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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {208}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—Do you know what I think of the Socialists?

UNCLE SAM—No; what do you think of them?

B.J.—I'll tell you—a lot of rainbow chasers. The Co-operative Commonwealth is all very fine, no one will deny that. But we are not so far yet. It is well enough to extol the beauties of the ideal system, but in the presence of existing conditions—

U.S.—Yes—

B.J.—In the presence of existing conditions, when millions are suffering—

U.S.—Would you make them suffer more?

B.J.—No; but when millions are tortured by hunger pangs and driven to desperation and despair—

U.S.—Man alive, you are awfully long-winded; come to the point.

B.J.—I say that under such conditions, notwithstanding fabulous resources, something should be done NOW—

U.S.—Whether it can be done or not?

B.J.—We must do something NOW on the lines of common sense.

U.S.—Do you know that that tune is a very familiar one?

B.J.—Have you heard it before?

U.S.—Yes; and what's worse, others before me.

B.J.—Why "worse?"



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U.S.—It is the tune of the funeral march that has preceded and followed each and every time the wild goose schemes that have aimed at “improvement” and “reform,” and whose only result was to throw some more wreckages on the shores of time.

B.J.—This common sense demand?

U.S.—It is a tune taken from the repertory of the “pure and simple” union, from the repertory of the fake reform movement, and from the repertory of rascally politicians.

B.J.—But how can the getting of something now be a funeral song?

U.S.—Not the GETTING, but the PROMISE OF GETTING something now is. When a “pure and simple” labor leader is told that his union is a tub without a bottom, what is his answer? It is this: “I, too, want the millennium; but you can’t jump just now into the millennium; we want something NOW;” and forthwith, under the promise of getting something NOW he gets his rank and file to vote for the boss’s man, who, when elected, does give him something NOW, to wit, a cut down in wages and a dose of the rifle diet for dessert.

B.J.—Hem!

U.S.—When a heels-over-head reformer, who don’t know what Socialism is, who mistakes the form for the essence, and who is roped into some middle class Glasgow plan movement, is told that the wage slave is no wise improved by such schemes, forthwith comes the answer: “I, too, want the millennium; but you can’t jump just now into the millennium; we want something NOW;” and hoping to get something NOW, he places the wage slave in the hands of an improved capitalist concern, the capitalist State, which not only skins him economically, but oppresses him politically.

B.J.—Well, but—

U.S.—No “buts.” The path of absurd movements to improve the condition of the workers is marked with huge grave stones, each bearing the inscription: “Thinking I could get something NOW, I lost the opportunity of taking a step, however short, towards the day of my liberation; and the result is that I got NOTHING, and lost my opportunity to boot—Rainbow-chaser.

B.J.—Rainbow-chaser?

U.S.—Yes; or follower of a mirage. The man who, parched in the desert, sees

the mirage of a fresh well and would reach out his hands to that, and wear out his remaining strength in catching up to that, and would reject the advice of marching on steadily to his goal where alone he can find relief, is the picture of all such men as you who imagine you can get something now, follow that ghost, and abandon the straight road. The rainbow-chasing is a boot on the other leg. The Socialist is not the leg that wears it, but such light-headed reformers as yourself.

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

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