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Édouard Vaillant, [*On Working Class Politics*]⁹⁹

‘In the presence of an unbridled and momentarily victorious reaction, which stifles any claims of socialist democracy and intends to maintain by force the distinction between classes, the Conference reminds members of the Association that the political and social questions are indissolubly linked, that they are two sides of the same question meant to be resolved by the International: the abolition of class.

Workers must recognize no less than the economic solidarity that unites them and join their forces, on the political terrain as much as on the economic terrain, for the triumph of their cause’.

[...] Vaillant anticipates two objections to which he responds as follows: one might say that this declaration is imprudent and will draw upon the Association the severity of governments, but have we not always seen governments persecute the Association as a political society? On this matter there is, therefore, no reason to abstain from this affirmation, but, on the contrary, there is to gain from it that, from now on, misunderstanding will no longer have any excuse.

The second objection is this: He heard, from a member of the Conference, that the Association should not be involved in politics. [...]

[...] In the statutes, the principle of its proposition is indicated as a means of achieving the abolition of classes and, from the beginning, this was the spirit

⁹⁹ This text contains a resolution put forward on 20 September, at the London Conference of 1871, together with an excerpt from the synopsis of a speech made in support of it. Édouard Vaillant [1840–1915] was one of the principal followers of Louis Auguste Blanqui [1805–81], and one of the most important leaders of the Paris Commune. Following its defeat, he fled to London where he became a member of the GC from 1871 to 1872. He was also a delegate to The Hague Congress (1872) and, in 1901, he was one of the founders of the French socialist party (SFIO). The full version is in PI, II: 191–3.

that inspired the founding of the International, thus, my proposition only energetically affirms an essential principle of the Association. [..]

I shall respond to Citizen Bastelica who said that by the term politics he certainly did not mean that feeble agitation which consists of sending a worker to parliament, since parliaments must also be destroyed.

The politics of the Association must be socialist and have but one objective: the abolition of classes.