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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {286}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—Those ridiculous “anti-trust,” “anti-octopus” shouters!

UNCLE SAM—They are ridiculous.

B.J.—Why, think of the increased productive powers of a trust; it is just like an improved machine. Who would go back to the hand loom or the stage coach? No one! (With increased enthusiasm.) An improved machine produces so much more wealth; so does the trust. The idiots who would “smash the trust!” they are no better than the idiots who wanted to smash the machine!

U.S.—You got that straight; none but idiots, or schemers who try to dupe the idiots, shout “Smash the Trust!”

B.J.—And think of the un-Americanism—

U.S.—The what?

B.J.—The UN-AMERICANISM of such an idea as the anti-trust notion!

U.S.—“Un-American”?

B.J. (testily)—Yes; Un-A-mer-i-ca-nism; did you understand that?

U.S.—Inasmuch as to which?

B.J.—Inasmuch as it is wholly an un-American attitude.

U.S.—That is very much like saying a thing is yellow inasmuch as yellow it is. Why is it “un-American” to want to smash the trust.

B.J.—Why? Just think of such a question! Don’t you see it is “un-American”? Why, of course you do.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—I don't see it.

B.J.—The devil, you don't? Why, man, trust-smashing simply flies in the face of the founders of this country.

U.S.—Now at least you have given a reason; it may be a bad one; but still a reason it is. Let's see. The founders of this country were the typical Americans, and their ways were typically "American"?

B.J.—That's it.

U.S.—I say so too.

B.J. (smileful)—You do?

U.S.—Certainly. But preserve your smiles. Now, then, tell me, Did those founders of our country work with little capital or with big capital?

B.J. (beginning to look sober)—Hem! They worked with little capital.

U.S.—Each for himself?

B.J.—Y-e-s—

U.S.—And did they produce large quantities of wealth?

B.J.—N-o-o—

U.S.—Such a thing as a single concern operating thousands of men did not exist?

B.J.—N-o—

U.S.—Or a big farm covering thousands of acres, all under cultivation?

B.J.—N-o-o—

U.S.—Consequently the improved machinery of production implied in the trust was not known to them?

B.J.—N-n-n-o—

U.S.—And they worked with very small machinery—

B.J.—The devil take you! I see what you are driving at now.

U.S.—Cool, cool; no profanity. And can you escape from the trap? Can you escape the conclusion that it is the trust-smashers who are truly "American," while the trust-upholders are the "un-American" ones?

B.J.—No, I can't. Then you too are a trust-smasher?

U.S.—Not much. The trust is an improved means of production; as such it is capable of being a blessing. The trouble with that improved means of production is that

it is held by private holders and THEREFORE it becomes a curse to the people. Those who want to smash it are truly “American” in so far as “Americanism” means the ways of our ancestors. If there is any honor in being over a hundred years behind the times, that honor surely belongs to the trust-smashers. But the intelligent man is not an oyster. He does not glory in immobility; on the contrary, his pride is the capacity to move onward. “Americanism” in the sense of the ways of our Founders is a thing of the past. The trust, in so far as it is a means of improved production is good; we want that; and the same intelligence that shows us its excellencies shows us also its defects: we shall preserve its excellence by upholding it; we shall remove its defects by nationalizing it.

B.J. (swaying backward and forward and moaning)—Oh my “Americanism,” my “Americanism”!

U.S.—Is no good, eh?

B.J.—Seems not!

U.S.—Cheer up, old fellow. The true lover of the word “American” is not he that would keep us in our national childhood; nor he who would allow himself to be humbugged by the word, as you were doing; but he who, revering the past for all that it deserves, is ready to use that past as a stepping stone for higher reaches.

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

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