

May Day 2016

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group

1 May 2016

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Chicago 1886

On 1 May, workers in Chicago in the United States went on strike for the 8 hour day. Three days later, a bomb went off at a workers' demonstration. Seven police and four workers were killed, either by the bomb or the following gunfire. In the outcry that followed, eight Anarchist union leaders were framed and convicted for the crime. Four were executed. The campaign for the exoneration of the Haymarket Martyrs and the release of the survivors gave birth to May Day, celebrated around the world as a day of working class solidarity.

Melbourne 2016

The labour movement in Melbourne, though far declined from its former strength, has neither totally given up the ghost nor been allowed quarter by its enemies. Unions campaign for health and safety, against insecure work and against the use of temporary work visas to undermine labour standards. The campaigns, though, are undermined by the conservatism and timidity of the union officials, their support for the Labor Party and their nationalist focus on "Aussie jobs", which interferes with building the necessary solidarity between local workers and super-exploited migrant workers. Meanwhile, the capitalists are proceeding with legislation to destroy the construction workers' union (CFMEU) and bring the entire union movement under close State supervision.

Abroad

Although the struggle in Australia has been low key in recent years, events overseas have been stepping up – for good and ill. China has become strike capital of the world and workers in India continue to stage immense general strikes. The movements behind Jeremy Corbyn in Britain and Bernie Sanders in the US (though the candidates themselves have no answers) are evidence of a desire, particularly amongst young workers, to break from the current political establishment. Against this, however, stand other factors. Unions in South Korea are under massive assault, while governments in Turkey and Thailand have become increasingly violent and intolerant. Religious sectarianism deepens in West Asia and North Africa (assisted in some countries by imperialist intervention). And Fascism, that ghastly menace from the past, rises again across Europe and elsewhere, feeding off both the failure of the European Union and the influx of refugees fleeing persecution and imperialist war. Even in Europe, however, there is a ray of light with the mass struggle against the anti-union attacks on the labour code.

Communism

Time grows short, with the environmental disaster of climate change accelerating yearly and international relations descending into ever more intractable imperialist wars. The emerging struggles, however, are evidence that the working class is up to the task. We can rise up and overthrow capitalism. We can create a stateless, classless society of libertarian communism, where each contributes according to their ability and receives according to their need. We can win – and be free.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

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