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DIALOGUE

## UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {204}

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**B**ROTHER JONATHAN—There surely are parties enough in the country, but not one is right.

UNCLE SAM—Not even the Socialist Labor party?

B.J.—No; not even that.

U.S.—What's the matter with it? Are its aims not correct?

B.J.—Its aims are correct enough, but its construction is not; that's all wrong.

U.S.—In what way?

B.J.—Is not Socialism the movement of the working class?

U.S.—Yes, if by "working class" you mean the "proletariat."

B.J.—What is the difference?

U.S.—A good deal, sufficient difference to confuse people of scrappy information.

B.J.—And what is the difference?

U.S.—This: The working class is the class that works. To-day we have hundreds of thousands of people who don't work, but who would like to; they are the unemployed. If "work" determines the class on which the S.L.P. should be built, all the unemployed would be excluded.

B.J.—All of these belong of course to the working class.

U.S.—Certainly, and yet they are not working. Then again there are a lot of people who are not idle and do work, and who, if work is enough to determine the class to



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which a man belongs, would be ranked among the working class, and yet such people do not belong there. Such men are the small shopkeepers, small farmers, etc. All of them work, but seeing they also employ labor and fleece it, and have some capital, however small, to do that with, they do not belong in the working class proper.

B.J.—Of course they don't.

U.S.—It follows that the simple fact of working or not working is not enough to determine whether a person is or is not of the working class proper.

B.J.—Well,—no!

U.S.—What marks the distinction and establishes the class differences is not “work” or “idleness;” it is the ownership of things needed for production, or the non-ownership of them. Work or idleness are a result of such ownership or non-ownership. Those who own the means of production can, by virtue of such ownership, employ others who don't, and fleece them; if such owners hold large means of production, they can live in absolute idleness upon the wealth that they fleece their employes of; if they hold only small means of production, they cannot live on only what they fleece their employes of, that would be too little, and, consequently, they have to do some work themselves. None of such are of the working class proper or proletariat.

B.J.—I admit all that.

U.S.—The class distinction of the proletariat is that its members are stripped of the needed machinery of production; that, consequently, they must sell themselves into wage slavery before they can work and eat; and that, as a result of that, they are fleeced by their employers of all that they produce except what they need to barely keep body and soul together. For this reason the term “proletariat” is preferable; it is not open to misunderstanding. And the proletariat is the class upon which the Socialist movement rests and depends.

B.J.—I accept all that; and for that very reason I claim that the S.L.P. is constructed wrongly; it is not constructed on the proletariat; it admits a whole lot of people who are not engaged in manual and productive labor; it has people who work with their jaws.

U.S.—My good man, you are more than a generation behind the times, and you contradict yourself beautifully.

B.J. (flaring up violently)—I don't!

U.S.—Keep your shirt on. You contradict yourself because you just admitted that the proletariat is the class on which the Socialist movement must rest, and that a proletarian is one who, not owning any machinery of production, must sell himself into wage slavery; and now you claim that a proletarian must be a manual worker. In other words, the line you draw between proletarians and non-proletarians is manual labor, whereas before you admitted the line to be ownership or non-ownership of the machinery of production. That's a contradiction.

In the second place you are behind your times because long ago, when the scientific principle of class distinctions was not yet clear, there were people who claimed that the Socialist movement was the movement of manual workers only. The people who held so have come down in history as the theorists of the “horny hand.” The ripened movement has thrown them aside as unscientific and mischievous—

Unscientific, because they would dwarf the Socialist movement to the dimensions of the movement of a FRACTION of the proletariat, whereas the Socialist movement is the movement of the WHOLE proletariat. A drummer who “works with his jaws,” a clerk, a teacher, all others, when they hire themselves out to earn a living, are proletarians and belong to us.

Your theory is mischievous, because it lays the foundation for the splitting up of the proletariat into as many classes as there are trades, and thereby incapacitates the proletariat from working unitedly. If you draw the line between a drummer and, say, a cigarmaker, because the former does not work productively and “works with his jaws,” notwithstanding both are wage-slaves, then a farm hand will draw the line between himself and you on the ground that he produces a prime necessary of life, while you only produce a luxury; and so on. This notion lies at the bottom of the “pure and simple” union. Hence you will find that “pure and simpledom” has never been able to unite the whole proletariat. It first drew the line, as you now do, between the “horny-handed” and the “non-horny-handed;” then it drew the line between the “skilled” and the “unskilled” among the “horny-handed;” and it has proceeded on in this way till it stands to-day impotent before the Social Problem.

The Socialist Labor party and its twin sister the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance build upon the whole class of the wage slaves or the proletariat. Never losing sight of the

scientific fact that the economic class distinctions and the class bonds of the proletariat are the fact of its being stripped of the machinery of production, the S.L.P. and the S.T. & L.A. are uniting the whole proletariat into one mighty body. And this sound position once taken, the S.L.P. and S.T. & L.A. can safely admit in their camps people who are not proletarians at all, but whose hearts rebel at existing wrongs, and whose enlightenment teaches them that only the aims and tactics of these two bodies can solve the Social Problem.

B.J. remains silent sucking his thumb.

U.S. (taking his leave from B.J.)—I hope you will suck some good sense out of that thumb, enough to prevent you from again making a “pure and simple” fool out of yourself. Ta, ta!

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