



ORGANISE! A Call To Action

On May Day we celebrate the gains we have fought for and gained as working class people in over 200 years of organised struggle. The eight hour day, paid holidays, overtime rates, pensions, safer working environments, welfare provision and the weekend have all been brought to us by the struggles of organised workers, employed and unemployed.

Yet everywhere these gains are under attack as we are repeatedly told that we must all pay for the ongoing crisis that capitalism finds itself in... Pension cuts, job losses, longer hours, worse pay, more taxes, less services, more privatisation, bail outs and subsidies for the rich and increased hardship and destitution for the working class and the poor.

This is on a global scale. The debt crisis that capitalism created is being used to excuse an all out attack on those who did not create that 'crisis' in the first place.

Capitalism is based on robbery - it is built on profit and greed. The working class built the wealth of this society through our labour. The wealthy have siphoned off the true value of our labour to create immense wealth for themselves. This is what they call profit. They would prefer to leave us with just the bare minimum we need to survive.

This does not always work out just how

they would like it to. Through organising and taking action against bosses and government working class and unemployed people forced concessions from them. Our combined struggles won real improvements in our lives but now it seems the bosses, and their lackeys in government, are having none of that and are stripping us of the little we have fought for over the years to line their pockets with even more of the wealth we create!

In the face of this we need to organise. The Trades Unions are failing us. Demanding that MLAs and politicians sort things out for us will get nowhere. Our history has shown us that direct action by workers is what forces concessions from the bosses. That history also shows us that any meaningful change demands the scrapping of capitalism and the state.

Welfare Reform will be carried out by the Stormont Executive no matter who you vote for. Poverty is on the increase while the gap between rich and poor has never been greater. The rich continue to get richer while we continue to get poorer.

The thing is this isn't a crisis - well not for capitalism anyway. The crisis for us is that we are poorly organised and badly led. We need to begin the task of building effective and revolutionary unions. We need to be better organised to begin taking back what, is after all, rightfully ours.

MAY DAY Origins & Legacy

On Monday 28th April people gathered at the Belfast Solidarity Federation's second Solidarity Cafe to discuss the origins and legacy of May Day.

May Day was adopted by the international workers movement as an annual celebration of the struggle for the 8 hour day and as a commemoration of the judicial murder of 4, and the suicide of 1, anarchists involved in that struggle in Chicago in 1887.

On 1st May 1886, in Chicago alone, 400,000 workers went on strike for the 8 hour day. At McCormick Harvester Co. 200 police attacked striking workers with clubs and pistols. At least 1 striker was killed, 5-6 seriously wounded and many more injured. A rally protesting the police attacks was organised for the following day.

This rally was addressed by anarchist labour activists August Spies, Albert Parsons and Samuel Fielden. As it came to an end and most of the crowd had already drifted off due to rain 180 police arrived and ordered those who remained to disperse. At this point a bomb was thrown at police killing one officer and fatally wounding 6 more.

The police opened fire. No record of the numbers killed or wounded exists.

In the wake of the bomb throwing a reign of terror swept Chicago. Meeting Halls, Union offices, printing presses were raided, trashed and closed. Peoples homes were raided. Anarchists and socialist and many workers who were neither were rounded up. Many were tortured.

Eventually 8 men were to stand trial for murder.

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"How come you don't work fourteen hours a day? Your great-great-grandparents did. How come you only work the eight-hour day? Four guys got hanged fighting for the eight-hour day for you."
- Studs Terkel, Touch and Go: A Memoir



MAY DAY

Origins & Legacy

All of the men were anarchist active in Chicago's labour movement. The trial was marked by packed juries, intimidation and no evidence. What in reality was on trial were the men's ideas, the aim of the trial was to crush those ideas and working class self organisation in Chicago.

August Spies, Samuel Fielden, Albert Parsons, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, Michael Schwab and Louis Lingg were eventually all sentenced to death. Oscar Neebe was sentenced to 15 years. Immediately an international campaign against trial and its verdict began. As a result Fielden and Schwab's sentenced were commuted to life.

Spies, Parsons, Fischer and Engel were executed while Louis Lingg cheated his executioners by committing suicide in jail.

In 1893 Neebe, Schwab and Fielden were pardoned.

The struggle for the 8 hour day went on and was one across much of the world.

Many of the gains made over the intervening years of struggle have been stripped from us in more recent years.

Zero hours contracts for some, a longer working day for others, attacks on pensions, welfare and

other hard fought for rights.

The legacy of May Day is however that workers can come together and win. We have organised as workers, employed and unemployed, across barriers of sectarianism, gender, race, ethnicity and fought against governments and bosses willing to kill us. When we have done so we have won victories against seemingly overwhelming odds.

The next time you hear someone argue that there is no alternative to cuts and austerity remember our history. But don't mourn - Organise!



SMASH BIGOTRY

Bigotry, homophobia, racism, sectarianism, sexism, transphobia and xenophobia are all utilised by the bosses and state to keep us divided and fighting amongst ourselves while they continue to profit.

Stormont voted to block gay marriage legislation. That religious bigots and fundamentalists (predominantly members of the Unionist parties but joined by Alliance Party members) even have the right to impose such a decision on anyone shows up the lie that is representative 'democracy'. There is nothing democratic about this system.

These bigots find greater cross party support when it comes to denying women control over their own bodies. 'Pro-life' fundamentalism unites 'our' politicians across their sectarian divide.

Racism and xenophobia are on the rise. A Traveller family have had shots fired into their home in west Belfast. In east Belfast loyalist UVF paramilitaries have been behind an upsurge of attacks on immigrants. Racism is promoted by the rightwing media, politicians and political parties seeking to shift the blame for increased hardship in working class communities onto more vulnerable, working class, people living in these communities. There can be no room for these things in a truly revolutionary labour movement. Unions must be based on workers coming together in defence and pursuit of common interests as working class people. In doing so we must oppose bigotry from all quarters.



The Solidarity Federation is a revolutionary union initiative: an organisation of workers which seeks the abolition of capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit worldwide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for those

who control and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege. In their place we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can be achieved by working class organisations based on the same principles - revolutionary unions. These are not trade unions concerned with "bread and butter" issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues - both in the workplace and beyond - which arise from our oppression.

As such we are actively opposed to sectarianism, racism, sexism and homophobia and other tendencies used to divide workers and weaken our struggles for our common interests.

Revolutionary unions fully support and encourage organisation in all spheres of life that consciously parallel those of the society we wish to create; that is,

organisation based on mutual aid, voluntary cooperation, direct democracy and opposed to domination, hierarchy and exploitation in all forms. We are committed to building a new society within the shell of the old in both our workplace and wider community. Unless we organise in this way, politicians - some claiming to be revolutionary - will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of Locals and Industrial Networks which seek to take on the functions of revolutionary unions - supporting our organising efforts where we live and work. Our activities are based on direct action - action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through participation of the membership. We welcome all workers - including the unemployed, retired, stay-home parents and students - who will work within our Aims and Principles and seek to create revolutionary unions to fight the class struggle.