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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {170}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN (glaring defiance)—Do you know what I think of you, sir?

UNCLE SAM (with mock meekness)—No.

B.J.—You are a gold bug, sir.

U.S.—Who, I? Not much!

B.J.—Aren't you a Socialist?

U.S.—You bet.

B.J.—Then you are a gold bug, a damned gold bug, sir.

U.S. (affecting to be shocked)—Don't be profane, be gentle, courteous and polite.

B.J.—Not be profane? Isn't it enough to make a Saint's blood boil to see you Socialists going about and claiming to be the friends of the workingmen, while all along you are stabbing them in the back by ranking yourselves on the side of the gold bugs?

U.S.—But we don't rank ourselves on the side of the gold bugs, not by a jugful.

B.J. (bursting with impatience)—Don't you say the 16 to 1 free coinage of silver will do the workers no good?

U.S.—That's just what we say, and prove it to boot.

B.J.—Then you must be a gold bug.

U.S.—Do you favor yellow fever?

B.J.—No, sir!

U.S.—Then you must be a lover of cholera.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—I'm neither!

U.S.—That's our case with gold and silver. The 16 to 1 scheme is like yellow fever, the gold standard is like cholera to the working class. It does not follow, if a man will run away from yellow fever, that he must run into the arms of cholera; no more does it follow if a man sees that the free coinage of silver is harmful he must dote on the present gold standard.

B.J.—You puzzle me.

U.S.—If as much silver as is now worth half a dollar is coined into a thing called a dollar, that 50-cent dollar will only fetch half as much as the dollar did before.

B.J. scratches his head with an incredulous look.

U.S.—Scratch away if that relieves you. The boss who now pays a workingman \$1 a day is not the sort of a hairpin who will, when the 50-cent dollar is out, say to his workingman: "My good man, my beloved brother, when I agreed to pay you and you to work for me for \$1 a day, neither of us meant by the word '\$1' a thing called '\$1'; what we meant was a certain amount of food, clothing, etc., that you need to live; now that the thing called '\$1' is worth only half a dollar, were I to pay you with that, I would be cheating you out of half what you expect and I agreed to pay. Therefore henceforth, now that this 50-cent dollar is money, I shall pay you 2 things called dollars. In that way I am no worse off, nor you the gainer. Things remain as they were." The boss will certainly not act that way, what think you?

B.J. looks into the blue sky.

U.S.—With a 50-cent dollar out, the boss is more likely to say unto himself: "I now can squeeze all the more out of that 'brother' of mine, the worker; I shall pay him a thing called '\$1' as before; I am thereby 50 cents in pocket; of course, he will find out that he is getting only one-half he got before just as soon as he tries to buy groceries and goods with that '\$1'; he will then swear blue murder against his Gomperses and the other fakirs who hollered for 16 to 1; and he will demand more wages to help him to get along. I shall wait until he does, before I give him as much more as will bring his wages up to what they were before. Perhaps I won't need to 'raise' his wages at all. There are so many of these 'brothers' of mine out of work that they may be willing, and glad at that, to work for a 50-cent dollar." This is what will happen.

B.J. looks still more intently at the blue sky.

U.S.—And you, and all other workingmen, who now are whooping it up for 16 to 1, are not all of you a lot of lunkheads for thus running your own throats against the razor?

B.J.—We are; we would be if, seeing it in that light{,} we stuck to the notion. But your explanation cures me. Sure enough 16 to 1 is a sort of yellow fever; I give in to that; but (furiously shaking his fist at Uncle Sam) I must now blame you all the more for talking about the gold standard as you do. It is not a cholera. It is safety; the only safety we have. For heaven's sake think of our low wages being halved! By Jericho, I shall go with the gold bugs!

U.S.—Steady, man, don't fly off the handle.

B.J.—I know what you are going to say. You are going to say that the gold bugs also skin us; that's true. You are going to say that there is no safety and freedom outside of Socialism; that's true.

