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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {236}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN (looking very angry)—You have a cheek, you have.

UNCLE SAM—Inasmuch as to which?

B.J.—Why, our union already gives you and its other unemployed members \$3 a week, and now you unemployed members want us to give you more!

U.S.—Anything wrong in that?

B.J.—Certainly, that is criminal!

U.S.—Tut, tut! Didn't we who are now unemployed enable the union to gain short hours and good wages?

B.J.—What of it?

U.S.—What of it? I'll tell you what of it. When you talk of our struggles do you and those who now have jobs talk of YOUR high wages and low hours? Do you not talk of the "Union's victory"?

B.J.—Why, certainly, it was the union's victory.

U.S.—And who makes up the "union," you fellows who are employed and have soft snaps, or ALL of us?

B.J. (visibly annoyed)—That has nothing to do with the case.

U.S.—It hasn't? It has everything to do with it. Now let me give you a lesson on unionism that you evidently stand very much in need of—

B.J.—YOU give me a lesson in unionism? Why, I have been in the union 37 years—

U.S.—I don't care if you have been in it 370 years, you don't know what unionism means. The union consists of ALL its members, do you hear that? It may be news to you; but it is so. It consists of ALL its members all the year round. Tinderheads like you and



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fakirs would have the union consist of all its members only when there is a fight on; then we must ALL pay assessments; we must ALL go out and scurry; we must ALL stand the hardships of the strike;—but when the fruits of victory are to be enjoyed, then you precious “unionists of 37 years’ standing,” hold a different language; then ALL are not in it; then the plums are to be only for the few;—

B.J.—But—

U.S.—Shut up! Then the question of who makes up the union suddenly has “nothing to do with the case.” We who are not “37 or 370 years’ union men,” are good enough to pay dues and fight, but when the fight is over we are not considered. The devil take such unionism and such unionists! We unemployed want a larger share of our common victory.

B.J.—Preposterous; unionism—

U.S.—We’ll show you whether it is “preposterous” or not; and before we get through with you we shall make you walk Spanish if you want to be in the bona fide organized labor movement—

B.J.—What you unemployed want is preposterous; it amounts to simply this: You want us to do the work and you are to be kept in idleness by the wages we work for—

U.S.—Is that what we are after? Now, if you really mean that you can easily put us to the test. Offer to change places with us. If you are right, we unemployed will refuse. But I’ll tell you what, you are wrong, and you know it. Just make the offer to us to change places and you will see. We are ready to take your places for 6 months, work for 6 months, and during that interval honestly share our income with you. At the end of the 6 months we can change places once more: you go to work, and if we can’t get work you support us as we supported you. This is fair. Will you do it?

B.J. looks as if he had been caught stealing sheep.

U.S.—No, you won’t. And that’s all of your alleged “unionism.” It is a caricature of the capitalist class which considers itself to be the nation, and all the happiness of the nation must be his property. Stand by the unemployed, or we will make the fur fly, smash your damned hypocrisy of “pure and simpledom,” and set up a union that is a class-conscious proletarian concern. Put that in your pipe and smoke it.

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

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