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FIRST DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {221-222}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—If I were a Socialist
I would not make a fool of myself.

UNCLE SAM—In what way do they?

B.J.—Why, with your municipal campaign.

U.S.—Inasmuch?

B.J.—Will you tell me whether the gold standard
can clean streets?

U.S.—I am free to say it can not.

B.J.—Or can the silver standard build bath
houses?

U.S.—I don't know as it can.

B.J.—Or can protection carry away garbage?

U.S.—I don't think so.

B.J.—Or does free trade light street lamps?

U.S.—I don't think it has fire enough for that.

B.J.—You admit all that?

U.S.—Certainly.

B.J.—Now, then, are you Socialists not fools to talk upon such things in a municipal
campaign?

U.S.—We don't. Your old parties do. If there is any folly in doing that, they are the
fools. We hammer on the wages issue.

B.J.—Well, the OLD parties do. But my party don't.

U.S.—And which is your party?

B.J.—The Seth Low party. We want clean streets, plenty of schools, etc. Those are



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

municipal issues. Not the Socialist issues. What on earth have these municipal issues got to do with your wages system, and all that?

U.S.—Are the streets on Fifth avenue clean or are they not?

B.J.—They are.

U.S.—Why don't you walk on them?

B.J.—Why? Because as it is I have to rush out of bed to the factory. I get out of there late. And then I am hungry and want to go home.

U.S.—Why don't you walk on the clean Fifth avenue after you have had your supper?

B.J.—As though you didn't know! I must go to bed early or I am not fit to work the next morning, and then I would be discharged.

U.S.—Are all your children at school?

B.J.—Not one of the three.

U.S.—How old are they?

B.J.—The youngest ten, the oldest fourteen.

U.S.—Are there not plenty of schools for them?

B.J.—Schools enough.

U.S.—Why don't you send them there, or are they so clever?

B.J.—I don't sent them to school because I can't afford it. If I had to support them, keep them in food and clothing, we none of us would have enough. Even so what we all make is not enough. Where would I be if they were not at work earning something!

U.S.—I don't need to go any further. We have clean streets on which you can't walk, schools to which you can't send your children, and all because your wages are so low and your hours so long that you can't afford it. Now, who is the fool, we Socialists who want the wages question settled so that we should be better off and enjoy the clean streets, schools and other good things, or you who can't enjoy the good things there are now to enjoy and want more good things—for others to enjoy? (And he pulls B.J.'s hat down over his ears.)

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BROTHER JONATHAN—Hooray for Henry George!

UNCLE SAM—Why hooray?

B.J.—Because he promises to give us three-cent fares.

U.S.—Who is running George’s campaign?

B.J.—Tom L. Johnson.

U.S.—What is his business?

B.J.—Among other things, he owns the Nassau trolley line in Brooklyn.

U.S.—Does he demand any fare?

B.J.—Why, certainly.

U.S.—How much?

B.J.—Five cents.

U.S.—Could he not, if he was devoted to three-cent fares, lower his fare to that?

B.J. remains silent.

U.S.—Does he do it?

B.J. remains in deeper silence.

U.S.—Why don’t he?

B.J.’s silence and motionlessness resembles that of a tombstone.

U.S.—Why don’t he, answer?

B.J. begins to look pale, besides being silent and motionless.

U.S.—And you imagine that this man George, if elected, would dare to do what Tom Johnson does not want to be done with his fares, and does not do himself?

B.J. begins to perspire.

U.S.—Now, Jonathan, I won’t blame you for smoking the cigars and drinking the whiskey that George treats you to with millionaire labor fleecer Tom Johnson’s money. But don’t let the fumes get you off your base; above all, don’t come and breathe them upon me.

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

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