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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM AND BROTHER JONATHAN. {336}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—I hope, Jonathan, that this election you will strike a blow for freedom, and vote Malloney and Rimmel, straight down the Socialist Labor Party ticket.

BROTHER JONATHAN—No, I won't!

U.S.—You prefer to remain in wage slavery?

B.J.—I can't "remain" in what I am not. I am not a slave, "wage" or otherwise.

U.S.—Oh, you innocent abroad!

B.J.—See here, you Socialists would do a good deal better if you did not exaggerate. This calling of people "slaves" does you no good. No man here is a slave. No one will believe you. Stick to reforms, and don't try to be radical, especially where there is nothing to be radical about. We are free, not slaves.

U.S.—Are you through with your assertions?

B.J.—Quite through.

U.S.—Now answer me a few questions.

B.J. (with a cocksure toss of the head)—As many as you like.

U.S.—What does that baker over there live by?

B.J.—He lives by selling bread.

U.S.—And that hatter across the way?

B.J.—By selling hats.

U.S.—And yonder woman at the fruit-stand?

B.J.—By selling fruit.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—And that motorman on the car that just went by?

B.J. (looking puzzled for a while)—He? Hem! Why, he lives on his wages.

U.S.—Do wages grow on him like apples on apple-trees?

B.J.—How you talk! Wages don't "grow" on him; he receives wages from his employer.

U.S.—The same as the baker receives pay for his bread from his customers?

B.J.—Just the same.

U.S.—And the same as the hatter receives pay for his hat from his customers?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—And the same as that woman at the fruit-stand receives pay for her fruit from her customers?

B.J.—Just the same.

U.S.—Accordingly, that motorman has a customer, and has a merchandise that he sells to the customer.

B.J.—Yes. His customer is his employer.

U.S.—And what is the merchandise that he sells?

B.J.—His labor.

U.S.—Just so. The motorman's merchandise is labor-power. By selling the merchandise of their trade people live. Not so?

B.J.—Why, yes. Everybody knows that.

U.S.—Now, let us look at these owners of merchandise and their stock in trade a little closer. You see that baker?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—If he were to die, would his merchandise bread die with him?

B.J. (derisively)—No.

U.S.—And if his merchandise bread were to be destroyed, would that kill him?

B.J.—Nonsense! It wouldn't.

U.S.—And that hatter, say he died, would that kill his hats?

B.J.—Not a bit!

U.S.—And if his hats were to burn up, would that burn him up?

B.J.—No sir!

U.S.—And what about that fruit-woman. Would she rot, if her fruit rotted?

B.J.—Not necessarily.

U.S.—Nor would her fruit turn angels in heaven if she handed in her checks?

B.J.—No it wouldn't.

U.S.—And now take up that motorman once more. Say that he died, would that affect his merchandise labor-power?

B.J. (begins to realize that something is up)—Affect his labor-power? Why of course it would affect it. His labor-power would be gone.

U.S.—And say his merchandise labor-power were destroyed, what of him?

B.J. (meditatively)—That would cook his hash!

U.S.—Now, I guess, we have facts enough in Court. People live by selling their merchandise. The only merchandise of the workingman is labor-power. That merchandise differs from all others. All other merchandise is outside of its seller. This merchandise is inside of the seller; it is interwoven in all his tissues, it is part and parcel of him. You have admitted all this. Now, sir, when the workingman sells his merchandise labor-power, does he or does he not SELL HIMSELF?

B.J. (with bulging eyes)—Right you are! He sells himself.

U.S.—Is he slave or not?

B.J.—I can't deny it.

U.S.—Is there then a condition of slavery out of which he should try to get?

B.J.—There is!

U.S.—From now on, till election day and down to the moment that you cast your vote, just think of this proposition.

“Shall I vote for Bryan or McKinley, when both uphold the social system that condemns me to wage-slavery? Or shall I vote the Socialist Labor Party ticket, and, by supporting Malloney and Rimmel, strike a blow for freedom?”

Think it out.

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