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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {166}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—It seems to me that Socialism is another word for Christianity. Everybody calls himself a Christian. It seems to me that all that Socialists should do is to point out that fact and they are bound to succeed rapidly. Jesus was a Socialist.

UNCLE SAM—Your allegations of fact and your conclusions are both false. It so happens that Christianity is not Socialism and that Jesus was not a Socialist.

B.J. (astonished)—Does not Socialism mean to establish happiness?

U.S.—Certainly.

B.J.—Well, Christianity aims at the same thing.

U.S.—Your argument amounts to this: Christianity and Socialism aim at the same thing, consequently they are identical.

B.J.—That's about the size of it.

U.S.—Are there not gold bugs who sincerely believe a gold standard will make labor happy?

B.J.—I guess there are some dull enough to entertain that notion.

U.S.—And don't you know many a silver bug who honestly and devotedly holds to the principle that all the worker needs to be a happy man is the free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1?

B.J.—I regret to say that there are such noodles.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

U.S.—Both gold bugs and silver bugs aim at the happiness of the workers, don't they?

B.J.—They do.

U.S.—According to your way of reasoning it would follow that, seeing that gold-bugism and silver-bugism aim at the same thing, they are, therefore, identical. Are they?

B.J. (fumbles in his pockets)—No, they are not.

U.S.—Neither are Socialism and Christianity.

B.J. (very much enraged)—Will you explain to me what you Socialists mean by such tactics as these? Why, you willfully deprive yourselves of public support and useful arguments.

U.S.—What we mean is to succeed, and we know that all “arguments” that convey a false impression and interfere with the acquiring of correct knowledge, can never lead to the success of a Cause, however rapidly they may occasionally lead to the individual success of scheming knaves.

B.J.—And would the saying that Socialism means to establish Christianity and that Jesus was a Socialist convey false impressions or interfere with the acquiring of correct knowledge?

U.S.—Yes, siree!

B.J.—I doubt it!

U.S.—Because you don't know what Socialism is.

B.J.—Isn't Socialism good will to man on earth and to live as the early Christians did?

U.S.—No; Socialism does not propose to establish the social system of the early Christians, and on the other hand the early Christians would not establish Socialism.

B.J.—That takes my time!

U.S.—The early Christians lived in common, Socialism don't want that. Socialism demands that work should be done in common{,} and that conception could not have occurred to the early Christians.

B.J.—Why not?

U.S.—Simply because the idea of working together cannot occur to man until the machine, the mammoth machine of production, such as we know it to-day was in

operation. The early Christians lived in the days of small production. The tool of production was then such that each man alone and individually could operate it. The community of life that they instituted was an aspiration. Even in those days, individual production brought on serious evils in its wake. The way out could not be visible to them by reason of the absence of collective work which the machine enforces on man, and they resorted to communal life, and community of poverty.

B.J. looks puzzled.

U.S.—In point of good intentions the Christian Fathers and the Socialists are one. In point of methods they could not be one. In the days of the Christian Fathers all that men could aspire to was equality of poverty and mutual abnegation.

B.J.—Isn't mutual abnegation Socialism and good?

U.S. (smiling)—Mutual abnegation may be very good to lighten one another's burdens. This feeling was possible when it was still impossible that no one should bear any burden, and only those aim at it to-day who are not aware of the fact that the productive mechanism has increased in such a way that none need bear burdens. But Socialists know that to lighten the burden of toil of workman John Jones it is not necessary to lay the burden on Tom Jones. To-day, no one need be burdened. Collective work throws the burden of toil off the shoulders of all. This is Socialism. Those who upheld it are like the early Christians only in so far as their object is good; they are unlike the early Christians in so far that the Socialists are working at a time when the good that the early Christians aimed at can be introduced for all.

B.J.—I can accept that all right enough.

U.S.—It is important though to keep the distinction in mind. If you do, you will be marching with your feet on facts; if you don't, you will be exposed to illusions and to be misled by schemers.

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

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