

The People.

VOL. VI, NO. 52.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 1897.

PRICE 3 CENTS.

DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {195}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—To me it is clear that the Socialists have no logic in them. How they do contradict themselves! Any man of average intelligence could see that.

UNCLE SAM—I wish you would aid me with your intelligence, because I don't see the contradictions you speak of.

B.J.—Don't Socialists claim that the wages of the workers represent the market price of labor?

U.S.—Yes.

B.J.—And don't they say that the cheaper products are the cheaper becomes the price of labor?

U.S.—Yes.

B.J.—And don't they say that this cheapening of the price of labor comes from the cheaper price of the things needed to reproduce labor-power?

U.S.—Yes. I see no contradiction in this.

B.J.—Neither do I. That's all right. But I claim that it is illogical, after one has said all this to claim that, therefore, the workingman shall have all the wealth. I call it illogical to say first that the price of labor is going down and then to claim that the reward of labor should go up.

U.S.—The logic of that is all right. The trouble is with you, that you don't understand all you say.

B.J.—I don't?

U.S.—No. The price of labor declines where labor is a merchandise. Under the



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

capitalist system labor is not clad with the attributes of humanity; it is simply merchandise. If your finger is in the fire what happens?

B.J.—It burns.

U.S.—And if you leave it there it will burn to nothing, eh?

B.J.—Guess so.

U.S.—Is it illogical to say that because your finger will burn to nothing in a flame, therefore it is illogical for you to want to keep your whole finger?

B.J.—No; that would not be illogical.

U.S.—No more is it illogical for the working class, who, in the flame of capitalism will be consumed, to want to pull out and keep whole.

B.J.—How?

U.S.—When the Socialist says that just because the price of labor is bound to decline, therefore the worker must keep all he produces, it is just as saying that just because under the capitalist system labor is a merchandise, labor must pull out or destroy the capitalist system, cease to be a merchandise, and becoming human enjoy all that man is entitled to. Is that gun spiked?

B.J. remains silent.

U.S.—Having ripped you on that side I'll rip you up from another side.

B.J.—But one side will do.

U.S.—No; when a fellow knows he knows as little as you do on these things and yet he will impertinently shoot off his mouth he must be thoroughly thrashed. So here goes. The worker does some kind of work—in fact, he does it all; so or not so?

B.J.—'Tis so.

U.S.—The capitalist class does no manner of work; so or not so?

B.J.—'Tis so.

U.S.—It follows that, even though actually the services of the working class were becoming less valuable, the working class is entitled to the whole of the wealth, because the capitalist class now renders no services whatever, and consequently it is wholly a valueless class. Now, go to bed, Jonathan.

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

Uploaded January 2008

slpns@slp.org