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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {112}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—This is extortion;
damnable extortion!

UNCLE SAM—Which?

B.J.—The price I am now made to pay for meat
by my butcher.

U.S.—Why don't you go to the one on the other
side of the street?

B.J.—What good would that do me? I would
have to pay the same price.

U.S.—Why don't you go to the one two blocks
off?

B.J.—For the same reason; he would charge the same price.

U.S.—Why not bestow your patronage on a butcher across town?

B.J.—Why, man, they all charge the same price, the same extortionist price.

U.S.—Why don't you then go to Kokomo and buy your meat there?

B.J. (with an impatient motion)—Kokomo!

U.S.—Yes. Kokomo.

B.J.—In the first place, I don't live in Kokomo.

U.S.—In the second place?

B.J.—In the second place, even if meat were cheaper in Kokomo, it is mockery to
tell me to go buy it there; the traveling expenses would be too high. In the third place—

U.S.—What is the third objection?

B.J.—The price of meat is just as high in Kokomo as here. Meat is monopolized. The
retailer may be and is a different man in each shop, but behind them all stands one man,



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

one concern—the meat monopolist. You may change retailers, but that is only a change of appearances. You don't and you can't escape subjection to the prices dictated by the monopolist.

U.S.—You are right; but it only serves you right to be caught in the cleft stick of capitalist actual slavery and seeming freedom.

B.J.—Why does it serve me right?

U.S.—Because only the other day you looked calmly upon a lot of impaled workers—as completely impaled with regard to their wages as you are now impaled on the matter of the price of meat.

B.J.—I did?

U.S.—Yes. When the Brooklyn trolley men struck for higher wages you calmly said: “If they don't like the price paid for their work by the Brooklyn bosses, why don't they go to some other boss?” Now that you realize why it will do you no good to change your butcher shop you may also realize why it is mockery to propose to the worker to seek to improve his condition by a change of bosses. The nominal employer may be a different one each time, but the actual employer is the same all the time, whether here or in Kokomo; it is the monopolist, the capitalist class, and he is one. Labor enjoys seeming freedom, but is in actual slavery.

B.J.—(drops his head).

U.S.—Now, throw that old plug of tobacco out of your mouth and chew upon that fact. You will find it more juicy, piquant and tonicky than any plug.

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

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