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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {167}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—To me it is very clear that the Socialist programme will go to smash against the moral sense of the American people.

UNCLE SAM—Inasmuch as to which?

B.J.—Inasmuch as the moral sense of the American people will revolt against the idea of confiscation.

U.S.—Confiscation? For instance.

B.J.—The Socialists will, for instance, tell you point blank that they mean to appropriate the railroads without indemnifying their owners.

U.S.—Supposing they did!

B.J.—That is a confiscation, and confiscation is an immoral act, and no moral people like the American would countenance such a thing.

U.S. (after a pause)—What is the name of the Austrian village in which you were born?

B.J. (indignant)—Austrian village! I was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and you know it!

U.S.—Oh, I mean your father, in what Austrian village was he born?

B.J.—My father was born in Boston, sir, near to Boston Common.

U.S.—Oho! Well then it was your mother. What Austrian village does she hail from?

B.J. (very indignant)—Do you call Lynn an “Austrian village”? You know very well she was born in Lynn.



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U.S. (affecting embarrassment)—Well—I mean your father’s mother or your mother’s father. In what Austrian village were they born?

B.J. (very haughtily)—I want you to understand that not only was I born here and my parents too, but all my four grand parents and all their grand parents were born in this country; we are of pure May Flower extraction and New England stock.

U.S.—Then you all descend from the neighborhood of where Bunker Hill Monument now stands.

B.J.—Exactly.

U.S.—Then you feel very proud about the American Revolution, do you not?

B.J.—Don’t you?

U.S.—I do, most assuredly. And do you think our ancestors acted immorally on that occasion?

B.J.—Certainly not! Do you?

U.S.—Of course not. But will you oblige me by imparting to me a certain information after which my heart now pants?

B.J.—With pleasure.

U.S.—How much indemnity did our ancestors pay King George when they took the colonies away from him?

B.J.—Indemnity!!!

U.S.—Yes, my sweet preacher of sweet morality—“indemnity.”

B.J.—You must be crazy!

U.S.—Were not our ancestors moral?

B.J.—Certainly.

U.S.—Did not King George own these colonies?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—And were they not yanked away from him?

B.J.—Certainly. And wasn’t that right?

U.S.—You see, I am no moralist; you are the moralist. Tell me how much indemnity our ancestors paid King George for having yanked his property from him? According to you for a people to take a thing without giving the owner indemnity is immoral. King George owned the colonies; they were taken from him; and our ancestors who did the

taking were moral. It follows that they must have indemnified him.

B.J. remains stupefied.

U.S.—Hullo, there! The indemnity!

B.J. fidgets about.

U.S.—You don't seem to hear. (Yelling in his ear.) The indemnity, the indemnity; how much indemnity did King George get!

B.J. (exasperated)—None! Hang you, none!

U.S.—And yet our ancestors were moral?

B.J.—Stop bantering me. Tell me how that is. I don't quite understand it. Was it immoral on the part of our ancestors not to indemnify King George?

U.S.—No; it was not immoral. If they had it would have been stupid. You don't indemnify the highway robber for the stolen goods you take away from him, do you?

B.J.—Nixy!

U.S.—Neither does a nation. The question is simply this: Does the American people need the railroads to live? If they do, the railroads can be and must be appropriated just the same as the colonies were without indemnity. Moreover such appropriation is eminently just. The present owners of the railroads and of all other machinery and land needed by the people never produced them. The land is nature's gift, the machinery is the product of the brain and manual labor of the working class stolen from them by the capitalist class. To take this property is but to restore it to its owners. The same common sense—and morality is always on the side of common sense—that caused our ancestors to yank the colonies out of the clutches of the British Crown without indemnity will guide our people to vote themselves into power and to legislate the land and the capital back into their own hands. The immorality lies on the side of the thieves who stole the people's heritage and are seeking to keep it.

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

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