



DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {106}

By DANIEL DE LEON

**B**ROTHER JONATHAN—I must say I am now at last in dead earnest. I admit I used to have cobwebs in my head, but they have now all been swept away. I did once have a notion, and it lingered long, that some good might be achieved by some good capitalist officeholder. I did even as late as the last elections pick out what I considered good men from among those candidates. I find you are right; they are all alike, and none is worth the powder to blow him to hell with. This Brooklyn strike, the conduct of the reform Mayor and Governor in sending out the militia to help the corporations break the law, and the insolence of this Street Cleaner Waring, who is of the “washed” class, have cured me. I henceforth am with you. Never again shall I vote for a capitalist. I shall only vote for workingmen. I’ll pick workingmen out of all the old parties.



UNCLE SAM &amp; BROTHER JONATHAN

UNCLE SAM—You started fine. But you managed, as you always do, to land dexterously back again into the ditch.

B.J.—That’s just like you. It seems one can never act to suit you. Your motto seems to be: “You are damned if you do, and you are damned if you don’t.” Formerly I voted for the capitalists, and you made it your business to give me a laying out regularly; now I am ready to vote for the workers, and you inform me I am back in the ditch.

U.S.—Now, if you will just keep your shirt on one minute and thirty seconds, you will see that you are off all around.

B.J.—I’d like to know how.

U.S.—Have I not again and again told you that at this social crisis, as in all social crises, the question is one of Principles and not of Men?

B.J.—Well, yes.

U.S.—Have I not again and again shown you the difference there is between a “reform” and a “revolutionary” period?

B.J.—Very well.

U.S.—Has it not always been the burden of my song that in a “reform” period, when the question is merely to improve an existing and settled social system, Principle is in abeyance and personal predilections may prevail?

B.J.—That’s all right.

U.S.—But that when a “revolution” is at hand, and the question is not merely to improve, but to overthrow an existing system that has become unsettled, then Principle becomes paramount?

B.J.—Granted.

U.S.—Stick a pin there. And now look at it from another side. Do you believe that everybody who voted for Breckinridge in 1860 was a knave?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—Do you imagine that all the Abolitionists elected in 1860 were runaway saints?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—Now join the two lines of thought. Can you escape the conclusion that what an intelligent man voted for in 1860 was for the platform on which the candidate stood, for the principles they represented, and not for the men?

B.J.—I grant that, too.

U.S.—The principles that peeped through every line of the political platforms of 1860 were, on the one hand, “slavery shall go;” on the other, “slavery shall stay.” Our people divided upon those lines. They felt confident that, the same as a shoemaker is chosen for his capacity to make shoes and not for his being or not being a jolly fellow, by voting for a pro-slavery man he would see to it, if elected, that slavery would be kept up; and by voting for an anti-slavery man, he would see to it, if elected, that slavery was abolished. Ain’t it?

B.J.—Yes. But for that very reason if I vote for a workingman, makes no difference with what party he happens to be, if elected, he will see to it that wage slavery is wiped out.

U.S.—Did you ever hear of a fellow called Benedict Arnold.

B.J.—The damned traitor. I should think I did.

U.S.—And did you ever hear of a son of Benjamin Franklin who was Colonial Governor of New Jersey, and stood by the British Crown?

B.J.—Yes. He was a blot on the name of the great Franklin.

U.S.—And did you never hear of the native-born Tories, who in Trinity Church of New York, used to pray, during the Revolution, for George III., instead of George Washington?

B.J.—I did; the scalawags!

U.S.—Were not all these people American colonists?

B.J.—Certainly.

U.S.—Suppose some one were to have told you during our Revolution, “I am going to place confidence henceforth only in American colonists. Wherever I find an American colonist I shall back him up against the British Crown.” Would you not have kicked the fellow into kingdom come?

B.J.—Most assuredly.

U.S.—Now, then, old boy, for the same reason you should look with added suspicion upon any workingman who stands on a capitalist platform, or herds with capitalists. He is worse than they. He is a traitor to his class. He is a compound of Benedict Arnold and traitor Tories. See?

B.J.—Jehosaphat! that’s so.

U.S.—Henceforth, let your motto be: “Look out for, down with the modern Benedict Arnolds!”

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

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