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*Remember the Dead,  
and Fight Like Hell  
for the Living!*



*A Story of May Day  
Lowell Thomas*

## Glossary of terms:

**Anarchism** (or anarchist): a very commonly misunderstood political theory and practice often confused with chaos, violence or disorder. Anarchism states that all forms of domination and coercion are unnecessary as well as inherently violent. Seeking to replace hierarchical relationships, particularly in human society, with voluntary associations based on mutual-aid and cooperation.

**A.F.L.** : federation of unions established in 1886, currently one of the largest union organizations in the U.S.

**Capitalism:** Economic system based on private ownership of both the means of production and distribution. Running of the economy for the purpose of profit maximizing. Tends to foster competition, greed and gaps in wealth. Creates class divisions and its philosophy's are typically mirrored in the minds of people who live in a capitalist society. Continually changes itself, changing class makeup, society and the world in the process.

**Class Collaboration:** the assumption that the capitalist class and working class have common interests, therefore cooperation will lead to the most satisfactory results of each class. Tends to be based on the acceptance of Capitalism.

**Communism** (or communist): Replacing capitalist run economy with a state or socialized economy. Belief that capitalism will dig it's own grave and a "dictatorship of the proletariat" will take it's place. Most experiments in communism have failed for multiple reasons, mainly their authoritarian and bureaucratic framework. Typically based off of the works of Karl Marx.

**Direct Action:** a group of people or an individual taking action for themselves as opposed to assigning responsibility to someone else. Not relying on someone else to get something done for you.

**"Globalization":** The move to a multi-lateral mode of production. A manifestation of Neo-liberalism.

**Neo-liberalism:** the process of liberalizing the world's economy, moving as much of the economy into the hands of the private sector. Replacement of local and state power with corporate control. Removal of things considered "barriers to trade" (tariffs, unions, laws, tax's etc.).

**"Right To Work" laws:** guarantee to employers by law that unions may not hold a closed shop. Has nothing to do with guaranteeing anyone the right to work.

**Scab(s):** someone who takes another person's job during a strike. Usually brought in by employers to help break a strike or bust a union.

Work cited:

A Peoples History of the United States : Howard Zinn

A Short History of the U.S. Working Class : From Colonial Times to the Twenty-First Century: Paul Le Blanc

The Auto-Biography of Mother Jones: Mother Jones

Various May Day Articles from [www.infoshop.org](http://www.infoshop.org)

[www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org)

correlation between the battles we fought yesterday and the problems we face today. This doesn't mean all is lost or that repression has been completely successful. It's more of a reminder that "those who forget their past are doomed to repeat it." We can be the solution to the majority of our problems if we remember what May Day is and keep the flame of yesterday shining brightly on our path to tomorrow.

### **Long live May Day!**

**M**ay Day holds far more than just historical importance. Many of our demands from yesterday have yet to be granted today, and the ground we have won is continually being stolen from underneath us. An overwhelming amount of products we consume today (from tennis shoes to fruit) are still produced in sweatshops and come from the sweat of slave labor. Non-traditional agriculture continues to wreak havoc on our land, leading us into an eco-catastrophe far more cataclysmic than its predecessor the dust bowl. (Neglect is causing top soil to erode away at a rate that could take thousands of years to rectify.) Capitalist globalization has opened the door for big business to burden developing nations with slave wage jobs, often times causing Americans to lose their jobs in the process. This often fools Americans into racist scapegoating — blaming impoverished people in other countries for situations neither of us had any say in creating. Racism blinds us from seeing who's really at fault and whose interests are actually being served. We continue to witness the destructive effects in our day to day lives caused by systems of competition as opposed to cooperation. The list goes on and on, and the symptoms all point to a larger problem; we aren't living sustainably or even desirably, thus the battle continues and the spirit of May Day lives on today.

There are entire books written on our forgotten history; environmental degradation; the failures and the hopes of American labor; healthy and desirable alternatives to Capitalism and Authoritarianism; and ways that people have put these ideas into action. May Day and all it stands for hasn't gone away. Many people throughout the world are reminding us of this and slowly we are beginning to remember. And it's important that we do remember.

