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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {184}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—"Tis getting worse and worse. More and more men out of work, more and more failures; more and more suicides; ever more misery. I wonder how long the people will put up with this nuisance of capitalism.

BROTHER JONATHAN—You and all Socialists are enlisted in a ridiculous campaign. You want to change the laws of nature. You can't do it. All these evils you complain of are natural.

U.S.—Are they more "natural" than for cholera microbes to kill?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—And yet you were running around wild a few years ago when some cholera ships arrived in port, to get muriatic acid to counteract the natural effect of the microbe. Are these social ills more "natural" than that lightning should burn up the house it strikes?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—And yet you have invested in lightning rods to counteract that effect of nature. Are these social ills more "natural" than those our forefathers were afflicted with under King George?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—And yet you applaud every Fourth of July the work of our Fathers in abating the "natural" effect of the King George nuisance. Now, please explain why, if all these things were not less "natural" than the social evil now complained about, and if, as you



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

admit, it was not ridiculous and is not ridiculous to enter a campaign against them, it suddenly becomes ridiculous for the Socialists to do so against existing social ills?

B.J.—Well, hem, you see—

U.S.—Yes, I see. I see that you don't know what you are talking about. There was a time in the history of man when disease, pestilence and famine, thunderbolts, hurricanes and tempests were looked upon as heavenly visitations, as punishments sent from above, which to submit to was pious and which to oppose was impious.

B.J.—People were then very ignorant, and superstitious.

U.S.—Yes, ignorant and superstitious. As fast as they overcame their ignorance and outgrew their superstition they cared not a rap whence these evils came and they went about guarding against them.

B.J.—Of course.

U.S.—Subsequently, we find a period in the history of man when he bowed down reverently before all the afflictions inflicted upon him by his kings. The latter he considered God-ordained, the former the deeds of God's own Vicar—

B.J.—Yes, but all that is over; people are no such fools any more.

U.S.—Indeed not. Enlightenment dispelled the notion that such evils were “natural” in the sense of inevitable. The people grabbed their kings by the slack of their pants and chased them down and out of the high places where they had power to make nuisances of themselves, despite all the king's {kings'??} howlings about such conduct being “unnatural.” How did that come about?

B.J.—Very naturally; people got tired of being ridden.

U.S.—Call it “getting tired” or anything else you may want. The fact is this: Even against visitations from heaven, which we can't prevent, like storms and such, we now take guard, however “natural” they are, and prevent with all our might that they kill us. We have gone further and have refused to accept as “natural” British tyranny, and set up our own government. Now, do you imagine that we will put up with being sucked dry by a capitalist system, plucked and plundered by it, kept in slavery and misery just because it exists and those who profit by it call it “natural”? Nixy! To be killed by a cholera microbe is “natural” enough if you let it get into you; but it is equally “natural” to kill the cholera microbe and thus prevent the “natural” effect of its activity. To be taxed to death

by a King George is “natural” enough if you allow him the power; but it is equally “natural” to throw him overboard and deprive him of the power. So with Capitalism—enforced idleness among the workers, low wages, misery, slavery, ruin to the middle classes, all of these are indeed quite “natural” so long as you allow capitalism to have its way; but it is equally “natural” to take the monster by the throat and end his reign of ruin. See? See?

B.J.’s eyes bulge out.

U.S.—The trouble with you is one of two things: Either you are still in that stage of moral subjection in which all our ancestors were at some remote time, when they blindly bent to wrong, thinking it was inflicted by God;

Or you are in that stage of perverse morality where you derive some benefit from existing wrong, and try to make people think that what you profit by is “natural”.

U.S. leaves B.J. standing and sucking his thumb, while he walks off whistling the tune of “Shoo fly, don’t bother me.”

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

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