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DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {200}

By DANIEL DE LEON

**B**ROTHER JONATHAN—Did you ever hear a Socialist speaker?

UNCLE SAM—Yes; quite a number of times.

B.J.—What do you think of them?

U.S.—They are a level headed set of people.

B.J.—Well, I don't think so. I heard one talk last Sunday. His arguments were loose. You could drive a wagon and four clean across them.

U.S.—Do you remember any one of them?

B.J.—Yes. He said the workingmen were plucked because they did not own the machines with which they work.

U.S.—Isn't that so?

B.J.—Whether so or not, the foolishness lay in his conclusions.

U.S.—And what were they?

B.J.—Wait. Then he said that the reason why the capitalists plucked the workman was that they owned the machines with which the workmen work.

U.S.—And isn't that so?

B.J.—Let it be so; now listen to the absurd conclusion: THEREFORE the workmen must take possession of the machines. That does seem to me an idiotic conclusion.

U.S.—And why, pray?

B.J.—You are stronger than I—

U.S.—Yes.



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B.J.—You can hit a harder blow than I—

U.S.—Yes.

B.J.—Is that a reason why I should be entitled to your arms, and check your freedom of will as to the use you may want to make of your arms?

(U.S. grabs Brother Jonathan by the collar; gives him a jab in the nose; two jabs in the ribs; a right hander along the jaw; and a thump on the head. B.J. tries to get off and yells “Police! Police! Lock this fellow up. He is going to kill me!”)

U.S.—Jonathan, you are “absurd.”

B.J.—Police!

U.S.—Jonathan, I can “drive a wagon and four” across your protests.

B.J.—Police! Police!

U.S.—Jonathan, am I not stronger than you—

B.J.—Yes. Police!

U.S.—Can I not knock you into jelly?

B.J.—Yes. Police! The devil take you. Police! Arrest this man.

U.S.—Why, having greater strength than you, should I not have the right to maul you? How absurd is it not on your part to want to check my liberty of will as to the use I may want to make of my arms and fists! I am now inclined to use my arms and fists as I now do (gives him a few more jabs, whereupon B.J. yells “Police!”), and here you are absurdly objecting, and you are still more absurdly calling for the police to take control of my arms. Don’t you see how “absurd” you are?

B.J.—“Absurd?” Do you call that “absurd” if I object to be battered by you and seek to make you harmless?

U.S.—To speak truly, I don’t think there is any absurdity in such conduct.

B.J.—Then what do you mean?

U.S.—The absurdity lies in such conduct proceeding from you.

B.J.—Do you take me for a saint on tin wheels?

U.S.—Surely not.

B.J.—Why, then, am I absurd?

U.S.—Because you were just before laying down the maxim that the Socialists are absurd for objecting to be pounded by the stronger capitalists, and for striving to put

that bully where he may be harmless. The cases are parallel, as far as this point is concerned. The capitalist class uses its power to outrage the working class. The same as you justly object to my using my power to your injury, the Socialists object to the capitalists' using their power to the injury of the working class; and for the identical reason that you started to yell "Police!" at the top of your voice, the Socialists seek to gain control of the public powers and thereby arrest the evildoer.

B.J. rubs his sore spots.

U.S.—But in the instance of the Socialists the case is still stronger. Even though the power I may use to your injury be a power inherent in me, you will justly object to my conduct and justly seek to restrain me. If, however, the power which I turn to your injury is not inherent in me, if it belongs to you and I have robbed you of it, your objection could then be all the stronger, and your desire to strip me of it would then be all the juster. This is the case with the attitude of the workers. The weapon which the capitalist class uses against the working class is the tools of production. The tools of production, or the machinery of production, have all been produced exclusively by the working class. The capitalist class stole and is stealing this weapon from its rightful owners, and, with the aid of this stolen property it is scourging the working class. To strive to take this weapon from the hands of the ruffian class that wields it to our undoing is the conduct of sensible and brave men. The "absurdity," Jonathan, lies all on your side. Now, go home and bandage up your eyes and put plasters on your well merited sores.

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

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