It's important that we remember May Day so that our past will never die, so that we remember all that we are capable of and so that the battle for our lives continues until it's won.

## **Remember the Dead, and Fight Like Hell for the Living!**

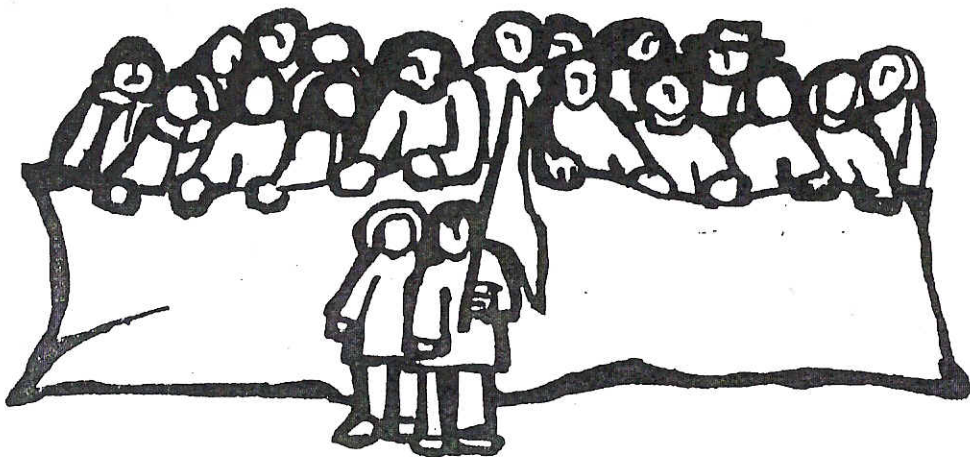
**A Story of May Day**

**Llowell Thomas**

For working people in nations across the globe, May 1<sup>st</sup> marks a day of massive celebration, active class solidarity and the demand that our history never be forgotten. Millions of people pour from their homes and workplaces, flooding their cities in celebration and often times, protest. From fully industrialized nations to developing countries, across natural and constructed borders, a global community of working class people assemble in commemoration of a powerful historical landmark, and memory of a holiday that in it's founding country has all but been forgotten. This tremendous day of celebration is known as May Day and its origins lay right here in the United States of America.

May Day, the struggle for the 8-hour work day and other important elements of the American worker culture, seem to have disappeared from our history books as well as the minds of our populace, leaving one to assume they eroded away or simply lost their relevance. More realistically, these important events have been white-washed or simply left out of the story we inherited as our own. This dissertation is composed to counter the attempted nullification of everything workers have fought and died for over the past 150 years.

So what is May Day? Where does the 8-hour workday come from? Where did it go? And why will the rest of the world be celebrating the real Labor Day while Americans work through yet another holiday?



*“The first of May, whose historical significance will be understood and appreciated only in later years, has come”*

**August Spies, May 1<sup>st</sup> 1886**

This essay is followed by a glossary of terms marked by \* in the text

The attempt has also been made to redirect labor's attention from a meaningful “labor day,” like the first of May, to a day with little historical significance in September. This serves multiple purposes. We forget our power to actualize our dreams as a class by thanking the bosses for granting us a day of our own. It also furthers the myth of class collaboration. We forget our connection with the global working class by celebrating an unrelated holiday with no sense of solidarity. By forgetting where we came from, forgetting our martyrs and forgetting what we fought and won, it makes it that much easier to take away.

May Day celebrations in the U.S. are still targets for police repression and brutality. In the year 2000 minor celebrations in Chicago, Olympia, Boston, Phoenix, San Francisco, New York and a handful of other U.S. cities all reported cases of police brutality and unjust arrests. In Los Angeles police surrounded a group of demonstrating anarchists, and after brutalizing them, pinned them against a wall unloading 40-50 rounds of rubber bullets point blank. A youth named Robert Middaugh was given a 3-year sentence for defending himself and upon release will be forced to be silent or leave the jurisdiction. Such targeting of specific groups for their beliefs, as opposed to their actions, seems hauntingly familiar to the “examples” made of the Chicago 8.

