

## MAY DAY: INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY

May Day—International Workers Day—is a day of remembrance and celebration for international labor and left-wing movements. People in more than 80 countries mark this day with marches and demonstrations. May 1<sup>st</sup> was originally recognized to commemorate the 1886 Haymarket Massacre in Chicago and working class struggle.

### HISTORY OF MAY DAY: HAYMARKET MASSACRE IN CHICAGO

The heart of the American labor movement was in Chicago. The Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions – in response to workers who were being forced to work more than 12 hours a day – passed a resolution stating that 8 hours should constitute a day's work legally from May 1, 1886. A general strike was called to achieve this goal. The government responded by sending police into strikes who opened fire & killed many. A bomb was thrown into Chicago's Haymarket Square. Following the bombing a reign of terror swept over Chicago. Meeting halls, union offices, printing shops and private homes were raided.



Eight men, all anarchists & active union organizers stood trial for murder. No proof was offered by the state that any of the eight had anything to do with the bomb. A biased judge and jury and a hysterical press ensured that all eight were found guilty. **Their only "crimes" were their anarchist ideas, union activity and the threat these held for the ruling class. In spite of worldwide protest, four of the Haymarket Martyrs were hanged.** Half a million people lined the funeral procession. President Cleveland feared that commemorating Labor Day on May 1st could become an opportunity to commemorate the Haymarket Martyrs. Thus he moved Labor Day to September. The rest of the world (except Canada) celebrates International Workers Day on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

### IMMIGRANTS AND LABOR DAY: WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

In 2006 the immigrant rights community in the US helped revive the meaning of May 1<sup>st</sup> with huge political strikes. Immigrant workers, especially undocumented workers, are the most exploited and vulnerable group of workers worldwide. One of the main reasons people have had to leave their homes and migrate to find work is due to economic policies and trade agreements that benefit the wealthy by impoverishing working people. Take NAFTA, which destroyed family farms in Mexico causing many people to migrate to the US to become farmworkers in slave-like conditions, created notorious factories along the border called *maquiladoras*, and destroyed good paying union jobs in the US. The entire global economy creates economic refugees and preys on immigrant workers, who have little labor protections. Wage theft—when employers do not pay workers what they are owed—is a crime committed against immigrant workers more than any other worker. Immigrant workers who have "guest worker visas" in the United States are dependent on their employer to have legal status in the US, which keeps the workers in servitude to the employer. Immigrant workers face huge levels of violence by employers, little safety protections in hazardous jobs, unjust firings and wage theft, sexual harassment, and are trafficked or enslaved globally more than any other people. As workers we must unite globally to end worker exploitation!



## WAL-MART: THE HIGH COST OF LOW WAGES

In 2011, Wal-Mart's net income was \$15.7 BILLION.

But the average worker made \$15,500 a year—poverty wages.

Most workers rely on public assistance to supplement these poverty wages. It is estimated that the taxpayer cost of subsidizing Wal-Mart workers is \$1 billion nationwide.

Walmart has a long history of denying its employees the right to organize and right to collectively bargain. The company deploys numerous anti-union tactics, including requiring workers to attend anti-union meetings and specially training supervisors in union avoidance.

In 2005, a memo from Walmart's then Vice President of Benefits Susan Chambers outlined a strategy for how the company could remove sick workers from the payrolls and avoid paying healthcare benefits.

