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Campaign poster for the election of Nov. 16, 1890, Quartier Clignancourt.

Joseph Jean-Marie Tortelier

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Translated from the French by Michael Shreve

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Citizens,

I am running as a candidate not to satisfy some petty ambition to be become a representative, but to have the opportunity to tell the truth.

Exasperated by the suffering of the people, I will do everything to eliminate them.

If elected, what would I do?

I will propose that we demolish the Church of the Sacred Heart, which is shameful; I will get rid of the funding of Religion; I will make all the ministers give back the goods that have been extorted from us.

ELECTORS: The rich want there to be ministers to preach to us how to be submissive and cowardly. They'll come to their aide and it'll be us, always us, who will have to support them indirectly.

ME: I will put all the taxes on the rich.

ELECTORS: They'll lower our salaries and nothing will change.

ME: I will make a law forcing them to pay you higher wages.

ELECTORS: If they pay workers more, they'll sell their products for more and the situation will be the same.

ME: I will clean up the neighborhood, build new streets and take care of the subway and do everything that can provide new jobs for you.

ELECTORS: Yes, we know the old song about work — always working for others! Making new roads will raise the value of property, which, for us, will mean higher rents.

ME: I will shout out in the Chamber that they are robbing and betraying the people.

ELECTORS: But we know that! There's no need to go the Chamber and cry it out for 25 francs a day.

ME: I will be the most revolutionary, the most ardent attacker of abuses.

ELECTORS: You say that before being elected, but you quickly get used to the comforts of the office and then you stop attacking the abuses because you're profiting from them.

ME: I will call upon the people to Revolt; I will preach the General Strike; I will march at the forefront and bring you Revolution.

ELECTORS: Ah, you want to be chief! They've always betrayed us. We don't want any more. We will make the General Strike and the Revolution without and in spite of any representatives.

ME: I see that it is hard to pull the wool over workers' eyes today. But if you think that I can't do anything for you, what about the others?