

The Honest Man

Le Bandit du Nord

February 9, 1890

What is an honest man? Few of those who claim the diploma of honesty have taken the trouble to examine the meaning of the title of honest man. It is the submissive, the slave, the crawling worker who salutes, venerates, and bows before the boss who causes him to die of hunger who is an honest man. The supervisor who is the watchdog in service to the boss, who distributes fines, who squeals on the least action by a worker, who fires him and plunges his family into poverty who is an honest man. The soldier who lines up and correctly executes the antics he is ordered to carry out, who receives the insults of a corporal or any other rank without blinking, who allows himself to be called an imbecile, lazy, and an idiot is an honest man. The man who kills his like in a riot or a battle with no scruples is an honest man. The man who, employed in a shop who has at his disposition 4,000 or 5,00 francs and who – to guard the property of a fat do-nothing who drinks champagne in his salon – doesn't have the courage to take five francs to prevent his children from suffering from hunger is an honest man.

The servile and crawling dog, the squealer, the legal assassin, the coward, and the heartless are all honest men. Imbecilic workers, who you flatter by calling honest, go with the bourgeois who rob you! In the name of honesty display your famished faces alongside their round bellies. Go to the foot of their palaces and build your shacks. For our part, we despise the dog that licks the hand that strikes him. We love the cat that scratches the person who does him harm, and if we still recognized the law we would sue for slander anyone who calls us honest.

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Retrieved on 24th September 2020 from
<https://www.marxists.org/subject/anarchism/bandit/honest-man.htm>
Originally published in *Le Bandit du Nord* [of Roubaix]. First year, issue no. 1. Sunday,
February 9, 1890. Translated by Mitchell Abidor.

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