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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {314}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—What tomfoolery are you now again up to?

BROTHER JONATHAN—In what way?

U.S.—I'm told you are going to join a Bryan club. That's tomfoolery enough, I'm sure, for any workingman.

B.J.—Oh, you make me tired! I suppose you would like me to join your Socialist Labor Party!

U.S.—That would be sensible, indeed! So sensible that I couldn't quite expect it from you, as yet. But I thought you'd sense enough to stay away from any of the capitalist parties that you have been flopping over to for the last ten years, and each of which has in turn betrayed you.

B.J. (*with a condescending nod of the head*)—You see it is this way: You Socialists are right. You have the right theory. But, Lord, how impractical you are! Your route goes too slow. It will take an awful long time before you educate the people and get there. Socialism is too slow. We want to move on faster. This slow system of education will never do the work. I want to get there by a leap.

U.S.—Hem!

B.J.—By the way. I want you to join our new Union.

U.S.—On what principles have you organized it?

B.J.—“Principles”?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—Yes, “principles.” The question seems to surprise you. Do you ever start a thing without some principle?

B.J.—Well, I don’t know about “principles.” What we want is to get up a Union of our trade. Bring in all the men. Strike for higher wages—

U.S.—And get left? With nobody at the end of the strike having anything to show for it except the salaried officers?

B.J. (*impatiently*)—Well, what would you have us do? Would you have us remain unorganized so that the boss could grind us down?

U.S.—Oh, no! I believe in organization. But there is “organization” and “organization.” I believe in “organization” that is organization; I don’t believe in a thing called “organization” that leaves you more helpless than before, like all these pure and simple, old-style British Unions, that have presided over the steady degradation of us working people.

B.J.—Well, how would you have us organize?

U.S.—I would like to see an organization of our craft where the men know what the issue is between Capital and Labor; where they understand that there is no salvation for them unless they themselves own their machinery of production; where they understand that, the way things now stand, they can’t even improve their condition, unless, with every palliative that they strive for and get, they keep in mind the necessity of pushing on to the conquest of the public powers; where they understand that a Union is only a capitalist device to paralyze the Labor Movement unless the Union operates hand in hand with a class-conscious Labor Party. In short, I would like to see a Union planted on the principles of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance: fighting the capitalist in the shop, and on election day march with the Socialist Labor Party to the ballot-box and smite the capitalist plunderer. That would be an organization. All else is moonshine.

B.J. (*who all the while was listening with perceptibly increasing impatience*)—Oh, you make me tired! That’s the way with you. You Socialists want to rush ahead. You don’t stop to think that all these things that you mention require time. It requires education; slow work; we can’t get there by leaps. You Socialists are too hasty.

U.S. (*grabbing B.J. by the collar, turns him around and administers to him three kicks that set him howling*)—Go away, for a fraud that you are! Only a minute ago you maintained that we Socialists believed in too slow a method, seeing that we believe in

educating the people; and now you claim we are too hasty. Only a minute ago you were for leaping forward, and now you are for crawling backward. Begone! You are a type of your species. You look for pretexts to do that which will line your pockets at the expense of the rest of us workingmen. You know the Socialists are right in teachings, aims and methods. But these aims, tactics and methods don't suit YOU, simply because you have crooked schemes, and therefore you libel the Socialists.

B.J.—Lemme go!

U.S.—Not yet, you double-faced fakir! Not before you tell me exactly what dirty politician has you in pay this trip, and what leech of a capitalist has you on his pension list. Just cough up the secret, or I'll kick you black and blue for trying the confidence game on me.

B.J. (*collapsed like a dishclout*)—Well, I'll tell you. Pat Keenan—

U.S.—The Tammany ward politician of the 16th A.D.?

B.J.—Yes, he is paying me for booming Bryan, and the capitalists who are with him want me to get up Unions that will pass resolutions for their political candidates this fall. Now, lemme go!

U.S. (*gives him a parting kick*)—Go; and if I catch you at this dirty work again, wherever it may be, I'll expose you for what you are,—a lackey of the fleecers of your class. Go!

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