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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {33-34}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—So, then, there will be no strike on the Northern Pacific road; the Courts have enjoined the men from striking!

UNCLE SAM—Yes; and if the working people fool much longer, or allow themselves to be fooled much longer and stay away from the Socialist Labor party, THEY WILL YET BE ENJOINED FROM VOTING.

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BROTHER JONATHAN—I would hang them all!

UNCLE SAM—Whom?

B.J.—The scabs; the idle workmen.

U.S.—Do you think there is rope enough in the country to do that? There are every bit of 5,000,000 of them.

B.J.—I am not joking; they are a nuisance; they are a pest.

U.S.—You look wild, and you talk wilder.

B.J.—I am not talking wild; but I am wild, and so ought you to be.

U.S.—Not I; at least not upon the idle man. Why should I?

B.J.—I'll tell you. See here! Here is a speech by President Prescott of the International Typographical Union. This is what he says: "No combination of employers, however grasping and heartless, can inflict upon us the injury that it is possible for idle craftsmen to impose." Now deny that such fellows are a pest.

U.S.—Where did these fellows come from?

B.J.—From . . . hem . . . from . . .



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—Well, I'll tell you. The employers combine and set up joint affairs. Just as soon as they do that they don't need to compete any more with one another. So long as they compete with one another they need more establishments and, of course, more hands. With fewer establishments, fewer hands are wanted. The hands that are not wanted go . . .

B.J.—On the street.

U.S.—Just so; they go into the army of the unemployed, and hunger may drive them to become scabs.

B.J.—Is that the cause of the unemployed?

U.S.—One of the causes. Here is another. Machinery and perfected machinery is ever bringing new streams of recruits into the army of idle workmen. The type setting machine is throwing hundreds of type setters out of work. In agriculture, each patent binder throws nearly 20 men out of work, each cotton harvester throws out 38 men, each steam plow throws out 21 men, and so forth; in the industrial field, each riveting machine throws out 21 men, each grain elevator on the Mersey docks throws out 31, each steam roller with patent pick throws out from 18 to 38 men, each pneumatic spraying machine on the Chicago exhibition buildings threw out 3,700 painters, the Owen lehr machine in the glass industry throws out all the carrying-in hands, the machinery employed in the manufacture of agricultural machinery throws out 1,555 men . . .

B.J.—Stop! For heaven's sake, stop!

U.S.—Keep cool; I have only just begun. The “tumbler-smoother” throws out 3 hands; each machine in the shoe industry throws out 8 men, each stone planing machine throws out 7 men and hundreds of them are now being thrown out of work on the stone yards by this new invention, in lace-making the machine throws out 2,000 women, in paper-making the machine throws out 140 hands, in weaving threads the machine throws out 1,099 hands, when the cotton harvester will be in full swing it alone will have thrown out 660,000 hands . . .

B.J.—Stop! Stop!

U.S.—Have you got enough?

B.J.—Guess I have!

U.S.—Some of these people, thrown out by machinery, find employment in the building of new machinery, but not all. In the production of machinery itself there is a displacement of 25 per cent. of hands. Thus the sea of idle craftsmen is fed by steady and swelling streams, while it is tapped by very slim outlets. Such, Brother Jonathan, is the effect of the capitalist system of production under which the machine, instead of being owned and operated by the people for their use, as we Socialists demand, is owned by private individuals for their private profit at the cost of the people's welfare.

B.J.—Then these machines . . .

U.S.—Hold, I am not yet through with your first argument. Yonder lies a man murdered with a dagger in his heart. Whom would you arraign before the courts, the dagger itself or the man who drove it?

B.J.—Why, the man!

U.S.—Who is the “nuisance”{,} who the “pest”, the dagger or the murderer{?}

B.J.—Why the murderer!

U.S.—Whom would you hang, the . . .

B.J.—I give in, I give in; I made an ass of myself.

U.S.—The unemployed, aye, the “scabs” included, are the dagger wielded by the capitalist system to stab the working class with. They are the unconscious instruments of the capitalist class, and that is the criminal we should remove. The capitalists would like nothing better than to be left alone and have people wear themselves out fighting the effects of capitalist misrule. Every one, aye, the pure and simple trade unionists included, who do so much kicking against the “scab” and the unemployed, every one who does not labor to overthrow the capitalist system and rear the Co-operative or Socialist Commonwealth, everyone who by pen, word or vote throws his weight into the capitalist and withholds it from the Socialist scale—such is the real criminal to-day, a foe to himself, to his family, to his country and to mankind.

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