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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {217}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—Are you going to vote the Socialist Labor party ticket this year?

BROTHER JONATHAN

(snappishly)—No!

U.S.—Why not?

B.J.—I believe in freedom, Socialism believes in compulsion.

U.S.—Inasmuch as to which?

B.J.—It says, for instance, that we SHALL co-operate. If it had its way, even if I did not want to co-operate, I would be compelled to.

U.S.—Of course, before having made up your mind, you looked into this matter?

B.J.—I did.

U.S.—The long and short of it is that you did not. Socialism does not propose to compel you to co-operate, what Socialism does is to pull you by the ear and call your attention to the fact that to-day, under capitalism, you are compelled to work co-operatively, whether you like it or not you must. Next that this co-operative labor has a good feature: it enables the productivity of labor to be so great that, with very little work, every one could have an abundance. Next that the reason this good feature does not assert itself is that the machinery of production, which compels co-operation, is privately owned by a special class and is operated for the exclusive benefit of that class, so that that class alone rolls in wealth without working, while the workers roll in toil without wealth. So far for the premises of Socialism.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—Is that it?

U.S.—Yes. Now, from these premises, Socialism draws the conclusion that, if you and all other workingmen, the working class in short, want to be free, you must own the machinery of work as collectively as it is operated. That is the beginning and the end of Socialism as an aim. Now, where is the “compulsion” in that?

B.J.—But we shall have to co-operate.

U.S.—Yes, or fall back into barbarism.

B.J.—And suppose people should prefer to fall back into barbarism?

U.S.—We all walked on all fours when we were babies, didn't we?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—And, if we want to, we may walk on all fours now, eh?

B.J.—Yes.

U.S.—Do we?

B.J.—We don't.

U.S.—Neither will the race of civilized man choose to return to barbarism. Your opposition to Socialism on the ground of its “compulsory” feature is as if you were to oppose man's growing into maturity, because maturity would “compel” him to walk on his feet.

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

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