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DIALOGUE

UNCLE SAM & BROTHER JONATHAN. {174}

By DANIEL DE LEON

BROTHER JONATHAN—What rascals these McKinleyites are!

UNCLE SAM—Inasmuch?

B.J.—Don't you see how they are intimidating the workingmen?

U.S.—Do you think I'm blind?

B.J.—Isn't that rascality?

U.S.—Decidedly!

B.J.—Let's vote for Bryan and thus rebuke the Republican capitalists—

U.S.—If you do, you are no better than a shuttlecock, kicked from right to left by the battledoor.

B.J.—Which battledoor?

U.S.—The capitalist battledoor. See here; don't you know that the Bryanite silver mine owners of Montana, Colorado, and Nevada, are intimidating their workmen in the same way?

B.J.—I heard about it.

U.S.—If a McKinley boss wants a parade he orders his men to march with McKinley buttons on their coats, and he who refuses is kicked out of work—

B.J.—'Tis shameful.

U.S.—And if a Bryanite silver mine boss should be so foolhardy as to carry any but a Bryan button HE would be fired. Is that less shameful?

B.J.—Can't say it is.

U.S.—How shameful must not then be the conduct of that workingman who would



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rebuke McKinley intimidation by supporting Bryan intimidation or rebuke Bryan intimidation by supporting McKinley intimidation? Isn't it allowing himself to be kicked about like a shuttle-cock?

B.J.—But then there is no way to punish these malefactors.

U.S.—If what you are after is to “punish,” then I don't see how I could help you. If, however, you would give a hand to remove the conditions that make possible such intimidation of the workers, then I may be the man you are looking for.

B.J.—Tell me how.

U.S.—Would the bosses try such intimidation if they knew their workingmen were independent of them?

B.J.—Of course not.

U.S.—It is the dependence of the workmen upon the boss that render them subject to intimidation?

B.J.—That alone.

U.S.—And that same workingman who is so dependent upon the boss for a living is the boss' door at the ballot box?

B.J.—He is.

U.S.—And of what use is his political independence to him if he is so wholly dependent on the boss for a living that his vote is but one more vote cast by the boss himself?

B.J.—Of none that I can see.

U.S.—It follows that political independence depends upon industrial independence. The man whose living depends upon the will of another is that other's slave. The man who owns the machinery of production holds by the throat the man who does not own that tool and thereby makes him his slave. In order that every man be free to earn his living without begging another, he must own his tools, the most perfect tools. In order to own the mammoth tools of to-day the working class collectively must own them. That can be brought about only by the conquest of the public powers by the working class and the establishment by them of the Co-operative Commonwealth.

B.J.—But is there any party that proposes such a thing?

U.S.—Certainly. The Socialist Labor Party. It is headed by Matchett and Maguire. If

you want to usher in the day when the political freedom will be freedom indeed, vote that ticket straight and none other. Every vote cast for the Socialist Labor Party brings us nearer to that day of deliverance.

B.J.—That's all very good. When you once got the Socialist Commonwealth there will be no more industrial slavery, and, consequently, no more political intimidation. But how can you get so far? You must get the Socialist Commonwealth with labor votes. But these labor votes are now controlled by the bosses, because the men who cast the labor votes are workingmen and consequently dependent on their bosses, and consequently subject to intimidation, and consequently will never be sufficiently free to vote freely.

U.S.—I see what you mean. You mean that dependent men can not be independent enough to vote freely.

B.J.—Just so.

U.S.—That's an error. When the bosses are divided politically and contend with one another for the vote{s} of their workers, they must always hold the language of capital, to wit, that the dependence of labor upon capital is natural and always will be. Thus at the same time that each seeks to intimidate his own workers, he strengthens the power of intimidation in his opposing capitalist. Socialism, however, teaches that it is not natural for labor to depend upon capital; that it is unnatural and the result of a perverse social system. Socialism shows the workers that if they care to be free they can; if they vote themselves into power they are free because then they will take possession of the tool of production. Accordingly, the worker, if he is once a Socialist feels the ground firm under him and will not be afraid to overthrow his boss, because he knows that only then will he be free.

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

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