

The People.

VOL. IX, NO. 21.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 20, 1899.

PRICE 3 CENTS.

DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {301}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN looks downcast.
UNCLE SAM—Is there bad news in the wind?

B.J.—Bad news? Yes, indeed. I've lost my job.

U.S.—Sacked?

B.J.—No; work is slack, and I'm laid off.

U.S.—And your employer, is he laid off, too?

B.J. looks up surprised and startled.

U.S.—Is he laid off?

B.J.—He? Why, no!

U.S.—He lives on happily; stints himself not a penny's worth; and while he has done no work save sponging on you; and you who have done all the work are now laid off! Well! Well! How do you like it?

B.J.—Like it! How you talk! But what is there to be done but grin and bear it? My employer said to us when he laid us off that "the oscillations of the market are like the ebb and flood of the sea to which we must all accommodate ourselves." So there you have it, grin and bear. They are heavenly visitations.

U.S. (as mad as he can stick)—How YOU talk! If the sea is in the habit of beating heavily against a shore and break it down, do people calmly sit down and let their land be eaten away by the waves, and "grin and bear it"?

B.J.—Oh, no! They raise barriers against the waves.

U.S.—And when in southern climes where tornadoes are periodical and their approaches usually foreseen, do people there let the wind tear up their houses, and look



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

resignedly on, and “grin and bear it”?

B.J.—No; I’ve read that they nail slats across their windows to keep them from being torn open and the house up-turned.

U.S.—And lightning, that comes down so unexpected, smashing and burning up things, do people “grin and bear it,” or do they not take safeguards against it?

B.J.—They provide lightning-rods, I guess.

U.S.—And how about diseases, epidemics; do people “grin and bear it” when yellow fever, or smallpox, or cholera or any other pestilence visits them?

B.J.—Guess not!

U.S.—Not only they {do they?} resist it while it is there, but they guard against its approach by sanitary and other measures, eh?

B.J.—Of course.

U.S.—No “grinning and bearing,” eh?

B.J.—Oh, no; all such things are fought.

U.S.—Now, you meek lambkin, will you please tell me what sense there is in your guarding against all such visitations, and not guarding against that “ebb and flood of the sea” that periodically throws us out of bread for ourselves and our families?

B.J. scratches the back of his head, nonplussed.

U.S.—See here, my man. That employer of yours, all our employers, the whole rabble-rout of the capitalist class is playing upon us the game of the old heathen Priestcraft. They used to tell the people that ebbs and tides, storms, epidemics were all visitations of heaven that the people had to submit to or else they would be rebels against God’s will. That sort of teachings was good for the Priests, but mighty bad for the common folks. To-day we all laugh at those gullible people who allowed themselves to be so humbugged. And yet what are you doing when you meekly “grin and bear” these “oscillations of the market,” but just what those foolish and ignorant people of old did?

B.J. opens wide his eyes.

U.S.—Yes, open them! Those layings off are the heavy end of a perpetual storm that is blowing upon us. That storm is the storm of Capitalism. It is impoverishing us and degrading us. “Grin and bear it”? Why, man, if we do there will be nothing left of us to do the grinning with, in the end. We must guard in advance against, and we can. We can set up lightning-rods that will carry the Capitalist death-dealing bolt into the ground; we

can protect ourselves with antidotes that will kill off the pestilential Capitalist microbes. And that is the Socialist Republic. Help us Socialists raise it. Our ballots can conjure it into existence. Then, when the Capitalist Class is overthrown and the instruments of production are owned by us, who produced and alone operate them,—then the storm will be no more, and, like electricity, deadly when uncontrolled but helpful when harnessed to do men's work, so will the machinery of production, owned by the whole people, bestow upon us happiness, instead of, as now, famine and sorrows!

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded February 2009

slpns@slp.org