"Karl Marx, *[On the Political Action of the Working Class]*." *Workers Unite!: The International 150 Years Later*. Ed. Marcello Musto. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. 278–279. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501302367.0090>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 03:56 UTC.

Copyright © Marcello Musto, 2014. You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

Karl Marx, *[On the Political Action of the Working Class]*¹⁰⁰

[...] In almost every country certain internationalists, basing themselves on the truncated statutes adopted at the Geneva Congress, have said that there is no obligation in the statutes to engage in political action [and] have conducted propaganda in favour of political abstention that the governments have been careful not to interrupt. [...]

In America, a recent workers' congress resolved to take charge of the political question and, in selecting men to represent them, decided to replace personalities who make a profession out of being politicians with workers like themselves, responsible for defending the interests of their class.

But political action should be in accordance with the conditions in each country. In England, it is not so easy for a worker to get into Parliament. Since members of Parliament do not receive any compensation, and the worker has to work to support himself, Parliament becomes unattainable for him, and the bourgeoisie knows very well that its stubborn refusal to allow salaries for members of Parliament is a means of preventing the working class from being represented in it. [...]

But the tribune is the best instrument of publicity [and] one should never believe that it is of small significance to have workers in Parliament. If one stifles their voices, as in the case of De Potter and Castian, or if one ejects them, as in the case of Manuel – the reprisals and oppressions exercise a deep effect on the people. If, on the other hand, they can speak from the parliamentary tribune, as do Bebel and Liebknecht, the whole world listens to them. In the

¹⁰⁰ This text is part of the synopsis of a speech given by Karl Marx (see note 1) during a session of 20 September 1871 of the London Conference, devoted to discussing the political action of the working class. The full version is in PI, II: 202.

one case or the other, great publicity is provided for our principles. To give but one example: when during the [Franco-Prussian] war, which was fought in France, Bebel and Liebknecht undertook to point out the responsibility of the working class in the face of those events, all of Germany was shaken; and even in Munich, the city where revolutions take place only over the price of beer, great demonstrations took place demanding an end to the war – which, in Munich, won many workers to the International Association.

The governments are hostile to us, one must respond to them with all the means at our disposal and launch a general crusade against them. To get workers into Parliament is synonymous with a victory over governments, but one must choose the right men, not Tolains.

[...] The Association has always demanded, and not merely from today, that the workers must occupy themselves with politics.