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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {305}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN (with eager look)—Have you time now to take up that platform of Jones? You were telling me it was no good.

UNCLE SAM—So I said. I'm willing to give you a few minutes now.

B.J.—Did you read his motto:—"I claim no privilege for myself or for my children that I am not doing my utmost to secure for all others on equal terms." Is not that beautiful?

U.S.—Yes, if it were not fraudulent, as applied by him.

B.J. (somewhat nettled)—How can you say that?

U.S.—I'll show you clear enough. But let's first take up that platform. Then you will perceive the fraud of that motto.

B.J.—Very well.

U.S.—His platform demands the "public ownership of all public utilities—"

B.J.—Don't you Socialists demand that, too?

U.S.—Indeed, we do; only that, when we say "public ownership," we mean PUBLIC OWNERSHIP; when we say "all public utilities," we mean ALL PUBLIC UTILITIES;—"

B.J.—And don't Jones?

U.S.—No.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—I declare!

U.S.—Listen to what he says himself, in that same plank of his platform—

B.J.—Well, what does he say?

U.S.—He proceeds to explain what he means by “public ownership” and what he means by “all public utilities.”

B.J.—Where?

U.S.—Right here. (Holding under B.J.’s nose Jones’s platform, and reading from plank 2.) By “public ownership” he says distinctly that he means “the principle now operating in the public ownership of the Post Office”;—

B.J.—Don’t you Socialists mean that?

U.S.—Not by a jugful! The principle of “public ownership” meant by Socialism is to the effect that those who work shall have the full fruit of their labor, and that THEY shall be the ones to establish the regulations of the plants that they operate, and shall themselves elect their superior officers; indeed, without that, there is no public ownership. Now, is that the principle that applies in the “public ownership” of the Post-Office?

B.J.’s forehead begins to show heavy beads of perspiration.

U.S.—Do the mail-carriers and Post Office employees receive the full fruit of their labors?

B.J. remains silent, and the perspiration starts to run down his forehead.

U.S.—They don’t. The girls in the bagging department are real sweat-shop workers. The mail-carriers are under paid, and so are all the other employés. On the other hand, the upper officers are appointed from above; and, while they spend hardly any time at the work they are presumably paid for, but spend most of their time in pulling political wires, their salaries are big. They, the idlers, establish what regulations they please; the real workers in the department have nothing to say but to submit to be bullied about.

B.J. (mopping the perspiration from his forehead)—There’s no denying that!

U.S.—That sort of “ownership” is not “public”; it is “private.” Not private for ONE capitalist, but private for the Capitalist Class. That sort of ownership is just the reverse of the “public ownership” Socialism contemplates. That capitalistic, or Sam Jones style, of “public ownership” is ownership that contemplates CHEAPNESS OF PRODUCTION, to the end that the capitalist may have all the larger fleecings; the Socialist style of

“public ownership” looks not to CHEAPNESS, because it excludes the bare thought of capitalists and spongers; what it looks to is that the worker gets his FULL SOCIAL SHARE. You see the two are exactly opposed: Under Socialism, with the increased productivity of labor, the worker would be getting more and more; under capitalist “public ownership” he would be getting an ever smaller share of his product. So there you have Jones nailed as an anti-Socialist.

B.J.—It is tough, but it is true!

U.S.—I said also that Jones does not mean “ALL public utilities” when he says so, and that Socialism does mean ALL.

B.J.—Yes; how is that?

U.S.—Let’s again quote him. He explains that by “all public utilities” he means “the mines, railroads, telegraphs, telephones and water and lighting plants.” Are these ALL the public utilities?

B.J.—Are there any other?

U.S.—Yes; the shirt, shoe and machine factories; the corn fields and stone yards; the baker shops, oil wells, etc., etc. These have become absolute public utilities; they are operated by the public co-operatively, and the public needs them all. Does he mention any of them? Does he mention the oil wells, for instance, that he owns?

B.J.—No.

U.S.—And I’ll tell you why. He proposes to grind labor in them for HIS private use. As to railroads, etc., which he don’t, and other capitalists do, own, he wants them to be owned by the capitalist government, because then their operation would be cheaper, and then he could get transportation cheaper for his goods.

B.J. opens wide his eyes.

U.S.—Jones’ “public ownership” of “all” public utilities is nothing but a fight between capitalists. He uses Socialist terms to catch gudgeons with. Be you none. Vote the S.L.P. ticket! I have no time now to take up his motto. Shall do so next week. Ta, ta!

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

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