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Emile Aubry, *[On Workers Capacity to Administer Society]*⁴⁶

The ruling classes, as they call themselves, far from striving to make the advancement of the people easy and peaceful as the most elementary moral laws require, declare on the contrary that they will make sure of everything to perpetuate modern slavery; never, they declare, will wage labour be abolished: it is indispensable for civilization! Thus argued the slave-owners of antiquity!

The idea that the proletariat will soon emancipate itself bewilders that section of the people which, it claims, achieved success by the sole power of its intelligence, and makes it advance the movement.

Profoundly ignorant of the causes which are hastening society's ruin, that section of the people persists in accelerating the movement instead of slowing it down by a few sacrifices.

Supported by the ignorance of a large portion of our class, the bourgeoisie, more prepared to increase its enjoyment than to decrease it, rushes ahead down to destruction.

Cupidity makes it increase the debt and the power of monopoly to a point where the already considerable disorder in the organization of its degenerate economy increases incessantly. [...]

The moral disorder reigning everywhere confirms the imminence of our triumph, because it is the harbinger of transformation and because the crassest ignorance dominates all the economic measures our adversaries will take; they seem to have made a pact with contradiction to hasten the disintegration of the social atoms. [...]

⁴⁶ This text is an excerpt from the *Report of the Rouen Federation* sent to The Hague Congress (1872). It was written by Hector Emile Aubry [1829–1900], a lithographer and delegate at the Geneva (1866) and Brussels (1868) Congresses, and Secretary of the IWMA in Rouen. The full version is in HAGUE: 248–56.

Does the worker possess the qualities necessary to administer society? We believe, after the short period of his activity in the [Paris] Commune, that the workers can today, without fear of creating chaos, take the place of those who really constitute the disorder in all branches of society; to become convinced of this it is sufficient to consider the votes of the Versailles Assembly. We know that it will be further objected that the fact that we have been defeated is proof that we have not the requisite qualities to direct a society such as we understand it.

To this we shall reply that labour is the antipode of war, it defends itself only in producing, and if it was defeated the reason was that it was naïve enough to entrust its battalions to those who said that, being specialists in defence, they entrusted its future victory, and because labour, with its habitual trust believed that these men said to ingratiate themselves with its rising power. [...]

We ask you in the name of liberty and justice, the fruit of our immortal year 89, to proclaim loudly to everybody that the proletariat will consider itself emancipated only on condition:

- a. That the individual ownership of the product is available to all those who work, and is not a privilege granted to those who produce nothing.
- b. That property which cannot be divided without violating social harmony is placed under the control of the corporation, commune, canton, the department or zone and of the national administration.

By collective property we mean the railways, roads and waterways linking the commune with the canton and the zone, and all the territorial divisions.

The post, telegraph and all public services as well as the equipment, on condition, of course, that each of these properties is under the control of the respective authorities.

For example, the equipment which plays the biggest role in social organization must belong to the corporations or working class companies which use it to work up materials.

- c. That all private and collective interests are protected by the application of federative principles.