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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {56–58}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I think Socialists would progress faster if they held more American language.

UNCLE SAM—Inasmuch as to which?

B.J.—Many of their expressions are so utterly un-American.

U.S.—Mention one.

B.J.—They will talk about our “wage-slaves;” now here in America we have no such thing; we have no wage-slaves.

U.S.—We haven’t?!?!

B.J.—No!

U.S.—What do you call the weavers of New England who signed a petition against the Wilson bill against their will?

B.J.—Cowards.

U.S.—Is it cowardice that compels a slave to submit to the lash of the master?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—Those bosses stood to those weavers as slave-drivers to their slaves. Their wages, their lives and those of their whole family depended upon their signing; if they had not they would have been discharged; discharge means to the wage worker starvation, at least temporarily, possibly permanently.

B.J.—Yes indeed.

U.S.—How is it with the miners who are ordered to “suggest” a reduction of wages—

B.J.—And do they “suggest?”



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U.S.—Most assuredly, else they would be wholly reduced.

B.J.—Pretty tough.

U.S.—How is it with the railway employes who are enjoined by the Courts from striking?

B.J.—Damn those courts!

U.S.—How is it with the shoemakers who are made to sign a declaration that they will join no union?

B.J.—They are in a bad fix.

U.S.—How about the express employes of New York and street car conductors in the west and California who are not given a job before they sign away all their rights?

B.J.—Hellish; damnable!

U.S.—In short how about all the wage workers—the sole producers, directly and indirectly, of all our untold wealth—who are allowed to keep only a small portion, STARVATION WAGES, out of their own product?

B.J.—Well, is that the cause—why certainly it is!

U.S.—It being so, are these people slaves or are they not?

B.J.—It looks that way.

U.S.—Do you remember what John Adams said? He put it this way: “The workingman who gets just enough wages to live on is not essentially different from the slave who gets the things he needs at short hand; we call the one free, the other slave, but the distinction is imaginary only.”

B.J.—Too true!

U.S.—Guess Adams was a good authority on Americanism?

B.J.—Guess he was.

U.S.—Now; Brother Jonathan, there is this good feature about you: However full of Jingo prejudices you may be, you are not pig-headed and you will throw off an error when you discover it. But there are in this land of ours a lot of fellows with whom the Jingoism is so fast grown that it can't be shaken. The reason of it is that they are ignorant, are too perverse to admit it, and are insolent enough to talk about things they do not understand. I could mention to you scores of such specimens.

B.J.—I know it.

U.S.—They are like so many Reverend Jaspers. Jasper says “the sun do move;” if he knew a little astronomy he would keep his mouth shut; these people we are now considering would also keep their mouths shut if they knew at least the ABC of political economy.

B.J.—But the worst of it is that they imagine that because they sling their ignorance in more grammatical language than that fellow Jasper therefore their ignorance is wisdom.

U.S.—Exactly! Wage-Slavery, accordingly, exists here with us as in other countries. The real un-American is he who shuts his eyes to facts.

B.J.—So say I; let us turn our backs upon them, and let us set our caps to abolishing this blot of wage-slavery in the land that was meant for the free.

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BROTHER JONATHAN—I had an idea that Senator Hill was a friend of the workingman.

UNCLE SAM—That idea was false.

B.J.—Must be; that speech of his last Monday in the Senate made no bones of his being hand in glove with the plundering capitalist class.

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BROTHER JONATHAN—Poor Jerry Poppy, he has not yet got his job from Cleveland!

UNCLE SAM—The mutton of his job is cooked for good.

B.J.—Will he, do you think, now cease to be “practical?”

U.S.—Nay, nay; he is stranded fast in the mud of “practical politics.”

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

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