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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {233}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—It is clear to me that we are fast going to the devil in this country, and will get there soon, too, unless the break {brake?} is put down.

UNCLE SAM—You have spoken like an oracle.

B.J.—The shackles of slavery are being forged—

U.S.—Oracular again.

B.J.—I say we must stop that.

U.S.—True. How would you go about it?

B.J.—Put an end to the tyranny that Socialism proposes.

U.S.—I don't quite understand you.

B.J.—I'll explain. The Socialists are organizing unions, and they demand that a certain wage shall be paid—

U.S.—No harm in that—

B.J.—No harm? That's tyranny! What becomes of freedom? I would have laws passed to protect the employers, and thereby insure freedom.

U.S. smiles.

B.J.—It is an essential principle of freedom that workingmen shall have the right to labor unmolested for such persons and at such wages as he or she may elect.

U.S.—May elect?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—Does "election" presuppose freedom of choice?

B.J.—Of course.



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U.S.—If there is no freedom of choice; is there an “election”?

B.J.—No.

U.S. (taking out a pistol, puts it to the head of B.J., who tries to run off but is held back by U.S.)—I’ll shoot you dead if you don’t fork out all your money. What do you elect? To die or to give me your money? Choose!

B.J.—Are you crazy? Police!

U.S.—No, sir; very much in my senses!

B.J.—Have you become a highway robber? Police!

U.S.—Never mind that. Choose!

B.J.—How can I choose? Do you call that giving a man a choice?

U.S.—Don’t you?

B.J. (scared out of his senses)—No; I don’t.

U.S. (puts his revolver away, much to the relief of B.J.)—You went through a good scare, eh?

B.J.—I don’t like such jokes.

U.S.—You just experienced what it means to be within a quarter of an inch of your life, eh?

B.J.—Guess I do; I call that a bad joke.

U.S.—And you realize that a man in such a strait has no choice?

B.J.—Of course not.

U.S.—He is not free to elect, is he?

B.J.—Why, no; and you know it as well as I do.

U.S.—If I had called for the police to protect ME, what would you have thought of it?

B.J.—I would have thought you were crazy—

U.S.—Or in with some murderous policeman?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—Now, that’s what I think of you and all other bosses who want protection against the workmen. You have virtually a pistol at the worker’s head. You hold the necessary machinery or capital to work with. You don’t need to look frightened; I’m not going to remind you by what acts of robbery you got into possession of that capital. But

you have it; the workers have none. If they don't work they die. By withholding work from them you kill them. They must work at your own terms or die. When you say that they should be free to work for whom and for what wages they elect, you are shamefully misusing the word freedom, just as shamefully as the highwayman would who claimed he left you freedom to choose. And when on top of that you claim you should be protected by law, you and your law stand in the identical light that you admitted the highwayman and the policeman whom he called to his assistance would stand—in the light of one malefactor coming to the aid of another. Freedom in the mouth of your capitalist class means brigand's rule. We propose to strip you of that freedom, and shall do so by getting the law on our side; by voting it into our hands. Jonathan, Jonathan, I shall yet see you as lean as the rail; with all the "freedom" you now exercise squeezed out of you!

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

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