The Gospel of Discontent

We Social Democrats preach the gospel of discontent to the workers. We call upon them not to remain content with the miserable surroundings which are the lot of the majority of the class.

What have they to be contented with? Are they to be thankful that the only property they possess is their power of labour which they sell to the capitalists and employers at roughly speaking, the cost of its production? Are they to be contented with the fact that the moment the employing class can no longer use their labour to make profit for themselves they—the producers of wealth—are thrown out on the street, wretched and penniless? Are they to offer up blessings that they are born under a system of society wherein those who work not enjoy all the good things of life, while those who work early and late for weekly wages—chose to whom a cessation of their exhausting labour means poverty and starvation—have to exist as best they can?

Oh, ye! "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Praise the landlord for being good enough to squeeze so much rent as he possibly can out of you! Praise the capitalist for giving you work when he can, and only when he can wring, profit out of you! Praise, bow down and worship the Moloch of miseria society which deals disease and death throughout your class.

But let us consider the matter seriously. The middle and upper classes constantly urge the workers to be contented. They are supported by a whole host of persons who endeavour to pull the workers by pinioned cheekbones on the back of industry. What would these people do if they were suddenly faced with mere luxurious surroundings and plunged into the progressive poverty of the average artisan, let alone the nobler misery and degradation of the mass of unskilled labour. Would the landlords and capitalists, the dividend boosters and the profit mongers, the persons and lawyers, and the whole tribe of parasites who had upon the establishment of the capitalist system—would any of them, we ask, practice what they preach to others? Would they remain content with their stations of life into which it had raised the Almighty to drop them down suddenly? We know they wouldn't. They would be so intensely discontented that they would have a revolution in about twenty-four hours.

It is the duty, therefore, of the workers as a class to be discontented. To actively mark their dissatisfaction on every opportunity. But it must be no mere dissatisfaction at their individual surroundings, but must be reason discontented with the enveloped position of the whole of their class. Is there anything mean, how ignoble in this? On the contrary such discontent will elevate and enable all men to women who truly feel it. It will urge these to work continuously for the overthrow of this commercial society and the wage system which so degrade and enslave mankind. It will cause them to throw in their lot with the Socialists who is every civilized country are educating, agitating, and organizing for that Social Revolution which shall bring peace, plenty, and happiness to the workers of the world.