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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {293}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—There is a snag that the Socialists are bound to run up against; and when they do, up the spout they'll go.

UNCLE SAM—Why, that's interesting. We are of the opinion that we have clean sailing before us.

B.J.—Not much; and I'll show you. If the Socialists get into power their aim will be to acquire possession of the present machinery of production.

U.S.—For the people; yes.

B.J.—And they are not going to send policemen and troops to oust the present possessors without further ado: they will put their acts upon a legal basis, otherwise their example of violence would instigate the most violent passions from their own camp-followers; that might be found difficult to curb. I know that Socialists seek the most peaceful solution possible; they are not going to set the example or give a color for violence; eh?

U.S.—I don't know just what you are driving at, or have in mind by all that. But, to help you to a head, I'll say, Yes, we shall certainly put our acts upon a legal basis; what then?

B.J.—Then you will be caught tight.

U.S.—How so?

B.J.—Because there isn't money enough in the country to buy out legally the present capitalists. Thus you will stand before the alternative of either taking forcible possession by confiscatory procedure, or to give up the plan of acquiring possession being unable to



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do so legally.

U.S.—Heavens! Are you there yet? Why, man, this objection about “confiscation” has been flattened out flatter than a pancake—

B.J.—Then you mean to confiscate?

U.S.—I shall leave that question aside for two reasons: First, because it has been amply answered before; but secondly, and above all, because the point you raise about “buying out” the capitalists is a peculiarly interesting one. I shall meet it with a broad-side-of-the-wedge answer: There will be no want of money to buy out your Messrs. Capitalists—

B.J. staggers back with a grunt of amazement.

U.S.—And by the most approved legal and lawful style, too.

B.J. (beside himself with wonderment)—How? How? Your Congress and Legislatures will have to appoint Committees to appraise that capital; the capital in the country is worth billions upon billions; where will you get that money from? Where—

U.S.—Not so fast. We SHALL appoint Committees to appraise—

B.J. (testily)—And there you will die!

U.S.—Let’s see. The following has happened in Massachusetts only last month: a stock-holder in a Massachusetts manufacturing concern, that was pretty low down and paying no dividends, received notice of an assessment of \$100 per share. Surprised, he asked the reason for this unexpected move. One in whom he had confidence told him: “Pay the assessment and keep still.” This he did. Pretty soon he received a stock dividend of—how much do you imagine?—of \$100 PER SHARE! Do you catch on, what that means?

B.J.—I can’t say I do; I am not familiar with stock transactions.

U.S.—Well it means this: The capital of the corporation had been doubled by water; the assessment had the appearance of a bona fide doubling the capital; but by returning the whole of the assessment, under the fraudulent guise of “stock dividends,” the original capital actually remained the same. Do you understand?

B.J.—Guess I do, now.

U.S.—Now, then, this watered wealth goes into the billions that capital is made to appear as being “worth”; it swells the total of the money that the capitalist class claims

for its plants. Now, do you imagine that our “Committees on Appraisalment” will allow such fraudulent values to be foisted on them.

B.J.—They shouldn’t!

U.S.—Neither will they. To begin with, all this fraudulent “water” will be squeezed out by our “Committees on Appraisalment.” It is safe to say that there goes two-thirds of the billions upon billions to be bought out. Stick a pin there.

B.J.—But that don’t dispose of but a part of the value of the plants.

U.S.—Of a very good part. Now as to the other parts. There is not one capitalist concern in the land that has not defrauded the Government of taxes. The amounts of these taxes, that the Government has been cheated out of, alone runs up to hundreds of thousands, aye, into the millions.

B.J.—Guess there is a good deal in that.

U.S.—Do you imagine that our “Committees on Appraisalment” won’t look into that item, ascertain it, calculate the interest due on it, and deduct the whole gross sum from the amount that remains after the water is squeezed out?

B.J.—Guess not.

U.S.—That done, do you imagine that our “Committee on Appraisalment” will neglect to look into all the violations of law, of which not one of these capitalist concerns is innocent?

B.J.—Would they?

U.S.—Bet your eye-balls they will. Leave it to that Committee, a veritable Committee of Safety, with the Law in their hands, the very laws passed by that brigand class of Capitalists to hoodwink the workers with, that “Committee on Appraisalment” will cause these violators of the Law—who, by their violations of the Law have often and again caused the loss of life besides the loss of limbs—, to pay the full penalty of their misdemeanors and felonies both by fines and imprisonments—

B.J.—But, at that rate, there will be hardly anything left to pay—

U.S.—You now discover that your “snag” is no snag ahead for Socialism?

B.J.—I begin to realize that.

U.S. (with a devout look)—And that the whole thing can be done very lawfully?

B.J.—Yes, indeed; without a jar.

U.S.—And you perceive also that there will be no danger of a money famine to buy out the capitalists?

B.J.—“Money famine”!? I should say, no. That “Committee on Appraisement” will positively make money easy. The price of the plants will have been paid off clean.

U.S. (sympathetically)—No; not entirely. There may be a balance of a nickle in favor of the capitalists, and that amount will be religiously paid over to those of them who have not landed in jail. Do you see?

B.J.—I see.

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