



DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {203}

By DANIEL DE LEON

**B**ROTHER JONATHAN—The rapacity of corporate wealth is something shocking.

UNCLE SAM—You may be right, and you may be wrong.

B.J.—Aren't these corporations veritable cormorants in rapacity?

U.S.—They are, and in so far you are right; but if you mean that private wealth needed for production is not rapacious so long as it is not "corporate," then you are wrong, and dangerously so.

B.J.—Why, look at these large corporations, and then look at a little straggling concern; can you say that these small fellows are "ravenous"?

U.S.—Most assuredly. And your question points out the danger of your error. See here. Did you see the cub tiger at the Zoo?

B.J.—I did.

U.S.—And did you see his dame?

B.J.—I did.

U.S.—You noticed, perhaps, that she was positively fierce.

B.J.—So she is.

U.S.—Now, what would you think of the man who came to you and said to you: "That big tiger is a ferocious brute, but the cub is a little darling."

B.J.—I would think that that man don't know that the cub is a baby tiger, that will surely, if given time, become a full grown one, and develop all the ferocity of its dame.



U.S.—And would you not perceive the danger of such an error?

B.J.—Yes; that error would be dangerous.

U.S.—In what way?

B.J.—Why, in this way. A man who labored under that error might bring up a tiger cub as he would a cat or a dog, expecting that it would become a good and pleasant domestic animal, and his blunder may turn out fatal to him; some fine day, the first thing he knows—

U.S.—He won't know anything, eh?

B.J.—Yes; his developed cub, the cub that he took care of, may eat him up.

U.S.—Just so. And just so it is with these little “straggling” concerns owned by private parties. They are like tiger cubs. If they were different from the large or “corporate” concerns, we would not now have any “corporate wealth” for you to weep about. Each of these “corporations” was once a “straggling” concern; and each grew into the precious thing it now is, obedient to the law that underlies the very existence of these innocent-looking “straggling” concerns. A tiger cub can not develop into a lap dog; it must develop into a rampant tiger; all that is essentially tigerish is in embryo in the cub; a cub is a small tiger, a tiger is a large cub. So it is with these “straggling” concerns, and these “corporations.” All that is essentially destructive of freedom and rapacious in “corporate wealth” is in embryo in the “straggling concern;” a “straggling concern” is a small “corporate wealth” affair, a “corporate wealth affair” is a full grown “straggling concern.” The enmity you have against one, you must have against the other, if you are intelligent.

B.J.—But what is that “essential” thing that the small concern has in common with the large one, and that makes them as much one as cubs and tigers are one?

U.S.—That essential thing is the private ownership of the means of production. Just as soon as one man owns a tool that another cannot produce, and that can produce more cheaply, that man can begin to dominate the other; when a third gets a still better tool, he in turn can dominate and oppress the former two. The present “straggling” concerns were as ferocious as any so long as nobody had better tools than they; now they suffer because others can do what they themselves once did. Drop the nonsensical talk against CORPORATE ownership of the tools of production. It is as silly to talk about “corporate

wealth" as to talk about "natural monopolies"; the private ownership of the machinery of production is the root of monopoly. All privately owned concerns can develop into a huge monopoly. If you allow yourself to be led against "corporate wealth" or "natural monopolies" you will be led astray. Guard against the danger.

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

Uploaded January 2008

[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)