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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {245}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I have become positively proud of our Government. Of late I was beginning to feel inclined to look upon it as you Socialists do. But you are off. Likewise are you off in the opinion you hold of our capitalist class. It and the Government are not neglectful of the poor; least of all are they neglectful of our soldiers. See how unanimous is the feeling among them of indignation at the foul murder committed upon our marines by Spain in the harbor of Havana. Our Government and our capitalists are now, as they always have been, thoughtful of the weal and the honor of our soldiers.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

UNCLE SAM—"Always," is good indeed!

B.J.—Yes, ALWAYS. When were they not?

U.S.—How old are you?

B.J.—Sixty.

U.S.—Then you were a pretty big chunk of a laddie when our Civil war was on.

B.J.—I was.

U.S.—And you know all about it?

B.J.—I do; and right royally were our soldiers treated.

U.S.—Did you ever hear about the Legal Tender Act of '62?

B.J.—Don't remember that particularly.

U.S.—Well, this was the situation. The Greenback had depreciated greatly; so much

that it took \$2.85 in Greenbacks to buy what \$1 in coin did.

B.J.—What have we got to do with the money question? I thought you Socialists claim the money question has nothing to do with the Labor Question.

U.S.—And so it hasn't. But the conduct of our capitalists and their Government at that time throws some little light upon their attitude towards that part of the working class that was fighting the Union's battles.

Well, then, the Greenback was greatly depreciated; business was hurt thereby because of the insecurity of prices that accompanies such discrepancy in the purchasing power of current money. Thereupon the Legal Tender Act was passed—

B.J.—And did that hurt the soldiers' interests?

U.S.—It did, as you will see. By reason of this disparity, the Legal Tender Act provided that the credit notes, or the Greenbacks of the Government, were not to be legal tender in the payment of the interest on the United States bonds;—

B.J.—Now, again, I am less able to understand you. Don't you Socialists claim that money must have intrinsic value—

U.S.—Or be redeemable in intrinsic value; and we add that that is the pest that attaches to all money under the capitalist system;—

B.J.—Very well; then where is the wrong in legislating for a payment of debts with intrinsic value or coin?

U.S.—None whatever, provided they had legislated the Greenback clean out of its legal tender power. And herein lies the point. Our capitalist class and Government legislated the depreciated Greenback out of legal tender power ONLY in the interest of the capitalist class, and left the legal tender power sticking to that depreciated Greenback in all transactions where they were debtors themselves;—

B.J.—You don't say!

U.S.—Keep cool, because, if there is any feeling in you, you will be boiling hot before I get through with my story, and show you how these capitalists love our soldiers.

Well, then, by the Legal Tender Act payments due on the bonds had to be made in coin; most other payments could be made in Greenbacks.

The soldiers' salary was not a payment of interest on bonds; consequently the soldier could be and was paid, not in coin, but in Greenbacks.

The soldiers' pay was \$13 a month. But as he was paid in Greenbacks with a purchasing power that was at a discount of \$1.85, the soldiers did not get \$13, but only \$4.56—that being the purchasing power of the \$13 in Greenbacks that they got;—

B.J.—Thunder!

U.S.—Accordingly our “soldier-loving” capitalists protected themselves; they saw to it that when, in payment of the interest on their bonds they got a thing called ONE DOLLAR, that thing should not have the purchasing power of only about one-third of a dollar; they saw to it that by their law, every time they received thirteen things called dollars, those thirteen things should have the purchasing power of \$13, not the purchasing power of only \$4.56. But the soldier they left out in the cold.

B.J.—The divvil, you say!

U.S.—They protected themselves by law against the economic law of capital that reduced the purchasing power of the Greenback; but the soldier who was in the front, who was bleeding, dying, or undermining his health for life so as to keep up the very Government on whose existence the payments to those capitalists depended,—that soldier was left out in the cold. The “soldier-loving” capitalist, who stayed at home protected himself with the aid of the Government, but the soldier was left exposed to the working of that economic law.

B.J.—The divvil, I say again!

U.S.—And what is more, that soldier was doubly cheated. They pretended to pay him \$13 and gave him only \$4.56. Now, Sir, what say you to your theory about the Socialists being wrong?

B.J.—I drop it; I never knew that!

U.S.—So don't make a fool of yourself now. The capitalists and their Government live upon the working class like hyenas.

In time of peace, they live upon the working class in the shops, mills, factories, railroad yards, mines, etc.; skin them to the bones, and shoot them down if they dare “ask for more.”

In time of war they live upon the working class whom they enlist, or draft, or cajole into the ranks.

Whether in the soldier's uniform or the workman's blouse, the proletariat is used by

the capitalist class and its government as cattle. It cheats them right and left, passes laws in its own behalf; swindles them out of their pay; and uses their very misfortunes as a pretext for Pharisaic indignation on which to perpetrate some more swindle upon them.

That you were ready to be taken in by their false pretences shows only how effective their tactics of rascality are.

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