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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {90-91}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I think Socialists would make decidedly more progress if they would do a certain thing.

UNCLE SAM—Which?

B.J.—They should define accurately the Co-operative Commonwealth.

U.S.—How define?

B.J.—They should describe accurately how things will be instituted, the organization of society, how the various wheels will look and how they will operate. Do you catch on?

U.S.—Guess I do.

B.J.—You agree?

U.S.—Let's see. You know all about Columbus, don't you?

B.J.—I know some; he discovered America.

U.S.—You know, too, that he went from court to court, from country to country, stating his conclusion that by traveling westward he would strike land?

B.J.—Exactly.

U.S.—Was he believed by all who heard him?

B.J.—No, indeed; he had a hard time of it to make people understand the soundness of his views.

U.S.—Now, imagine some smarty, like yourself, had drawn him aside and whispered confidentially to him: "Columbus, you are not making any great headway in convincing people. You would make decidedly more progress if you would draw up a



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map of the land that you say lies westward; point out exactly how the coast looks; where the mountains rise and how high; the lakes, the rivers, the plains, the highlands. If you did that people would soon be converted.” How do you imagine Columbus would have looked upon that friendly adviser?

B.J.—He must have looked upon him as any one does at a donkey braying.

U.S.—Correct. And why?

B.J.—Why? Because it was suggesting an impossibility.

U.S.—And so is your suggestion. Columbus reasoned that, the world being round, if you traveled westward you were bound to reach land; the shape of that land could not be described. Likewise, the Socialist. He reasons that the system of the ownership must tally with the system of operation of the tools of production. When the tools were so small that each individual could operate them they were owned individually, i.e., privately. Now, they have become so gigantic that they neither can nor are operated individually; they are operated collectively, consequently they must be owned—

B.J.—As collectively as they are operated.

U.S.—As the whole nation now collectively operates its land and capital, so should and will the whole nation, and not a set of individuals, be the owners thereof. The Socialist were foolish if he went a step further than to show what is coming and why. Like Columbus, he says the Co-operative Commonwealth lies ahead of us, and, like Columbus, who never attempted to give the details of the land, the Socialist will refuse to palm off dreams for facts.

B.J.—I see.

U.S.—But look you here. Between the Socialist and Columbus there is this difference. Europe could have gone on without the discovery of America; but civilization cannot go on without the Co-operative or Socialist Commonwealth. That Socialist would be wasting his time who did not concentrate all his efforts in the endeavor to demonstrate that Socialism is inevitable, and no sensible man wants or needs further information on the subject than the broad outline of the public ownership of all that is needed for producing the necessities of life.

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BROTHER JONATHAN—Wasn't this last election a glorious victory for the Republicans?

UNCLE SAM—I don't see it in that light.

B.J.—Why they increased their—

U.S.—Vote?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—Not much.

B.J.—Why, they beat the Democrats almost everywhere.

U.S.—Yes, and when you figure up the totals and compare them with the last national elections you will find that the glorious part of it consists in the fact that the total poll fell off tremendously.

B.J.—Fell off?

U.S.—Yes. People stayed at home.

B.J.—What fools.

U.S.—Not quite that. The staying at home is only the first step toward progress. The man who was wedded to his Republican or Democratic party cannot, in most cases, be suddenly wrenched away and induced to vote the Socialist Labor party's ticket. The first step in the Socialist direction is for the old party man to stay at home.

B.J.—The second is for him to come out and vote the S.L.P. ticket?

U.S.—Exactly. Look out for a stampede our way in 1896. Between now and then the people will have a pretty good taste of Republicanism. Cured of Democracy and weaned from the Republican party, their eyes will see clearly that they must rank themselves with those who want to uproot the capitalist and establish the Socialist system of society.

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