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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {270}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—Did you hear the news of the big Socialist vote?

BROTHER JONATHAN—Yes; but I don't feel like shouting over it. It can never come to anything.

U.S.—You don't say so! Then according to you it will never sweep the country?

B.J.—I won't say that exactly. It might, and I presume it will, sweep the country.

U.S.—Then what do you mean?

B.J.—I mean that it can never accomplish anything.

U.S.—“Can't accomplish anything,” even if the party holds a majority of the Government?

B.J.—Yes; even if it gain a majority of the Government. The moment it does hold a majority it will break down—

U.S.—Hey!?

B.J.—For the very reason that it will then find out that its plan is absurd.

U.S.—You puzzle me.

B.J.—Let me explain to you. I have given deep thought—

U.S (with a smile)—“Deep thought” did you say?

B.J.—Yes; deep thought to the question of Socialism. I find it to be a very beautiful but an impracticable theory.

U.S.—Your yarn is becoming thrilling enough for yellow covers. Let me hear more



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of it.

B.J.—That’s all right. But I have discovered a big flaw in Socialism.

U.S.—You keep me in suspense. And what is more remarkable yet, I don’t understand how, having found such a flaw in Socialism, you can still be looking so seedy and poor. The man who makes such a discovery is a made man. The capitalists and their politicians would take care of him in right royal fashion. He would be looked upon by them like a real Messiah. He would have rolled off their hearts the biggest rock that yet oppressed it. Such a man could not, like you do, carry the mark of poverty.

B.J.—That may all be so and yet I have discovered the flaw.

U.S.—Out with it.

B.J.—Socialists propose to buy out the capitalists. Now, in the first place, that is {a} contradiction: if the capital, now in the hands of the capitalist class, is stolen property, as Socialists claim, why buy it back to its owners? In the second place, there is not money enough to buy out the plants out right; bonds will have to be given; and thus the capitalist class would be enabled to continue to live in idleness on the backs of the workers for quite a long time. Here, is not that a flaw?

U.S.—It would be one, indeed, if Socialists actually proposed any such thing, but they don’t, not only for the reasons you give, which would be quite enough to reject the idea of “buying out” the capitalists, but for two other reasons: one of honor and the other of equity.

As to the point of honor, it is this: Would it not be dishonest to “buy” a thing, that is to “pay” someone with what would have no value whatever?

B.J.—Surely.

U.S.—Well, Socialist society may, for a while, a transition period, use and need money; but that period would be short: money, as now understood, would not be needed in a co-operative community. Thus, to give money to the capitalists for their plants would be a mockery, and, therefore, dishonest: they could not buy anything with it.

B.J.—That’s so.

U.S.—As to the second point, the point of equity, a movement of the people may be so circumstanced that the death of their oppressors is a necessary thing. But such an issue can arise as an imperative necessity only when an oppressed class, that itself is an

oppressor of a lower class, rises against its own oppressors, not to establish freedom for all, but to secure freedom for itself alone. Now the Socialist movement is essentially different in that its very programme, and the law of its existence, compels it to give freedom to all. By establishing the public ownership of the land on and the machinery with which to work, Socialism opens the doors wide for everybody to live in industrial comfort. Thus the members of the capitalist class would have an equal chance with everybody else. It might shock some tender consciences to kill a robber, but at times such severe act may be necessary. In this instance, however, the robber need not be killed by the victorious class except by himself. If a capitalist does not want to work, of course, he will have to die; but if he is willing to work he will receive vouchers for the labor he has performed, with that he will be able to exchange for the products of others and enjoy a life of comfort. For this reason, to pay him for his present plant would be a wrong, besides being an absurdity, as you showed.

B.J.—Then Socialism don't propose buying out the capitalists?

U.S.—No, Siree.

B.J.—Then my flaw wasn't any flaw?

U.S.—There are no flaws in Socialism.

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

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