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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {107}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I see the Socialist vote in the United States was something like 33,000 last year. Was that all?

UNCLE SAM—That was all.

B.J.—Now, that does surprise me.

U.S.—You think it too big or too small?

B.J.—Too big? No. Too small!

U.S.—What surprises me is that, taking everything into consideration, it should so soon be as large as that.

B.J.—It strikes me just the other way. Taking everything into consideration, I should think it ought to be much larger by this time.

U.S.—I'd like to hear one of the considerations that makes you think so.

B.J.—I'll give you one, and that the principal one. Almost everywhere I go and talk about Socialism I meet people who say they are also Socialists. Now, then, judging by that, if one-half of them voted the Socialist Labor party ticket, the vote ought to be 133,000, at least.

U.S.—There is where you err.

B.J.—I do?

U.S.—Yes; what you consider a source of strength is, just now, a source of weakness.

B.J.—Weakness?

U.S.—Yes; weakness. When men who are not Socialists say they are, even if they mean to tell the truth, they retard the growth of the Socialist poll.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—But all those whom I have met I know are Socialists.

U.S.—How do you know?

B.J.—They all want the Co-operative Commonwealth.

U.S.—Is that enough for you to look upon them as Socialists?

B.J.—What more do you want?

U.S.—A good deal more.

B.J.—You are unreasonable!

U.S.—See you here. To-day, in sight of the widespread suffering that exists, in sight of the experience of those who still have some little property left that is bound to be swallowed up by the big sharks; in sight of the object lessons in co-operation that concentrated capital is holding up before the people's eyes—in sight of all this, to meet a man who does not admit that the Co-operative Commonwealth is a haven of refuge, is inevitable and is desirable is to meet either an idiot, a rascal or a capitalist, which is a combination of both idiot and rascal. Every intelligent man must favor the Co-operative Commonwealth, and every decent man is ready to say so.

B.J.—Very well; that only goes to make my case all the stronger.

U.S.—Not a bit of it. You overlook an important fact. When a great social change is to come about, the first thing is to have the necessity of its coming about made generally understood.

B.J.—That's all right.

U.S.—The first thing is to get the masses to realize that it is the right thing.

B.J.—Yes, and we have reached that point with regard to Socialism, as you admit yourself.

U.S.—But when that point has been reached, it loses in comparative importance, and another point rises into primary importance. That point is: “How to bring about the change?”

B.J.—Ha!

U.S.—When this stage is reached it does no longer matter very much whether or not a man is fully in accord with the ultimate aims of the movement; the question of real importance is: “Does he adopt the right methods; does he join the organization whose experience renders it the only safe one to go by, or does he not?”

B.J.—Yes; yes.

U.S.—To-day, as I stated before, all intelligent and decent men, certainly millions upon millions of our people, are agreed upon the aims of Socialism and wish to reach it, but they are not yet clear as to its methods. They don't yet know how to get there. They still have palliative bugs in their noodles; they still follow the will-o'-the-wisp delusion of "One Thing at a Time." In short, they still believe that the Socialist Labor party is too unnecessarily radical.

B.J.—I begin to catch on.

U.S.—Now, then, seeing that the vast majority of people who are Socialists in the sense that they want the Co-operative Commonwealth are yet laboring under the delusion which I mentioned, you may judge that their influence in keeping votes away from us is strong at present. Hence their large number is rather a source of weakness.

B.J.—I see it.

U.S.—Hence, also, the name of "Socialist" can not be properly applied to such people.

B.J.—No, indeed.

U.S.—A Socialist is only he who not only wants Socialist aims, but who co-operates with the organized body of Socialists to bring about these aims. He who still imagines that the social revolution implied in the Co-operative Commonwealth can be brought about by flank movements, dicker, false pretenses, beating around the stump, talking hints and all that is only a half-baked Socialist. Experience is, however, turning them out rapidly full baked. Just you watch the Socialist vote next November.

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

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