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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {120}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN (in great glee)—That plan of Sovereign's is a capital one!

UNCLE SAM—Which do you mean? He has been grinding out "plans" at the rate of eight a week; to me each looks sillier than the other.

B.J.—I mean that plan of boycotting the national bank notes. As he says, well, that will "stick a dagger into the heart of the money power," and will "sharply draw the issue as in the struggle of Andrew Jackson with the old United States Bank."

U.S.—Tut, tut! Go to bed, young man!

B.J.—I won't.

U.S.—You ought to, and you should put cracked ice on your head. A man who talks like that needs all such precautions.

B.J. (seriously and concernedly)—Do you mean it?

U.S.—Yes, I do. If his other plans were silly, this one is the most all-around insane one he yet hatched out.

B.J.—In what way?

U.S.—In a number of ways:

First, read this statement: "National bank notes are legal tender between the National Government and the people, and between the banks and the people." Don't you see what a boycott of such legal tenders by individuals among themselves would amount to?

B.J.—No!



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U.S.—These banks notes are legal tender between the National Government and the people, and between the banks and the people; is that not so?

B.J.—Yes, Sovereign says so himself.

U.S.—It follows from that that if the National Government offers them to the people for payment in any shape the people MUST accept them.

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—And that if a check is presented to one of these banks and it offers these national bank notes in payment the holder of the check MUST accept them.

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—Now, don't you see that if the individuals were to boycott these bank notes among themselves they would be boycotting against the wrong man?

B.J. (striking his head)—By Jericho, that's so!

U.S.—Can you think of anything insaner than to imagine you could hurt a bank by boycotting in business what you are bound to accept from the bank itself?

B.J. (in evident distress)—You are right. It is very much like cutting one's own throat.

U.S.—Thus you perceive that that talk about “sticking a dagger into the money power” is hollow bombast.

B.J.—I do.

U.S.—But that is not all. Do you remember when Sovereign issued his bombastic call to the Knights to strike with Debs?

B.J.—I do. No one responded.

U.S.—The second bit of insanity on the part of this proposition is, accordingly, that it would tend to discredit Sovereign's own organization. People will come to think it is a purely paper concern.

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—The third bit of insanity consists in claiming that the issue is like that under Andrew Jackson.

B.J.—Well, isn't it?

U.S.—Not much! It is insane to imagine that the present troubles are the same as those sixty years ago. The man who does not know that is sixty years behind his times.

But there is still another bit of insanity in this proposition.

B.J. (despondently)—And I had thought it was so grand!

U.S.—Wages are low, are they not?

B.J.—Yes, indeed!

U.S.—Jobs are hard to get?

B.J.—Very.

U.S.—The workmen are pretty badly off?

B.J.—Quite so.

U.S.—Now, why don't they strike for higher wages, lower hours, etc.?

B.J.—Why, you must now be gone crazy. How could they strike? What good would it do them? Their places would be taken almost instantaneously by those who are wholly out of work.

U.S.—Correct. Now, just make an effort and try to think for a moment. What would you think of the man who would propose a boycott on national bank notes by workingmen who are glad if they get any wages at all?

B.J.—Oh, yes; that man is insane.

U.S.—Or what would you think of the man who does not consider this fact, and who to ride a stupid hobby would suggest so suicidal a course to the workers?

B.J.—I give it up.

U.S.—Now, you see what that “capital” plan you spoke of amounts to. You ought to be ashamed of yourself for even repeating it. You are no baby and no parrot. If others go crazy, you should have sense enough to keep cool.

B.J.—I should and I shall try to.

U.S.—Now, go straight home and put some ice on your head; stick your feet in a hot bath with mustard; roll yourself up in a blanket and go to bed.

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

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