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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {275}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I hope that after all the troubles between Labor and Capital at Pana, Virden, Hazleton, Cleveland, etc., people will act sensibly.

UNCLE SAM—Amen.

B.J.—This is just the time to enforce the idea of arbitration.

U.S.—What?

B.J.—I mean compulsory arbitration.

U.S.—Worse yet.

B.J.—Would you have employers and employés fall together by the ears eternally and keep the whole country in commotion?

U.S.—Not I.

B.J.—Why, then, not arbitrate?

U.S.—Because there is nothing to arbitrate; and, if there were, arbitration would be no good.

B.J. (impatiently)—Do you mean to side with those bloody-handed employers?

U.S.—Not I!

B.J.—Are they not grasping, grinding reprobates?

U.S.—Most assuredly.

B.J.—Then there IS something to arbitrate.

U.S.—Who produces all wealth?

B.J.—Labor.

U.S.—Has {Have?} any of the capitalists concerned in these labor troubles ever



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done a stroke of useful work?

B.J.—Not a stroke.

U.S.—And yet millions upon millions are in their possession?

B.J.—Wrongfully, for that reason we should have arbitration.

U.S.—Are they entitled to anything?

B.J.—To not a thing!

U.S.—Who is entitled to it all?

B.J.—Why, we, the workers, of course.

U.S.—And yet you think there is something to arbitrate? Is there anything to arbitrate between a footpad and the robbed?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—To offer arbitration is to condone crime. There is either justice in robbery or there is none. Either an employer may skin his workers all he can, or skinning must be stopped altogether. There is no middle way.

B.J.—Granted; but even so, would not arbitration relieve the situation some?

U.S.—Not a bit.

B.J.—Would it not prevent excessive skinning?

U.S.—Not a particle.

B.J.—Suppose a Board of Arbitrators finds that a company is doing good business, and that the reason it gives for reducing wages is false—

U.S.—What then?

B.J.—Then—

U.S.—Yes, then—

B.J. hesitates long.

U.S.—You seem to have struck a snag, eh?

B.J.—Then the Board would give its decision and condemn the company—

U.S.—And the company might order the decision framed over the motto: “Words, words, words.”

B.J.—Would it mean nothing else?

U.S.—Nothing else. The Board could not compel the Company to operate its plant. If the Company wanted, it could shut down and starve its workers into submission; and

then they would come back and sue for work, and the Company would triumph—"condemnation" by the Board or no condemnation.

B.J.—Is there, then, no way to enforce the decision of the Board?

U.S.—None whatever against the Company or capitalist; a decision against the workers could be enforced; the capitalists hold to-day the Government with its military and Courts; these can always be used to aggravate the situation of the toiler and enforcing arbitral decisions against them, but they will not be used against the employer, and could not be used without upsetting the system of private property in the means of production.

B.J.—Then upset the system!

U.S.—That is the only thing to do. Let her rip!

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