

MAY DAY AND ANARCHISM

The anarchist origins of May Day

On 1st May 1886 a strike involving 400,000 workers began in Chicago, in support of an 8 hour working day. At a workers rally soon after, a bomb was thrown at police and four Anarchist trade union organisers were framed for the crime and hanged on flimsy evidence; another spent 6 years in prison. In memory of their sacrifice May Day became an international workers day. The state had attempted to do away with the anarchist idea but today anarchism inspires a new wave of struggle against global capitalism.

May Day in Melbourne

On 1st May 1886, Australia's first anarchist organisation was formed - The Melbourne Anarchist Club. From 1887 to 1889 it was only anarchists from the Melbourne Anarchist Club who remembered and celebrated May Day. After 1928 May Day became generally popular but anarchist Chummy Fleming still took pride of place in the May Day march, waving his anarchist flag triumphantly. He would start marching 30 minutes before the official time, proceeding so slowly that the rest of the procession gradually caught up with him.

May Day: A day of strength and solidarity

One hundred and twenty years after the first May Day in Chicago, where are we? We march through cities and towns bearing union and other banners but it's just about the only day of the year we can get the union bureaucrats out of head office. Then we listen to hypocritical speeches by these equally hypocritical bureaucrats. Once, however, May Day was a day when workers all over the world displayed their strength, proclaimed their ideals and celebrated their successes.

We can do it again!

We need independent working class politics, not collaboration with government, bosses and union bureaucrats. We need real solidarity with fellow workers in struggle, not a blinkered sectional outlook. We need shorter working hours, without loss of pay, to create work for the unemployed. We need revolutionary politics to lead us towards a genuine socialism where freedom is shared and democracy is real - not the present charade where we can choose our rulers but not their policies. We need a real democracy where everyone affected by a decision can have their say in it, a democracy of efficiently co-ordinated workplace and community councils. We need a society where production is for satisfying needs, not for making profits for a privileged few.

That's Anarchism.

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group

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