

The People.

VOL. VIII, NO. 44.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 1899.

PRICE 3 CENTS.

DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {281}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—Think of the wretchedness that there is and the happiness that there could be! A look at the papers should be enough to turn every decent man into a Socialist.

BROTHER JONATHAN—But you Socialists are not going to change things. You are altogether too ideal; you make no allowance for hard, practical human nature; according to you men should be angels, or are angels. Now that will never do, it surely won't go down with so matter-of-fact a race as our Anglo-Saxon race.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S. (with a look of resignation)—Well, that would settle the Socialist. By the way, did you catch much fish yesterday in the bay?

B.J. (enthusiastically)—Did I?! We caught more than we could carry.

U.S.—What did you fish for particularly?

B.J.—Bass. Our reels were kept a-going all the time. They bit as soon as the hook got under water. Sport? I tell you we had sport!

U.S.—It is a great fish for sport, I understand.

B.J. (with increasing enthusiasm)—Sport? Why, that's no word for it! Some of these fellows will keep you busy rolling them in, and then letting out again for 10 minutes and more. You have to play them fine; (his eyes glistening with the sport's delight) there's nothing like it for all around fun!

U.S.—And they are a pretty fish to look at, are they not?

B.J.—Yes; a good-sized bass is a fine bit of workmanship; graceful lines, beautiful shades of color.

U.S.—How does it compare with the trout?

B.J.—In one way not as pretty; but the two are not to be compared.

U.S.—The bass is larger, is it not?

B.J.—Why yes; the smallest bass is larger than a good-sized trout.

U.S.—Then the bass must furnish a pretty good meal?

B.J.—I should stutter! Take a 15-pound bass, and boil it, and eat with caper sauce; (smacking his lips) 'tis a dish for the Gods!

U.S. (seeming to be deeply interested in bass)—And would fill a man's belly, would it not?

B.J.—Fill?! I should stutter again!

U.S.—Do you think that to have full bellies all around would be {a} good thing for our people, instead of so many going around hungry, with their belts pulled so tight that the buckles thereof rub up against their back-bones?

B.J. (with a gesture of impatience)—Now, there you have the Socialist again! Always thinking of the stomach, and of material convenience; as though mankind were oxen to be comfortably stalled. Now, that sort of theories may do well enough with savages, but it won't commend itself to this civilized and spiritual Anglo-Saxon race of ours.

U.S. (swings his arms with a motion as though he were whisking a fish out of the water)—I landed my fish!

B.J. (surprised, looks around)—What fish?

U.S.—YOU!

B.J.—Me?!?

U.S.—I played you for bass; I let you have all the line you wanted; now I landed you; and I'm going to feast upon you.

B.J.—What are you driving at?

U.S.—Only ten minutes ago you denounced us Socialists as too ideal for our “hard, matter-of-fact Anglo-Saxon race”—

B.J. (under his breath)—The devil, so I did!

U.S.—And now you turn a somersault about and denounce us Socialists as too

matter-of-fact for that identical “spiritual Anglo-Saxon” race of ours.

B.J. (muttering under his breath)—How he did play it on me!

U.S.—That’s the way with all of you objectors to Socialism. Take rope and you hang yourselves. One minute we Socialists are too material, the next we are too ideal,—just as the maggot may happen to bite you. Now, the fact is we are neither more material than a sane man should be, nor more ideal than it is the duty of a civilized being to be. To uphold your capitalism, you are bound to make a monstrosity out of man—either absurdly material, so as to oppose the spiritual aspirations of the Socialist; or absurdly, top-heavily ideal, so as to give a color to your opposition to the sanely material basis of Socialism. Man is a compound of the material and the spiritual. But the former is the basis of the latter. Without material life, there is no possibility of intellectual life. A healthy mind in a healthy body is an unquestionable maxim.

B.J.—But—

U.S.—Shut up; I tolerated your dishonest nonsense long enough. Wait till I get through. The disagreement between the Socialists and you capitalists is not upon that maxim; you people see to your physical comfort too, and first of all; the difference between us lies in that your anxiety for the safety of your animal side has made you monomaniacally insane, it has turned you into cannibals: you would sacrifice the race so that your belly be full; you are like the miser, who, forgetting that he started to hoard up so that he may live, winds up with starving himself to death so that he may hoard up. Mr. Bass, you are ripped up! Good-bye, my “Anglo-Saxon”!

(U.S. walks away but before turning the corner he looks back, and sees B.J. kicking himself with both feet while muttering to himself: “The devil is in these Socialists; how they do see through us!”)

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

Uploaded March 2008

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