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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {142}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—I have a plan that will fetch success in no time.

UNCLE SAM—Less than no time would be still better.

B.J.—The Socialists want the whole hog: they want the land and they want the tools of production.

U.S.—And right they are.

B.J.—I also am a Socialist; there is nothing they can want that I don't want. But they are going with their heads against the wall. I propose a more practical plan—

U.S. begins to smile.

B.J.—I propose to make a flank movement on the enemy. My plan is to take the land first; to concentrate our reform forces on that; one thing is easier to get than 100. This move is all the shrewder because when we got the land and the natural opportunities, everything else is bound to fall into our hands. I believe in strategy. What say you?

U.S.—I say that your “flank movement” amounts to putting your head into the dragon's mouth.

B.J.—Isn't it easier getting 1 than 100?

U.S.—Depends upon what. In the case of the land and the tools of production it isn't.

B.J. smiles an incredulous, cocksure smile.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—I'll take you at your own words. You say if we have the land everything else is bound to fall into our hands.

B.J.—Yes, siree!

U.S.—If follows that if you attack the landlord interests, you simultaneously attack all private proprietary interests. Catch on?

B.J.—acquires a distant look.

U.S.—If by attacking the landlord interests you attack the capitalist interests—

B.J.—But listen—

U.S.—No dodging! I shan't let you wriggle both ways. You said: "When we got the land and the natural opportunities, everything else is bound to fall into our hands." If that means anything, it means that by attacking the landlord interests of modern society, the capitalist interests are attacked at the same time. If you deny the conclusion of your own statements you reason like a baby and are not worth reasoning with.

B.J.—I admit the conclusion.

U.S.—Now, then, the beauty you claim for your "flank movement" is that one thing is easier to get than 100, it is easier to get the one thing, land, than the two or more things—land and capital—

B.J.—Ain't it?

U.S.—No, it ain't, by reason of your own admission, which I just pulled out of you. You can't claim that, by "going for" the land, you "go for" one thing only when you recognize that by "going for" the land you also stir up all the capitalist interests. By "going for" the land you "go for" every capitalist, because the landlord and the capitalist interests are, as a matter of fact, closely interwoven. (Giving B.J. a pull of the ear.) There goes your wonderful "flank movement."

B.J. remains pensive.

U.S.—But that's not all. Even if you had the land you would have nothing. The sea is entirely unappropriated; it is "natural opportunity." Why don't you compete with big capital in ocean navigation and fishing?

B.J.—Hem!

U.S.—Simply because you haven't got big capital, and with an oyster smack you cannot do what a Cunarder can. If big capital in the hands of others keeps you from

plying a trade on the ocean, there is no reason why big capital won't keep you from earning an independent living on the land.

B.J. looks nailed.

U.S.—The upshot of your wonderful “flank movement” is that:

First, if your theory were correct you would have as big a fight on hand with a one-plank land platform as you would with a full or “whole hog,” as you call it, set of demands;

Second, when you got your land you would have nothing. You would have fought only for the very big capitalists to whom you would have to knuckle under.

Your strategy is the fool's “strategy,” and you would die “as the fool dieth.”

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

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