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DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM AND BROTHER JONATHAN. {366}

By DANIEL DE LEON

**B**ROTHER JONATHAN—You have always mistrusted me.

UNCLE SAM—So I have.

B.J.—The single fact that I am a capitalist, that I employ labor has always made you turn a deaf ear to all my labor loving suggestions.

U.S.—There you err. It is not the mere fact of your being a capitalist that has made me copper your suggestions in behalf of my fellow workingmen, but the fact that your suggestions were always capitalist suggestions, cloaked over with seeming love for labor.

B.J.—That's what you have always said. You were always wrong in doing so. But I won't feel discouraged. I hope to succeed at last in convincing you of my good intentions. I'm going to try it once more.

U.S.—You surely want something of me. Suppose you begin with that.

B.J.—Yes; I want you to exercise your influence with your Union—

U.S. makes an impatient gesture.

B.J.—Listen!

U.S.—I'm listening.

B.J.—Let me first explain. The nation has no merchant marine worth mentioning. It ought to have the largest merchant marine of all nations. Do you agree so far?

U.S.—I do.

B.J.—I shall not, then, go into any elaborate explanation of why we should have



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the largest merchant marine of all. I shall only incidentally say that it would do an immense amount of good to the working people—

U.S.—There I disagree!

B.J.—Well, suppose we drop that. You are agreed that we should have a large merchant marine—

U.S.—I am.

B.J.—We won't go into the reasons, we shall pass that, seeing we are agreed that we should have a large merchant marine. Now, we can't get a large merchant marine for the simple reason that our ships can't compete with foreign ships.

U.S.—Why can't they?

B.J.—Because it costs more to run and build an American ship than a European one. The additional cost is due to higher wages in the shipyard, higher wages on shipboard, and better living for the crew.

U.S.—Suppose that's so.

B.J.—That being so, our government should step in and give help.

U.S.—I don't object to that.

B.J.—Good. Now, what I want you to do is to get all the Unions you can to pass a resolution to that effect.

U.S.—What effect?

B.J.—That it is the Government's duty to help our merchant marine.

U.S.—Nothing more? Shan't we say how?

B.J.—Oh, yes; by passing the Ship Subsidy bill.

U.S. (looking very innocent)—What does that bill provide?

B.J.—It provides for subsidies to recoup the American ship owners for the increased cost of building and running an American ship.

U.S.—No. Sir! There you have the old dodge again: Under the pretext of "helping the American workingman," the American capitalist is to be subsidized. It is the old, old story, help the fleecer and leave the fleeced exposed. And that you call promoting the Nation's welfare!

B.J.—Don't blame me so quick. I do mean to help the workingman and promote the Nation's welfare.

U.S.—You do?

B.J.—I do.

U.S.—Very well, Sir; I'll put you to the test on the spot. You love the Nation?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—You love the workingmen?

B.J. (putting both his hands to his breast)—Yes.

U.S.—Both Nation and workingmen would be benefitted, greatly benefitted, by a large and larger merchant marine?

B.J.—Greatly; tremendously!

U.S.—What keeps away this great benefit is our present inability to compete with foreign ships?

B.J.—That's it.

U.S.—And what so disables us is the cheap labor of foreign countries?

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—The higher wages that the masters pay in the shipyards, the higher wages they pay on shipboard, and the better living of the crew?

B.J.—You got it down fine.

U.S.—Now, then, if it is really the Nation and the workingmen whom you love so much, and not the capitalists, at the expense of both Nation and workingmen, let your Chambers of Commerce and other capitalist organizations immediately order (I promise you the Unions will follow suit at the double quick), that a bill be forthwith introduced to the effect that the Government shall pay to all the workingmen in our shipyards and on our ships the difference between their wages and the lower wages of the workingmen abroad, and on foreign ships. Agreed?

B.J.—That would never do!

U.S.—'Course not! And that nails you! In the bill I propose, the workingmen would get the benefit of the subsidy. By the bill that you propose, you capitalists would swipe it all in, because, as a matter of fact, all this talk about it costing so much more to build a ship here is just so much mendacity. American labor is the cheapest, inasmuch as much more work is squeezed out of us here than out of our brothers abroad. Go, Sir, and try to rope in others: you can't rope in me: your Ship Subsidy bill is a bill intended to loot the Treasury for the benefit of you capitalist ship owners and builders, who, together with the other capitalists, are now looting

the Nation by looting its workingmen. And so are all your other bills for that matter. Scoot!

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