

# Our May Day Manifesto

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COMMUNIST WORKING MEN'S CLUB

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## THE PROLETARIAT.

—O—

I

Who hammers, brass and stone?  
Who raiseth from the mine?  
Who weaveth cloth and silk?  
Who tilleth wealth and wine?  
Who worketh for the rich to feed,  
Yet live themselves in sorest need?—  
It is the men who toil, the Proletariat.

II

Who strives from earliest morn?  
Who toils till latest night?  
Who brings to others wealth,  
Ease, luxury, and might?  
Who turns alone the world's great wheel,  
Yet has no right in commonweal?—  
It is the men who toil, the Proletariat.

III

Who is from aye a slave,  
To all the tyrant brood?  
Who oft for them must fight?  
Oft sacrifice his blood?  
O folk! hast thou not yet perceived!  
'Tis thou that ever art deceived! (riat!  
Awake, ye men who labour! Up, Proleta-

IV

Together join your powers;  
And swear to banner red!  
For Freedom boldly fight!  
To win ye better bread!  
Then quicken ye the despot's fall!  
Bring peace unto the nations all!  
To battle, ye who labour! Up, Proletariat!

V

In your hands lie the means!  
Work but with unity!  
Hold ye but firm together  
Then ye will soon be free.  
With quick-march forward to the fight,  
Though scorn the foe in grape-shot might!  
Then win, ye men who labour! Win, Proletariat!

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JOHN MOST.

WORKING MEN do not work on Tuesday May 1st;

let us all meet in Hyde Park.



I

Courage yet! my brother or my sister!  
Keep on! Liberty is to be subverted, whatever occurs;  
That is nothing that is quelled by one or two failures, or any number of failures,  
Or by the indifference or ingratitude of the people, or by any unfaithfulness,  
Or by the show of the tushes of power, soldiers, cannon penal statutes,  
Revolt! and still Revolt! Revolt!

WALT WHITMAN.

May 1st, 1906 will mark an epoch in the history of struggling humanity, in the up-hill endeavours of oppressed mankind. It will, for the first time in the modern history of May Day, bring prominently to the front the real revolutionary significance of this international Labour Day. While having until now compromised in the majority of European countries with the vulgar conceptions of bourgeois-political ambitions, having been supplanted from its original real aim—a revolutionising proclamation of a General Strike on the part of the toilers against the oppressors, leading to a series of energetic battles against the tyranny of capital—it will and does become this year through and by the valiant initiative of French Trade-Unionism again glorious in its original, profound, meaning:—The “First of May” is to be a day when the exploited masses shake their fists against their rulers and oppressors; when Labour, having grown tired of the insipid, utterly unworthy promises of its masters, takes into its own hands the destinies of its cause, and by direct economic action, achieves the triumph of its immediate demands for the amelioration of the conditions of the proletariat.

We do not recognise the “First of May” as a holiday. As revolutionary Socialists, as Anarchists, we know that the time for holidays has not yet come. Great is the servitude prevailing among the people; terrible is the slaughter of thousands of our brothers and sisters by the greed of Capitalism; awful is the infamous incendiarism of the Russian Government and it has murdered coldbloodedly the finest representatives of a great people, kind-hearted in its ways; all over the world the meanest legalised injustice and exploitation,

the most cruel trickery and corruption are holding their feasts of gluttony, their orgies of irony at the terrible spectacle of wage-slavery, predominant in every so-called civilised country; at such a time, we have no desire for any holidays, nor for the pleasures accompanying them. May Day for us means a revolutionary war cry, a challenge to these gold glittering “parvenu”—masters and their mistresses; it means for us a proclamation of our will to emancipate ourselves from the bondage of governmental authority and capitalistic slavery—it is a mustering of our ranks for the purpose of carrying on our avenging struggle, our direct action. Louder even than usual do we cry out on this day to the capitalistic, money grabbing class: “You are robbers, and we shall take back our own; our factories because our hands have built and run them; our machines, because we, the toilers alone, know how to keep them going; our mines, fields, forests, which you, miserable parasites of landlordism and monopoly hold in your governmentally protected clutches, while we, by the sweat of our brows, have wrung from them all the wealth which **you dare** to appropriate for your own benefit—we, the drudging slaves of capital, take back **our property**, our tools, the means of production and distribution!”

All over the world these shouts are to be heard by the revolutionary proletariat. And, mind, this year more than ever before since a long time. The spirit of Revolt gains more power the nearer the “First of May” draws and the tidal wave of revolutionary enthusiasm, cast over from France this year, finds a ready and willing coast everywhere, where labour becomes conscious of its just and right aspiration for liberty and becomes shamefully conscious of its degraded position in the world of affairs:—a stepping stone to the politician, a human machine to the employer, a willing slave to the tyrannies of Governmentalism.

