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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {133}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I am disgusted.

UNCLE SAM—Whereat?

B.J.—At the stacks of rascals that are keeping the political pot boiling.

U.S.—Isn't that rather a reason the more for decent men to step in?

B.J.—No; I should say that it was reason enough for decent men to step out.

U.S.—If a lot of loafers were to get into your house, would you step out and leave a clear field for them to do and undo at their sweet will?

B.J.—No; I wouldn't; but that is a very different thing.

U.S.—It is?

B.J.—I should think so. My house is the place I live in; I should try and keep it clean from all vermin—two-legged as well as six and more-legged.

U.S.—And the country you live in, is not that a sort of house in which you dwell?

B.J.—Hem.

U.S.—If the rascals rule, is it not just as bad as if six-legged vermin swarm in your private house?

B.J. looks disconcerted.

U.S.—If the rascals hold the reins of government, are they likely to enact regulations that would hurt rascality and help decency?

B.J.—Guess not!



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U.S.—They would enact and enforce regulations to suit their rascally instincts?

B.J.—Every time.

U.S.—You would, if you found an inroad of cockroaches in your house take the field against them with a squirt full of “rough on cockroaches?”

B.J.—Yes—

U.S.—Not only you but your wife, and your daughter and your maid?

B.J.—Yes, we would all do so.

U.S.—And yet you will abstain from going on the political war path with a “rough on rascal” squirt?

B.J. scratches his head.

U.S.—You admit that with the rascals in possession, rascally regulations will be inflicted upon the people who inhabit a country; with capitalists, who are a sort of scorpions, in the government, do you imagine that the regulations they will enact will be to the disadvantage of capitalists?

B.J. has a far-off look.

U.S.—Does the capitalist perform any kind of work?

B.J.—Work?! Work?!

U.S.—Yes, work.

B.J. (angrily)—Damn them! They don’t know what work means; they run away from the bare idea of work as a man bitten by a dog runs from water; they are idlers, who live without work and have a notion that all we are there for is to work for them to riot in idleness and wealth. (Stamping his foot) How can you ask whether they “work”?

U.S. (whose eyes have been glistening during this angry outburst)—Correct! Now could these loafers live without work, in other words, sponge our property from us, unless they held the reigns of political power?

B.J.—Hem.

U.S.—Do you, I ask again, imagine that with these capitalists in power regulations will be enacted, much less enforced, that will clean this our national house from the plague of poverty?

B.J.’s head begins to drop.

U.S.—Do you imagine that they, having it in their power to make arrangements for

this our national house, will provide disinfectants, so to speak, against the plague of poverty with all its assistant and resultant plagues of insanity, crime, suicide, drunkenness, sickness, short lives for us, drudgery for our wives, prostitution and ignorance for our children?

B.J. looks much shaken.

U.S.—Your daughter Fanny—

B.J.—Stop! The crimes of this capitalist class, the sufferings it inflicts upon us, the cup of misery and degradation (his whole frame shaking) which it makes us drain to the very dregs—(he drops his head between his hands and sobs convulsively, uttering at times the words “Fanny!” “my daughter!”)

U.S.—Fanny is not your daughter alone; it is the flesh of the toilers’ flesh and bone of their bone that is suffering with her the shame she now bears. In her and in thousands of others the American proletariat lies in the slums, and their sons live virtually in chains, in chains and slums enacted and preserved by those who hold the political power and who are befouling this broad home of ours. Will you treat them more gently than you treat cockroaches? Will you step in against the comparatively harmless cockroach, but leave this death and shame dealing insect of capitalism the field free to spread and fasten his tentacles upon us?

B.J. sighs.

U.S.—It was a law enacted by the wise Athenian legislator Solon that in all commotions of the State every citizen should take a hand, and he who did not was guilty of treason. This was to balk the rascals. Thus every decent man was forced to participate in the affairs of the State, and thus the State was safe. The days of the “Thirty tyrants” were not possible for Athens until she allowed that law to be a dead letter.

B.J. (shakes himself out of the stupor into which he had fallen)—You are right! I talked the foolish talk of the sorely tried who sees no way out. No! I shall not, will not leave the field free for the rascals, I shall meet them in battle, on that battle-field of civilization—the hustings.

U.S.—And?

B.J.—And seek to pepper them with the hot shot of the Socialist Labor party ballot.

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