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Zo d'Axa
You Are Nothing But Suckers
1898

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This essay is from La Feuille's campaign to run an ass named
"Worthless" for the Chamber of Deputies.

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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 paws and hair all over.

My name is Worthless, which is what my competitors in this race are.

I am white, as are many of the votes that have been cast and not counted, but which will now belong to me.

My election is assured.

You will understand that I speak frankly.

CITIZENS:

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

On the contrary, a Chamber made up of deputies who are ninnies and thieves perfectly represents the voters you are. Don't protest; a nation has the delegates it deserves.

Why did you elect them?

Amongst yourselves you don't hesitate to say that the more things change the more they remain the same; that your representatives mock you and think only of their own interests, of vainglory, or of money.

So why would you elect them again tomorrow?

You know full well that the whole lot of those you would send to the legislature would sell their votes for a check, and would sell jobs, functions and tobacco offices.

But who are the tobacco offices, positions and sinecures for if not the Electoral Committees that are also paid?

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

The Chamber represents the whole.

Idiots and crafty devils are needed; a parliament of old fools and Robert Macaires¹ is needed to embody at one and the same time professional voters and depressed workers.

And that's what you are!

You are being fooled, good voters, you are being deceived and fawned over when you are told that you are handsome, that you are justice itself, law, national sovereignty, the people-king, free men...Your votes are bought like at a candy store, and you are the candy...Suckers.

You continue to be fooled. You are told 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 hardy, risk-taking, idea-spreading, cult-smashing country. It's Marianne kneeling before the throne of autocrats. It's corporalisme reborn more hypocritically than in Germany: a tonsure under the kepi.

You are being fooled, fooled without cease. They talk to you about fraternity, and never has the struggle for bread been sharper or more deadly.

¹Character of a bandit in a popular play by Frederic Lemaitre.

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

They talk to you about integrity, and it's the pirates of the press, the journalists ready to do anything, the master deceivers and blackmailers who sing of national honor.

The supporters of the Republic, the petit-bourgeois, the little lords are tougher on the "rogues" than the masters of the former regimes. We live under the supervisors' eye.

The weakened workers — the producers who consume nothing — content themselves with patiently sucking at the bone without marrow that is thrown to them, the bone of universal suffrage. And it's only to tell stories, to engage in electoral discussions, that they move their jaws, the 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, like at Fourmies,² face to face with our brave army...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 the old workers who are arrested as vagabonds.

The ignominy of the present moment is such that no candidate dares defend this society. The bourgeois-leaning politicians: the reactionaries, the liberals, the masks, the false noses, the republicans, cry out that in voting for them things will work better, things will work well. Those who have already taken everything from you ask for still 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 brave workers, the party quacks; they want to conquer power...in order to better suppress it.

²Site of a May Day rally in 1891 that was brutally put down by the army.

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 drew men onto the streets; and even if by some strong act a group went into action, what could we wait and hope for of the crowd we see swarming about, the cowardly and empty-headed crowd?

Allez! Go ahead men of the crowd! Go ahead, voters! To the urns...and don't complain. 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 your equals as they steal from you. They are doubtless worth more: they're worth 25 francs a day, not counting their small profit. And this is very good.

The voter is nothing but a failed candidate.

The little people — of small savings and small hopes, rapacious small merchants, slow-moving domestic folk — need a mediocre parliament that will mint and synthesize all that is vile in the nation.

So vote, voters! Vote! Parliaments emanate from you. A thing is because it must be, because it can't be otherwise. Put in place a Chamber in your image. A dog returns to its vomit. Return to your deputies...