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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {126}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—Did you ever feel as though you could throttle a man?

UNCLE SAM—I dare say; some men inspire that feeling.

B.J.—Well, that is the way I feel about the landlord. Such a parasite I would like to throttle.

U.S.—Do you know that the vampire carries fleas and lice upon his body?

B.J.—I do.

U.S.—They are parasites, are they not?

B.J.—Guess so.

U.S.—What would you think of the man who would feel like throttling the fleas and lice that feed on the vampire and would let the vampire quietly suck the blood of a man?

B.J. (*angrily*)—He—

U.S.—Now be careful, you are about to describe yourself, and—

B.J. (*with vehemence*)—I am not about to describe myself. That's not my case. Such a man were an ass. But I want to do away with the biggest parasite of all, the real vampire.

U.S.—And you take the landlord to be that?

B.J.—Yes!

U.S.—And not the capitalist?

B.J.—No!

U.S.—Well you are off. You've got things turned upside down, like the regular



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

noodle that you are.

B.J.—Noodle! Noodle!

U.S.—Yes, twice noodle.

B.J.—Does not the landlord take rent from the workingman?

U.S.—He does.

B.J.—And does he not take rent from the capitalist?

U.S.—In that question you reveal your noodleism in still stronger light.

B.J.—I do declare!

U.S.—And so do I. See here. Labor produces all wealth. The landlord gets his rent paid in wealth, in the products of labor or that which will purchase those products?

B.J.—That's just it.

U.S.—Now, under this existing capitalist system, can the workingman work without the capitalist allows him to?

B.J.—It is not the capitalist's permission he needs to work, it is the landlord's, who deprives him of access to natural opportunities.

U.S. (*breaking out into a roar*)—Why, man, you are much more of a tom-noodle than I thought, for you are a single taxer!

B.J.—Care not what you call me. 'Tis the landlord who keeps the workers from natural opportunities, and who fleeces them of their product. He is THE vampire.

U.S.—Have you ever read about farmers who were sold out for their mortgage?

B.J.—Lots of them.

U.S.—Were they not landlords?

B.J. (*hesitatingly*)—Y—e—s.

U.S.—And why were they sold out and turned paupers?

B.J.—Because they could not pay the interest on their mortgage.

U.S.—And why did they raise that mortgage on their land?

B.J. (*begins to drop his jaw*)

U.S.—And why could they not pay it off or the interest on it?

B.J. looks blank.

U.S.—You are at the end of your single tax tether. Now let me tell you. They raised the mortgage because, landlords tho' they were, they could not make the two ends meet;

they could not make the two ends meet at that time because the products which once fetched them enough money to make the two ends meet, did not later fetch as high but much lower prices; and their products fetched such lower prices and were unable to fetch the former higher ones because other people were producing such products with more and better capital. These other people could afford cotton picking machines, steam plows, threshers and binders, etc.; they could therefore produce so much more and so much quicker; that lowered the exchange value of those products in general. The large capitalist farmers could afford to sell so much cheaper having so much more to sell; the small capitalless farmer could not. Catch on?

B.J. (*whose eyes had been opening wide*)—I follow.

U.S.—Thus unable to make the two ends meet because he had no capital, the small farmer raised a loan on his little patch of land. But that loan was not large enough to enable him to compete with the big capitalist farmer; he did not have land enough for a larger loan; if before the superadded load of the mortgage he was a ruined man, with that load he broke down. Landlord though he was, he was killed by the capital of the bigger fellow.

B.J.—I don't know whether I stand on my head or my feet.

U.S.—Neither do any of those who talk like you. These smoked out farmers, or landlords, had possession of “natural opportunities,” all the “natural opportunities” that they could want, eh?

B.J.—Yep.

U.S.—And yet they were driven off?

B.J.—Yep.

U.S.—What was it that drove them away?

B.J. (*with a bright look*)—The lack of capital!

U.S.—As you understand that now, you will perceive that he who has no capital, i.e., “social opportunities” to operate upon “natural opportunities” can't work. Having seen that fact you must admit that he who owns capital holds the key to the access to “natural opportunities.”

B.J.—He does! He does by Jericho!

U.S.—Consequently, I was right when you contradicted me when I said that under

the existing system, the capitalist system, the workingman could not work unless the capitalist allowed him?

B.J.—You were. I see it clearly. But—

U.S.—Hallo! a “but”?

B.J.—Yes. But still you must admit the truth of what I said when we started that the landlord skins the workers.

U.S.—I don’t deny that. On the contrary. As a level headed Socialist I recognize that the landlord is a parasite, but not the leading one. I want to abolish that parasite, but the only way to do that is to abolish along with him the vampire capitalist on whom he is a parasite.

B.J.—I don’t quite see that.

U.S.—See here. You realize that without the consent of the capitalist the worker can’t work?

B.J.—I do.

U.S.—It follows that the capitalists will not consent to let the worker work unless he is willing to let the capitalists have a share of his product?

B.J.—Yes. But the landlord steals from the worker part of his wages, part of what the capitalist allows the worker to keep.

U.S.—That statement implies a serious error. The capitalist needs the worker. True the worker, with his empty stomach cannot stand out long against the capitalist, but the capitalist can’t afford to let the worker die. Consequently, all that the worker needs to live he must be allowed to keep as wages. He needs rent for the landlord, hence he must be allowed to keep enough of his own products as wages to satisfy the landlord. It follows that, under the capitalist system, the landlord does not steal from the worker, he steals from the capitalist who employs the worker—

B.J. (*striking his head*)—I begin to see a light.

U.S.—If the landlord did not demand rent from the worker, the worker would have less expenses; his wages would be proportionally less; and consequently, the quantity of the worker’s product which the capitalist appropriates as profits would be larger. You see then, that, under the capitalist system, the landlord is a parasite on the big vampire, the capitalist, who directly sucks the blood from the worker, and that he shares with the

landlord the spoils he carries off from labor.

B.J.—I now see it clearly. And I see an other thing too.

U.S.—What?

B.J.—That it would not do a particle of good if the landlord were thrown off our necks so long as that capitalist rides us.

U.S.—You got it now!

B.J.—The only difference would be that the capitalist alone would keep all the fleecings which he takes from the workers and which he now must share with the landlord!

U.S.—I now raise from you the badge of tomnoodleism. You have caught the right idea, an idea which is perfectly simple but which the dyed in the wool single taxer is unable to grasp. It is a plain principle of reasoning from unquestionable economic facts: If a lion and a tiger daily capture a lamb, and the lion takes $\frac{3}{4}$ of it and the tiger $\frac{1}{4}$, then, if you kill the lion, the tiger will take all the $\frac{4}{4}$; he is not going to leave the $\frac{3}{4}$ that the lion used to take. The single taxers, who look upon landlordism as upon a lion, imagine that, if you kill the lion, the tiger will keep to his $\frac{1}{4}$. Common sense and science tell us that the tiger of capitalism would, were the lion of landlordism to be disposed of, take from labor all that he took before besides what he used to have to share with the landlord.

B.J.—That is quite plain.

U.S.—And there is another thing that is quite plain. The capitalists show in nothing the vein of stupidity that runs through them so clearly as when they fight single taxism. If they had any sense they would all be rabid single taxers. I know of but few capitalists who have sense enough to perceive that; Tearful Tommy Shearman and Tom Johnson are among these bright capitalists who want the single tax so as to keep to themselves all the wealth which they fleece the workers of but which they now must share with another fleecer of labor, the landlord.

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