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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {123}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—Socialism is simply ridiculous.

UNCLE SAM—Well, well!

B.J.—It is worse than ridiculous; it is wrongful.

U.S.—Better and better.

B.J.—It would make ninnies out of men.

U.S.—You are becoming interesting.

B.J.—What makes men strong is trials and hardships; remove trials and hardships from the path of men and they will become jelly fishes. Look at our galaxy of self-made men. But for them the country would not be what it is; but for the hardships and trials which they had to contend with, they would not have been what they are. Look at me. I now can draw my check for a million. I am a self-made man. I know how good it is to rough it in early life; to sleep on straw and learn what it is to have temptations in your path. (Striking his chest.) That's what makes the men. I speak from experience. Socialism would be no better than a plague—a plague upon it, and long live our glorious institutions!

U.S. (shaking his head pensively and a smile peeping at the corner of his mouth)—“Hardships and temptations in early life” are part of the institutions you claim as ours?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—And you cheer them?

B.J.—Certainly.



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U.S.—And you want them to last forever?

B.J.—Assuredly.

U.S.—Without them the nation would cease to have men?

B.J.—Yes, sir.

U.S. (after a pause)—By the way, Jonathan, turning to something else, are you getting into litigations, or trouble of that sort?

B.J.—No; why?

U.S.—I saw you going up into Lawyer Seth Cheatem’s office yesterday morning.

B.J.—Yes, I did. But it was on no lawsuit. (Confidentially approaching Uncle Sam.) You see, I am getting old. I may at any time be taken off. The rheumatism is gaining upon me, and the doctor tells me my heart is affected. I wish to settle my affairs. My five boys and my two daughters should be provided for. I don’t want to leave things so that any crook might come around and leave these children penniless and unprotected—

U.S. (with mock solemnity grabs Brother Jonathan by the collar with both hands and shakes him)—Traitor!

B.J.—W-h-h-a-t-t?

U.S. (still shaking B.J.)—Traitor! I say.

B.J.—I a traitor?

U.S.—Yes! Traitor to your country; foe to our “glorious institutions of hardships and temptations in early life;” base demoralizer of our young folks by seeking to make them like jelly fishes; weakener of our American manhood! (Giving Brother Jonathan a final shake.) Traitor, who should be indicted, hanged and quartered, make your peace with heaven; I am going to inform upon you and see to it that you get the deserts of your traitorous plan.

B.J. (fetching his breath)—Are you gone crazy?

U.S. (with increased mock solemnity)—No, sir; I am a patriot, I am. And when I see a man deliberately trying to undermine our “glorious institutions of hardships and temptations in early life,” my blood boils, and I cry, “Brlood, brlood, Jargo, brlood!”

B.J. (amazed)—You must be gone crazy.

U.S.—Did you not a minute ago say that you owe your great success, your manliness, etc., to the hardships, privations and temptations that you had to go through

in early life?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—And did you not say that such early trials it is that build up the man?

B.J. (beginning to smell a rat)—Well—yes.

U.S.—And did you not say that without such trials-tried men, the country could not exist?

B.J.—Hem—

U.S.—Out with it; no dodging!

B.J.—Yes, I—I—I did.

U.S.—And all that notwithstanding, you go about it deliberately to deprive your children of a chance to become trials-tried men and women by leaving over a million to them, so that they may not be “unprotected”? Don’t you see that you are a traitor to the country, and by right ought to be hanged forthwith?

B.J. (with a toad-under-a-harrow look)—You are the darnedest fellow to trip one up.

U.S.—And you feel tripped?

B.J.—I must confess I do.

U.S.—Then, Jonathan, let us join in laughter at these objectors to Socialism, none of whom ever opens his mouth without straight-away putting his foot into it, as you have just done.

B.J.—That is just what I did.

U.S.—If these self-made men, who believe in early hardships and temptations, were sincere, they should either throw their wealth into the sea just before dying, or bequeath it to the children of their worst enemy.

B.J.—Ha! ha! That’s just it.

U.S.—Instead of that, they are careful to keep it for their dearest ones. They blow hot and cold. What is one to think of such a crew? Are they consummate hypocrites, or are they superlative donkeys? You ought to know.

B.J. (whispering in U.S.’s ear)—A little of both.

U.S.—Well, an honest confession is good for the soul.

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