May the light of liberty shine brighter and ever brighter. May its light illuminate and inspire the minds of the oppressed people. With this hope we welcome the “First of May” of this year in the name of the emancipation of labour, the Social Revolution and that glorious ideal of peace and liberty: Anarchy!

The history of May-Day teaches us, how an idea is most beautifully evolved by the people, but, alas, also how it becomes corrupted by the self-constituted political leaders and tricksters amongst the working class. Nevertheless, however much downed, the original



great issue upon which the idea of the "First of Day" is based could never be subdued totally; to-day it breaks forth with a new and rejuvenated vigour.

Originally, we can trace this idea, leaving aside the antiquity of folklore, or the meaning of May-Day during the Middle Ages, side by side with the notion of independent economic action and strife on the part of the people. May-Day, as far as it concerns itself with the modern revolutionary movement, becomes at first dimly visible, though still somewhat veiled, in the great struggles of the American "Knights of Labour," a once upon a time, very revolutionary Trade Union Movement which was founded by the tailor Uriah S. Stephens. The immediate aims of this movement were to be economic emancipation by means of a direct struggle against the employers, encroachments and, above all, the realisation of an eight hours working day. In its earlier stages the struggles of the "K. of L." assumed an acute form of revolutionary warfare; its agitation for the "eight hours" was very brisk and several of its strikes do veritably merit the names of General Strikes.

All these struggles, which later on were gallantly assisted by the, at one time, also progressive "American Federation of Labour" culminated in one great struggle which broke out on May 1886. The workers of many larger towns in North America, but mainly those of Chicago, laid down on this day their tools and proclaimed the commencement of a General Strike in favour of an eight hours working day. This act was the natural outcome of a decision which had been reached one year prior, declaring that organised labour all over the United States should come out on Strike on May 1st, 1886, for the above mentioned demand. Thus we have before us one of the first consciously promulgated General Strikes by the people against the exploiting vampires of Capitalism. All over the vast territory of America large manifestations of a revolutionary character took place, with the result that at the end of this campaign—which has nothing in common with "Labour Representation" in Parliament, or with electioneering and political blundering—over 200,000 workers were successful and had gained what they struck for—the eight hours working day.

But great causes can and will never triumph, unless the blood of martyrdom is spilled; thus it was also in 1886. American Capitalism, infuriated at the sight of an awakened revolutionary movement, striking at the economic root and foundation of the unlimited right of exploitation, thirsted after revenge. It did quench

this desire for vengeance, by drinking vampire like the blood of five of the noblest men who ever fought in the ranks of the people for the emancipation of labour and a genuine reconstruction of Society. The names of Spies, Parsons, Engels, Fischer, Lingg, the names of these Anarchists who were judicially murdered at the gallows of Chicago, for their glorious stand taken during the labour-struggles of that period, the names of these grand martyrs remain for ever associated with the ideas of the "First of May." Anarchists were those who took a foremost part in the economic battles of the people and it is their blood, their lives which were sacrificed at the cradle of the idea of the "First of May." Ever true to the cause of the people, they died heroically when their hour struck and no way of rescue was opened for them.

Delusive is the thought and hope of governments and capitalists when they think that they can crush the spirit of Revolt and Liberty by persecution and the philosophy of the policeman's bludgeon. These savage means against liberty may impede her course, but they are unable to stop her advance, as the pages of history readily tell and teach. Thus it was after the 11th of November 1887, when our comrades were hung; the eight hours Movement was for a period hindered and checked, but it was never stamped out. Already one year later agitation set in again with great force and vigour, and in 1888, in December, the "American Federation of Labour" renewed the decision of 1885, declaring its intention of conquering the will of Authority, which was, of course, against this measure, to achieve the Eight Hours Day by direct action to be begun by a large demonstration on May 1st, 1890.

Meanwhile, in 1889, an International Social Democratic Congress met in Paris. There a motion to consider this question was introduced and the Congress thereupon decided to adhere to the decision of the "A.F.L." However, being a Congress which mainly believed in parliamentary tactics, they stealthily swerved from the original meaning of May-Day—a meaning that had been born out of the untold amount of sacrifices and sufferings of the people—and declared that May-Day should only be a day of peaceful demonstration, having as its essence a plea to all governing bodies to be so kind as to consider the question of the eight hours day and to legislate to this effect.

It stands to reason that this is an absolute apostasy, a falling off, from the original, real meaning of the "First of May" and—"by their fruits ye shall know them"—the effect of the above



resolution was to be seen very soon in all countries where the "First of May" was observed in such a peaceful, legal manner. Germany, the country of three millions of social-democratic votes and a whole people of absolute economic impotency, went ahead by crippling the meaning of the May-Day from the very beginning, with the result that in Germany the "First of May" is very seldom observed if the first unhappily falls upon any other day than Sunday; and even then it is hardly more than a jolly picnic, devoid of all and every revolutionary impulse. The same sad spectacle do we find in every country where the workers are influenced by the notions of a "legal and lawful" policy of Socialism, contenting itself with mere parliamentary methods and political voting. With all these countries—Germany, Austria, England, Switzerland—the "First of May" is only a day of general merriment; they totally ignore the deep significance, the call to arms and action, which is really the only quintessence of the day and without which the "First of May" is in fact of no exceptional importance whatever.

