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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {83–84}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—There are some things I don't like in Socialism.

UNCLE SAM—Which, for instance and to wit?

B.J.—The idea of compulsion.

U.S.—Is there any compulsion in Socialism?

B.J.—Certainly, their “co-operation” is not “voluntary” co-operation. I believe in voluntary, not compulsory, co-operation. Compulsory co-operation is dictatorial. I'll none of it.

U.S.—Do you hold that what you are “compelled” to do is under all circumstances “dictatorial?”

B.J.—Certainly.

U.S.—Could you live with your head under water?

B.J.—Not I.

U.S.—Could you move by flying?

B.J.—Nay.

U.S.—You are “compelled” to live above water and to move with your feet, eh?

B.J.—Certainly. That is a result of man's physical condition.

U.S.—You would not, then, consider it dictatorial that you must walk and can't fly, that you must breathe air and not do the fish act.

B.J.—Of course not, there is no dictatorship in that.

U.S.—You then admit that not all that you are “compelled” to do is “dictatorial?”

B.J.—No, not all. As I stated just now, what my physical or natural condition requires I must submit to and don't think it a hardship.

U.S.—And submit to gladly?

B.J.—Yes. Gladly.

U.S.—The first question you must then put to yourself in this instance is this: “Do social conditions give me any choice?”

B.J.—Why should they not?

U.S.—We’ll see. If you had the choice to live under water you would change {charge?} about like the hippopotamus—

B.J.—Guess I would.

U.S.—Having no choice you stay above water?

B.J.—All I can.

U.S.—Now, then, I shall show that social conditions are as compulsory upon man as physical ones. Can you live and do your work unless the shoemaker, the tailor, the bricklayer, the coal miner and so forth worked and supplied you with what you need?

B.J.—No, but neither could they live unless I and other working farmers supplied them with food.

U.S.—Exactly. You are all dependent the one on the other?

B.J.—Y—e—s.

U.S.—You are co-operating?

B.J.—Y—e—s.

U.S.—You are COMPELLED to co-operate?

B.J.—Hem, by Jericho, ’tis so.

U.S.—Do you feel under any dictatorship?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—The prevalent method of production and distribution brought on by the tools of production establishes social conditions from which man can escape as little as he can escape from physical conditions. Already in its very infancy capitalism thrusts co-operation upon man; now that the means of production has become such that no one man can operate them alone and that it takes the whole of society to conduct the work of production and distribution, the co-operative feature of life has become most pronounced. Man has now no more choice whether he will co-operate or not than whether he will live under water or not.

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BROTHER JONATHAN—We have often touched on the money question.

UNCLE SAM—You don't propose to bring it up again?

B.J.—Don't be afraid that I have relapsed. I shan't bring up the question about the value of money. You have satisfied me fully that the goldbugs lie when they say money must ALWAYS have intrinsic value; it need not where it can be used as a legal tender; you have also proved to me that the 16 to 1 or cheap money coinagists are off when they claim money NEVER has any intrinsic value; it must have that when used as a medium of exchange.

U.S.—What is it you want now?

B.J.—Granted all that, there is still this point. Free coinagists claim that an increase in the volume of money has a positive good effect on the wage workers. Here is the *Midland Journal*, for instance, that says so, and in proof it quotes the experience during the war; it says that the standard of wages “was the result of plenty of money, good times and high prices.” Is that so?

U.S.—That is not so. The *Journal* reasons faultily.

B.J.—How?

U.S.—When you got drunk last 4th of July did you get drunk because your children were firing firecrackers or because you took in a gallon or two of whisky?

B.J.—(Looks guilty.) I wish you would forget that spree; you were none too sober yourself, and part of that whisky you took in.

U.S.—Answer me; was it the firecrackers or the whisky that set you singing?

B.J.—Why, the whisky, of course.

U.S.—Would you have got hilarious if there had been firecrackers only?

B.J.—Of course not.

U.S.—What would you think of one who thought that you got jolly because firecrackers went off?

B.J.—I would think he was crazy.

U.S.—Well, now, money could have been as plentiful as blackberries in '60-'65, and wages would have remained low and times bad (they were very low and very bad just before the war) were it not for the “war factory” which engaged the labors of 1,000,000 and more soldier “hands.” That tremendous outlet for labor sapped the industrial labor market; it enabled the workers to demand higher wages; it and not the increased volume

of money brought on “good times.” To say that the increased volume of money did it is just as crazy as it would be to claim that you rolled under the table in your parlor on July 4th because your children were firing firecrackers a block off.

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

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