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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {100–101}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—It almost sounds like cruelty to say “I told you so,” now that the strike is lost. But I did tell you so—when you were hurrahing two weeks ago.

BROTHER JONATHAN—And yet I claim the strike is not lost.

U.S.—What!

B.J.—In one way I know it is, and that is the way you are thinking about. But in another it is not.

U.S.—Which other, oh you saturnine fatty?

B.J. (patting his thick belly complacently)—I claim no strike is wholly lost. It always teaches a lesson. That lesson is so much gained.

U.S.—If you mean that these strikers, and through them all the other workers, have thereby learned the lesson that “pure and simpledom” is stupid, that the union man who votes any other than the Socialist Labor party ticket is cutting his own throat; that the new trade union organization is the only sane one—if you mean that this lesson has at last been learned, then it is to be hoped you are right.

B.J.—Exactly. The strike makes people think.

U.S.—Not necessarily; if it did there would not be left in the land since 1886 one single pure and simple union.

B.J.—No?

U.S.—You see, this thing of “making people think” is all right enough if it does make people think. But if these strikers remain in the hands of “pure and simplers” they will be told that the strike was lost because the present Mayor of Brooklyn is a Dutchman.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

Next time they go in again and lose once more, and then they are “made to think” that they lost because the Mayor is an Irishman. Again they go in, and lose again, and are “made to think” that their misfortune comes from the circumstance that the weather was too good, or too bad. I tell you what, the capitalists like nothing better than this “making the people think” in a way that will take them from pillar to post, wear them out, and give the capitalists a chance to intrench themselves stronger and stronger in power, while the workers become more wretched at every “lesson” they receive. There is only one way of teaching the people to think, and that is by showing up the contemptible labor leaders who are deceiving them, and pointing out to them in clear language the path they should pursue.

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BROTHER JONATHAN sobbing and trying to speak.

UNCLE SAM—What’s up?

B.J. makes an effort to talk, but breaks down.

U.S.—Come, come, it can’t be as bad as all that?

B.J.—Jer-r-r—r-r-r— (sobs). Jer-r-r— (sobs and breaks down again).

U.S.—Anything the matter with your friend, Archibald?

B.J. (sobs out loud, and almost gets into hysterics)—Yes—he—h—(the sobs smother his words).

U.S. (with a look of deep concern)—Has Sullivan again taken him in hand?

B.J.—No (sobs); worse than that! (A whole string of sobs.)

U.S.—Worse yet? Come on, relieve my anxiety.

B.J. (after making a strong effort to speak, the tears streaming down his cheeks)—Don’t you know he applied three years ago for the post of Commissioner of Immigration?

U.S.—Yes, but he didn’t get it.

B.J. (almost breaking down again)—Then he applied for a deputyship (sobs).

U.S.—But that wicked Cleveland wouldn’t listen to the proposal.

B.J.—Just so. Then he joined the reform forces last Fall and was out for Mayor Strong, and—(here Brother Jonathan breaks down completely and has to be revived by Uncle Sam holding to his nose a bottle of Jamaica run. Thus restored, he proceeds) and

when Strong got elected he doubted not he would get a fat job.

U.S.—And was he once more disappointed?

B.J.—Now listen to my tale of woe, but first give me a sip out of that bottle. (The sip being taken, he proceeds.) He applied to Strong for a judgeship.

U.S.—And got it?

B.J. (the signs of a collapse again appearing)—No! He then applied for a court clerkship—

U.S.—Well?

B.J.—And that was refused (increased signs of a recurring collapse). Then he applied for a courthouse janitorship—

U.S.—And?

B.J. (through heavy sobs and tears)—And that was refused him.

U.S.—And?

B.J.—And then he applied for the place of courthouse scrub woman—

U.S.—He got that surely?

B.J.—No; even that was refused to him!

Uncle Sam and Brother Jonathan fall on each other's necks and are convulsed in sobs for fourteen minutes and fifty-eight seconds by the City Hall clock.

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

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