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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {98}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN shaking his head from right to left with a perturbed look.

UNCLE SAM—Art thou worried?

B.J.—This won't do at all (shakes his head some more).

U.S.—Which?

B.J.—The Socialist Labor party is too choice.

U.S.—Out with it; what is on your stomach?

B.J.—You know Tim Jimcrack?

U.S.—I does.

B.J.—Doesn't he want the Co-operative Commonwealth?

U.S. (hesitating)—Well, yes, ultimately; he wants, however, Prohibition first.

B.J.—You know Dick Riggamagige?

U.S.—Yay.

B.J.—Doesn't he want the Co-operative Commonwealth?

U.S. (again hesitating)—Yes, but he also only ultimately; what he wants first is the single tax.

B.J.—And you know Bob Freak?

U.S.—The chap who wants free coinage at the rate of 16 to 1?

B.J.—But doesn't he also want the Co-operative Commonwealth?

U.S.—He says so.

B.J.—Do you doubt him?

U.S.—Granted he means it; but he wants first of all a deluge of cheap money.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—Well, at any rate they are all agreed that we must have Socialism. Why don't the S.L.P. go with them? But no; it must be Socialism straight enough to fall over backward. I am disgusted.

U.S.—Who is there who would not like to live in a fine, large, noble-looking, spacious house?

B.J.—No one.

U.S.—Every one aims at that?

B.J.—Certainly, every one.

U.S.—And would you for that reason take any one to build such a house for you?

B.J.—Not much!

U.S.—You would take a man who knows architecture?

B.J.—Most assuredly.

U.S.—If you think some one is no architect, much though he may aim at a good house, you won't engage him?

B.J.—Not if I know myself.

U.S.—You realize that a fellow who does not know architecture may make a holy mess of the job?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—That being so, how can you, without kicking yourself, conclude that because a man wants the Co-operative Commonwealth ultimately, therefore he is fit to be intrusted with the conduct of a movement that has that object in view?

B.J. looks nonplussed.

U.S.—All these people whom you have mentioned may be all right in their time. But not unless you imagine their "first steps" are correct are they fit material now. Their first steps are not only not correct but positively bad—as bad as if it were proposed to put on a fifth floor material that was heavier than the walls below could stand. If the Prohibition tactics were adopted we would be butting a stone wall with our heads; if the single tax tactics were adopted the capitalist would have things much more his own way than now, and it would be harder to fight him; and the cheap money men's tactics would simply break down everything.

B.J.—I—

U.S.—Hold! It is additionally foolish on your part to admit that the aims that we proclaim are correct, and yet that we should go with movements that dare not proclaim our aims.

B.J.—I give in there. But I claim that the Socialists should not abuse those people; they should try and befriend them.

U.S.—In this you are right; but you are wrong if you imply that Socialists abuse these people. He who makes that assertion simply exercises his right to free speech, and free speech includes the right to talk nonsense. Socialists do, and it is their duty, to oppose and expose the dangerous economic theories of “reformers,” but rarely do you find any fake “reformer” answer with arguments. He feels he is beaten, and then he starts to abuse.

B.J.—Well, that is true, too; but that it is true is a very ominous sign. I fear we Socialists will in that way make too many enemies. I think for that reason it were best to leave all those reform movements alone without criticising them.

U.S.—There you do great injustice to many good men in those reform movements. The good men among them do not become enemies when they find their pet theories attacked and refuted. On the contrary, they become the staunchest of friends, and the only ones worth having. Those who do become enemies are fishy characters. Being such, they never will be with us. Whether their theories (they have no theories) are criticised or not, they, being of a venomous nature, will be more and more violent against the S.L.P. at every progress of ours and at every collapse they meet. I know several of that stripe. They will become Pinkertons, and fight the labor movement. They can't be hit too soon or too hard.

B.J.—Why, then, let them be cracked over the head.

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

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