

# The People.

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DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {181}

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**U**NCLE SAM—I saw you reading the Socialist Labor Party’s platform. I’m glad of it. Are you going to join?

BROTHER JONATHAN—I don’t yet know. There are a number of things I don’t yet understand.

U.S.—Which one, for instance?

B.J.—How they’re going to do it. For instance: Here are the Vanderbilts and others owing the railroads; there are the Goulds owning the telegraphs, and so forth. I understand that the Socialists want all these things, including the mines, the factories—

U.S.—The whole machinery of production, transportation and distribution.

B.J.—Yes, they want to nationalize all these things.

U.S.—Correct.

B.J.—But all these things are now owned by private individuals. How are these to be taken from them? Are these people going to be bought off? If so, where are you going to get the money from? Or—

U.S.—Bought off! Was King George “bought off”? Did the colonists raise money to pay him? My recollection of the transaction is, and mighty proud of it are our so-called “Sons” and our so-called “Daughters of the Revolution” (most of whom now own these railroads, mines, factories, etc.), that, when “moneys were raised,” they were raised to knock down King George, not to “buy him off,” he not having shared the view of the Revolutionary Fathers that “these colonies are and of right ought to be free.”



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—Why, then, Socialists mean to confiscate all these things!?!

U.S.—Did the Revolutionary Fathers “confiscate” these colonies?

B.J. puckers up his lips.

U.S.—They belonged to King George.

B.J.—They did.

U.S.—If the simple fact of taking away a thing from one who “owns” it is “confiscation,” then these colonies were surely “confiscated” away from King George.

B.J.—I don’t like that word “confiscation.”

U.S.—But wasn’t it confiscation all the same.

B.J. makes a wry face.

U.S.—Let me come to your aid. It wasn’t confiscation.

B.J.—I’m glad you say so.

U.S.—You evidently feel that the taking away of the colonies from King George has all the outward marks of confiscation, and yet you have a strong aversion to giving that name to the action of our Revolutionary Fathers. There is a conflict in your mind. The reason is that you are not clear upon an important legal, historic and sociologic fact.

B.J.—Which?

U.S.—The term “confiscation” implies the recognition of some law. If the property taken is owned by a law that is recognized, then the act is confiscation; if the law on which the ownership is based is denied, then there is no confiscation. Now, then, under no sun that ever shone, in no clime, and at no time have peoples ever meekly folded their arms and died by law. Just as soon as a people realize, are conscious of the fact, that a certain law, or system of laws, stands between them and their lives, that law has gone, must and does go. Catch on?

B.J.—I do.

U.S.—Now, then, the propertyship of these colonies in King George was grounded on certain laws; our Revolutionary Fathers long felt the shoe pinching; their lives becoming more and more precarious; they did not know where the fault lay, and groped about, bowing to that law. Finally the truth dawned upon them. They became conscious of the fact that the trouble lay in the social system, that is, the system of laws under which they were going down. Just as soon as they saw that, they kicked the law

overboard—

B.J.—Bully for them!

U.S.—And took possession of the country. Their depriving King George of what he had was not “confiscation” because the Revolution overthrew the law on which his “property rights” rested, and established another system of laws that vested the property in them—

B.J.—And high time it was, too!

U.S.—Revolutions bring along with them their own laws. By the laws of our first Revolution this territory was ours, and, accordingly, we simply took possession of our own. That surely was not confiscation.

B.J.—That’s all right.

U.S.—So with regard to the ownership of these mines, railroads, factories, in short, of the nation’s machinery of production. The proprietary rights of the present owners, the capitalist class, are grounded on a certain system of laws. So long as people bow to them they will consider the taking of that property to be confiscation. But our people feel pinched and are going down. As our Revolutionary Fathers did years ago for quite a while, so do our people now grope about bowing to those laws. But they will pretty soon discover that these laws stand between themselves and their lives. Soon as they make that discovery, the law will be overthrown, and, with that, the proprietary rights of the capitalist class. Our second Revolution, now at hand, will bring its own laws along with it. By those laws the ownership of the nation’s machinery of production will vest in our people jointly, and when they take possession they will be simply taking their own. So long as you prate about “buying off,” or are preoccupied about “confiscating” the nation’s machinery of production, you simply betray the fact that you have not yet found out that the present social system, or system of laws, decrees your death. When you shall have found out that fact you will talk differently. See? (And U.S. chucks B.J. under the chin.)

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

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