

The People.

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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {136}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—It is a great pity about THE PEOPLE.

UNCLE SAM—Inasmuch as to which?

B.J.—Well you see it seems to imagine that everybody is a Socialist.

U.S. (putting his right hand to his right ear)—Eh!?! Say that again, will you?

B.J.—It seems to think everybody is a Socialist, and that is a mistake.

U.S. (with a broad grin)—That charge takes the cake. I've heard a good many more or less ridiculous charges against that paper; but this one, that it takes everybody to be a Socialist, does sound as the most idiotic yet.

B.J.—Do you read it?

U.S.—Regularly.

B.J.—Then I'm surprised you don't understand what I mean.

U.S.—Well, I surely don't; kindly explain.

B.J.—I shall gladly do so; and you will agree with me; and you may then join me in getting it {to} change its course in the matter.

U.S.—Let her rip. Explain away.

B.J.—Won't you agree that most if not all its space is taken up with economic and sociologic and statistical articles?

U.S.—That's so to a t.

B.J.—And won't you admit that such articles are comparatively difficult to



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understand?

U.S.—Admitted.

B.J.—And don't you see that other articles that are less difficult would be more readily understood, and would be pleasanter to read?

U.S.—For instance.

B.J.—For instance, historic articles, light criticisms, satirical squibs on the present system, "arrow heads" showing that things are out of gear, pointed exposures of the trickery of capitalist politicians, and so forth. Such things would be spicy.

U.S.—And do you mean to say the paper has none of these?

B.J.—No; I would not say that. But what I do say is that it has too little of these and too much of the others. If it were to invert the order and write more of these and less of the hard scientific matter it would reach more people and do better work.

U.S.—Hem!

B.J.—Ain't it?

U.S.—I don't quite understand. You stated that THE PEOPLE wrote as though everybody was a Socialist.

B.J.—Exactly. Didn't I make that plain?

U.S.—Hardly.

B.J.—See here. A scientific article may be understood by one who is already a Socialist, while any of those light shafts I mentioned can be read with pleasure—

U.S.—And UNDERSTOOD by people who are not yet Socialist?

B.J. (rubbing his hands)—Now you got it! Now you got it!

U.S.—"IT"? Nay, nay; I got "YOU."

B.J.—Me?

U.S.—Yes. Your reasoning amounts to this: Light articles can be easily understood by people who are not Socialist;—

B.J. nods smiling approvingly.

U.S.—Articles on political economy and kindred subjects are harder to understand by people who are not Socialist;—

B.J. nods, and smiles still more approvingly.

U.S.—From this you draw the conclusion that the scientific articles must be addressed to Socialists;—

B.J. getting beside himself with nods and smiles of approval.

U.S.—And that the light articles are addressed to and can profit only with non-Socialists;—

B.J.—You got it! you got it!

U.S.—Hence you conclude further that a paper that publishes mostly economic articles can address itself only to Socialists;—

B.J.—I see you got it straight!

U.S.—And what you hold is that a Socialist propaganda paper should try to reach non-Socialists, and that to do that it should have mostly light articles of criticism. Isn't that it?

B.J.—Exactly. Ain't I right?

U.S.—You are wrong!

B.J. (amazed)—What!

U.S.—Your reasoning is upside down. You reason like a noodle.

B.J.—Noodle!

U.S.—I'll show you that it is just the reverse of what you imagine. That light articles can be profitable only to Socialists, and that scientific ones are necessary for non-Socialists.

B.J. looks incredulous.

U.S.—Light articles have been the stock in trade of radical papers for the last thirty years. What has been the result? Zero! The masses laughed, agreed that things were out of gear, but, not being Socialists, could not of themselves see the way out; and as the articles did not point to the way out, the result was that the discontent they created went up in wind.

B.J.'s jaw begins to drop.

U.S.—On the other hand, Socialists do not need very many scientific articles on Socialism. The people who need that are the non-Socialists. The so-called scientific articles are useful to these. It is the Socialists and the Socialists alone who can profit by light articles of criticism. No one but they can understand them, because nobody but they have the key to understand them. Are you a noodle, or are you not?

B.J. remains silent.

U.S.—Now, Jonathan, these facts prove that if THE PEOPLE did what you want, it would be addressing to a purpose only the Socialists. Its mission is to

educate; in order to educate, arguments have to be made; all argumentation, if sound, must be scientific. Your charge, like all charges I have ever heard against THE PEOPLE vanishes into thin smoke as soon as looked into.

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