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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {273}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—Do you notice how the Socialist vote is coming in fine?

BROTHER JONATHAN—There is, indeed, a remarkable growth, but after all, what does it amount to? It merely indicates misspent effort: the larger the vote, the larger the misspent effort.

U.S.—You call “misspent effort” the effort to take possession of the public powers on behalf of the working class?

B.J.—Yes. You Socialists attach altogether too much importance to the public powers. The working class can get along without that.

U.S.—The deuce, you say!

B.J.—Why, man alive, the old parties are all right!

U.S.—See here: Are the capitalists the producers, or the workingmen?

B.J.—The workingmen.

U.S.—Does the capitalist class do any manner of useful work, intellectually or otherwise?

B.J.—No, none whatever.

U.S.—And yet they live?

B.J.—They do, unfortunately.

U.S.—Do they live on air?

B.J.—Guess not! They live on good, solid, substantial and plentiful wealth.

U.S.—Does wealth come down from the skies?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—It don't.

U.S.—It must be worked for?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—Consequently, the capitalist class lives in affluent idleness on wealth produced by the working class?

B.J.—Certainly.

U.S.—Stick a pin there. Now, let's proceed: Which of the two is the more numerous class, the capitalist or the working class?

B.J.—The working class.

U.S.—Are they as 2 to 1, two workmen to every one capitalist?

B.J.—They are that{,} sure.

U.S.—Are they perhaps 3 to 1?

B.J.—I think so.

U.S.—4 to 1?

B.J.—Quite probably.

U.S.—10 to 1?

B.J.—I don't know about that?

U.S.—Well, to avoid all disputed points, there are enough workmen to every 1 capitalist to give the workmen the overwhelming preponderance of power?

B.J.—Certainly.

U.S.—Now, here we are brought face to face with two facts that seem irreconcilable: A large, numerous and powerful class produces all the wealth and yet has but little of it; on the other hand, a small, weak class does nothing whatever and yet enjoys the bulk of the wealth produced. How is that to be explained?

B.J. answers not.

U.S.—Is it that the working class is pleased with the idea of carrying the idlers on its back?

B.J.—I can't imagine that.

U.S.—Then, how is the conundrum to be explained?

B.J.—Well—hem—

U.S.—Let me give you a tip. The working class is in perpetual struggle with the

capitalist class. From time to time the struggle becomes acute. Such occasions are called “strikes.” The numerous workingmen and the few capitalists then stand with their respective hands at each others’ throats. If power were to decide the conflict, it is clear that in less than no time there would be left not a grease-spot of Mr. Capitalist. Does that happen? No. What do we see? The numerous and powerful class whipped, the weak class victorious. How comes that about?

B.J. sucks his thumb.

U.S.—Do you impute the sight to a miracle?

B.J. sucks his other thumb.

U.S.—There is no miracle about it. Place 1,000 men opposite 50 and the 1,000 will be the stronger; but put in the hands of the 50 a lot of Gatling guns and leave the 1,000 un-armed, and you have transferred the balance of power from the 1,000 to the 50. That is just what happens in the struggles between Labor and Capital. In the midst of the conflict, in there steps the PUBLIC POWER, it separates the combatants and it throws its own weight on the side of the small and otherwise weak capitalist class. That PUBLIC POWER is a social organism; it must be counted with; it is the gift of the workingmen; to-day they make a present of it to the Capitalist Class, and thus they, not only deliberately convey to that class a power that they could keep to themselves, but, by the conveyance, they, the stronger side, render themselves the weak, and the capitalist, or weak side, is made the strong.

No, without the PUBLIC POWER the working class can not stand up against the Capitalist Class. All the efforts spent in that direction are efforts wisely spent.

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

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