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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {258}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—It does seem to me that you act very foolishly in bothering with Socialism.

UNCLE SAM—Why so?

B.J.—I'll tell you. If you were out of work and on your uppers, then I could understand your giving up time to Socialism; but you are not so situated. You and I have work; we might earn more, that's true; but I would leave well enough alone.

U.S.—So would I. But what we have is not well enough.

B.J.—We are not running into debt—

U.S.—Leave aside the matter of debt. Have you a lien on your job?

B.J.—Not exactly; but—

U.S.—But what?

B.J.—But the boss won't discharge us.

U.S.—You know how it was with John Jones?

B.J.—He was sacked.

U.S.—Was he a bad worker, lazy, drunken, or otherwise no good?

B.J.—No; he was all right.

U.S.—And despite that he one day was told to go. Why?

B.J.—There was no work.

U.S.—Under this capitalist system the worker gets a job only when the boss thinks he will get orders, or has them. If there are none, we are laid off. We may be lucky



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enough not to be laid off for a long time; but some day bad luck will strike us. Why?

B.J.—Why?

U.S.—Because this capitalist system is not run for the benefit of the people but for the benefit of the bosses. It matters not how much wealth we may have produced, if orders drop, out we are and must starve. Is it of no interest to us to pull down a house that threatens any day to fall together over our ears, and to establish one that will be safe to live in?

B.J.—In that sense it is.

U.S.—Differently from the capitalist system, the Socialist system would be to every man a guarantee against want.

Differently from the capitalist system, where the more we produce the greater is the danger of our being thrown out of work, the more we produce the more we would have.

Differently from the capitalist system, where, if more is produced than the people can buy, a panic is the result, under the Socialist system, if much more were on hand than could be used up, there would be a grand vacation.

Differently from the capitalist system, where every invention that turns up throws more men out of work and a proportional share of burden on the shoulders of all of us who are at work, the less labor is needed by a machine the fewer would be for the workers.

Finally, differently from now under capitalism, where we workers are wage-slaves, dependent for a living upon the will, whim and caprice of the capitalist we must depend for our welfare upon ourselves.

Is not that worth striving for?

B.J.—Well, you see that is all very good and true; but it is so far off.

U.S.—Even if the final goal of freedom were far off, that is no reason to throw it still further off by not working for it, eh?

B.J.—That's so.

U.S.—But however far the final goal may be, one thing is quite near, and that is our poverty and dependence, and the certainty that that will get worse all along. Will you deny that?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—So then if you have not spring enough in your mind to work for a high goal that seems far off; you should at least have sense enough to work to stem the troubles that are actually upon us. That's why I am not foolish for working for Socialism and you are for not doing so.

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