Only countries like France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, the Jura Section of Switzerland, South America and, last but not least, Russia, they stuck to the original, revolutionary meaning of the "First of May." But, however much they strove, they were also depressed by the weight of reaction which legalized Social democracy fostered during the last few decades, and, while doing much in their own respective countries, very little notice was taken of them, by the rest of Europe.

The crushing defeats which parliamentary politics here received during the last few years has, however, radically changed the situation; and we are on the eve of a new era in the struggle of the conscious proletariat. Where formerly the ballot dominated, it is now rejected and loud voices clamor for the application of the General Strike and direct Antimilitarism. The approaching "First of May" finds the working class of almost all countries in an unsettled condition as it is always the case when old methods are withdrawn and new ones have to struggle for their recognition against mean self-interest, ambition and authority. The toilers of all countries look with amazement at France which will this year call upon its proletariat to strike for the eight hours day and which is preparing a General Strike if the French capitalists do not instantaneously yield to the demand. The torch of Solidarity is also illuminating internationally the war camp of the struggling masses, because if the French workers should be obliged to go

out on their General Strike on May 2, they will be followed by the sympathetic strikes of the workers of Spain, Italy, part of Switzerland and Holland.

Thus do we witness this year the resurrection of the "First of May" in its original glory. It is again the old true battle, comrade; the "First of May" which is the pioneer who only receives his grand and far reaching meaning through the people's action on May 2, and after.

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It is high time for us, as English workingmen and women, to awake to the real meaning of "First of May."

Only the other day a noted labour leader and Secretary (1) of one of the largest Trade Unions in England, answered, when asked by the members of his organisation what's to be done, in the following peculiar terms: "Put your trust in me." We know this biblical saying very well, but just because we as anarchists, do not believe in it, therefore we call upon you, English workingmen, not to put your trust in anybody, but only to rely upon your own strength, your own power of organisation, and your own integrity. No leaders will help you in the least, unless you will help yourselves; it is you who help leaders materially, by making them leaders. but no leader has ever benefited the people. The people always had to help itself.

It is therefore a great fallacy to believe that parliamentary representation, or any other political desire, can in any way ameliorate the conditions of the working class as a class. Only one thing can really help you! Your own economic power which, if intelligently wielded in the form of a General Strike, will lead you swiftly from success to success until the day of final emancipation has arrived. All the pallaver about of the famous "Trades Disputes Bill"—which if even passed will only make your strikes to be impotent because legal and enervate your power!—and all the many other palliatives which the present system, which your political bosses of various creeds, promise you, is all empty talk. It will never become truth, because politics have that strange peculiarity that even if they fulfil all promises given before election, these promises, once

(1) Mr. RICHARD BELL, M.P. General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.

realised, become shallow and insipid. No wonder, law always deceives.

Amidst the infamy of all capitalistic states, which have just now rallied to the financial support of Russian Autocracy and Incendiarism, we, as Anarchists, do voice the noblest, innermost sentiments of the people; when we declare ourselves unalterably opposed to all forms of governments, of monopoly in the wealth of society and nature, against all oppression of man by man and every form of wage slavery.

Our aim, on the "First of May," is, to instill the people with hatred against tyranny, with international solidarity for the sons and daughters of all races as long as they are oppressed.

And we call especially upon the English working men to remember that it is high time for them to show a revolutionary front to their masters and rulers, to struggle earnestly for their ultimate liberation from the thralldom of exploitation and rulership.

We sincerely and heartily extend our most fraternal solidarity to the brothers and sisters of the revolutionary proletariat of all countries and firmly declare: "We will never take up arms against them, we entertain for them only the profoundest sympathy and love!" War we leave to those who do not cherish these feelings for the working people, these feelings of Internationalism.

Long live the "First of May"! Let us hope that the struggle of our French brothers will be victorious; we rejoice at the mere prospect thereof.

Down with all Governmental causes of war and dissension amongst the people; down with the system of tyranny and inhuman robbery, sanctioned by law and authority. Long live the General Strike; it is the soul of the "First of May" idea, it is the only method of procedure for a valiant Trade-Unionism, the only means of achieving success!

Thus do we recognise and celebrate the "First of May;" as an initiation of direct action on the part of the people, a demonstration of strength and activity, a fore runner of the Social Revolution. This is **our** "First of May," the May-Day of those who believe in Anarchism and Communism!

P.R.

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