



DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {156}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—If I were you I would give up my activity in the Labor and Socialist movement.

UNCLE SAM—Why so?

B.J.—You see it takes so long to change human nature—

U.S.—How was that again?

B.J.—It is the toughest job this job of changing human nature.

U.S.—And do you imagine that is the job I have undertaken?

B.J.—Why, of course, can you make a Socialist out of a man without first changing his nature?

U.S. takes out a field glass and looks Brother Jonathan over from head to foot; walks around him, takes an observation of his rear, his starboard and port side, lands back in front of him, puts away his field glass and remains contemplative as if engaged in some deep astronomic calculation.

B.J.—What are you up to now?

U.S.—I had taken you for my old friend Jonathan. But after what you said about Socialists being engaged in changing human nature, I concluded I must have been in error about whom I had before me, and that you must be some curiosity dropped from some wild wandering planet.

B.J.—“Curiosity”? — “Dropped”?{—}“Wandering”?

U.S.—Tell me, did our Revolutionary Fathers go about “changing human nature” when they sought to cut loose from George III.?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—I don't know that they did.

U.S.—Have you any recollection of what they did do?

B.J.—They tried to show up George.

U.S.—They went about, didn't they, showing that George was fleecing them, that he was seeking to interfere with their opportunities to acquire and keep wealth, and that they could do better without carrying George and his Parliament on their backs than with the load. Was not that the way they went about it?

B.J.—Guess so. 'Twas so.

U.S.—And as they proved the facts and their conclusions they got a sufficient number on their side to rid themselves of the British burden, eh?

B.J.—They did, sure enough.

U.S.—Would you call that “changing human nature”?

B.J.—No! I call that very practical work, sure to be successful.

U.S.—Now, then, similarly, at all points, is the work of the modern, militant Socialist. He leaves human nature alone. Nay, he uses it. So far from trying to change it he turns it to advantage.

B.J.—Why, that is new to me.

U.S.—I am speaking of the sane Socialists, not of the fantastics who call themselves Socialists. The S.L.P. knows that it is human nature to hate being swindled; that it is human nature to try and get rid of animals that feed on the human body. Accordingly, the agitators for Socialism try to prove to the working class that wealth must be the product of labor—

B.J.—Of course, it is—

U.S.—And that it can't proceed from idleness; that the capitalist class is a class of idlers; that it produces nothing; that, seeing it has all the wealth in its hands, it must have sponged, and must be sponging it from the workers—

B.J.—There's no flies on that reasoning—

U.S.—That the workers can do better without carrying the capitalist barnacles on their backs, than with that load; and that to throw off the useless and mischievous capitalist parasites the workers must organize a political party, and, seeing that they are 100 to every 1 capitalist, vote the capitalists down and out, take possession of the government and establish the Co-operative Commonwealth.

B.J.—That is quite sensible.

U.S.—Do you call that trying to change human nature?

B.J.—No; not that.

U.S.—Do you think it requires a change of human nature to discover that a bed bug is living upon you and to smash him?

B.J.—Can't say I do.

U.S.—This being thus you were off, as completely off as if you had burnt a hole in your shirt to imagine that Socialists are seeking to change human nature, and that that being a difficult task, Socialist propoganda is difficult. Socialist propoganda is the easiest thing whenever you get the ear of the workers. Hence it comes that the fakirs try to intercept the Socialists, and hence it comes that the fantastics and reformers, who are always criticising Socialist methods, fail.

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

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