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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {64}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—I have a conundrum for you.
BROTHER JONATHAN—I am not good at guessing.

U.S.—Why is the “pure and simple” trade union like the grippe?

B.J.—That’s easy enough!

U.S.—Well, tell us.

B.J.—Because it is so deadly.

U.S.—That’s not it.

B.J.—It ought to be. See how many thousands of men, women and children it has killed. It has killed

thousands of them directly by causing them to keep the murderous class of capitalists in command of the militias and police, and then leading those workers straight into the hands of the thugs to be butchered. And it has killed a good many more indirectly by keeping from them the requisite information whereby they could put an end to their misery and live happy lives—

U.S.—That’s all very true, but—

B.J.—There is no “but” about it. Cholera, yellow fever, whooping cough and small pox together have not been so deadly in America as “pure and simple” has; directly and indirectly it has killed and crippled for life more human beings than all the four put together. I have solved the conundrum.

U.S.—You have not. The deadliness of “pure and simple” is unquestioned. But in what is it particularly like the grippe? Cholera, yellow fever, etc., all kill, and so does the grippe. The question is, in what do the killing qualities of the grippe differ from



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those of all other pests, and coincide with those of “pure and simpledom”?

B.J.—Well—in that—

U.S.—Yes—

B.J.—I give it up.

U.S.—What is the feature of the grippe?

B.J.—It is damned disagreeable.

U.S.—Its feature lies in this peculiarity that in itself, by itself, and for itself, disagreeable though it be, it is not deadly, but that it starts all the latent diseases there may be in a body—

B.J.—Yes, I noticed that—

U.S.—A man with the germ of heart trouble may live to a {sic} green old age; but if the grippe grabs him, the germ is developed rapidly and he dies of heart disease. A man with inclination toward consumption may sink an old man into his grave and never know that he had a leaning towards consumption; but let the grippe grab him and the consumptive germ within him will be set agoing, and he will cough himself to death in a little while. And so forth.

B.J.—And now as to “pure and simpledom”—

U.S.—Like the grippe, “pure and simpledom” is by itself, in itself and for itself a rather innocent affair; but, like the grippe, it is sure to start and set agoing whatever rascally instinct there may be in the man who falls a victim to it—

B.J.—Why yes; I now see—

U.S.—A fellow may have the soul of a slaver and yet, under proper conditions, he may live an honest life, and earn an honest living, and never grow rich upon, nor eat his bread in the blood of his fellows. But yet, let him fall foul of “pure and simpledom” or “pure and simpledom” of him, and he will trade upon the workers, and with the blood-money he gets he will live in fine villas, buy stock in the concerns that are skinning and hounding down his men—

B.J.—Why, that’s Arthur, Grand Superlative Chief Arthur!

U.S.—A man may have the germ of dullness and vainglory in him and that germ may never develop, but let him get into “pure and simpledom” and lo and behold the germ of vanity and dullness will grow like Jonah’s gourd and devour him—

B.J.—That’s the case with Gompers!

U.S.—Others may have an inclination for jobs and hypocrisy and yet might have behaved all right for their lifetime, but if “pure and simpledom” once seizes upon them—

B.J.—Gone they are, like Jerry Poppy, McSweeney, Skeffington—

U.S.—Others again may never have succumbed to the temptation of drunkenness, but contact with and activity in “pure and simpledom” will set them reeling along the thoroughfares, and tinge their noses with the color of blushing maids—

B.J.—You mean Franky Foster and G—

U.S.—Never mind whom I mean. I could go on giving illustrations till tomorrow morning—

B.J.—Not necessary! It is a good conundrum. The grippe and “pure and simpledom” are very much alike indeed.

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

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