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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {134}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—Jonathan, next Tuesday is election day, I trust you will do your duty and vote the ticket of the Socialist Labor party.

BROTHER JONATHAN (testily)—I am a free American citizen; the free American citizen votes as he pleases, without compulsion, however slight that compulsion may be, or suasive the manner in which compulsion is attempted.

U.S.—Does the freedom, as you call it, of the American citizen consist only in his freedom to vote as he pleases? Has he no other rights?

B.J.—Of course he has.

U.S.—He has the right to cut off his own ears, has he not?

B.J. (with a puzzled look)—Guess there is no law against that.

U.S.—And he has the right to slit his nose, eh?

B.J. (puzzled once more)—Guess so.

U.S.—And what would you say of the free man who exercised such rights?

B.J.—That he was crazy.

U.S.—And what would you say of him if, fearing that he was about to crop his ears and doing some such other crazy act of freedom, you were to argue with him and try to convince him not to do such things, and then he were to flare up against you, as you have done just now, and testily inform you that he was a “free American citizen and was not going to be bulldozed?”



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—That's not a parallel case with voting.

U.S.—It isn't? Let's see.

You are a workingman, a trolleyman; your employers are squeezing now out of you three dollars for every four that you produce; they are not satisfied with that, they want more; to get more they must work you longer hours; there is a law forbidding more than ten hours' work a day in your trade; they break that law, and demand of you twelve and more hours; you strike, and while you are at strike the parties you put into power send the militia down upon you and shoot a bullet clean through you.

B.J.—And that's just what they did, the scoundrels—

U.S.—Did they fire that shot?

B.J.—Who else?

U.S.—Did they drive you down, keeping you at starvation wages, thereby bringing sickness and death into your family?

B.J.—They, of course; who else?

U.S.—No; it was not THEY; it was YOURSELF that shot yourself; it was YOURSELF that introduced sickness and death into your household!

B.J.—I declare!

U.S.—Is it the gun that fires the shot or the man who pulled the trigger?

B.J.—The man, of course.

U.S.—And would that man have pulled the trigger if he was not ordered in the field by his superior?

B.J.—Guess not.

U.S.—Consequently, as far as we have got, it is his superior who started the shot?

B.J.—Y-e-s.

U.S.—And who was that superior, was it not the political party in power, the Governor of the State?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—And would the Governor have ordered the men in the field who pulled the trigger, would the Governor have started the shooting if he had not been elected?

B.J. (weakening perceptibly)—N-n-o.

U.S.—Now, Jonathan, raise your head and look in my face: Would that Governor

have been there in a position to order out the men, i.e., in a position to start the shooting, if the workers had not voted him and his two capitalist parties into power to back him up?

B.J.—Candidly, he would not.

U.S.—Then it was the workers themselves who did that that was necessary to start all their hardships; it is they who mutilated, shot and outraged themselves. Wonderful freedom that is.

B.J. remains silent.

U.S.—Are the two cases paralleled or not?

B.J.—They are! By Jericho, they are!

U.S.—Will you then listen to arguments, and allow yourself to be “bulldozed” into voting the Socialist ticket?

B.J. (shaking U.S. by the hand)—Yes, and gladly, and I am only too sorry you did not long ago give me this laying out.

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