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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {318}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN (*beside himself with joy*)—I got you Socialists; I got ye! I have seen an argument that knocks you out. You are now done for!

UNCLE SAM—We might as well give it up, eh?

B.J.—You might as well!

U.S.—But suppose you first make the argument. I, for one, won't strike my colors before I'm actually knocked out.

B.J.—That's right. This is the argument: Our United States Government is a poor Government. Now, where will the Government get the money from to buy the railroads alone, not to speak of the score of other industries? Where—will—it—get—the—money— from? Just—tell—me—that, if you can!

U.S.—The United States is a pauper Government?

B.J. (*with much self complacency*)—It is!

U.S.—And therefore can't pay any big bills?

B.J.—That's it!

U.S.—Did you ever hear of our recent Yanko-Spanko war?

B.J. (*bristling up with much spirit*)—Guess I did! Didn't we wallop them, though!

U.S.—And was that walloping done with spit-balls and broomsticks?

B.J.—No, sir: It was done with first class warships, first class cannon and balls and first class soldiers.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—All of which cost no little money, eh?

B.J.—It cost some \$300,000,000, to say nothing of the \$20,000,000 we paid for the Philippines.

U.S.—Now, did you ever hear of a pauper disbursing \$300,000,0000?

B.J. *looks annoyed.*

U.S. (*pokes B.J. in the ribs*)—That’s one on your “pauper government”!

B.J. *frowns.*

U.S.—Do you know what the salary of the President is?

B.J.—\$50,000 a year.

U.S.—Yes, besides perquisites. That together with the salaries of our ambassadors, ministers plenipotentiary, civil and political officials, exceeds the civil list of the British Crown. (*Poking B.J. again in the ribs.*). How is that for a “pauper government”?

B.J. *looks decidedly disgusted with himself.*

U.S.—Now, I’ll tell you. Don’t you again turn parrot, or you will find yourself imitating and repeating the bray of a donkey. Our government is no “pauper government.” It is the richest government on earth. Governments are pauper or rich according to the poverty or wealth of the people who elect and sustain them. The collective wealth of a nation is the wealth of a government. Property is the creature of society, and it belongs to society, ready to be used by society whenever society so wills it. Now, the government is the representative of society. Whenever society needs a thing it takes it. The railroads and all the other portions of the wealth of society, are at the disposal of the government, and will be appropriated whenever society realizes that it needs them and that their continued private ownership is harmful to society. He who has meat in his larder does not pay for it every time he wants a steak. He just takes what he needs. So does society through its government. And there goes your stupid theory!

B.J.—If ever I meet that Ingalls, I’ll tell him he is a jackass.

U.S.—Well, if you are ready to give him a piece of your mind, you might as well do the thing complete. He surely is a jackass for SAYING that our government is a “pauper government” But he is, besides a jackass, a knave to make the argument. He knows better. The knavery consists in the purpose there is back of that statement. The purpose is to conceal the fact that the government now appropriates what it wills out of the people’s pockets. His purpose is to make it appear that the appropriation of the railroads

would be a crime by insinuating the idea that governmental appropriations would be criminal. Now, you may feel easy on that score. Our government is amply rich enough to appropriate all that needs to be appropriated.

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