

# The People.

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DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {209}

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**B**ROTHER JONATHAN—I have written a book on the Solution of the Social Question!

UNCLE SAM—Where is it?

B.J.—I have not yet got a publisher. It is on that point that I want to consult you. Do you know a publisher?

U.S.—I know lots of them.

B.J.—What I want is a publisher who is interested in reform. Do you know of any?

U.S.—You will have to define that word “reform” before I could aid you.

B.J.—By “reform” I mean a publisher who is interested in the improvement of the people.

U.S.—It is getting worse now. You will now have to define two words: “improvement” and “people,” before I could give you an opinion.

B.J.—Do I need to define two such plain words as “improvement” and “people”?

U.S.—As a rule, the words are plain enough. They are plain enough in every day talk on every day subjects. But in connection with “reform” and “solutions of the Social Question,” and such matters, the words have many and conflicting and special meanings. You will have to define them.

B.J.—I never heard of such a thing!

U.S.—I’ll show you. Have you ever heard of the gold mugwumps?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—They are “reformers.” Now, with these reformers the word “people” means



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two things. It generally means their pockets; when they use it in that sense, they understand by “improvement of the people” the filling up of their pockets, which is the same as saying the “skinning of the workers some more”—

B.J.—Well, of course, I don’t mean that by “improvement of the people.”

U.S.—Sometimes the mugwump uses the word “people” in the sense of the workingmen. When he does so and talks about the “improvement of the people” he means the administering to them of good clubbings to keep them quiet—

B.J.—Of course, I don’t mean that either.

U.S.—Then you have the silver mine barons. They rank themselves with “reformers.” Now, when they talk of the “improvement of the people” they mean the administering of the rifle diet to the miners. By that they consider that their miners, whom they rob right and left, will be so far improved as to become “loyal American citizens,” and help to support the European barons who married American heiresses of silver mines. That is their way to “improve the people.”

B.J.—Now, you know I can’t mean that!

U.S.—I only know what you say, and I want to understand you. Then there is Rockefeller’s Prohibition party. When it talks about the “improvement of the people,” it has in mind the idea of reducing the expenses of the working people so that the capitalists who run it can squeeze the wages down, and make higher profits—

B.J.’s eyes open wide.

U.S.—Do you mean that?

B.J.—N—n—o—

U.S.—Then you have the municipal ownership reformers á la Glasgow Plan—

B.J.—Well, are they not all right?

U.S.—Guess they are from their standpoint.

B.J.—And what is that?

U.S.—By the “improvement of the people” they mean to bring the workers on public industries under the political club of the capitalist class so that this class may hold over them both that and the economic club, and in that way hold the workers in more complete slavery.

B.J.—I do declare! Why, that knocks out my book!

U.S.—I thought as much.

B.J.—I shall have to re-write it!

U.S.—A good idea.

B.J.—But is there no such thing as “improvement of the people”?

U.S.—I mentioned four different ones. But there are more. One of them is the Socialist.

B.J.—What do they mean by it?

U.S.—By the “people” the Socialists mean the working class in particular; by “improvement” they mean ridding the working class of the parasite class of capitalists that devours the substance of the workers. By the “improvement of the people” the Socialist Labor party means the overthrow of the capitalist system, thereby of the system of wage slavery, and the establishment of the Co-operative Commonwealth under whose dome he who works shall eat, and he who can but won’t work shall enjoy full freedom to starve and freeze to his dearest heart’s content.

B.J. looks stunned.

U.S.—Now, go home, throw the manuscript of your book into the fire, and start a new book.

B.J. walks off scratching his head and mumbling to himself: “A queer way these Socialists have of looking at things! They want us to work! Hem!”

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

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