

To manual workers, supporters of political action

On behalf of a group of refugees from Lyon

François Dumartheray

February 1876

Here you are on the eve of naming your so-called representatives who have never represented you at all. That's why, working like you, I've come to tell you: ABSTAIN!!! And here's why: the governing and aspiring gang will again advise you to vote and agitate you to name Peter or Paul.

For them, it is only a matter of amusement, one suits them as well as the other, because they all have the same interest, they proved it in May 1871. That day, their mask fell off, and we saw the disappearance of the political parties; from that moment on society was divided into two camps, full bellies and empty bellies, robbers and robbed. Let's stay in ours and let the aspirants to power agitate alone.

To get you to vote they tell you that they will ask for amnesty (first of all they should not have condemned), these rascals only keep this string for the good times. What did the political parties do, even the radical party; to the request for amnesty made by Naquet? They answered with contempt by voting the Langlois proposal (the Proudhonian) which was the preliminary question. They knew well that by making the amnesty, their pale and decomposed former electors, hardly able to stand, would come to say to them: what have you done with the mandate that we had entrusted to you, as always you have deceived us, you shot our mothers; and our children, where are they? Back, you wretches! They want at all costs to avoid this spectre which does not leave them for a moment, therefore let us not count on the amnesty. Never will these bourgeois, who have nothing in the skin but a bladder of pig which dyes them instead of heart, agree to take Trinquet out of his irons, as well as his companions. Let us expect amnesty only from the efforts that we will make to make the social revolution, because it alone will open the lid of the tomb where they were thrown alive and tear them off their executioner. So let's not waste a moment on politics, let's think about our martyrs, and let's hope that in a moment of rage we can bring down the bourgeois edifice with one blow.

Now there is a large part of the workers who believe that they have to vote and that there is no other way to do it, there are also petty bourgeois who call themselves revolutionaries? And who tell you that without authority there is no revolution possible.

So the politicians can be classified as such: the ambitious ones, and there are many of them, who are and will be, I believe, even after their death, candidates, even if only for a position as

a rural guard; these are the most dangerous, they understand nothing and want to understand nothing, so much hope closes their eyes, they will drag you to the polls even by force and by all the possible promises, these are the wretches who must be despised and to whom one must refuse to give a hand, because they are aware of the harm they are doing. The ignoramuses who seriously discuss the European equilibrium and go to public meetings to be able to play the fool by discussing if Gambetta has a glass eye or the size of the hump of Naquet, the terrible intransigent, these are the ones who must be torn away from the stupid training that they feel when they hear these jokers, and they must be given a good socialist propaganda.

Now, there are still a certain number of men devoted to the revolution who believe that political action is a practical way to reach socialism, this is an error that the anarchist communists do not want to share, and first of all, in order to do political action, it is necessary to ally with a party, This party cannot be other than the radical party, an alliance as disgusting as that of any political party, so we must examine the program of these famous radicals who, together with the others, have murdered, deported and kicked out these poor little children that they had just made orphans.

We would not bother to discuss this program of these full bellies if it were not that we seek all the means to dissipate the error of our friends, and let us start with the freedom of the press, it is a decoy because when one does not have money to make a newspaper what use is it to us, and even would we have to make a sheet that the printer would be ruined for having printed a newspaper which would be contrary to the bourgeois interests, and it is still necessary to have time to write it. It is as with all politics, it is necessary to know how to say nonsense, which the worker cannot do, and admitting for a moment that he could, there would be produced in France, as it is already in America, a quantity of sheets of all kinds that the bourgeois gives for nothing, and certainly the struggle would not be long, therefore the freedom of the press can only be good for the bourgeois, that is to say, for the thieves and not for the stolen. Freedom of assembly and association, what a joke! And that's why the radicals ask for it, because, what the hell can one do when one doesn't have the money! It is all very well to associate, but there is nothing we can do except listen to the complaints of the unfortunate ones who are dying of hunger, the great dada is that we can cooperate, if we don't have enough to eat, it would be very difficult to do so, and the experience has been made, and not in favor of the partisans, and then get together, they still ask you for money to pay for the hall and it is certain that the public meetings would not last a year, two at the most, if freedom were complete, if the meetings were full under the empire, it is because there was something to fear and the authority to taunt and still that would be like in journalism a tournament of eloquence where we would often be the dupes.

But, I will be told, how can we do propaganda if we don't have that, we will do what is done now for the so-called political revolution, and I am sure that when one is pursued, hounded, in a word, when the fruit is forbidden, propaganda is much easier and more effective, one has the support of all, There is a mass of propagandists who can make themselves understood very well by a few people, and if they had to go before a large audience, it would be impossible for them to speak, and then the public meeting only benefits those who know how to handle the word, and it is not in our class that there are any, and there again this freedom is like the others, illusory.

Let's see if it's worth talking about the separation of Church and State. For us anarchist communists who do not want to be governed, we have no use for this bone to gnaw, we simply want the abolition of the church and to cure the enlightened (and not to cure the State since we ask

for its abolition), so we would not stop there if it were not that we are committed to examining the program behind which our friends would like to drag us.

With the State, they tell us, we will do good, while those who have it now do evil. First of all, good becomes evil when it is imposed, and then to do something you must have the strength to impose it if necessary, and when you have the strength and by that very fact that you impose yourself, you will be an enemy, since we aspire to be free, not to give ourselves new masters, because we do not want any. But let's suppose for a moment that authority can do good, it can't, but in order to show in what illusion some revolutionaries are, we will see how they will be able to achieve it.

Some good men will have made us work for at least a quarter of a century or two to get power, they will have taken away our most energetic propagandists to make them aspirants, even statesmen. Revolutionaries who no longer have the same needs will no longer have the same aspirations and will come to have only hatred and disdain for their own. These same men, who would have been of great value and who would have rendered great services to the Revolution, will become miserable. And the guilty ones are those who serve as a stepping stone to these scoundrels!