Although we haven't seen such a massive mobilization of the U.S. working class in sometime, our police forces still continue to militarize themselves over minor people's mobilizations (like the recent demonstrations against neo-liberalism\* or “globalization”\*). A majority of our police departments now have paramilitary units, which seems to have only served the purpose of terrorizing citizens. Much in the way the Chicago Commercial Club helped arm the Chicago police, big businesses continue to arm and hire police departments today, using them for the protection of their interests at the expense of ours.

We have seen the enactment of multiple laws whose purpose is to usurp the power of working people and our organizations. An example of this is “right to work” laws,\* which disable a union of workers from keeping a closed shop, giving employers the ability to bring in anti-union workers and bust the union. Other examples include outlawing secondary boycotts, sympathy strikes, jurisdictional strikes, limiting the size of picket lines, implementing “cooling off” periods where workers are prohibited from striking, and union officers being forced to file affidavits that they are not members of the Communist\* party. The closed shop and the rest of these impeding restrictions were activated under the Taft Hardley Act adopted in 1947. While some stipulations of this act have been repealed, a majority of it's anti-labor laws remain in place. (“Right to work” states still exist.) Laws and regulations like this are myriad, and more and more they continue to slide their way onto the books — two centuries of battle and strife rapidly reversed by the strokes of a pen.

The repression of May Day can be seen in many different ways, some more subtle than others. But one doesn't have to look far to see the

First in a series of articles highlighting Law Day and the Rule of Law

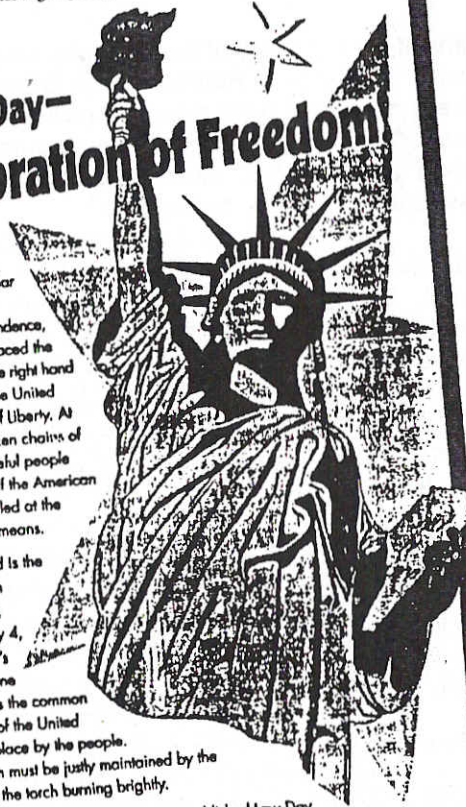
# Law Day— A Celebration of Freedom

To honor the 100-year anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the French people placed the torch of freedom in the right hand of a special gift to the United States—the Statue of Liberty. At her feet lay the broken chains of tyranny. Many hopeful people seeking their part of the American dream have marveled at the torch, and what it means.

Yet often unnoticed is the keystone resting in Liberty's left hand, inscribed with July 4, 1776, the nation's birthday. This stone tablet symbolizes the common law foundation of the United States, set into place by the people. The legal system must be justly maintained by the people to keep the torch burning brightly.

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower established Law Day to recognize the importance of law in the American heritage of

liberty, justice, and equality. We invite you to join in celebrating your freedom on Law Day, May 1. Look in this newspaper during April and May for a continuing story about freedom, the rule of law, and the importance of preserving these precious legacies.



CELEBRATE  
★ YOUR  
FREEDOM



1997  
Law Day  
May 1

The Series

- ★ Today: Law Day
- Part 2: Freedom of Speech
- Part 3: Freedom Under Law
- Part 4: Freedom of the Press



### Law Day and You

Freedom is expressed in many ways. Look through this newspaper to identify pictures and stories of freedom. Explain your reasoning.

Make a list of civic events listed in the community calendar and elsewhere in this newspaper. What causes do the organizations support? What freedoms are members exercising?

