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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {215}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I heard last evening a beautiful Socialist speech; it must have made hundreds, if not thousands of Socialists. I tell you, that Professor Jehoshaphat is a great Socialist.

Uncle Sam coughs.

B.J. (pricking up his ears)—Why do you cough?!

U.S.—Well, if you are very anxious, I'll tell you—

B.J. (snappishly)—I am anxious.

U.S.—I coughed because I tried to swallow down a laugh. It makes me laugh to think of the Prof. Jehoshaphat as a Socialist, and it makes me laugh still more to think of him in the capacity of a teacher of Socialism. Now you know why I laugh.

B.J.—Oh, if you had only heard him!

U.S.—Well, what did he say?

B.J.—He actually made the people weep.

U.S.—How?

B.J.—Describing the misery of the working people. You should have heard how touchingly he portrayed the sufferings of the working women, the privations of the children in the factories, the exposure of the men on the railroads and the mines, the gloom of the tenement house. Oh, I tell you it was grand. I almost wept, myself. It is the grandest Socialist speech I ever heard.

U.S.—And was {that} all he said in that vein?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—Yes; is not that enough?

U.S.—All of his speech a description of the general want?

B.J.—Why, yes; is not that Socialism enough?

U.S.—And that sort of talk you say teaches Socialism?

B.J. (impatiently)—I don't suppose you are satisfied yet!

U.S.—When, the other day, you had the toothache and were all doubled up, and were moaning and groaning, you were in great pain, weren't you?

B.J.—Should think I was; don't remind me of it.

U.S.—Now, suppose your wife had gone to the doctor's with the news that you were in pain, could she have returned with the right prescription?

B.J.—Why, no.

U.S.—You might have had a pain in the head, which might have needed cracked ice there, eh?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—Or you may have had a pain in your belly, which may have needed a purge, eh?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—Or you may have had a pain on your toe, which may have needed a corn extractor, eh!

B.J.—Sure.

U.S.—In all these cases you would have been in misery, eh?

B.J.—Certainly.

U.S.—Would the knowledge of your being in pain and misery have been enough information to give you relief?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—A patient's pain is not enough to determine the remedy. So with society.

B.J.—With society?

U.S.—The existence of misery in society is not sufficient premises from which to conclude that Socialism must follow. It matters not how pinched a man may be, that is not enough to teach him economics and Social science. His pitiful condition may be the right condition to make him listen to sense, but it does not of itself supply the sense. All

the calamity howling that you may muster up does not explain why Socialism and not Greenbackism, why Socialism and not Free Trade, why Socialism and not Free Love, etc., etc., must come. These calamity howlers who go about sticking, so to speak, their fingers into the sores of the people and making them realize their sufferings all the deeper, and do not explain why the people suffer, do not teach Socialism. They may, on the contrary, impede the teaching of Socialism by making the hearers so torpid or prurient, and accustoming them to hear long speeches, which they need no effort to understand, that the hearers will dislike to hear addresses that require them to think.

B.J.—Prof. Jehoshaphat's speech was so sweet all the way through and easy to understand that it flowed—

U.S.—Like water out of a jar or {off a} duck's back, and did the people no good. Surely if he knew Socialism he would take some of his time to explain it. He would have shown that, under this capitalist system the workingman is no better than any other merchandise; that machinery lowers the price of goods by increasing their plentifulness and the productivity of labor; that wages, or the share of labor's product that labor is allowed to keep, must become ever smaller; that without the ownership of the machinery of production, labor can not arrest its decline; that, to get possession of that machinery, labor must conquer the public powers upon the Socialist platform. This and all such things he would have explained, and would then have talked to a purpose. But such addresses are more difficult to deliver than to reel off phrases; the audience is not as appreciative, applause is not as frequent. For this reason your Jehoshaphats don't deliver them. Go away with your loquacious orator.

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

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