But we will suppose for a moment that we will find a quantity of men of the temper of Blanqui and the knowledge of a Liebknecht. First of all, on that day, the voters will already have a revolutionary conscience, and the State will have lived; but it is often said, and here it will be said much more, that the elected will be more advanced than the voter. Well, let's admit it. Then what will happen? When the bourgeoisie will see that there is danger in the house, they will do what Bonaparte I did and that his cretin of nephew repeated, or else they will find some great Castelar and a lot of Pavia accomplices, and the trick will be played.

But, they will say to us, it is the Revolution, no they have not committed the crime to make take for a century the shadow that is the politics for the reality that is the social Revolution. There will probably be a 4th of September and some cunning people to hide the movement. Therefore, let's not let these stupidities that are the separation of the Church and the State be continually put between our legs. It is often said that in order to suppress the State, it is necessary to be part of it, as if in order to suppress the Church it was necessary to become a priest or a bishop, so it is an illusion from which it is necessary to get rid of.

I am not a pedagogue, I will not discuss the methods of instruction, but what I can say is that we will learn in schools that authority is necessary, that we cannot do without it, that we would be lost if it did not exist and even that it is of divine essence, because, whatever we say about secularism, it does not prevent us from talking about God, on the contrary.

It will be said that individual property is a splendid thing, and that the boss is an honest man, that the worker who is dying of hunger is an eater and a great idler, even though he has been working since he was six years old, and that he has never been able to make a good meal, and that the bourgeois who steals his mother's breast has done him a great service; and how can we force the child who is dying of hunger to go to school, when he could find a pear by playing hooky. This cannot be until Society is changed.

Abolition of standing armies. This is enough to make the bourgeois order tremble; as if one could be in power without having the strength to be obeyed. They can very well do as the countries where there are no standing armies, that doesn't prevent them from shooting at the Gotthard, and they can very well break a worker's head in America without a standing army; when there are no soldiers there are gendarmes, it's always the same thing.

Reform of the judiciary. What on earth do you want us to do with reforming institutions of thieves that condemn the thieves, it is always suppression that you want.

Progressive tax. Damn ! Here is the big word, it is not nothing that, you know gentlemen! Well! It's like everything else, it's illusory, because instead of having a tax collector, there will be as many as there are bourgeois and, indeed, is it the one who does nothing who pays, I don't think so. Whatever the tax is called, it is only the one who produces who pays. It is to be hoped that we will soon be tired of always paying. There are great revolutionaries who say that we can have a salary increase if we lick the boots of the radicals. Well, that's not in our temperament, that's good for the bourgeoisie, who have not ceased, for almost a century, to make love to the nobility, and we know how they respond to a request for a reduction in working hours or an increase in salary: they send us bullets like all exploiters; So, on this side again, it is the suppression of wage labor that we want, and that everyone works for the needs of all. There, manual workers, is the program that makes the bourgeoisie tremble (or at least it pretends to), this terrible program that starts from the eye of Gambetta, crosses the belly of Marcou, knocks down Birodet, is going to get lost in the hump of Naquet, the terrible intransigent, and it is behind these unfortunates that our friends commit us to march. It is dreadful, let us therefore completely leave the radicals to make their weapons (or their antics) with those who are called the old parties, because, as we said, the political parties do not exist any more, even in the whole of Europe, since May 71. Let us hope that our friends, soon disillusioned, will come to take the place which they should never have left and we enemies of the power, whoever they are. Let's put ourselves with ardor to make a revolutionary conscience and when we are well tempered, let's devote ourselves to communicate our ardor to our brothers in the countryside and in the cities who are suffering, they won't take long to understand us, because they already have the revolutionary instinct; there is only politics that prevents them from doing their duty.

Let us see now what it is necessary to be a revolutionary; first of all, we must be convinced that the present society is and can only be a constant outrage to humanity, and that it is our duty to bring it down; and for this, all means are good; let us understand well, those that do not leave to equivocation as great a part as politics, but the hatred of all that hinders us and that is authority. Once it has been well inculcated in this part of the people, who have only had before their eyes the veil and the big box of the politicians, the social revolution will not be far off, a revolution that must lead us to the promised land, that is to say to anarchist communism. Only there will we be able to speak of freedom; it will no longer be an illusion, but true economic freedom, because as long as there is individual property and paternal authority, there will be no freedom. What we want is the non-ownership of everything that exists and the freedom of the woman through free union, and that the child be free as much from one as from the other; in a word, we want no limit to this freedom except insofar as it interferes with the freedom of others, and we will form a society; of course, if we like it, if we want to remain alone, that is our indisputable right.

Apart from the pamphlets of my friends Perrare and Colonna, which have just been published, the group will soon publish a pamphlet about anarchist communism, and we think that there, having more time, we will be able to give an exact definition of what we understand by anarchist communism.

Worker! Don't let yourself be dragged to the ballot box by those politicians who make your life miserable; study, feel your sides, and when you become aware of your needs, you will not stay long to understand what you must do to satisfy them, and you will be of our opinion that nothing is true, that nothing can prevent you from suffering, that nothing can prevent your child

from being without shoes, your sister insulted, cheated, your mother dying in a hospital bed, that the thief is watching to dissect her, for the greater good of the bourgeoisie, if not *anarchist communism*, that is to say, from each according to their ability, and to each according to their needs, and say with us: *Anarchy and Revolution!*

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Pamphlet by refugees from the Lyon Commune, which contains the first written reference to “anarchist communism”. Translated from the original French *Aux travailleurs manuels, partisans de l'action politique*.

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