In the TV listings, find a program that has to do with law or lawyers. Watch the programs. How do lawyers and the court system resolve conflicts?

EVIDENTLY, Joseph Goebbels' spirit is alive in San Francisco, where the above ad was placed in the Chronicle newspaper. As Propaganda Minister for the Hitler regime, Goebbels ceaselessly bludgeoned the people with similar indoctrination for an authoritarian State and the basic concept that slavery equals freedom. Typical is the vague posture of concern about possible opposition to the "rule of law", whereas of course almost no issue of any mainstream paper ever carries one word of such arguments.

The holiday known as May Day has two roots from which two separate holidays were established. Though occasionally they intertwine, the focus here is on the May Day most celebrated by the global working class. The celebration was spawned from the bitter labor struggles that took place in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century industrializing United States of America. More precisely, May Day began when the American Federation of Labor (AFL\*), alongside the American rank and file, demanded that "eight hours shall constitute a legal days work from and after May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1886."

Although today this may seem like a modest demand, at the time it was taken as a serious threat. The American employing class was not interested in heeding any demand from American labor (which it treated something like its property). Both sides knew what it was going to take to protect their interests — the employing class returning to their tactics of state terrorism, and the working class engaging in direct action\*, thus further agitating the already heated battle over the 8-hour workday.

For those who toiled for a living, this was a miserable and brutal epoch in America. Work days were typically 10, 12 and even 16 hours long. Entire families struggled side by side in sweatshops, coal mines, fields and factories. Child labor was a common practice. ("Toddling four-year-olds were brought to the mills to "help" the older sister or brother of ten years but their labor was not paid") Workers lost limbs and died on the job like casualties of war. But this brutal era also nurtured in workers a consciousness of self; seeing capitalism\* bare and exposed made it easier to know who were one's allies, as well as making workers less susceptible to the farce of class collaboration\*.

In the face of such inhumane conditions, the plea for an 8-hour workday was quickly heeded by a quarter of a million workers on May 1, 1886, swelling to 350,000 workers in a nation-wide general strike by the second week of May. 10,000 people marched in New York to Union Square; 11,000 marched in Detroit, Michigan; Louisville, Kentucky and Baltimore, Maryland, which was remarkable for the open collaboration of multiracial workers. The nation was in revolt, but the hub of working class militancy was to be found in Chicago, Illinois.

There are a number of attributed reasons as to why Chicago became the heartbeat of the rejuvenated eight-hour movement. Prior to the demands by the American Federation of Labor (AFL), Chicago had already been noted for having the strongest eight-hour movement in the nation. Class-consciousness was deeply embedded in the minds of many Chicago laborers. The Anarchist\* International Working Peoples Association (IWPA), which published five newspapers in three languages, and claimed a large membership, had a strong following in Chicago. These weren't the only reasons behind the militancy of Chicago, but were some of the most important.

\* The autobiography of Mother Jones

By May 3<sup>rd</sup> the number of strikers in Chicago had soared to 65,000, immediately tipping the employing class into visceral reaction. And it's this brutal response by the owners of industry, with help from the state, that leads us to the most noted story of May Day and the eight-hour movement, the Haymarket tragedy.

On May 3<sup>rd</sup> a man by the name of August Spies was addressing a crowd of striking Chicago lumber workers, preparing to negotiate with the bosses over the eight hour work day. During Spies' oration, many lumber workers decided to go a quarter a mile away to stand in solidarity with the McCormick harvest workers who had been locked out of their jobs for over three months. The McCormick plant was being run by scabs\* whom the workers were planning on confronting at shift change. Within 15 minutes, hundreds of cops swarmed on the McCormick workers. Spies and the remaining Lumbers heard gun shots and quickly moved to the McCormick plant to support their fellow workers. The police intercepted Spies and the lumbers, brutally attacking them with clubs and firing bullets into the crowd. The police killed four workers and injured many others. In response, some leading Chicago Anarchists organized a rally in Haymarket Square the following day to protest police brutality.

