

resistance anarchist bulletin



Special edition

May Day 2007

Free/Donation

May Day all year round!

MAY DAY IS a day to celebrate workers' struggles for freedom and justice. In many countries, this day has been taken over by those seeking to change the meaning of the day for their own authoritarian ends. In Russia and the countries of Eastern Europe, May Day used to bring to mind triumphal parades of state 'socialism' and in the West, May Day is dominated by marches of union bureaucrats and reformist politicians. It is important that anarchists reclaim this day, reminding both ourselves and others, that it is a day to celebrate anarchism and remember all of those anarchists who have given their lives to the struggle for a transformation of society.

The origin of May Day as a 'Workers' Day' dates back to 1886 when on May 1st 340,000 workers struck all over the US, calling for an eight hour day. In Chicago, 80,000 workers came out. The following Monday, the police fired on strikers at the McCormick Harvester factory and six workers were killed. The next day a protest meeting was broken up by the police. In the ensuing melee, a bomb was thrown at the police, killing one outright and fatally wounding seven others. The authorities immediately accused the anarchists, who were active members of the 8 hour day movement in Chicago. After a farcical trial, with a jury made up of businessmen, their clerks and a relative of a dead policeman, 8 anarchists were found guilty. Four were hanged, three spent many years in prison, and one committed suicide before sentence could be passed. Evidence later

came to light that the bomb had actually been thrown by a police agent, but it was obvious from the start that the aim was to demonise anarchists as a way of undermining the 8 hour day movement. Bosses continued to use this incident to victimise working class militants.

There was international outcry and May 1st became established as an international day of solidarity and action by the American Federation of Labour, and this was supported by workers' movements, mainly in Europe. One hundred and twenty years later, this history has been conveniently forgotten. In the US, the State moved the date to September, and renamed it 'Labour Day', now known more for family BBQs on a long week-end than for any political association. In western Europe, it became the property of reformist political leaders and union bureaucrats and transformed into a meaningless ritual. Recently, some governments have made moves to follow the US example and turn May Day into a day to celebrate work. In the Soviet Union, China, North Korea and other so-called 'communist countries, May Day was turned into a display of the military might of the State.

Why should we bother trying to reclaim May Day? Though we know that our struggle is not confined to one day a year, it is nevertheless important to have moments when we unite with other anarchists around the world and consciously remember that we are part of a long tradition that offers the only challenge to authoritarians of every variety.



We alone argue for a society of equals based on the association of free individuals. It is anarchists who have realised that any government, whatever ideology it professes, is inherently oppressive. Anarchists have ceaselessly fought against all governments and have shown in theory and in practice that it is possible for people to organise themselves without giving up their power to an institution that then seeks to control and dominate.

And, by remembering the Chicago anarchists and their involvement in the 8 hour day struggle, we also remind ourselves that, though we want nothing less than the total abolition of capitalism and all governments, anarchists, as workers, also want to improve their living and working conditions in the here and now. We know that it is only out of these day-to-day struggles that we can build an anarchist society.

By making May Day an International Day of Action, we are connecting with our history and other anarchists, thereby strengthening our resolve and giving us inspiration for the struggles we wage during the rest of the year. ★

THE WILDCAT ARCHES HER BACK

WILDCAT STRIKES HAVE broken out all over the world in the last couple of months. One of the most recent was a wildcat strike by bus workers in late April at the Haren Bus Depot which is in a suburb of Brussels, after workers learnt that a colleague had been fired.

Roughly half of all services from the depot were cancelled. The strike continued the following day with only 39 buses out of 148 running. At Delta depot, 4 out of 5 routes were running with 26 of the 130 buses not moving all day. Only six out of 114 buses were not running from the Jacques Brel depot. In total the action affected roughly one in six buses across the city according to management. The action mainly affected bus line 12, which links Brussels to the airport. Management were forced to go across Brussels notifying passengers that the service would not be running. They were unable to mount a replacement service with passengers being forced to take longer routes or use the metro. The transport minister for the region André Antoine called the action 'scandalous'. In the past Antoine has called for strikers to be sacked. The strike seems to have won concessions on other issues, notably safety gloves and vests for security staff and self-defence classes for drivers. In Egypt, a mass wave of unofficial strikes continues despite the government trying to crack down. In the Nile Delta province of Monofiya, some 2,700 workers occupied a privately owned textile mill.

Over 4,000 textile workers in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria walked out over attempts to deduct pay for an earlier strike. In Cairo, some 9,000 granary workers beat an attempt by the regime to cut the grain supply to a state owned company and transfer production to a private firm.

Earlier, hundreds of workers at the Danish Broadcasting Corporation wildcatted in March against plans to cut 10% of the workforce. And in February in Holland bus drivers on public transport went on an unofficial strike on 19 routes on the Amsterdam-Zaandam region.



In the USA hundreds of school workers in Monongalia County in the South went on sick-out (a mass phoning in sick) forcing all state schools to shut. Organised strikes are illegal and the sick out was conducted informally.

In Canada staff at the Nackawic paper mill in New Brunswick wildcatted on 5th March for a day over hiring practices.

In Belgium, train drivers on the Namur-Luxembourg line walked out on wildcat on 12th March in protest against a new annual leave system. Earlier a wildcat strike in February among conductors followed assaults on staff, who only returned to work following a commitment to improve safety on trains.

In France and in Germany 10,000 Airbus workers facing redundancy struck in a series of wildcats. In France a wildcat began in one of the mechanics' workshops and spread through the whole plant. In Germany about 1,000 Airbus workers wildcatted at the Laupheim plant. This followed a spontaneous walkout at another plant.

In Vietnam there was a wave of wildcat strikes throughout the country. 1,000 workers at a furniture factory downed tools and walked out over low pay. 4,000 walked out at four foreign companies. ★



The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists aiming to abolish capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is Anarchist Communism.

We see today's society as being divided into two main opposing classes: the ruling class which controls all the power and wealth, and the working class which the rulers exploit to maintain this. By racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, as well as war and environmental destruction the rulers weaken and divide us. Only the direct action of working class people can defeat these attacks and ultimately overthrow capitalism.

As the capitalist system rules the whole world, its destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it, such as working through parliament and national liberation movements, as they fail to challenge capitalism itself. Unions also work as a part of the capitalist system, so although workers struggle within them they will be unable to bring about capitalism's destruction unless they go beyond these limits.

Organisation is vital if we're to beat the bosses, so we work for a united anarchist movement and are affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations.

The Anarchist Federation has members across Britain and Ireland fighting for the kind of world outlined above.

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