

To the Voters

Zo d'Axa

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Voters:

In presenting myself for your votes, I owe you a few words. Here they are:

I come from an old French family — I dare to say — and am a pedigreed ass, an ass in the good sense of the word: four hooves and hair all over.

My name is Worthless, as are my rival candidates.

I am blank, like many of the ballots that they persist in not counting, but which now belong to me.

My election is assured.

You understand that I am speaking frankly.

Citizens:

You are being fooled. It is said that the last Chamber¹, made up of imbeciles and swindlers, didn't represent the majority of voters. This is false.

On the contrary, a Chamber made up of idiotic representatives and cheats represents you as voters perfectly. Don't protest; a nation gets the representatives it deserves.

Why did you elect them?

You aren't embarrassed, among yourselves, to admit that the more things change, the more they stay the same; that your elected officials mock you and think only of their own interests, glory or money.

So why would you elect them again tomorrow?

You know quite well that those you send to sit for you will sell their word for a check and will trade in jobs, positions and tobacco shops.

But who are the tobacco shops, positions and sinecured jobs for if not the Electoral Committees that are paid in this way?

The shepherds of the Committees are less naïve than the flock.

The Chamber represents the lot.

A parliament of idiots and crafty devils, of old fools and Robert Macaires² is needed to personify both professional voters and depressed proletarians at one and the same time.

And that's what you are!

They are fooling you, good voters, they are deceiving and flattering you when they tell you that you are beautiful, that you are justice, right, national sovereignty, the people-king, free men...They harvest your votes and that's all. You are fruit for the picking... Pears.

They keep on deceiving you. They tell you that France is still France. This isn't true.

With each passing day France loses all meaning in the world, all liberal meaning. It is no longer a nation of hardy, risk-taking, idea-spreading, cult-smashing people. It is a Marianne kneeling before the throne of autocrats. It's corporalisme reborn more hypocritically than in Germany: a tonsure under the kepi.³

¹ The equivalent in the French Parliament of the House of Representatives. (editor's note)

² Character of a bandit in a popular play by Frederic Lemaitre.

³ A French military cap.

They fool you, they never stop fooling you. They talk to you about brother, when the struggle for bread has never been sharper or bloodier.

They talk to you about patriotism and our sacred patrimony — to you who have nothing.

They talk to you about integrity, and here they are, pirates of the press, journalists willing to do anything, master deceivers and blackmailers, singing of national honor.

The supporters of the Republic, the petit-bourgeois, the petty lords are tougher on beggars than the masters of the old regimes. We live under the supervisors' eye.

Weakened workers, producers who consume nothing, are content to patiently suck at the bone without marrow that is thrown to them, the bone of universal suffrage. And it is to tell lies, to engage in electoral discussions, that they move their jaws, jaws that no longer know how to bite.

And when, on occasion, the children of the people shake themselves from their torpor they find themselves face to face with our brave army like at Fourmies⁴ ...and the reasoning of the Lebel guns puts lead in their heads.

Justice is the same for all. The honorable thieves of Panama travel in carriages and don't know the cart. But handcuffs squeeze the wrists of old workers who are arrested as vagabonds.

The ignominy of the present moment is such that no candidate dares defend this society. Bourgeois-leaning politicians: reactionaries or partisans, republican masks or false noses, proclaim that if you vote for them things will go better, things will go well. Those who have already taken everything from you ask for even more.

Give your votes, Citizens!

The beggars, the candidates, the thieves, the vote-squeezers all have a special way to make and re-make the Public Good.

Listen to the good workers, the party quacks; they want to conquer power...in order to better abolish it.

Others invoke **the Revolution**, and they fool themselves while fooling you. Voters will never make the Revolution. Universal suffrage was created precisely to prevent virile action. Charley has a good time voting...

And even if some incident launched men into the streets; and even if a group went into action in response to some police or military attack, what could we expect of the swarming crowd that we see, **the cowardly and empty-headed crowd?**

Go on! Go on, you men of the crowd! Go on, voters! To the polls...and stop complaining. It's enough. Don't try to inspire pity because of the fate you imposed upon yourselves. Afterwards don't insult **the Masters** that you gave yourselves.

These masters are worth as much as you, while they steal from you. They are probably worth more: they're worth 25 francs a day, not counting their small profit. And this is as it should be.

⁴ Site of a May Day rally in 1891 that was brutally put down by the army.

The voter is nothing but a failed candidate.

The people at the bottom — with small savings and small hopes, rapacious small merchants, slow-moving domestic folk — need a mediocre parliament that will bring together and make money from all that is vile in the nation.

So vote, voters! Vote! The Parliament emanates from you. A thing is because it must be, because it can't be any other way. Create the Chamber in your image. A dog returns to its vomit. Return to your representatives...

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