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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {231}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN (looking furious)—I am an American, I am.

UNCLE SAM—Something very bad must be biting you; but why do you growl at me.

B.J.—Because you are a Socialist, and you Socialists try to tyrannize us.

U.S.—In what way?

B.J.—You want to compel us union men to vote the way you think.

U.S.—If I understand you correctly, you mean that it is tyranny if the Socialist members of a union demand that all the members of that union vote the S.L.P. ticket, and no other.

B.J.—That's what I mean, and I call it an unbearable tyranny.

U.S.—When the other day you voted to expel a man from our union because he was working for lower wages than our scale, did you thereby exercise tyranny on him?

B.J. (emphatically)—No!

U.S.—If not, why not?

B.J.—Because the maintenance of the union scale is necessary to our existence.

U.S.—And when the very next day you voted along with me and the other Socialist members of the union to expel a member who worked longer hours than our scale, did you then act as a tyrant?

B.J.—No, sir.

U.S.—If not, why not?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—For the same reason. It is to the interest of all that the hours be reduced.

U.S.—Accordingly, from what you say it appears that tyranny does not consist in the simple act of coercing a man to do a certain thing.

B.J.—W—e—l—l—

U.S.—You helped coerce a man to obey the union scale—

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—And that was no tyranny?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—Why not?

B.J.—For the evident reason that if we allowed him freedom in that he would sink us all into deeper slavery.

U.S.—Just so. The compulsion you put on others is justified or not, according as it is for the good of all. You are ready to compel others to abide by the union scale because if they don't we all go down into deeper slavery. You do that because you are clear on what lower wages and longer hours mean. Now, we Socialist unionists are equally clear on what capitalist politics mean. We know that to vote for them means to put into their hands the guns with which to shoot us down, and the gatling guns on paper with which to enjoin us. We know therefore that to vote for a capitalist ticket is to vote for our degradation. Do you understand?

B.J.—I think I do.

U.S.—Therefore it is no tyranny to compel a union man not to vote the capitalist tickets. And of all men, the ones who are least justified in calling that tyranny are pure and simplers like yourself, who are quick to denounce as a scab whoever disobeys union laws. Think this carefully over.

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

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