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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM AND BROTHER JONATHAN. {327}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I hope that the next Congress will pass a mighty rigid anti-immigration bill.

UNCLE SAM—Enlighten me, if you will, upon your reasons for wishing that.

B.J.—I have many.

U.S.—Let's start with the first.

B.J.—The first is so clear that you, as a Socialist, will grant it forthwith: it is a direct deduction from Socialist principles.

U.S.—I have heard so many funny things advanced in the name of Socialism that I won't be surprised at your argument.

B.J.—Does not Socialism maintain that labor is a merchandise under the capitalist system?

U.S.—It does.

B.J.—And that, in the markets, the price of merchandise is determined by the supply and the demand for the merchandise?

U.S.—Correct again.

B.J.—And that, therefore, the price of Labor, that is, the wages of the workingmen, depends upon the supply and the demand for labor.

U.S.—Just so.

B.J.—Now, then, does it not follow that the more labor there is on the market the lower must be the price of labor, or the wages of the workingman?

U.S.—Correct again.

B.J.—I told you so, you would be bound to admit that immigration must be stopped.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—I certainly have not yet done so.

B.J.—But you will. Does not immigration increase the supply of labor?

U.S.—Say it does.

B.J.—That is all I need. Whoever admits that the wages of the workingman must go down if the supply of labor increases, must grant that immigration, which does increase the supply of labor, must lower wages. You must consequently admit that we need anti-immigration laws.

U.S.—I don't.

B.J.—But—

U.S.—Let me now have my innings. A hogshead seven feet high would be taller than you, eh?

B.J.—Guess so; I am only five feet six inches.

U.S.—Suppose I put you into such a vat and pour in water from above. If I filled it all up, what would become of you?

B.J.—I would drown.

U.S.—What would you do before you drowned?

B.J.—I would try to keep the water from pouring in.

U.S.—You would try to restrict the immigration of water from above?

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—Now, suppose the water is already twelve inches higher than your head, what good would it do you to prevent more from coming in? Enough is in to drown you. Say that you succeed in keeping me from pouring in six more inches of water, would that save you from becoming a chubby angel in heaven, playing on a golden harp?

B.J.—Well, no.

U.S.—Have we now a larger supply of labor than we can stand?

B.J.—Yes. There are least 5,000,000 superfluous workers in the land.

U.S.—And the result is?

B.J.—That our wages are low; they are starvation wages.

U.S.—Correct. Now, will you deny, that it is as stupid to prevent immigration now, as an aid to higher wages as it is to prevent the immigration of more water into a tank in which the water is already a foot over your head?

B.J.—But, damn it! What would you have me do?

U.S.—What would you do if you were in that tank?

B.J.—Kick it to pieces.

U.S.—And that is just what Socialists tell you to do with the tank of the social system in which surplus labor is now drowning you. Kick it to pieces. That's the only salvation. Kick the capitalist system to pieces by voting for the Socialist Commonwealth. Only then does labor cease to be a merchandise and, consequently, only then does the question of immigration and such questions, that are silly to-day, silly as I just showed you, lose all significance. Just because labor is a merchandise to-day, the Socialist wastes no time on questions like that of immigration. Let's conquer Congress, and thereby kick to pieces the capitalist tank.

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