U.S.—Well, you are developing—

B.J.—But Socialism is too far off. It will come, that's all right; but in the meantime we are bound to see to it that we remain alive. Now that I see what this 16 to 1 means, I see that we workingmen shall be slaughtered under it. As a matter of self-preservation, as a strategic move to keep alive, we are bound to wheel over to the gold bugs and down these silver schemers and their parrots. How on earth can you think otherwise; or do you agree with me?

U.S.—I would agree with you if that what you say were all.

B.J.—What else is there?

U.S.—The wages under the gold standard are low, and going lower, and bound to go lower—

B.J.—Granted; that's the course of things under the capitalist system, but wages don't drop down one-half at a leap.

U.S.—Just wait. On the other side, on the 16 to 1 side, we have the danger, the certainty, of a drop that will carry off fully one-half of our little earnings.

B.J.—Yes, isn't that enough to force us to join the gold standard men this campaign?

U.S.—Just wait. Your reasoning amounts to this: this year Socialism can't win; one

of the two old parties will win. Each of them will hurt us, the Republicans by continuing the system that steadily presses wages down; but the Demo-Pops will establish a law under which the capitalist system will work with greater fierceness in the way of lowering wages; under the former we can breathe, while striking out for freedom; under the latter we shall be crushed. Of the two evils let us take one that does not do us up in short order; let us vote for McKinley this campaign, down the silver men, and thus give us a chance to preserve life and establish Socialism later. Is that your reasoning?

B.J.—It is exactly. We must vote for McKinley.

U.S.—We must not. There is more in this thing than your reasoning covers. Listen: Republican party, or gold standard capitalists generally, are the top fellows, the monopolists and trustholders.

B.J.—They are.

U.S.—These big fellows now control things.

B.J.—They do.

U.S.—Through the perfected machinery, which they have been introducing into their plants, they have been displacing labor.

B.J.—They have.

U.S.—Displaced labor is not the less hungry, and causes wages to be depressed.

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—But hitherto there was quite an outlet for labor displaced by the machine. The production of still better machines and the extension of the capitalist lines, in the building of railroads, for instance, gave work to many of these hands that were thrown out of work.

B.J.—That's so; but these works did not occupy all the displaced men.

U.S.—Right you are; hence the lowering of the condition of the workers. But many of the displaced did so find occupation, and that relieved the labor market and thereby the down grade course of wages was checked.

B.J.—Guess that's so.

U.S.—Now then, this source of relief for the labor market is now run pretty dry. The large capitalist plants have reached such perfection that the large quantity of labor, formerly employed in producing still more perfect plants, is no longer needed. In the

railroad building alone there is a wholesale stoppage. Do you know what that means to us?

B.J.'s face pales.

U.S.—It means this: that the club of the unemployed, which the large capitalists have been holding over our heads, which has so severely belabored us, and which did not belabor us any severer because it was split—a big part of it being absorbed in the building of new plants—will now be one solid, unsplit club with which to knock our wages down.

B.J.—It looks black!

U.S.—The situation is accordingly this: On one side, the free silver scheme threatens to halve our wages, on the other the flood of the unemployed is going to swamp us. A storm either way, from the silver and from the gold quarter.

B.J.—I despair!

U.S.—Do you realize how senseless it were to join either side?

B.J.—I do now.

U.S.—Do you realize that there is no such thing as shielding ourselves with either gang against the other?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—If your life as a workingman is dear to you, you must at this supreme epoch in our country's history stand all the firmer by the Socialist ship and diligently seek to get all our fellow workingmen aboard whom you can reach. A gale blows from either quarter. There is no salvation but to poll a big Socialist vote this year. Only that will call a stop in the capitalist camp—silver and gold alike. Only the fear a hastening the victory of the working class at the ballot box will cause the capitalists to check their pressing down of wages. Man, take a heed! Neither Bryan nor McKinley; our ticket is Matchett and Maguire!

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

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slpns@slp.org