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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {104}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I'm going to turn Populist. I'm going to vote the Populist ticket next time.

UNCLE SAM—Weathercocks are moved by the wind. But there is not even the gentlest breeze blowing that way to turn you in that direction.

B.J.—Not the gentlest breeze? Quite a strong gale, I tell you.

U.S.—I don't feel it, and I am considerably taller than you.

B.J.—The Populist party was born long after Socialism was known, and yet all its youth notwithstanding it has got clear ahead of your S.L.P. It has Senators and Representatives in Congress. You can't show up one.

U.S.—And is that your reason?

B.J.—It is, and quite enough.

U.S.—What is it you are after? A man to draw the salary of Senator or a man to do Senatorial work in behalf of your ideas?

B.J.—A Senator to push my plans.

U.S.—Would you consider that you got what you want if a Senator goes dead against your views?

B.J.—Of course not.

U.S.—Would you brag about such a Senator?

B.J.—Brag? I would feel heartily ashamed of him.

U.S.—You would sooner hide the fact that you had helped in electing him than



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announce it from the housetops?

B.J.—Most assuredly.

U.S.—You are blowing about your Populist Senators?

B.J.—Yes; we have several; you have none.

U.S.—Now, how about your Senator Allen? Very proud of him, are you?

B.J.—Of course.

U.S.—Well, in January he made a speech in the Senate for which he has been kicked from one end of the country to the other by the Pops themselves. He stated their “principles.” Your principles are Socialist—

B.J.—They are.

U.S.—Well, all the principles he mentioned, claiming them to be the Populist principles, were money, money, money and glittering generalities.

B.J.—The devil you say!

U.S.—Then you have another precious specimen, Peffer.

B.J.—Isn’t he a hunky boy?

U.S.—Let’s see. One of the principles he announces is that the employer has the right to employ and DISCHARGE HIS MEN AT WILL. How is that for a labor principle?

B.J.—Why, that’s a capitalist principle!

U.S.—Exactly.

B.J.—And he utters such?

U.S.—Yes, in the report of the committee appointed to investigate the Homestead strike.

B.J. looks crestfallen.

U.S.—But that’s not all. He also declares that the boycott is an “illegal interference with the rights of a firm.” How is that for a chunk of capitalism?

B.J.—It can’t be beat!

U.S.—Are you still very proud of your Senators?

B.J.—Can’t say I am.

U.S.—Then you have Congressman Howard.

B.J.—Ain’t he all right?

U.S.—He may be, and surely is, for the silver mine barons who want to make 52

cents on every dollar, while they pay their miners less than a dollar a day.

B.J.—Is money all he talks about?

U.S.—Exclusively, and he damns everything else. How do you like it? Feel proud of him?

B.J.—Can't say I do.

U.S.—Now, let me tell you a story that you and those who talk like you put me in mind of. It is this:

A certain down East sea captain sailed one day out of Boston harbor bound for Liverpool. He had counted upon a favorable wind, but the wind was dead against him from the start. He was an impatient man, and, as you will perceive, not overloaded with good sense. He gnashed his teeth and tacked northwardly. The next day the wind continued adverse, and he tacked southwardly, his teeth set still more firmly. The third day no better luck, and again he steered northwardly, a growl beginning to escape from him. The fourth day came, and the wind blew dead ahead still, stiffer than before. The captain lost all patience; he threw his cap down on the quarter deck with a big oath, with a bigger oath he swore he WOULD have a favorable wind anyhow, and, ordering ship about, he sailed with a fine spanking breeze on hind quarters—where do you think to? Back into Boston harbor—just as such Populists as you are steering right back into capitalism out of an anxiety to have “Senators and Congressmen” anyhow.

B.J. raises his right leg and gives his left leg a kick; lets down his right leg, lifts his left and gives his right leg a kick.

U.S.—What are you doing?

B.J.—Kicking myself for having made an ass of myself.

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

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