



DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {257}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I don't object to Socialism; what I object to is to the style of its propaganda.

UNCLE SAM—For instance?

B.J.—For instance: the moment a Socialist opens his mouth, he must tell you you are a slave, a “wage-slave” he calls it.

U.S.—Would you prefer him to keep the information for the end?

B.J.—Not at all; I don't want to hear that I am a slave, whether at the beginning or the end.

U.S.—But suppose you are a slave?

B.J.—But I am not.

U.S.—Do you employ yourself?

B.J.—No; but that don't make me a slave.

U.S.—Do you imagine that the capitalist who employs you would employ you and pay you wages if you produced less than he pays you?

B.J.—Well—no—not exactly.

U.S.—Nor otherwise. He employs you because you produce more than he pays you. You produce, we shall say, \$4 worth of wealth a day and he gives you back \$1 worth in wages.

B.J.—I have an idea he makes out of me more than that.

U.S.—So much the worse. Out of the \$4 worth that you produce he deprives you of \$3.



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B.J.—He surely does that.

U.S.—And that is why you are a slave, and that proves it.

B.J.—Not much, it don't; I'm not a slave; I am a free-born American.

U.S.—Do you know what is a slave? Just define the word.

B.J.—Well—a slave is; hem! Yes; a slave—let me see. A slave—well.

U.S.—You evidently find a good deal of difficulty to hit upon a definition. That always is a sign of man's being confused in his thoughts if he can't define his words. I'll tell you what a slave is: A slave is a human being who is forced to yield to another a part of the wealth he produces. The negro was a slave, not because his master could wallop him and brand him with hot irons, but because he was forced to yield part of the wealth he produced to that master. It was upon what he produced that the master lived; and he had to put up with the dry crust that his master left him.

B.J.—Well, that's so.

U.S.—I should smile "so." That that negro, besides being deprived of the bulk of his product and kept in dire poverty, was also walloped, and otherwise maltreated, was only an intensification of slavery. His slavery was complete by his having to work for another. And that is your case and that of all workingmen. The wealth that you produce you are not allowed to keep. You must yield a part of, and a pretty big chunk of it, to somebody else. If you don't like it, you must starve; you can't earn your living without you submit to the condition of a slave, without you sell yourself in wage slavery. And that's all there is about it.

B.J.—That's not all there is about it.

U.S.—What else is there about it?

B.J.—A good deal.

U.S.—Let's hear it.

B.J.—I'll tell you. I would be a slave indeed, being a workingman, but for one thing—

U.S.—And that is?

B.J.—But for one thing that I can do and the negro couldn't.

U.S.—And what's that?

B.J.—The negro had to stay where he was; but if one employer don't suit me I can

shake him and hunt up another, see?

U.S. (breaks out in a horse-laugh)—No, I don't see, and you either. See here, you innocence: Was the negro a slave because of a certain master or because he had to yield the sweat of his brow to a master?

B.J.—Because he had to sweat for his master—

U.S.—For A master.

B.J.—Well, yes; for A master.

U.S.—It mattered not who was the master, the negro was SLAVE.

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—And that's just your case. You may shake off a master; but unless you are willing to starve, you must forthwith look for another,—and there you are in slavery.

B.J.—The deuce!

U.S.—How do you like it?

B.J. (in a collapsed condition)—I'm done for!

U.S.—No; you are not. A slave you are, a wage-slave; all workingmen, all employees, whether they work intellectually or manually, are wage-slaves. But they are not done for unless they want to. All of us wage-slaves have a ballot in our hands. With that ballot we can free ourselves if we plump it for that political platform that demands the unconditional surrender of the capitalist class. That's the only difference between us and the negro of old. And rightly do the Socialists proceed when they emphasize the fact that we ARE SLAVES. It may shock us; but we need a shock to awaken us from our stupor.

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

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