U.S.—Granted Roberts' contention about the small amount of per capita wealth producible to-day, and he knocks out himself. It is one of the charges that Socialism has nailed on the head of Capitalism that, to-day, it hampers production. The means of production being, to-day, private property, are operated only to the extent that they may yield profits to the owner, and thereby, popular misery becomes the staple product of Capitalism, despite the potentiality of fabulous well-being. There goes one more hole into your Roberts. Next week I shall rip open another.

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Uploaded May 2009

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