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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM AND BROTHER JONATHAN. {346}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN (with his face all puckered up into a knot)—What is this I see?

UNCLE SAM—What? Which? Where?

B.J.—There are two Socialist tickets in this State.

U.S.—Off you are! There is only one.

B.J. (takes out of his pocket a paper containing a facsimile of the blanket ballot)—Here is the Arm and Hammer or Socialist Labor Party—

U.S.—Correct: and defiantly it stands, and defiantly swings the hammer. Whereby hangs a long tale, a tale of triumphant struggle, waged against a horde of obscene interests led by the brothel-keeping Tammany Hall.

B.J.—That's all right. But here is another party—

U.S.—The Chimney-Brush party.

B.J.—Well, its emblem does look like a lamp chimney-brush. This party, which calls itself the Social Democracy, also claims to be a Socialist party.

U.S.—The right to free speech, Jonathan, includes the right to talk nonsense. If a man chooses to talk nonsense, so much the worse for him: everybody will know him for a fool. If freakishness and crookedness and hysterics choose to call themselves a Socialist party, whom do you suppose they could deceive?

B.J.—That's all right. But don't you suppose that there may be people who are not idiots, and yet are not sufficiently posted to be informed upon the crookedness and freakishness of this alleged Socialist party, of this party with the chimney-brush emblem?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—Yes, such a thing is possible as to people not being posted upon those details. Nevertheless, if they are not idiots, they surely must know enough to keep them from being taken in.

B.J.—What for instance should they know?

U.S.—You are a machinist?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—Now, we shall say, you set up a machine shop, and announce what you propose to turn out, and describe the steel, iron and other qualities of the machines you propose to get up—

B.J.—And someone else sets up a howl against you; claims that you are no good as a machinist; that you are narrow and intolerant in the principles that you propose to work on; that it is an absurd orthodoxy to claim that it requires fire to melt iron by; and he sets up his “machine shop” with water as the means to heat his iron—

B.J.—And goes to smash, of course.

U.S.—Thereupon he drops his water, takes to fire in imitation of you, but declares that it is the height of folly to think that iron and steel and brass are needed to make machines; laughs at you and denounces you as bigoted for your views; and he declares that the right thing to make machines out of is papier-mache held over the fire—

B.J.—And then burns up!

U.S.—Yes. Now, let us say that this same individual keeps on bumping from one idiotic theory and practice into another. Each time he sets himself up as a man who knows, when, in fact, he knows nothing; in his ignorance, he abuses and maligns you; finds out that you are right, copies you step by step, and finally, comes, let’s say, fully up to your standard. Who do you imagine would entrust his machine jobs to him rather than to you?

B.J.—Idiots no doubt.

U.S.—The man’s improvement in such a case could only accrue to your credit. Sensible people will trust in you all the more, would they not?

B.J.—That’s so.

U.S.—Now, suppose that the man who blundered in that way{,} sneering at you from step to step, and from step to step{,} learning from you—suppose he were to set himself up as the real machinist, what would you think of that?

B.J.—Every sane man would say of him that his conceit was greater than his good sense, and none but idiots would patronize him.

U.S.—Correct. So far I have supposed the case of a blunderer who finally does learn. But, now, suppose this blunderer don't learn, and being still in his blundering period does set himself up in competition with your machine shop—

B.J.—Why such a fellow could only attract the most idiotic of customers.

U.S.—Well, that is exactly the case with Mr. Eugene V. Debs, the presidential candidate of the chimney-brush ticket in this State, and you surely know it.

B.J.—Yes, he has been blundering and blundering all the time, while all the time impudently denouncing the Socialist Labor Party—

U.S.—He first declared himself a Socialist, and yet joined Bryan's 16 to 1 idiocy in '96, and denounced the Socialist Labor Party as intolerant.—

B.J.—Yes. And then he again declared himself a Socialist, but repudiated the ballot, all the time sneering at the Socialist Labor Party for being bigoted.

U.S.—Yes. And then he started a hundred-year-old colonization plan, and declared that the Socialist Labor Party was too orthodox;—

B.J.—I remember that. And then he started a political party with a farmers' plank in it as a means to "emancipate labor;"—

U.S.—And therefore, while calling himself a "Champion of Labor," he speaks in Idaho, within a stone's throw of the Bull Pen, and is too cowardly to denounce that capitalist outrage, because that would have interfered with his box-receipts.

B.J.—Correct!

U.S.—Now, that is the precious Debs. And will you say that any sane man will be fooled by him?

B.J.—Coming to think it over, no! Only the vicious and the fools could vote for such a man, none can take him for a Socialist.

U.S.—Nor will he get any other support but that. This fraudulent Chimney-Brush ticket will be smashed hip and thigh by the vigorous Arm and Hammer.

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

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