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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {234}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN looks worried.

UNCLE SAM—You look distressed.

B.J.—I am, in that I can't make out a certain thing.

U.S.—Which?

B.J.—You know our wages were reduced in the shop in which I work.

U.S.—That's not the first time; by this time you ought to have grown accustomed to it;—and even to like it, seeing that you persist in voting the tickets of your bosses.

B.J.—No; I'm not getting accustomed to it. But it is something new that is worrying me.

U.S.—And what may that be?

B.J.—It is the reason given for our reduction.

U.S.—And what is that?

B.J.—That our reduction of wages is necessary in order to thin out the overstocked market.

U.S.—That IS something new; and yet no stranger than so many other reasons they have been giving you each time that the bosses want to take a larger slice off your hide.

B.J.—Don't you see? The less we earn the less we can buy and take out of that market.

U.S.—Correct.

B.J.—Now, with higher wages than we now have we could not thin out the market, so overstocked it is.



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U.S.—Correct again.

B.J.—If, then, our wages are reduced still lower, how on earth are we to thin out that overstocked market so as to start in and produce again as before?

U.S.—Your opinion that a lowering of wages only makes harder the thinning out of the market is certainly well grounded.

B.J.—Then the boss is a fool—

U.S.—No; you are the fool.

B.J.—I!

U.S.—Certainly, for believing the boss means what he says.

B.J.—Do you then imagine he favors an overstocked market?

U.S.—That depends; but that is not the point.

B.J.—What is? Relieve me of my suspense.

U.S.—What do you imagine the boss is in business for? Because he likes it?

B.J.—Well—no—

U.S.—He is in business to make all he can, eh?

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—Money is the burden of his song, eh?

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—Any thing or method that will bring him money will do, eh?

B.J.—Guess so.

U.S.—Now, then, follow me close. There are a hundred dollars' worth of goods in the market. Your boss employs 25 men. These hundred dollars' worth of goods are produced by these 25 men, that is to say, each produces four dollars' worth of goods, and gets one dollar's worth of wages. These 25 men go to the market, invest \$1, and thereby pull out of the market twenty-five dollars' worth of goods. How much wealth has the boss left for himself?

B.J.—Why, seventy-five dollars' worth.

U.S.—Correct. You are a great arithmetician. Now, suppose the boss were to raise the wages to \$2—

B.J.—Why, then we could buy twice as much from him!

U.S. (smiling)—Yes; the men would have received from the boss fifty dollars' worth of wealth; they would buy that much wealth in the market, relieve the market by that much—and leave to the boss, how much?

B.J. looks perplexed, as though he were catching sight of a ghost.

U.S.—Hello, there! How much?

B.J. (falteringly)—Fifty dollars' worth of wealth?

U.S.—Is that more or less than before?

B.J.—Less, by Jericho! Twenty-five dollars' worth of wealth less!

U.S.—And, as you justly admitted a minute ago that the boss is in it for the money he can make out of it, he would not be the fool to help reduce the market by leaving him poorer. Now look at it from this other side.

B.J.—Which?

U.S.—The boss lowers the wages of his 25 men to 50 cents each—

B.J.—We HAVE come down almost as low.

U.S.—Then these 25 men have only \$12.50 worth of wealth with which to relieve the market, eh?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—They buy to that amount. There then is left to the boss how much of the wealth produced by his men?

B.J. (calculates a while)—Eighty-seven dollars and fifty cents' worth!

U.S.—Is that more or is it less than if he were to pay them \$2?

B.J.—More, of course;—\$37.50 more!

U.S.—Is that more or is it less than if he left their wages at \$1?

B.J.—More—\$22.50!

U.S.—There you have the secret. As the boss only seeks to skin you, because only in proportion as he does that does he grow wealthy, the less he pays you the more he makes. His overstocked market he will try to dump on other nations; he may yet turn you into a missionary to the heathens as a means to open those new markets. To understand that you must be clear upon this: Wages and profits come out of the products of the working class; the smaller the share of the worker the heavier the profits of the loafer capitalist—overstocked market or no overstocked market.

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

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