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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM AND BROTHER JONATHAN. {344}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN (rubbing his hands with glee)—Well, I feel good!

UNCLE SAM—What about?

B.J.—A huge big stone has rolled off my heart.

U.S.—Tell me all about it.

B.J.—I'll tell you. It is on the subject of the Trust.

U.S.—Ah!

B.J.—I've been attending all the political meetings—Socialist, Democratic and Republican. My object was to become clear on the subject of the Trust. I have become clear!

U.S.—I hope you have. Surely, if you attended the Socialist meetings that must have helped you greatly.

B.J.—Well, it did. It pretty soon became clear to me what each of these three holds to be true.

U.S.—Would you mind telling me?

B.J.—With pleasure. The McKinley men, as a whole, maintain that the Trust is a good thing. They admit that it destroys competition; but they assert that that is desirable on the ground that competition goes accompanied with waste, the trust saves the waste, and, consequently reduces prices.

U.S.—And what do you think of such a theory?

B.J.—I don't like it. I hold that nothing that stops competition can be good. Stop competition and monopoly reigns. Monopoly means tyranny. Ain't it?



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—I'd like to hear you to the end first.

B.J.—Now, the Bryan folks talk in line with my views on competition. They show that the trust spells M-o-n-o-p-o-l-y. That's so! And say they, "smash the Trust!"

U.S.—And you agree with that, I suppose?

B.J.—No, I don't! There always was something in that position that did not suit me. It ignored a certain thing that the Republicans always pointed out. That thing was that the Trust enabled production to be carried on more plentifully and at less cost. Now, to smash the Trust seemed to me all along like washing out the bath with the baby. Isn't that it?

U.S.—It looks to me, differently from what I expected at the start, that you are really going to come out all right, altho' you seem to get at it in a somewhat lopsided style. Go on.

B.J.—Lastly, I heard the Socialists. I like their position pretty well. They certainly escaped both horns of the dilemma. They admitted the benefits of the Trust as a saver of labor, and recognised its ills as a monopoly. But their remedy seemed to me too drastic. To preserve the good and escape the evil of the trust they proposed a complete reconstruction of society, they propose the Socialist Republic where the Trust shall be kept up but owned by the whole people.

U.S.—What objection can there be to this view?

B.J.—The objection that there always is to a great change when it is unnecessary. And that is the point that has finally been made clear to me. I listened last night to a learned gentleman. He spoke for McKinley, that's true; but that makes no difference.

U.S.—And did he present a new view?

B.J.—Yes. He solved the question in the neatest way of all.

U.S. (applies both his hands to his ears)—How, I'm all ears.

B.J.—Simply by showing that there was no such thing as the Trust.

U.S.—Ah, my buttons!

B.J.—He did. I'll tell you how. He showed that just as soon as the profits on the Trust grew large, idle capital starts competing establishments. So that the Trust, so far from being a monopoly really is a promoter of competition.

U.S.—Is the New York Central Railroad deriving large profits or is it not?

B.J.—Tremendous profits!

U.S.—Has it started competitive lines?

B.J. looks stumped.

U.S.—Are the profits of the Standard Oil Trust small or large?

B.J.—Tremendously large!

U.S.—Has that started competing establishments?

B.J. (looks still more stumped)—But how is that?

U.S.—The facts don't tally with your "learned man's" theory{,} do they?

B.J.—Seems not!

U.S.—And for very good reasons: The profits of combination do start competition at first. Thereupon competition, having again destroyed profits, goes into a new combine. This Second Combine is stronger than the first.

B.J.—That must be so.

U.S.—Presently the profits of this Second Combine grow so large that they again allure capital into competition.

B.J.—That's what my learned man said.

U.S.—Just so, but he imagined this Second Combine and this Second Competition to start upon the same plane that did the First Combine and First Competition.

B.J.—Don't they?

U.S.—No, indeed! Just watch them! The Second Combine is stronger than the First Combine, whereas the Second Competition is weaker than the First Competition. After the competitors in this second competitive struggle have sufficiently cut their throats and wiped away profits, they combine; and we then enter upon the period of the Third Combine, which is by far more powerful than the Second one was, and still more powerful than the First one.

B.J.—That certainly is so.

U.S.—What goes on after that is foreshadowed by what preceded. Competition keeps on rising, but ever less powerful to cope with the existing combine, until a period arrives when the combine is so powerful that competition is simply ludicrous. There is a stage in the development from Competition to Combination, and from

Combination to Competition, where further Competition is simply impossible. That explains the absence of all competition against the N.Y.C. Railroad, against the Standard Oil, etc., etc.

B.J. scratches his head.

U.S.—Your “learned man,” accordingly, is both knave and fool. He is a fool not to perceive this development; he is a knave in trying to explain away a thing that he knows he can’t explain away!

B.J.—So there I am in the same mental trouble I thought to have escaped.

U.S.—“Mental trouble” be hanged. All the mental trouble you have is of your own making. The sane man recognizes facts, and bows before them. Society has reached a point where man has no longer a choice. It is no longer a question of what we FANCY, but of what we MUST. Competition is gone, to all practical intent and purpose. Monopoly is here, and to stay. What’s to do? Hide our heads like ostriches, the way your “learned man” would have us do? The storm will overtake us just the same. Imagine that society can resist the storm, like the Republicans propose to do? You might as well resist the birth of the child that’s due. Thrust society back to the days when the means to compete with were so small that competition was possible, as our Bryanites propose? You might as well brace yourself against the cascade of Niagara. There is but one thing to do, to follow the Socialist Labor Party program, the program headed {by} Malloney and Remmel, and conquer the public powers for the purpose of nationalizing the Trust.

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

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