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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {194}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I'm going to join a 16 to 1 free coinage league.

UNCLE SAM—Why so?

B.J.—To get a law passed increasing the number of dollars.

U.S.—What good will that do you?

B.J.—The value of the dollar depends upon the number of dollars there are. The more dollars there are the cheaper they will be.

U.S.—That's stuff and nonsense. But even if that were so, what good would it do you?

B.J.—Can't you get more sugar for a given amount of money when the sugar is cheap than when it is dear?

U.S.—Certainly.

B.J.—So likewise you could get more dollars.

U.S.—For what, for a given amount of money?

B.J.—No, for a given amount of labor.

U.S.—Don't you yet know that the price of labor depends upon the supply of labor and the demand for labor.

B.J.—Why, certainly I know that.

U.S.—And haven't you yet learned that machinery and the concentration of capital are every day raising the supply above the demand, by wholesale displacements of labor?

B.J.—Why, of course, I know that. Am I not suffering of low wages? That's the very



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reason I wish and why I am so hot after more money.

U.S.—If you admit that the price of your labor is going down, then you must also admit that, even if the price of money depended upon what you say, and even if it were cheaper in case it were more plentiful, you would not be better off with free coinage than you are now. Let the dollar cheapen, if your labor cheapens along with it you remain with your nose to the grindstone.

B.J.—But I have had all that explained to me in a different way.

U.S.—Do you use your brains when someone explains a thing to you, or do you let anyone who comes by stuff you promiscuously?

B.J.—I don't mean to let them stuff me.

U.S.—Did you understand the explanation I just gave you?

B.J.—I did.

U.S.—Whenever a man approaches you with a proposition that is to benefit labor keep your eye, all your five senses centered on this one question: In what way will the proposition counteract the law of supply and demand? If it does not don't listen; the man is either a fool or a knave.

B.J.—But then we workers are doomed, the law of supply and demand is a natural law.

U.S.—Is it “natural” that your finger burn{s}?

B.J.—Yes, if it is in the fire.

U.S.—If you pull it out it becomes natural that it don't burn, eh?

B.J.—Just so—

U.S.—The law of supply and demand which reduces wages is a natural law under the capitalist system. Overthrow the capitalist system, and labor ceases to be a merchandise. Then supply and demand works differently. Either keep up capitalism, and submit to low wages; or knock it down and be free. There is no alternative.

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

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