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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {191}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—This voting business is stupid.

UNCLE SAM—And what is sensible?

B.J.—The organizing of the working people into armies to do some shooting. The time for ballots is gone; the time for bullets is on.

U.S.—Have you dropped the blue glass fad, and taken to the bullet fad?

B.J.—Call it a fad as much as you please; fact is that slaves have never yet freed themselves.

U.S.—And whom is it you want to organize into bullet brigades?

B.J.—The working people.

U.S.—For what purpose?

B.J.—To free themselves.

U.S.—And isn't it these very working people whom you consider slaves?

B.J.—What else are they?

U.S.—Accordingly, what you propose to do is to take these slaves, who you say can't free themselves, and organize them into bullet brigades to do what? Why, to free themselves! You start with the theory that they, being slaves, can't free themselves, and you wind up with the plan to organize them for them to free themselves. Don't you realize that you have put both your feet into your mouth?

B.J.—What I meant was that slaves never yet have VOTED themselves into freedom, they can free themselves only with the bullet.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—Where did you get this notion from?

B.J. (pompously)—From history and from reasoning. Reasoning tells me that slaves have not sense enough to vote right; and history confirms the theory.

U.S.—Let's take up your "reasoning" first. The brain must direct man's action, eh?

B.J.—That's just it. You got it now.

U.S.—Can a brainless man shoot right?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—Consequently, your "reasoning" amounts to this: "the wage slaves have no brains; therefore they can't give the right direction to their ballots; bullets must be shot as straight as ballots; brains are as necessary to do this as to vote; the brainless wage slave has brains to shoot right." How do ye like it?

B.J. looks sick.

U.S.—I won't insist on an answer from you. It must be hard for a man to speak when one of his feet is in his mouth and is choking him. Now I'll take up your history.

B.J.—My history is all right.

U.S.—We'll see about that.

B.J.—Yes we will. Did not the Roundheads shoot down Charles I.'s soldiers at Marston Moor?

U.S.—Yes. But before they did that did they not elect themselves to Parliament?

B.J.—Guess they did, by Jericho!

U.S.—Having had the necessary brains to give the right direction to their ballots by voting their foe down, they had also the necessary brains to give the right direction to their bullets by shooting their foe down when he took up arms.

B.J.—But, in the French Revolution it was otherwise. Didn't they grab the nobility by the throat and guillotine them?

U.S.—They did so. But before they did, didn't the then slave class, the bourgeoisie, elect their men to the Third Estate and take possession of the nation?

B.J.—Damn it; they did!

U.S.—There also you find that the slaves first proved their brain-power by voting right, and afterwards, of course, when it became necessary to fight, they had the requisite brain to fight right.

B.J.—Well, but right here among us, didn't we have to fight 4 years to free the negro?

U.S.—We did, but before we started in to fight, did we not vote straight by electing Lincoln?

B.J. bites his lips.

U.S.—In short, your history is as muddled up as your "reasoning," and there goes your other foot into your mouth.

Historically it is untrue, theoretically it is false that those who have not brains enough to use the ballot, when they have it, will suddenly have brains enough to use the bullet. What history and science do teach is that slaves can not free themselves so long as they do not know who and what is the tyrant. That is the point of importance. The method is secondary. Where there is no ballot to fight with, of course, the bullet is the first and last resort. But regardless of these, not unless the slave has a distinct idea of what it is that oppresses him can he act intelligently and emancipate himself. The bulk of the wage slaves in America to-day do not know who the real tyrant is, and they are fighting his shadow. To fight goldbugs, or Trusts, or landlords and all such to-day and uphold Capitalism, believing them to be the tyrants, is like if the Revolutionary Fathers had taken the Colonial Governors for the tyrants and had upheld King George. The tyrant at that time was British rule; the tyrant to-day is Capitalism. When the wage slaves of America shall have discovered that, then will they be possessed of the requisite intelligence to free themselves; when they shall have reached that degree of intelligence, they will not be the fools to fight first, seeing they have the ballot, and, being in the overwhelming majority, can swamp their adversaries at the hustings. This is reasoning and this is history. And upon these facts the political method is the only available one: it educates while it strikes, and it organizes for the bullet brigade, should that ever become necessary, by organizing the ballot army. Jonathan, go soak your head.

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

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