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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {241}

By DANIEL DE LEON

Brother Jonathan looks bright and happy, and rubs his hands.

UNCLE SAM—What bit of good luck has fallen to you.

B.J.—I am going to Hawaii.

U.S.—Is't that that makes you so happy?

B.J.—Yes: I can't help feeling happy. Here I've been these last seven months without work. That in itself is bad enough. But it wouldn't be so bad if before that I had had good wages, and had been able to lay by something. It happens, though, that before that my wages were so low that I couldn't get along with them, and ran in debt. On top of that I was laid off. Pretty tough, I tell ye. I never went through such hard days.

U.S.—But what is it that makes you happy?

B.J.—Now after all this suffering I am going to have good times.

U.S.—Where? how? when?

B.J.—Where? in Hawaii; when? when I get there; how? because I can't miss good wages.

U.S.—Me seems you go too fast. Where have you got that certainty from?

B.J.—Don't you know that President Dole, of Hawaii, is in the country now?

U.S.—I do.

B.J.—And haven't you read what he said to a labor reporter in Washington?

U.S.—No; I haven't. Life is short; to spend that shortness in reading tomfoolery



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were too long.

B.J. (throws his arms up, tips his hat back, and looks wild generally)—Now, there you have it again. Here comes a good man, with good news to the workingmen, and you call that tomfoolery. Just like all you Socialists! Oh—

U.S.—Give us a rest with your whimperings, and let's see what that “good news to the workingmen” is.

B.J.—I have learned the passage by heart; so well did I like it; I can give it to you literally.

U.S.—Do, by all means.

B.J.—He said: “The climate is sub-tropical; that makes the conditions of life easy; then also the planters are rich and growing richer. Taking these two things into consideration there is nothing to prevent white labor from finding at all times profitable employment, work and high wages.” There, now!

U.S. raps with his knuckles on B.J.'s forehead.

B.J.—What are you doing?

U.S. (raps again)—Hollow! hollow!

B.J.—What are you at?

U.S.—Poor Jonathan! Because Hawaii has a “sub-tropical climate,” and because the planters are rich, therefore you believe you are there sure of work and of high wages?!

B.J.—Why not?

U.S.—Man alive, you don't need to go to Hawaii for a sub-tropical climate or for rich employers; we have both right here. Isn't Louisiana's climate sub-tropical enough for you?

B.J.—Well, it is sub-tropical.

U.S.—And has labor there steady and good employment?

B.J.—Darn it, no; it is just the low wages paid down there that our bosses are now giving as a ground for lowering ours up here.

U.S.—Well said. And are the bosses here and in the sub-tropical South not every bit as rich as the bosses of Hawaii?

B.J.—Guess they are richer.

U.S.—And yet that does not insure permanent work or good wages, does it?

B.J. falls into a brown study.

U.S.—Now, Jonathan, you have been working almost a life-time, and still you have not yet got hold of the lesson that your daily experience teaches on wages. You have not yet learned that the wages of the workingmen do not depend upon the wealth of their employer, in so far that their wages do not rise with his wealth, but that, on the contrary, the only relation that exists between them is that the richer the employer the poorer the workingman—

B.J.—What?!

U.S.—Are you now better off than 20 years ago?

B.J.—I'm worse off; but—

U.S.—Is your boss richer or poorer?

B.J.—Immensely richer.

U.S.—There you have it. Now the matter is this wise in a nutshell. The wages of the workingman don't depend upon the wealth of the boss or on the climate. The wages of the workingmen are the price of his {their?} labor; the price of all merchandise depends upon the supply and the demand; the more workers there are in a place the larger is the supply, and the lower are the wages. When President Dole tries to get you and other gudgeons to go to Hawaii, he does so to raise the supply of labor there and thus lower the wages. If he can get enough such gulls as you to go there you will have the chance to run about without work, and the enjoyment of Hawaii's sub-tropical climate as the only thing to live on.

B.J.—But—

U.S.—No "buts." You have been nursed on Gomperism and other stupidities; you have been stuffed for years with Republican and Democratic clap{-}trap. Your own experience has gone for nothing. And now that you have loyally allowed yourself to be humbugged here, you are ready to go to Hawaii and be humbugged there. I wish to heaven you did go, and relieved the movement here of the burden of your stupidity.

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

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