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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {188}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I'm going to contribute some money to join the Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth.

UNCLE SAM (greatly surprised)—I thought you had recognized that the Socialist Labor party had the right principles.

B.J.—Why, yes; but what has that got to do with it? Its principles are all right, but the methods it has adopted to bring about the desired end are wrong. It says to a man who is hungry, without money and without work: "I am very sorry; but, my poor fellow, I can't help you right now except with a little charity; you are one of the millions in the same fix; you are, in fact, a victim of the present system of society; if you would study Socialism, become one of us, then after a while, when we are strong enough to capture the Government, we will fix things so none of us will ever lack the necessaries of life." That is what the S.L.P. says. On the other hand, look at the methods of the Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth: It proposes to institute right now what we are all aiming at, and so it not only provides an object lesson to the world, but it also provides a means of earning an honest livelihood all along.

U.S. (shaking his head)—Unhappy man! Others have burnt their fingers in a great variety of flames from that identical fire, and their experience is lost upon you. Well, if you must make your own experience, the sooner you do the better for you.

B.J.—You would have a man starve while waiting for ultimate emancipation; if you



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

can't yet have the whole loaf, you won't take half a loaf.

U.S.—If you really think so, you have watched Socialist tactics badly. Anything we can get now we would take; we would take, not half a loaf, but even a biteful, if it can be taken. The difference between the Socialists and these Brotherhood and other such people is that we try to enable the workingman to get all he can now, while they take away from him the little he has.

B.J.—But they promise so many things.

U.S.—And that is all you will get—promises. Look at the pure and simple unions: They have been voting for Democratic and Republican politicians who “promised” great things; we warned them that they could get nothing on that line, and that the best use they could put their ballots to was to raise the Socialist poll; what did they answer? Just what you now say; they wanted something now, half a loaf before they could get the whole, and so forth. Where are they now? Have they got their half loaf? No! They are now skinned worse than ever, and more of them than ever are now out of work. Had they voted with us they certainly would be better off. The boss will not dare to do to intelligent workers what he will dare to do to men who will lick his feet as fast as he kicks them; besides, if the Socialist vote were now larger you would be so much nearer to ultimate emancipation. It is good to get what you can as you go along. But it is folly to try and get what you can't and sacrifice what you can get. It is still greater folly to do what the dog did in the fable. Crossing a river with a piece of meat in his mouth, he saw the reflection in the water; water makes things look larger; he imagined the meat he saw in the water was larger than what he had; he let his go and snapped—at a shadow, thereby losing even what he had.

B.J.—But this Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth has some noble people in it—

U.S.—And also not a few rascals, who have been in such things before and plucked people right and left. They take as figureheads some good-natured people, who are inexperienced, and with them for flypaper, they catch flies with.

B.J.—I can hardly believe that.

U.S.—It isn't a question of belief; it is a question of knowledge. This Brotherhood proposes to introduce Socialism on a small scale. If Socialism could be so introduced it

would not be needed. The “Brotherhood” is a snare and a delusion; the money you want to put into it will be wholly lost; at the end of the song you won’t have even what you have to-day, and you will have lost the opportunity of pushing the Social Revolution, and last, not least, you will have increased hopelessness and despondency by having helped to raise another object lesson of “Socialist Failure.” Keep your money; don’t be stuffed; if you yield to this nonsense of “getting something” on a false tack, all you will have got for your money is your experience; the other fellow will have got your money. Keep this in mind: The “half loaves,” in all such cases, fall to the schemers and are taken from the workers who need the half loaves.

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

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slpns@slp.org