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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {86}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I have just heard
bully news from the West.
UNCLE SAM—Impart it to me.

B.J.—That the people out there are becoming
revolutionary.

U.S.—That is bully indeed. What evidence is
there of it?

B.J.—I have been informed people out there
are laying in supplies of Winchester repeating
rifles.

U.S. (looking disappointed)—Is that the
evidence of their becoming revolutionary?

B.J.—Yes. Isn't that good enough evidence?

U.S.—No!

B.J.—I am surprised at you! 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; and I remember how even here 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 the rebels in New York.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

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?”

B.J.—Hem—er—

U.S.—Let me give you a pointer. The revolutionary spirit is manifested not by methods, but by the 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, inquire WHAT he wants, and HOW he wants it.

B.J.—I see.

U.S.—Now, then, what do those people in the West want who are “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 will overthrow, not the large aggregations of the 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 a revolutionist, 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 no he is a revolutionist.

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 all 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.

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.

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slpns@slp.org