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DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {81}

By DANIEL DE LEON

**B**ROTHER JONATHAN—I think the Socialists commit many serious mistakes in tactics.

UNCLE SAM—Point them out to us, and you will earn our eternal gratitude. Socialists are neither cranks nor hot-headed zealots, nor yet are they riders of hobbies. Their convictions are drawn from facts, and their aims are too high and sound to be affected by “private axe” motives. Being human, Socialists may err now and then, despite their vast information. But as they are animated with an unconquerable desire to emancipate the toilers, they are only too ready to listen to counsel. Only you must not expect them to yield to bad advice, however well meant.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—I think they make a serious mistake in holding language that sometimes looks as if it were coined in Wall street.

U.S.—If they do, the mistake would be serious. Seeing, however, that they aim at overthrowing Wall street along with the whole capitalist shebang, I guess you will find it difficult to justify the charge.

B.J.—Don't they claim that money has an intrinsic value?

U.S.—Oho! That's it!

B.J. (triumphantly)—Wasn't I right?

U.S.—As right as if you claimed that George Washington's soldiers acted like Tories, because, like the Tories, they took aim before shooting, laid their eyes in line with the barrel of their gun{s} and pulled the trigger with their right hand.

B.J. looks puzzled.

U.S.—Let me illustrate. You know the attitude of the Socialists on trusts, don't you?

B.J.—I do. They favor the concentration of the means of production.

U.S.—Why?

B.J.—I was going to say because unless production is carried on in a concentrated way enough cannot be produced to afford plenty and leisure to all.

U.S.—Do they say “Smash the trust?”

B.J.—Why, no. The Populists say that; but the Socialists conclusively prove that that would be insane—insane because, even if the thing could be done, it would throw civilization back; and insane because all the evolutionary forces tend to such concentration and cannot be resisted.

U.S.—What language does Wall street hold on the trust question?

B.J.—Wall street says: “It is not to try and smash the trust. It must be kept as it is.”

U.S.—What do the Socialists say upon the same question?

B.J.—They say “Don't smash the trust.”

U.S.—Don't that sound like language “coined in Wall street?”

B.J.—Not at all.

U.S.—Why not?

B.J.—Because the Socialists add: “Place the trust in the hands of the whole people.” They say: “Smash the PRIVATE OWNERSHIP of the trust.”

U.S.—Very well. You admit that, although one part of what the Socialists claim on the trust is like what Wall street claims, nevertheless, when the full claims of both are compared they are very distinct?

B.J.—Certainly.

U.S.—Now, then, as unjust as it would be to charge the Socialists with holding “Wall street language” on the trust, it is to charge them with holding “Wall street language” on the money question.

B.J.—But don't they say money has an intrinsic value?

U.S.—Yes, in exchange.

B.J.—That is rank Wall street language.

U.S.—No more so than to oppose the “smashing” of the trust, because the Socialists

add that money, used as a means to pay debts, has no intrinsic value. Wall street is a creditor class headquarters; it claims money has always intrinsic value. The Socialists show that that is a creditor's class lie, whereby the creditor class would skin the people, and that to deny that money must have intrinsic value when used in exchange is a serious economic error, which, were it applied, would do no end of injury to the wage earning class.

B.J.—I think you made that quite clear to me some time ago; yet I would like to ask: Why do you believe the groceryman would refuse to give me 100 cents' worth of sugar for a coin called "one dollar," but worth only 50 cents?

U.S.—Because ten to one the butcher will refuse him 100 cents' worth of meat for that coin.

B.J.—But suppose the butcher were not to object?

U.S.—Then the dry goods store would.

B.J.—And suppose the dry goods store would not?

U.S.—Then the shoe store would.

B.J.—And if the shoe store would not?

U.S.—Then the landlord would.

B.J.—And if the landlord don't?

U.S. (with deliberation)—The landlord will, because the banker from whom he wants a mortgage will refuse to lend his money unless the interest and the capital be paid in the full coin that he will stipulate for.

(B.J. looks as if he had been punched in the stomach.)

U.S.—You see, this capitalist system is like a screw; if you turn the head all the planes turn. You must always start from the principle that to test a law or a reform you must be clear upon this, whether it is to be applied under the capitalist system or not. If it is to be applied under the capitalist system, you must place yourself under capitalist conditions. Under the capitalist system money becomes inevitably a commodity; credit may go a little way, but finally is exhausted and hard pan must be reached. If the traders were to accept a cheap dollar they would all tumble down, one after another, like a row of bricks. There are other reasons besides, but you chew over this one for the present, and we shall take up the other reason later on.

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

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