



DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {124}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—At last I have come across the right thing; THE right thing!

UNCLE SAM—What maggot has bitten you now?

B.J.—I am a single taxer!

U.S.—And yet you live?

B.J.—And so would all of us, if all of us were single-taxers.

U.S.—You would not think so if you understood the single tax.

B.J.—Will you deny that taxes on industry are a clog to production?

U.S.—Well—no! As a general, very general proposition it is correct to say that taxes have a checking tendency on production.

B.J.—Call it a “checking tendency.” It is due to the levying of taxation on the products of labor that there is such general poverty. If the products of labor were free from taxation we would all be hunky. The single-tax frees all taxes from the products of labor; it only taxes that which no human labor but which only the Creator created.

U.S.—Does the single-tax tax away bits of land from the holder?

B.J.—How silly! Why of course not. It only taxes land values.

U.S.—That’s a very different thing.

B.J.—No it isn’t!

U.S.—’Tis so!

B.J.—It is not!



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U.S.—You said the single-tax only taxes the work of the Creator. The Creator created the land and not the land values. Consequently, what the single-tax taxes away must be the land itself and not the land values.

B.J.—That’s a quibble.

U.S.—Eh!

B.J.—By taxing the land values the land is taxed. The single tax only takes away the economic rent.

U.S.—Call it by that jargon “economic rent.” That, you say, is not produced by labor?

B.J.—Exactly, now you are beginning to see the cat. The single-tax taxes away “economic rent” only, and that is not the product of Labor.

U.S.—(Tapping Brother Jonathan on the head with his knuckles.) Pretty hollow, pretty hollow!

B.J.—Will you deny that “economic rent” is not the product of labor?

U.S.—Is rent made of air?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—Can you imagine a landlord, or the government in its place putting up with chunks of air in payment of the “economic rent”?

B.J. (impatiently.)—Why, no!

U.S.—What is it that they will demand?

B.J.—Something useful.

U.S.—That’s it. They will demand rent in kind—trucks, vegetables, pumpkins, or be it shoes, toothpicks, spittoons—

B.J. (very happy.)—Now you got it; now you got it. You see the cat, don’t you?

U.S.—Guess I begin to see that cat.—They will either demand such articles of consumption as are raised on the premises, or an equivalent in money whereby to buy the articles, eh?

B.J. (rubbing his hands gleefully.)—That’s it; that’s it!

U.S.—And the “economic rent” so-called is made up of such things?

B.J. (increasingly gleeful.)—Yes. Now you got it.

U.S.—Now, tell me, where did you ever see, in what cat written book did you ever

find, the wondrous thing of cabbages, pumpkins, or shoes, or money created by the Creator without the aid of human labor?

B.J. looks blank, with open mouth.

U.S.—Did you ever see a spittoon or a carrot, or a dollar that was not the product of labor?

B.J.—N—n—o!

U.S.—All these are the products of labor?

B.J.—Certainly.

U.S.—And your “economic rent” is to be paid with them?

B.J.—Of course.

U.S.—And yet you say the single-tax is not a tax on labor?

B.J.—B-t-p-r-s. The cat—

U.S.—Damn that cat! In one and the same breath you say the single-tax levies no tax on labor and you admit that the tax it does demand must be paid in the products of labor. Jonathan, go soak your head.

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