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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM AND BROTHER JONATHAN. {368}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN (rubbing his hands)—I have long been looking for an argument in the nature of a “Knock-out blow” to you Socialists.

UNCLE SAM—You look as tho’ you had found it.

B.J.—So I have. (Takes out a newspaper clipping and reads):

“Director of the Mint Roberts made a good point in an address delivered last week. ‘It is the common error of those who attack the existing order of society,’ he said, ‘to treat of distribution as of more importance than production. But the real problem is to get more from nature. Careful statisticians have estimated that the total production of wealth for even so efficient a population as that of the United States including the yield of the soil, the output of the mines and all the earnings of capital scarcely exceeds \$2 a day for every person engaged in gainful occupations.’ An equal division all around at the close of each day would greatly disappoint the socialistic theorists. Mr. Roberts points out that the amelioration of conditions must come from increased production.”



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

I call that a complete knock-out.

U.S.—For the Socialists?

B.J.—Why, of course, whom else should it knock out?

U.S.—It knocks out the capitalists. The capitalist who holds that language delivers himself, tied hand and foot, over to the mercy of the Socialists.

B.J. looks incredulous.

U.S.—But you see, we are a cruel lot. When we get hold of an enemy in the way that this Roberts delivers himself to us we don't like to despatch him with one shot. We like to riddle him with bullets. Any Socialist can lodge a score of bullets into that Roberts argument, and make him and his argument look like 30-cents.

B.J.—But that's incredible. Point out one error.

U.S.—I shall certainly do so. I shall leave him in shreds before I get through with him. One shot at a time. Now here goes the first error:

B.J. listens attentively.

U.S.—I shall begin by granting for the sake of argument that \$2 a day is the highest possible production of the worker to-day.

B.J.—Very well.

U.S.—What then, does it mean if a man says, as this Roberts does, that, seeing production can only be \$2 a day, the present condition of things—where large numbers of working people do not enjoy their ratio, \$600 a year, while a small percentage has, not \$600, but \$600,000—that that is the best possible for the present?

B.J. begins to look shaky.

U.S.—I'll tell you what it means: It means a revival of Malthusianism. Do you know what Malthusianism is?

B.J.—Can't say I do.

U.S.—There was an English parson, early in this century, called Malthus, who, seeing the shocking inequalities of society, sought, parson-like, for a way to remove the blame from the Capitalist Class and to throw it upon God. He put his conclusion in blunt, tho' poetic form. Starting from the absurd premises that population increases faster than production, he said: "At the banquet table of Nature, he for whom there is no cover set, is told 'Be gone!'"

B.J.—Why, that's shocking!

U.S.—It simply amounted to justifying the squeezing of life out of the workingman by the Capitalist Class, and then telling him: "Die!"

B.J.—That's horrible!

U.S.—So it was. Sized up from the moral point of view first, Malthus "put his foot into it" badly. His capitalist paymasters used his reasoning for a while. But

they had to drop it. The cannibal plane on which the reasoning placed them was raked fore and aft by the cannon of the on-coming Revolution. It was shown that, taking his premises for granted, to wit, that there was not enough possible to go around so as to furnish affluence for all, those who held Malthus' language, simply confessed themselves blood-thirsty animals of prey. They were told, if it is impossible to have affluence for all, it does not follow that a few must have tenfold affluence, and the many tenfold misery. Malthusianism, its absurd alleged "scientific premises," along with its inhuman conclusions, had its guns spiked.

B.J.—I should hope so!

U.S.—Will you tell me what is the difference between your precious "Robertsianism" and the smashed-to-pieces morality of old Malthusianism?

B.J. scratches his head.

U.S.—It is the same putrid corpse in a fresh shroud. We have have {have had?} our Rockefellers with their hundreds of millions, the Vanderbilts and Goulds buying foreign princes with millions, the Bradley-Martins spending hundreds of thousands on one ball, the Seeleys spending thousands on lewd dinners, etc., etc., and along with that we have poverty, pinching and murderous, mowing down the Working Class. Thus you see that even tho' \$2 were all that was possible to produce a day, none but the veriest tigers of the jungles would consider that there is no relief possible until, perchance, more were produced, and stand by and profit by the popular misery. Even so there would be relief possible. The Bradleys are superfluities. That's shot No. 1 into your precious Roberts. Next time we meet I shall fire shot No. 2 into him.

B.J. withdraws, looking not half as cockish as when he first started.

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