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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {292}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN (confidentially)—I think you have some influence in the Socialist Labor Party—?

UNCLE SAM—Say I have.

B.J.—(more confidentially)—I thought so. Now, could you not use your good offices with the Party to induce it to modify its tactics—

U.S.—Hey!!

B.J.—I mean modify them for ITS own benefit. Now, don't misunderstand me. (With much unction.) I am not of those who denounce the S.L.P. No. I have a great admiration for it. It is simply superb. It stands upon the only sensible platform. It aims at the only solution that is a solution. And, as to its organization, it is a model of freedom coupled with the proper measure of discipline. (With increased unction.) And I admire the enthusiasm of its members; the zeal with which they agitate. No; don't put me down as an enemy, I am an admirer of the S.L.P.

U.S.—It being all that, why would you have us change it?

B.J.—I wouldn't have you change all that; all I suggest (scraping and bowing) is a slight modification of its tactics.

U.S.—Now, you have been beating around the bush long enough; what have you on your heart?

B.J.—You see (hemming and hawing) grand and superb though the S.L.P. is, it has a little defect—

U.S.—Which?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—Isn't it better to take half a loaf if you can't get the whole, and—

U.S.—You don't need to go any further. I have heard that tune before. It is cracked; it is doubly stale—

B.J.—But half a loaf—

U.S.—Your “half a loaf” theory is doubly stale, I said.

In the first place it is stale, as stale as the spilt lager beer on which {you} pay taxes, because it is but a repetition of an objection that takes no notice of our answer. To the objection that we don't take half a loaf, if we can't get a whole, we answer: “Not true; we would gladly take, not half a loaf, but a quarter, an eighth of a loaf, if we can't get the whole loaf; but what we do refuse to do is to accept even the whole thing, called a ‘loaf,’ but in fact nothing but a stone.” In other words, we refuse to be cheated: all the things presented to us as “half loaves,” are not loaves at all but hard, indigestible stones.

B.J.—Well—

U.S.—No “wells” here! Would you, if you can't get \$100, be satisfied with a \$50 counterfeit bill?

B.J. (staggering back)—No!

U.S.—Neither do we, and for the identical reason, {don't} accept your “half loaves”: they are counterfeits.

B.J.—Counterfeits?

U.S.—Yes; your “eight-hour bills”; your Glasgow municipalizations; your factory inspection bills; your charity bills; your free baths and lavatour bills; your reduced taxation bills; your free coinage bills; your anti-immigration bills; your Good Government bills; your. . . well, I won't go through the long and tedious list, the whole string of your “half loaves” consists of nothing but counterfeits. This we have claimed and proved. It is therefore stale for you to come back with the same “half a loaf” chestnut.

B.J.—Yes, but—

U.S.—In the second place, your “half a loaf” theory is stale because, after your having been at it for a generation, what have you to show for it? Nothing! Only failures upon failures.

B.J.—Failures?

U.S.—Yes and no.—YES, considering the workingmen in whose benefit you advance your stale theory; they have been getting it IN THE NECK—the whole loaf of capitalist tyranny, that’s all they have got, and nothing else.

But, in an other sense, your “half loaves” have, indeed, been no failures. The “half loaves” have been no failures TO THE POLITICAL AND LABOR FAKIRS WHO HAD THEM IN CHARGE. To these gentlemen the “half a loaf” theory always did bring little loaves; they, in the measure in which they succeeded in roping people in with them, managed to get the politicians to believe they had a following, and got jobs for their zeal.

B.J. begins to look decidedly uncomfortable and embarrassed.

U.S.—Now, Master Jonathan, look me in the eye (B.J.’s eyes wander to the left); look me in the eye, I say (B.J.’s eyes wander to the left {right?}); don’t you hear? I am neither to the right nor to the left of you, but in front; look me in the eye, I say (B.J. timorously faces U.S.); so. Now tell me, what job have you in mind for yourself in coming to me with this stale “half a loaf” theory? Which is the “half a loaf” that YOU want to bite into?

B.J. sneaks off scratching his head and muttering to himself: “Confound these Socialists; they haven’t eyes; what they do have in their heads is a Lick telescope, 400-horse power microscope and X-ray light combination that looks straight through and through one. Holy Smokes, how he did see through me!”

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