

# **Mayday: Building A New Workers Movement**

**International anarchist statement**

Various authors

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# Contents

A short history of May Day . . . . .	3
Present conditions . . . . .	3
Today's struggles – tomorrow's struggles . . . . .	4
The need for a new workers' movement . . . . .	4
A new world to build together . . . . .	5

**For far too long major segments of the working class have been dormant under the illusion that change can be delegated to exterior organizations or parties. When our struggles are bureaucratized and delegated to others, we lose ownership over them and in turn lose many benefits gained through them. A victory for the working class can only be established if our class is active in the struggle leading to victory.**

From the battle for the 8 hour day, to the struggles witnessed this past year, these examples cry out for the need to organize the fight back against the war that is being waged on workers at home and abroad. Through these examples we can begin to see an alternate future and experiment towards it. This new workers' movement must be established on class struggle lines, a movement that no longer waits for politicians and bureaucrats to resolve the growing inequalities and oppressions. A movement of workers organized through our own self-activity for democratic, combative and autonomous labor and community organizations must replace the stale forms of unionism and social democratic lobbyism that have dominated and compromised most struggles of the last decades.

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## **A short history of May Day**

The first of May is the day we remember the Chicago Haymarket Martyrs. 127 years ago these Chicago anarchists, who were influential organizers, speakers & editors in the Chicago labor movement, helped lead the battle of the day, not only for the 8 Hour Day, but also for social emancipation from all forms of oppression.

The origins of May Day go back to May 4, 1886 which marks the Haymarket Massacre. This memorable day began as a rally of striking workers who demanded the eight-hour work day, climaxing with a bomb produced by an unknown individual while the police dispersed the peaceful rally. The blast and ensuing gunfire resulted in the deaths of seven police officers and at least four civilians; scores of others were wounded.

Eight anarchists were convicted of conspiracy during the legal proceedings that followed. Although the evidence was scarce, and could not prove that any of the eight defendants had thrown the explosive device, seven were sentenced to death and one to 15 years in prison. The death sentences of two of the defendants were commuted to life in prison, and another committed suicide before his hanging. The other four were hanged on November 11, 1887. In 1893, Illinois' new governor pardoned the remaining defendants and criticized the evidence that was used during trial.

Since this day, we honor all those who have fought, sacrificed, and died for the defense and advancement of the working class. Not only the Haymarket Martyrs, but also the many who have followed in their wake.

## **Present conditions**

Through blood, sweet sweat, tears and bitter struggle, the working class has continued to fight and has since managed to wrestle much from the capitalist class and the state. Despite these col-

lective efforts, our small, yet hard-fought-for gains are under continued attack. Worsening working conditions, increasingly precarious and low wage work, deindustrialization and marginalization have become the new normal. Governments, under pretext of crisis, have imposed round after round of social austerity measures, where workers and families have been expected to swallow cuts to public funding of services so that the richest can continue to profit from the fruits of our labor.

From the rise of xenophobia through the *Partie Québécoise's* charter of values in Québec, the recent gains made by the *Front National* in France, Golden Dawn in Greece to the rise of fascism in Ukraine, it is no surprise that in these times of crisis, when the very foundations of capitalism are being challenged, right wing elements emerge to mystify, confuse and divide.

To further add to the desperation and confusion, the state and capitalists pit workers against workers in their renewed imperialist wars abroad in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, while irresponsible resource extraction and environmental devastation continue unabated.

## **Today's struggles – tomorrow's struggles**

Though we see the continued advancement of global capitalism and its fascist allies, day to day, workers find sources of encouragement through the multiple examples we have witnessed this past year. Across North America, we are seeing students and workers experimenting with combative organizing and militancy. The indigenous people of North America are engaged in multiple battles and are taking a stand against capitalist developments on their lands. The undocumented in the US are taking militant direct actions to halt deportations and raids. Communities have successfully boycotted corporate imposed testing in Seattle. Through solidarity networks and worker centers, workers in multiples cities are taking a stand and fighting back against rampant wage theft.

On the international level, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, we are seeing workers that are traditionally divided by sectarian violence, come together as a class to fight against austerity and corruption using direct democracy and combative tactics to rally all segments of the working class against its enemies. All over Europe, we are witnessing antifascism confront the growing wave of hatred in the streets. In recent days, workers are participating in the biggest general strike in Chinese history. Spain, France, Greece, and scores of other European countries have been shaken by anti-austerity protests. Poverty wage workers in the garment sectors are striking and confronting suppression to make massive wage jumps in Bangladesh.

## **The need for a new workers' movement**

For far too long major segments of the working class have been dormant under the illusion that change can be delegated to exterior organizations or parties. When our struggles are bureaucratized and delegated to others, we lose ownership over them and in turn lose many benefits gained through them. A victory for the working class can only be established if our class is active in the struggle leading to victory.

From the battle for the 8 hour day, to the struggles witnessed this past year, these examples cry out for the need to organize the fight back against the war that is being waged on workers

at home and abroad. Through these examples we can begin to see an alternate future and experiment towards it. This new workers' movement must be established on class struggle lines, a movement that no longer waits for politicians and bureaucrats to resolve the growing inequalities and oppressions. A movement of workers organized through our own self-activity for democratic, combative and autonomous labor and community organizations must replace the stale forms of unionism and social democratic lobbyism that have dominated and compromised most struggles of the last decades.

This new workers' movement should be allied with supportive movements, such as those against cuts to social services and education, those that seek to protect our environment, and those movements against all forms of oppression and inequality. We see the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression as we wage these struggles, along with the fights against the expansion and brutality of police forces and prisons, the criminalization of the poor and undocumented, and the continued attacks on reproductive freedoms. Struggles against oppression cannot succeed without the power of the working class and the struggle of the working class cannot succeed without the recognition that an injury to one is an injury to all and without purging our class of all reactionary ideas and practices.

Despite how small or embryonic they may seem, the struggles of the past year have demonstrated that working class victory is achieved from struggles owned and controlled by the workers themselves, not due to social democratic parties or lobbyism established from above but social movements from below that are built through their own self-activity and self-management.

## **A new world to build together**

As anarchists we seek to wage the battle of ideas and experiment with new forms of struggle. We must also strive to be involved in combative, democratic and autonomous mass workers' movements, and where these movements don't exist, we must set about organizing them.

By engaging in these struggles, we gain the necessary experience, initiate needed debates, and confront the current austerity agenda of the elite outside of current labor and civil laws. Through these struggles, we establish and build the much-needed strength to defend our class today while building the foundations of tomorrow. Through struggle, we can as a class, start to imagine and organize for a classless society, building a society without power, profit, and privilege, in which working people in workplaces and communities make the decisions about how our work is done and what we want from it.

This May Day, just like every other, is a call for workers to organize against the everyday exploitation of capitalism. In the spirit of those who fought for the eight hour day, let us continue the fight for the advancement and amelioration of our class's conditions while planning and building for the final fight.

**Towards a democratic, autonomous and combative workers movement!**

*1 May 2014*

**Prairie Struggle Organization** (Canada)  
**Workers Solidarity Movement** (Ireland)  
**Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front** (South Africa)  
**Organisation socialiste libertaire** (Switzerland)  
**Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici** (Italy)  
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