

# The People.

VOL. VIII, NO. 21.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 21, 1898.

PRICE 3 CENTS.

DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {263}

By DANIEL DE LEON

**B**ROTHER JONATHAN—Where were you last evening; I called at your place and you were away.

UNCLE SAM—I was at the primaries of the Socialist Labor party; we had delegates to elect to the State Convention.

B.J.—Well, I am surprised how a man of your intelligence can go to work so foolishly.

U.S.—Why, it isn't a week ago you admitted to me that Socialism, and Socialism alone, was the right thing, and that everything else was poppycock, as you expressed it—

B.J.—That's all right, and I think so yet. But what I mean is your methods. There you go through a lot of trouble to set up a new party; you stay late and worry and fret and contend with a lot of difficulties that are all of your own seeking in your endeavor to build up a new party. Now, all that is unnecessary—

U.S.—Unnecessary?!?

B.J.—Yes, unnecessary.

U.S.—I hope you haven't turned Anarchist?

B.J.—Not much!

U.S.—How then do you expect to conquer the public powers?

B.J.—Through one of the existing old parties.

U.S.—(putting his hands to his ears)—Say that again, will you?

B.J. (sententiously)—Through one of the existing old parties.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S. bursts out laughing.

B.J.—You won't laugh if you listen to me.

U.S.—I shall certainly listen, knowing I am going to be tickled almost to death.

B.J.—We'll see about that. Don't you say yourself that for everyone of those lazy, loafing, sponging capitalists there are a hundred of us workingmen?

U.S.—At least that many.

B.J.—Good. And don't you conclude yourself that if the workingmen were to vote as one man they would swamp their capitalist fleecers?

U.S.—That's just what I said.

B.J.—Now, I would like you to tell me by what process of reasoning you could escape the conclusion that the class that is numerous enough to swamp the capitalist class at the polls on election day must be numerous enough to swamp the capitalist at the primaries. Tell me that.

U.S.—(tries hard to suppress a smile and to look serious and interested)—Why, man, right you are. I wouldn't attempt to escape that conclusion. The working class could carry the primaries as quickly as it could the elections. No doubt about that.

B.J.—Well, there is your solution. There are the Democratic and the Republican parties. Let us pick one out. Let us march to its primaries. Let us capture it. There we would be forthwith in the possession of an existing party without going through the bother of building up a new one. Ain't I right, now?

U.S.—Let me understand you. Your plan is that we all march into, say, the Democratic party primaries—

B.J.—Exactly.

U.S.—And out-vote the capitalists and their politicians—

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—And in that way elect all our delegates—

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—And then?

B.J.—And then?

U.S.—Yes, “and then?”

B.J.—Well—

U.S.—What then?

B.J.—What then?

U.S.—Yes, “what then?”

B.J.—I don’t understand what you mean; what are you driving at?

U.S.—You don’t propose to frame up your delegates and hang them on the walls of our kitchens, do you?

B.J.—Why, no!

U.S.—What do you propose to do with them?

B.J.—What do I propose to do with them?

U.S.—Yes; what do you propose to do with them?

B.J.—Why, let them go to the State Convention.

U.S.—Who will pay their fare, their hotel and other expenses.

B.J. scratches his head.

U.S.—Master Smarty, you are treed. You imagine that if you capture a capitalist party, you have captured something. You have captured nothing. When the working class captures the Government, it has captured all the things needed to carry out the Government. But when we capture a capitalist party, we capture nothing. The treasury of such party, the money needed to hold conventions, to agitate, etc., etc., is not party property. It is in the pockets of the several capitalists as their private property. You capture their primary, and you have captured an empty shell. To make that shell a valuable thing you would have to go ahead and organize; indeed, you would have to organize in order to capture the primary; and that organization would have to be virtually a new party. Having to go anyhow through the trouble of building up what is equivalent to a new party, you might as well set up a new name, and free yourself from the bad odor of the old. Think this carefully over: Revolutions are not made by a trick.

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

Uploaded November 2008

[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)