

The People.

VOL. IV, NO. 5.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, APRIL 29, 1894.

PRICE 3 CENTS.

DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {62}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—(In a deep brown study, holding a copy of the Constitution in his hands) Hem! Pshaw!

BROTHER JONATHAN—You look worried.

U.S.—(Raising his head from the book) So should every man, every lover of his country, in these critical days we are going through. (Sinks back into deep pondering).

B.J.—You seem deeply stirred; what is up?

U.S.—(Holding over to Brother Jonathan the copy of the Constitution, and pointing his finger to

the First Amendment) When this Constitution was framed and submitted to the people, our longheaded revolutionary comrades, who had fresh upon their minds the ways of the tyranny from which they had just freed themselves, saw a defect, a serious defect in the original draft—

B.J.—Yes, I remember!

U.S.—The original draft did not guard against governmental exercise of the power to prevent the people from assembling, from free speech, and from petitioning—

B.J.—But we cured that by the proper amendment!

U.S.—Exactly. The tyranny of the British Crown and Parliament would not brook such gatherings; it would not allow a demonstration of the popular will; it knew such demonstrations would make public, and thereby crystallize the feeling of discontent; it knew such demonstrations would amount to a public, popular indictment of its crimes—

B.J.—And, like tyrants ever, it would manufacture seeming content by suppressing



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

and smothering public expression, by virtually gagging the people.

U.S.—To prevent its enormities from being thus publicly ventilated it declared public assemblages and petitions to be “riotous manifestations,” and under that pretext it sought to throttle our just wrath.

B.J.—Ah, but it failed; by Jericho it failed! We were heard, anyhow! When it stopped our mouths, we thundered forth our mind through the speaking tubes of our good muskets. Didn’t we, though! And how the red-coat symbols of tyranny, together with their Hessian mercenaries, rolled in the dust before our blast, and to the tune of “Yankee Doodle, Doo!”

U.S.—Yes; our boys had just got rid of that scheme of tyranny that consists in repressing assemblages and they made up their minds to guard against its repetition. Finding the original draft of the Constitution did not guard against it they promptly put in this, the First Amendment:

“Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

B.J.—That’s so, and we shall stand by that to the bitter end!

U.S.—But look you here! Here is Cleveland inspiring and Congress applauding this “proclamation” of the District of Columbia Commissioners—

B.J.—What has that pack got to say?

U.S.—Almost literally what the British Parliament said when it wanted to prevent us from assembling!

B.J.—W-h-a-t?

U.S.—Large bodies of American citizens have rendezvoused in Washington to assemble there on May 1, and petition the Government for a redress of grievances—

B.J.—And those Washington people—

U.S.—Yes, that crew dares to “warn” these grief-stricken citizens, in the very language of the British Parliament, against “a contemplated demonstration of physical force” —

B.J.—The traitors!

U.S.—Nor is that all. They assume and presume to declare in advance that “no

possible good can come” from the contemplated assemblage and petition!

(Uncle Sam shuts his copy of the Constitution with a bang, and, putting his arm in Brother Jonathan’s, who had commenced whistling the revolutionary song of “Yankee Doodle,” starts whistling the war refrain of “Sherman’s March Through Georgia.” Each whistling his separate song, they march off; and the melodies of the two stirring tunes melt into one.)

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded October 2007

slpns@slp.org