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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {298}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN (with a look of much concern and resolution)—There is no help for it; we **MUST** have a revolution in this country; it is bound to come; look at the way the trolley strikers came off; don't you see clearly that a revolution is certain?

UNCLE SAM—Don't know about that; what I do know is that there will surely be no revolution until our working class knows what it is to fight for.

B.J.—I grant that.

U.S.—And then it won't need to fight; it will be able peaceably to get all it wants.

B.J. (somewhat startled)—How do you mean that?

U.S.—It is like this: The men who struck on the railway lines can't be said to have known what they wanted. If a man is hungry and looks for bread from a bramble-bush, he surely don't know what he wants. The strikers, still misled by labor fakirs, placed themselves in a contradictory position: they uphold with their ballots the social system that makes merchandise out of them, and at the same time they rebel against being treated as merchandise. The capitalist system of society turns the workers into merchandise; the workers, regularly at election, uphold that system by voting for the parties of Capital and downing the Socialist Labor Party's ticket, which is planted on the principle that the worker shall not be a merchandise. Now, the law of life utterly scorns contradictions. A class of people cannot put their foot into their mouth with the



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regularity of clockwork and expect deliverance. Our workers don't yet know what they want. The moment they do find out that they must overthrow the system of capitalism, then will they know what they want, and then, no revolution of the sort that you mean will be needed.

B.J.—And how will they get what they want, even then?

U.S.—How many of us are there to every one of those capitalists who live upon us?

B.J.—Well, 100 to 1.

U.S.—At the very least; 1,000 to 1 would be nearer it. Now then—

B.J.—Why, our thousands could grab their ones by the throat and choke them.

U.S.—Not necessary. Why that useless effort? When our workers know what they want no revolution of the “Choking” sort will be needed; all they will have to do will be to drown the capitalists at the ballot box under a flood of the S.L.P. ballots.

B.J.—And if the capitalists refuse to recognize the fiat of the ballot?

U.S. (holds his sides and roars aloud)—“Refuse,” did you say, “to recognize the fiat of the ballot?” Why, man, there again you are putting the cart before the horse. A revolution (such as you mean) now, will slaughter us; but when our fellow wage slaves shall know clearly what it is they need; when they shall, being intellectually clear, have the moral vigor to stand up for their rights; then, if the capitalist class does ignore the fiat of the ballot the forcible revolution will slaughter, not us, but them, because then we shall not stand in contradiction to ourselves, but they will stand in contradiction to the Spirit of the Age. Let them, if they dare.

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

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