To say that the police repression and attacks on people was a knee jerk reaction for the authorities is to misunderstand the situation entirely. In preparation for the eight-hour movement, the Chicago political class and employing class had invested in state-of-the-art weaponry. The Chicago Commercial Club had spent \$2,000 (that's \$2,000 in 1886, mind you) on a new machine gun, fully premeditating the use of violence to repress the working class movement. It's with this understanding that the protest against police brutality was called, and it's this reality that led to the heartbreak and violence in Haymarket Square on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

Throughout the day of May 4<sup>th</sup> Chicago police carried out massive waves of violent attacks on striking workers. However, despite their contempt and anger, 3,000 people still managed to gather in Haymarket Square for a peaceful demonstration, including the mayor. First August Spies spoke against police violence, then Albert Parsons spoke about the eight-hour day, and as Samuel Fielden took the stage, storm clouds settled in. Spies, Parsons, the mayor and some demonstrators left, most likely due to the bad weather. Shortly after their departure, 180 police approached the speakers platform and demanded that the meeting disperse. Fielden protested that the meeting was peaceful and should be allowed to finish on it's own accord. A bomb then exploded amongst the police, wounding 66 and killing seven. The police responded by firing indiscriminately into the crowd, killing several people and wounding 200. Much later, evidence came out that Rudolph Schnaubelt had been hired by the police to throw the bomb, giving state leadership a reason to completely suppress the revolutionary leadership in Chicago and arrest at will.

The witch-hunt that followed was quick in coming. The state wasted no time in arresting seven Anarchist leaders (Parsons, making the 8<sup>th</sup> turned

himself in on the day of the trial) with no evidence connecting them to the bomb. Prosecuting Attorney Julius Grinnel admitted in his closing remarks "these men have been selected, picked out by the grand jury and indicted because they were leaders. They are no more guilty then the thousands that follow them... convict these men, make examples of them, hang them and save our institutions, our society."

Without ever producing any evidence that these men were in any way involved with the bomb, all except Oscar Neebe were sentenced to death. Lois Lingg cheated the hangman by exploding a dynamite tube in his mouth; Michael Schwab and Fielden petitioned for clemency and were commuted to life in prison, and the remaining four were hung November 11<sup>th</sup> 1887. It was proven later that aside from Fielden, who was speaking at the time the bomb exploded, the other seven men were not even present in Haymarket Square at that time. In declaring these men innocent, he proved that the whole trial had been nothing short of a charade.

However, the witch-hunt and attempt to make examples of these men actually began before the Haymarket tragedy ever occurred. A collaboration of businessmen, calling themselves "citizens committee," and the state had been planning on such an event arising. On May 1st the Chicago *Mail* asked that Albert Parson and August Spies be watched. "Keep them in view. Hold them personally responsible for any trouble that occurs. Make examples of these men if trouble occurs." Seemingly, the trial had already been framed before the crime had taken place.

Unfortunately the witch-hunt wasn't confined to the "Chicago 8," but resulted in repression of the entire labor movement. The strikes for the 8-hour day began to collapse and about one-third of the workers who had won the 8-hour day lost it in the month following Haymarket. A few years later, the AFL, who had done a good deal in helping initiate May Day, began to swing to the "right," completely disavowing May Day altogether by 1905.

Still the spark ignited in the United States began to catch fire worldwide. Before the 1900s, May Day was already being celebrated by most of the European countries and in Chile, Peru, Cuba, Russia, Brazil and many other places around the globe. Important historical figures, like Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, credited their "political birth" to the events in Chicago. But as May Day grew, so did the attempted repression of it. The battle for and against May Day continues today.

## Repression

One of the first Orwellian attempts at repressing May Day as a holiday came when the U.S. government declared May 1<sup>st</sup> as "Law Day," when Americans would celebrate their freedom to obey laws. This seemed to be done to purposefully undermine the fact that May 1<sup>st</sup> represents a day where thousands of working people had to go beyond the law to win any kind of decent conditions for themselves and their class. "Law Day" hasn't had much success as a holiday (though occasionally it has drawn more celebration when called "Patriot Day") in the United States, although it has achieved it's purpose of eclipsing May Day.