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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {274}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—After a careful and sympathetic study of Socialism I have arrived at the conclusion that it is unattainable.

UNCLE SAM—“Too good to be verified,” or “false in theory”?

B.J.—False in one essential particular. Or, to put it more accurately, it overlooks one important factor, and it dies there.

U.S.—I am curious to learn what that factor is.

B.J.—I shall tell you and in my own way so as to satisfy you that I have first carefully studied Socialist literature.

U.S.—Proceed.

B.J.—Do you see yonder street car going up the street?

U.S.—Quite clearly.

B.J.—It is pulled by two horses.

U.S.—Yes.

B.J.—Without the horses that car could not be operated, eh?

U.S.—It couldn't.

B.J.—Now, suppose you were to approach those horses, pat them on the neck, and address them as follows:

“You work, you sweat; the sweat of your groins is transmuted into nickles, dimes and dollars; wealth, in short. Did you ever stop to consider where that wealth goes to, what becomes of it? It is divided into two parts, a large part and a small part. The large



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

part is taken by the stockholders, the small part is left to you. The stockholders, with the large part that they appropriate to themselves, eat highly seasoned meats, fricassees, the best of vegetables, and the best food of the market; you, with the small part left to you, must put up with hay and oats. They can wash down their costly food with wines, Burgundies and Champagnes; you must be content with water, and not always clean water, at that. They can afford to live in magnificent residences; you must put up with common stables. They can give their children leisure to travel, learn and enjoy childhood; you have nothing left to you wherewith to afford similar pleasures to your darling colts. In short, those stockholders, the capitalists, people who do no manner of work,—they can and do live in clover upon the large part of the wealth that you produce and that they steal from you; while you, who do all the work, live in poverty upon the small share of the product of your labor that the capitalist class allows you to keep.”

Suppose you were to hold such a discourse to those two horses, what effect would it have upon them?

U.S.—None whatever; if I pat them enough they may feel I am friendly to them, and, possibly, neigh with joy. That would be all.

B.J.—Correct. Now let’s go a step further. Finding you made no impression, suppose you were to address them again, but with increased fire, as follows:

Dear horses; it won’t do to be so indifferent to your present condition. You might not care if you could only continue as you are. You might then think: ‘Leave well enough alone.’ But this system of capitalist exploitation is not satisfied with its present stealings; it wants more, and ever more. To get more it must reduce its cost of production. Your wages—your hay, oats, water, stabling—are part of its cost of production. It will try to reduce that; it will try to wipe that out altogether, so that it may keep more to itself. And it does so by means of improved machinery. The cable, the overhead or underground trolley will be introduced on your route. That will knock you out entirely. You will then be thrown out of work; you will become superfluous. Having no more use for you, these stockholders will trot you off to some Long Island Bologna sausage factory, and that will be the end of you. Wake up in time!”

What do you imagine such an impassioned and yet truthful address would have upon those horses?

U.S. (very deliberately and with a calmness that begins to alarm B.J.)—Well, such an address would have no more effect than the first. Those horses will plod right along, until improved machinery threw them out of work; and then they will plod their way demurely to your Bologna sausage factory without knowing what struck them even after they were knocked on the head, dead, preparatorily to being turned into sausages.

B.J.—Well, that is exactly what is and will be the case with your WORKING CLASS. The flaw in Socialist reasoning is that it shuts its eyes to the fact that that WORKING CLASS, upon which it banks, is, in all essential respects, no better than horses.

U.S. (pulls out of his pocket the *Socialist Almanac*; opens it at page 226; holds it with his left hand; and with his right hand seizes B.J. by the back hair and holds B.J.'s nose down on, while he rubs it against, the open page)—Look at this:

In '90, 13,704 of those alleged "horses" in one State showed that they understood Socialist addresses;

In '91, there were 16,552 of them in three States;

In '92, the number of these "horses" rose to 21,512 over six States;

In '93, they ran up to 25,666;

In '94, you will find 30,020 of them spreading over nine States;

In '95, you can see there were 34,869 such "horses" in eleven States;

In '96, are you keeping your eyes open? there were 36,274 in twenty States;

In '97, (giving B.J.'s head an extra rub over the page) the "horses" had risen to 53,550;

And, finally, this year over 80,000 "horses" announced that they would know the reason why before they were landed into Bologna sausage factories.

B.J. gives a grunt.

U.S. (lets go of his head and hands him the *Almanac*)—There; read! Wipe out of your head the cobwebs of false reasoning, and cleanse your heart of the dirt that capitalist education has made to settle down upon it. Here are facts. They speak aloud and eloquently. Every figure on these pages has a separate tongue, and every tongue holds a separate language, and all combine to give the lie to the Capitalist theory that the WORKING CLASS is cattle. True enough, your class would like to treat it so. Just so did every previous robber-ruling class look upon the class below. But every time, an hour

sounded when it was rudely awakened out of its error. So will that hour sound to your Class. On that day you will rub your eyes in dread, and fear, and trembling. You will then cower, like a convicted felon, before the giant you now look upon as a horse. The Socialists are hastening on that day.

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

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