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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {313}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—Do you know anything about the Socialists and Socialism?

UNCLE SAM—Some.

B.J.—Well, I think they ought to be strung up by the heels. Don't you?

U.S. (*jumping back, startled*)—Why? How you talk!

B.J. (*puckering up his brows and looking very tragic*)—Why? I'll tell ye why. Because their program would tear up society by the roots; it would bust up the family; it would deprive man of all incentive to provide for and raise his children—

U.S.—Why, that WOULD be very dreadful. But how do you make all that out?

B.J.—I'll explain it to you. I got it straight from a College Professor—

U.S. *bursts out laughing.*

B.J.—You will laugh the wrong side of your mouth if you listen to me. That College Professor explained that under Socialism, if you and I owned a railroad, for instance,—

U.S.—The devil take your instance! Do you and I own any railroads?

B.J.—No; but listen. If we did; supposing we did, that railroad would become common property. The now owners would have to pay their fare as well as others; they could not live on its income; and—

U.S.—Well, what of that?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J. (*impatiently*)—Just wait, can't you? The worst is yet to come.

U.S.—May the heavens have mercy!

B.J.—Yes; there is worse coming. If the capital that a father gathers is not sure to go to his children, but is sure to be taken away from them, what incentive would there be to work? Such a plan is heinous! It is dastardly!! It is criminal!!! (*Almost suffocating.*) It is—it is—it is utterly un-American!!!! (*Mops the sweat off his brow.*)

U.S. (*looks him over meditatively*)—Guess I understand you.

B.J.—You do?

U.S.—Yes. Your point is that Socialism would interfere with inheritance.

B.J.—That's it!

U.S.—That what a father has gathered to himself belongs to his children, after he is dead.

B.J.—That's what I mean.

U.S.—And to his children's children?

B.J.—Down to the last generation.

U.S.—And that the taking of any such thing away from such children is so heinous, dastardly and criminal as to be utterly un-American.

B.J.—Absolutely un-American, and not to be tolerated!

U.S.—Was Washington an American?

B.J.—A grand specimen of one!

U.S.—And Franklin?

B.J.—Oh, he was American with a vengeance!

U.S.—And Jefferson?

B.J.—There was a pink of Americanism.

U.S.—What they did, was that good or bad? American or un-American.

B.J.—Their conduct was animated by the truest American sentiments of right and justice.

U.S.—So say I. Well, these three and all our Revolutionary Fathers did that very thing that you are condemning as “heinous,” “dastardly,” “criminal,” in short, “un-American.”

B.J.—(*flaring up*)—Not much, they didn't!

U.S.—Didn't King George own these colonies?

B.J.—What of it? Yes.

U.S.—Hadn't he inherited them from his ancestors, and hadn't these grabbed this territory and virtually pocketed and run it to suit themselves.

B.J.—Y-e-s—

U.S.—Well, if it is “heinous,” “dastardly,” “criminal” and “un-American” to prevent that which a father owns from passing to his children so that they can enjoy it, then it certainly was heinous as heinous could be, dastardly and criminal as dastardly and criminal could be, in short, as utterly un-American as un-American could be, to deprive King George of what had been handed down to him by his ancestors, and keeping his offspring from it. Now, then, my fatty, on which horn of the dilemma will you impale yourself? Were our Revolutionary Fathers un-American, or is Socialism American up to the handle? Which?

B.J. (*throws up his arms with an impatient and deprecating gesture*)—That's just like you. Always giving a twist to the discussion so as to make a fellow look ridiculous to himself—

U.S.—Glad you feel that way.

B.J.—But for all that, your comparison does not hold. The two cases are not alike. King George tried to misuse his inheritance. He tried to tyrannize us by virtue of the ownership of that which his father had left to him. Under such circumstances, one has a right, one has a duty, to yank that inheritance out of his hands.

U.S.—You now amend your original proposition. Originally it was a sweeping condemnation as un-American of the act of depriving people of what their fathers held; now the proposition reads that such an act is un-American only when the property is not wrongfully used, but that if the property is wrongfully used, it is the height of Americanism for those who suffer thereby to yank it from the rascal.

B.J.—I'll accept it that way.

U.S.—And I shall now show you that the capital which capitalist fathers hold is used by them to tyrannize our people worse than King George did.

B.J.—It is?

U.S.—Have you any capital?

B.J.—Nixy.

U.S.—But you have a stomach and your wife and your children too; and these must

be filled.

B.J. (*sadly shaking his head*)—And my wages don't enable me to do it.

U.S.—And yet you have arms and skill. Why don't you go ahead and produce shoes for yourself instead of for your employer?

B.J.—Because I have no capital. I can't work without the machinery now needed to make shoes.

U.S.—And do you keep all the shoes that you produce or their value?

B.J.—You disgust me! Why, no; I don't keep the value of one shoe out of every four that I turn out.

U.S.—Are you robbed out of three-fourths of your product?

B.J.—That's about the size of it.

U.S.—And do you like to be robbed, or do you feel constrained to submit to such robbery, and be kept dependent upon your employer by virtue of his very ownership of what he either got from his father, or gathered himself, and would like to transmit to his children?

B.J. *makes a motion with his right leg as tho' he were kicking at something.*

U.S.—That College Professor whom you heard libeling Socialism so as to deceive the people may one of these days be himself the one to be strung up, the same as the traitor Tories, who tried to spy on the Revolutionary Army, were strung up by Washington. As then, the property that King George owned had to be yanked out of his clutches or our people would have become his slaves; so to-day, the capital held by the Capitalist Class must be yanked out of theirs or we the workers, the overwhelming majority, will become cooley {coolie?} slaves. Socialism is the most legitimate child of Americanism.

B.J. *gives another kick in the air.*

U.S.—What is that you are kicking at?

B.J.—At that traitor Tory College Professor.

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

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