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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {131}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I've good news for ye!

UNCLE SAM—Out with it, out! I'm in a good-news-hearing mood.

B.J.—You know, don't you, the "Spread the Eagle and Bugle Blast of Freedom Club?"

U.S.—Meseems, I does.

B.J.—Well, I was there last night. I heard the speeches. Do you know—

U.S.—No, I don't!

B.J.—Those people are inclining towards Socialis—

U.S.—Nonsense!

B.J.—I heard it, man; I heard with these ears!

U.S.—Nonsense, I tell you!

B.J.—Do you, who wasn't there, mean to know better than I who was?

U.S.—I don't need to have been in the moon to know that it is not made of green cheese.

B.J.—That may be, but I know that the club is inclining—

U.S.—There is no such thing as "inclining" towards Socialism. Either a man KNOWS, and then he don't "incline," but stands straight up for Socialism; or he DON'T KNOW, and then his "inclinations" are like those of a ship capsizing. No one capsizes towards Socialism.

B.J.—That may be too; but the trouble is that many of them are yet too cowardly—



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U.S.—Still worse nonsense!

B.J.—Their being cowardly?

U.S.—No, your imagining that courage or cowardice has anything to do with making a man a Socialist.

B.J.—Do you mean to say that a coward can become a Socialist?

U.S.—Do you remember that big fire you and I saw when we were in New York last year?

B.J.—I won't easily forget it. The cries of the people as the flames approached and enveloped them will ever ring in my ears.

U.S.—Did they all stay and get burned?

B.J.—Thank God, no! Some had sense enough to jump down on the mattresses held out for them by the firemen below. They got off all hunkey.

U.S.—Couldn't all the others have done the same?

B.J.—Guess so. Only they did not have the sense to.

U.S.—And what do you imagine interfered with their sense?

B.J. (trying to look wise)—Their nonsense!

U.S.—That's too indefinite. I'll tell you: They knew the mattresses were there; they knew the leap was without danger; they were well aware that it would be more comfortable on the mattresses than in the hot air of the rooms; but, now mark you, they DID NOT KNOW HOW FAR THE CONFLAGRATION HAD GAINED UPON THE BUILDING; THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THE FLAMES WOULD REACH THEM; and in that way they were caught.

B.J.—That's just the size of it.

U.S.—Consequently, the reason they did not get out in time was not COWARDICE, but IGNORANCE.

B.J. (shaking his head approvingly)—That's so!

U.S.—Consequently, KNOWLEDGE is what people need to become Socialists. He who knows that machinery and improved methods of production lower the prices of goods; that he who does not produce with as perfect a machinery as others do cannot keep up competition and must become a wage slave; that the wage slave is kept out of all opportunity to employ his labor because, if the man with some capital cannot compete

with the bigger capitalists, much less could the man without any capital whatever; that the number of the wage slaves looking for work must increase and the number of those needed must be diminished; that under the capitalist system the workers are fleeced of the bulk of their products; that, in short, the Capitalist House is on fire—he who knows that is not going to wait till the capitalist flames have consumed him—

B.J.—Indeed, he won't!

U.S.—He will jump out and land on the safe mattress of Socialism, where, owning collectively all the instruments of production, he can be safe and free.

B.J.—Yes, 'tis knowledge more than courage that they need.

U.S.—Now, next time you visit the “Spread the Eagle and Bugle Blast of Freedom Club” take to them some wholesome Socialist literature; drive out of their heads the mistaken notion of security that now lulls them; give them KNOWLEDGE and they themselves will furnish the COURAGE.

B.J.—'Tis so, the KNOWLEDGE of danger inspires the COURAGE to escape it.

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

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