

April 30, 2018



Speak Out Now

revolutionaryworkers.org speakout@revolutionaryworkers.org (510) 343-9105

Time To Reclaim Our Day - May Day!

May 1st or May Day, is known as International Workers Day throughout the world. Despite the U.S. ruling class's efforts to hide our history from us, it is **our** holiday. That is, it's our day to celebrate our history, our struggles, our future, and our class, the working class.

In the late 1800's workers were forced to give most of their day to the boss, working long hours in factories with hazardous working conditions. Workdays 12-hours or longer were not uncommon.

Workers began to organize, and they built a movement around the fight for the 8-hour workday. Their slogan was: "8 hours for work, 8 hours for rest, 8 hours for what we will." The movement for a reduced workday was a key concern of all workers.

In the 1880s workers began going on strike to make their demand a reality. Workers organized in their workplaces and neighborhoods. In Chicago, which was the center of the movement, anarchists, trade unionists, and socialists organized strikes, and demonstrations leading up to May 1, 1886, which was set as the official start of the 8-hour day.

On May 1, tens of thousands of workers struck and tens of thousands more took to the streets of Chicago to support the fight. Over the next days, 340,000 workers stopped work in 12,000 workplaces around the country. The workers' strength was undeniable! The capitalists responded sending their police against the workers.

On May 3, Chicago police fired into a rally of workers, killing four people and wounding 200. The workers responded, holding mass rallies and meetings all over the city to protest the killings. The next day over 3,000 workers gathered in Chicago's Haymarket Square, and the police attacked again. Dynamite was thrown into their ranks killing one cop and injuring more. The cops opened fire on the crowd, killing and wounding an unknown number.

The attack led to a witch-hunt of labor activists, and the frame up of eight well-known anarchists who were part of the workers' movement. They were accused, tried and convicted without a shred of evidence. Four men were hanged as an example

to workers throughout the country. One took his life, refusing to be hanged by the enemy. Six years later the Governor of Illinois, released the other three men from prison.

The legalized murder of the Haymarket martyrs didn't stop the workers' movement. It had the opposite effect. In 1889, the Second Socialist International and workers organizations around the world designated May 1 as an international day of solidarity to honor the workers in Chicago and the fight of workers around the world for a better life. Ever since then it has been the workers' holiday. This is our history, a history the bosses would like us to forget and believe that our future is theirs to control. But, as recent events have shown, it's not!

Recently the teachers and public school workers of West Virginia decided they had to take matters into their own hands. In February, more than 30,000 teachers, bus drivers, janitors, and cafeteria workers from ALL 55 counties of West Virginia defied politicians and union officials and went on strike to demand a 5% pay raise and stop the soaring cost of state health care benefits. They didn't just win for themselves. All state workers got a 5% raise and a halt to an increase in health benefit costs.

Soon teachers in Oklahoma and Kentucky organized statewide strikes, demanding wage increases and funding for public education. And, now teachers in Arizona and Colorado are on strike.

The example of the West Virginia public school workers may have awakened the sleeping giant - the working class of this country. It is long past time for us to reclaim our past and take the steps to take control of our future.

Join Us at the Next Speak Out Now Forum!

The Bay Area: For The 1% or for Us?

Dick Walker will discuss his new book *Pictures of a Gone City* about the enormous changes we have been experiencing in the Bay Area with the rise of the tech industry and its impact on working people.

Saturday, May 12th, 7pm (Doors open at 6:30)

South Berkeley Senior Center, 2939 Ellis St.

(Near Ashby Bart)