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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {267}

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNCLE SAM—Are you getting ready to vote the Socialist Labor party ticket; the workingman's ticket?

BROTHER JONATHAN—The devil take the workingman!

U.S.—Hey, hey! What violent language is that!

B.J.—None too violent for those fellows. Such a lazy, shiftless, worthless, grumbling crew of never-do-wells as the workingmen are I never saw, and wish never to see.

U.S.—Well, that's coming it strong!

B.J.—By no means too strong! What do you imagine a set of those lazy, worthless, shiftless, never-do-well workingmen, those fellows whose part you are always taking, what do you imagine they did to me the other day?

U.S (smiling)—I hope, for their sakes, they did not try to eat you up: they would have caught the colic, or some other deadly gastric disease, seeing the canine rage you are in.

B.J. (his eyes shooting fire)—No; they did not try to eat me up; but they put me in a hole and came near killing me, the confounded lazy good-for-nothings.

U.S.—Now, stop fuming and tell me what it all is about.

B.J.—You know I got the contract to shovel off the snow from the streets—

U.S.—Yes, and make a big pile by it.

B.J.—Well, I advertised for men to do the work.

U.S.—I never imagined you were going to do the work yourself.



UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN

B.J.—I thought to myself: Here I'm reading in the papers about starvation among the workers, and I remembered all your gush about "willing hands," and so forth; here is a chance for those poor fellows to make a living. Thinking so, I put in an advertisement for 1,000 men. I think it was answered by 5,000. Fully that many turned up the next morning at the yards. I lined them up around me. They were all fawning upon me. They could have licked my hands, at least I thought so, for joy at a chance to earn something. Well, I told them: "Boys, here's your chance; I can't use all of you, I'm sorry; but I have 1,000 jobs to shovel snow; let all who want to go to work at 75 cents a day raise their right hands."

U.S.—And what happened next?

B.J.—Not a darned hand went up; instead of that they raised a howl of curses at me—the thankless, lazy good-for-nothings!

U.S.—And then?

B.J.—"And then?"—And then, you ought to have seen those fellows walk away, shaking their fists at me, and calling me names. There was a chance to turn an honest penny thrown away, and it was sleeting all the time, and those fellows would not work! What do you call that? Do you call that laziness, or what?

U.S.—Tell me, thou paragon of thrift, do YOU work for the pleasure of working, or for what work will bring?

B.J.—For what it will bring. That's all anyone works for.

U.S.—Let's go a step further; do you work for the money you get, or for the sake of the good things, the necessary things the money you earn will bring?

B.J.—Of course for what I can buy for the money I earn.

U.S.—What you work for is, then, in the first place, to live; next, that being assured, to enjoy life.

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—Would you work for 75 cents a day?

B.J.—Guess not!

U.S.—Why not?

B.J.—I could not have lived on that.

U.S.—And if anybody had called you a lazy, shiftless loon for not accepting work at

that price—?

B.J.—I would have punched him in the nose.

U.S.—And that's just what you deserved at the hands of the men.

B.J.—What !?!?

U.S.—Just as I said! Those men were not anxious to work for the sake of keeping you in clover, and fat on your ribs; they did not wish to work for the purpose of dying faster, but for the purpose of living. Now, then, when you offer human beings, mind you, human beings, not polar bears, 75 cents a day to shovel snow, you simply offer them a means to die swiftly. Those 75 cents could not begin to buy cough-cures for the colds they would get at their work, let alone buy food and clothing to live. Those men are not loafers and shiftless fellows; what they are is sensible men, who, rather than die working for a contemptible capitalist skin-flint, like you, prefer dying and let you shift for yourself.

And right they are! Now go and adorn some Republican or Democratic political platform as a sample of what they all stand for.

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

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