

May Day 2019

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group

1 May 2019

Contents

Chicago 1886	3
Capitalism Today	3
Australia Today	3
The Solution	3

Chicago 1886

May Day arose in the late 19th Century from a campaign to free the Haymarket Martyrs. Police had moved to break up a peaceful workers' demonstration in Chicago in the US on 4 May 1886 and an unknown person threw a bomb. As a result of the explosion and ensuing gunfire, which came largely if not entirely from the police, seven police and at least four workers died. Eight Anarchist union organisers were convicted in a rigged trial. Seven were sentenced to death, of whom four were executed and one committed suicide. The labour movement mobilised in their defence and a tradition was born, International Workers' Day.

Capitalism Today

It has been over 130 years since the Haymarket Massacre. The world has seen booms, busts and two World Wars. The Russian Revolution, which started with such optimism, was perverted into the most disillusioning defeat. All the old feudal and colonial empires have fallen, the social productivity of labour has grown immensely and the new working class of China is now larger than the entire population of the United States. And all is not well. The world has not yet fully recovered from the Global Financial Crisis of 2007–09 and economic growth is slowing to a stall. Another slump threatens and, at the worst possible time, the US has initiated a trade war with China, with the risk of escalation to a shooting war. And this is occurring at the very moment when the world stands on the brink of a slide into extremely dangerous climate change, possibly threatening the existence of industrial civilisation.

Australia Today

Here in Australia, the capitalists won a major victory over the labour movement in the 1980s, when the ALP, in alliance with the union officials, instituted a program of neo-liberal restructuring. The capitalists showed no gratitude, of course, and continued the program under Liberal governments, with the added objective of the elimination of the union movement. Now we see the fruits of this. The profit share of national income has skyrocketed and the wages share has plummeted. Wages are stagnating, despite what the media describe as low unemployment. Union density is low and falling, while strikes are so rare as to be newsworthy. The result is a surge of Right wing populism and the rebirth of Fascism.

The Solution

The only way out is struggle. We, the working class, must organise in the teeth of all obstructions. We must build the unions that the officials manifestly can't build by themselves. We must use our vital weapon, the strike, and if the officials won't help, we must act without them. And we must build solidarity across borders, because only international solidarity can beat the power of global capital. Standing together, in defiance of nationalism, we will have built a movement that embodies the values of a new and better world, a movement which also has the power to create that world. We can make a revolution to overthrow capitalism and create libertarian communism, worldwide.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

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Retrieved on 12th October 2021 from anarkismo.net

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