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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {199}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—The general discontent—
BROTHER JONATHAN—Bother the
general discontent; I call it the general
stupidity.

U.S.—You may be right; if people knew what this
capitalism means from which they expect a living
while it will assuredly deal death to them—

B.J.—That is not what I mean. That's all stuff
about capitalism dealing death. What I mean is if
people were not so stupid they would know in what
way they could improve their condition and turn
capitalism to good use.

U.S.—And what is your way?

B.J.—I shall state my way if you have time to listen to me, because I shall want to
state systematically.

U.S.—“Systematically” is good; let her rip!

B.J.—We are two here, you and I.

U.S.—That's profoundly true.

B.J.—If there is only one hat produced by us, we could not each have a hat, could
we?

U.S.—That's another chunk of unquestionable wisdom.

B.J.—For each to have a hat we must produce two hats, not so?

U.S.—We could not each have one if there were no two hats.

B.J.—Now, that is the A.B.C. of the whole question.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—That seems very simple, but it may be too simple; it is certainly too simple for me.

B.J.—It follows from this A.B.C. that all that is needed is to increase production. If we can produce four hats we shall each have two; if we can produce a hundred hats we shall each have fifty—

U.S.—Not so fast.

B.J.—If our people could only increase the amount of the wealth produced, all would be hunky. He who has a million would have two millions; he who has \$5,000 would have \$10,000; he who has \$1,000 would have \$2,000; and the poor workingman, who to-day has nothing, would have—

U.S.—Twice as much; twice nothing is nothing.

B.J.—How you talk!

U.S.—Surely not like a booby as you do. Your “system” of reasoning amounts to this: “The more the workers produce the more they will get”—

B.J.—That’s just it.

U.S.—And that is just nonsense. The fact and the reason is just the reverse: “The more the workers produce the less they get.”

B.J.—Absurd!

U.S.—What enables the workingman to produce more?

B.J.—The machine.

U.S.—Say that in a room 100 men are at work without the machine and they earn \$2 a piece—

B.J.—Very well.

U.S.—A machine is brought in by which 50 men can produce more than 100 before. Do not these 50 men now turn out more goods?

B.J.—They do.

U.S.—Are the other 50 kept at work?

B.J.—No; they are displaced.

U.S.—As far as these 50 are concerned, to begin with, your “system” falls through; more is produced, and they get nothing, being thrown out of work.

B.J.—Hem!

U.S.—Now, let us return to the 50 who are kept at work—

B.J.—Well, they get something?

U.S.—That is not enough for your “system,” they must not only get “something,” they must get more than they did before because they are producing more. Now, do they get more?

B.J.—W—e—l—l—

U.S.—No, they don’t.

B.J.—But they don’t get any less.

U.S.—At first not; later on, yes. The men who are thrown out of work won’t starve; they {they’d?} rather work for \$1 than do nothing and die. So they apply for work at \$1. And the result is that, whereas before 100 men were getting \$2 apiece, now that the labor in that shop turns out with the machine more than before, 50 of the men get nothing and go tramping and the other 50 get one-half of what they got before. That is the cause of the discontent.

B.J. remains dumb.

U.S.—I shall now return to what I was going to say:

The discontent is so wide spread and the experience of the people is so extensive that this tariff cry will not fool them. They have been fooled by the money question and all these other issues so long that they now are tired of them. They are ready for the seed of Socialism. He who does not preach the straightest goods is either too ignorant for a preacher or is a knave. This capitalist system must go and make room for the Socialist Commonwealth. Nothing short of this will do. So long as this capitalist system lasts the people will not only be paupers, but will be pauperized worse and worse. Your idiotic theory that I just pumped all the wind out of helps to suggest the enormous criminality and insanity of a social system a feature of which is that the larger the stores of wealth, the poorer are the producers. Away with it! And to you I would suggest that you do some thinking before you shoot off your mouth as you have just done.

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

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