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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {99}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—Just as soon as I have a chance I am going to make me a list of all the good men in office.

UNCLE SAM—To what end?

B.J.—To the end of voting for them regardless of party.

U.S.—Whither driftest thee?

B.J.—Toward good common sense. Do you think I don't learn by experience? I do. I was until last election a firm Republican, or Democrat, I don't remember which. But I shall not continue to be the slave of any party, not I. I shall henceforth vote an eclectic ticket. I shall only vote for the best men put up.

U.S.—Then you won't vote with me the straight Socialist ticket?

B.J.—Straight ticket? No, sir. There are good men among the Socialists, but they are not all angels. There are pretty bad men among the Republicans and Democrats, I'll admit; but there are also good men among them.

U.S.—If you want free trade, do you look to the candidates or to the platform when you vote?

B.J.—What do I care for candidates in such a case? I vote for the platform.

U.S.—If you want high tariff legislation, do you look to the candidates whether they are "good" men, or to the platform they stand on?

B.J.—Why, of course not; I vote for the high tariff platform.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—If you get a notion that what you need is the silver cure, do you stop to inquire at the excellence of the silver bug candidates?

B.J.—No, of course!

U.S.—Now, then, what you have admitted amounts to this: That if you are after a principle, it is a principle you vote for and not for men. Consequently, so long as you look to the candidates, you are not after a principle.

B.J.—By Jericho, caught before I thought it!

U.S.—If, then, you want Socialism, you should vote for the Socialist platform straight.

B.J.—That's all right. I'm caught. If I want Socialism, I should not consider the candidates, but the platform on which they stand. But (approaching Uncle Sam confidentially and in a whisper) now tell me, what guarantee have we that the Socialists, if elected, won't sell out?

U.S.—Did the Abolitionist Republicans, when elected, sell out?

B.J.—No!

U.S.—Go further back; did the delegates to the Continental Congress when elected sell out to King George?

B.J.—No!

U.S.—Go still further back; did the Roundheads who made the revolution against Charles I. sell out after they were elected to Parliament?

B.J. (visibly weakening)—No!

U.S.—Come again forward a little; did the bourgeois or capitalists of France, when they captured the third estate, sell out to the Royalists?

B.J.—N-n-o!

U.S.—The simple fact that none of these sold out would not be sufficient ground from which to conclude that the Socialists will not sell out.

B.J. (brightening up)—You think so too, don't you?

U.S.—Yes. I say the simple fact that one man or set of men did not sell out is no guarantee that another won't—

B.J.—That's just what I think!

U.S.—The thing to look into is this: The reason why none of those sets of people

sold out. If we find that the same reason does NOT exist with the Socialists, then there would be no guarantee that they won't sell out; but if we find that the same reason DOES exist with the Socialists, then there WOULD be a guarantee that they won't sell out.

B.J.—Well, is there such a reason?

U.S.—Yes. The reason why the Northern Abolitionist Republicans in office did not sell out was that they were capitalists, and it was to their interest to abolish slavery, and thereby make labor “free” to compete with itself and have its members mutually cut one another's throats.

B.J.—Was that the milk in the cocoanut?

U.S.—None other. The reason why our Revolution{ary} Fathers of the Continental Congress did not sell out was that it was to their interest to keep their property and not let King George tax it away.

B.J.—So?

U.S.—Exactly. Likewise with the Roundheads and French Revolutionists. Each was defending its own class interests. You will never find that an economic class, when it once acquires a consciousness of its class interests, ever sells out. Now, then, the people who become Socialists are either proletarians, workmen who have reached a clear understanding of the fact that they and their families are dead gone unless Socialism is established, or they are people, who, without yet being proletarians, are intelligent enough to realize that their turn will certainly come when they will be wage slaves, and who are decent enough to help, instead of retarding human progress. The interests of such people will hold them straight, as all other revolutionary classes have been held straight. No man will sell himself out. The Socialist gives, by the very fact of his being one, the strongest guarantee that he will be true to his platform.

B.J.—Well, that's reasonable enough.

U.S.—Will you then vote the ticket straight?

B.J. (emphatically)—You bet! I now see the cat.

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

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