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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {22-23}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—This Berkman who shot Frick is a devilish law-breaker.

UNCLE SAM—So he is, and he proved himself an apt scholar of the law-breaker, pirate-hiring Frick.

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BROTHER JONATHAN—This “protection” is too manifestly a vile thing. *Puck* shows that in free-trade England a corduroy suit costs the workmen only \$8, and here in protected America the workman must pay \$15 for it.

UNCLE SAM—What is the difference?

B.J.—The difference? . . . the difference? Why, the difference is just \$7 in favor of the workman in free-trade England and against the workman in protected America!

U.S.—How do you make that out?

B.J.—Why, don't you see? In protected America, the workman has to pay \$15 for a corduroy suit; in free-trade England, he only pays \$8; and then he is in \$7 . . . \$7 in, by Jove!

U.S.—He . . . is . . . what, by Jove?

B.J.—He is in \$7, by Jove!

U.S.—Why, Brother Jonathan, you have caught the free-trade microbe. You have been stuffed by these free-trade humbugs. You are out, man; you are out!

B.J.—Out? Am I not \$7 in if I pay only \$8 for an article when you must pay \$15 for it?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—If you and I start in with \$15 apiece, and you pay \$8 for the same thing that I pay \$15—YES! But if you start in with only \$8 and I with \$15, and you can get the stuff for \$8, while I can't get it under \$15,—NO! You are not in a cent; not a red copper! We are then both dead broke, you as well as I.

B.J.—That's true enough. But do the workmen in free-trade England start in with so much less than here in protection America?

U.S.—Now you talk. That is the question. It is the question which the hypocritical free-traders slur over. Free-trade increases competition; competition lowers prices; low prices lower the wages of the wage earners in proportion. Never lose sight of this fact, Brother Jonathan, keep it as a disinfectant about you and then no economic microbe can get inside of you: "The working man has no instruments of production; the capitalist has taken them from him; without the instruments of production a man must starve, or go begging, or work for wages; the wages of a workman are the minimum of his necessities, with a tendency downwards; the lower the prices of the necessities of life, the lower his wages." If the tariff is removed the price of corduroy suits will go down, true enough, but down too, in proportion, will go wages, and at the end of the song you are just where you started from. Is that clear?

B.J.—It is. Then it is all one, protection or free-trade?

U.S.—If you are a wage earner, YES; if you are a capitalist, NO.

B.J.—How is that?

U.S.—If a workman produces \$3 a day and he needs \$2 to live under "protection", the capitalist pays him \$2 as wages, out of the \$3 that he produced, and keeps to himself \$1 as "profits." If, under free-trade, the prices of necessities being lower, that workman can buy for \$1 all that before cost him \$2, the capitalist will lower his wages and pay the workman only \$1 out of the \$3 that he produced, but then the capitalist will keep to himself \$2 instead of only \$1 as "profit," he then steals twice as much.

B.J.—Then free-trade is a capitalist scheme?

U.S.—Nothing else!

B.J.—Then, whether free-trade or protection, the workman gets fleeced, skinned, swindled, by Jove!

U.S.—Whether free-trade or protection, under the wage system, the workman gets

fleeced, skinned, swindled, by Jove!

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

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