International Workers' Day

Why do we need International Workers' Day?

International Workers' Day is a celebration of working people and a day when people campaign for decent work and fair pay. Thanks to action taken by workers over many years, millions of people have won fundamental rights and protections. Minimum wages have been established, there are limits on working hours, and people have the right to paid holidays and sick pay.

However, in recent years, working conditions in many situations have got worse. Since the global financial crisis of 2008, part-time, short-term and badly paid work has become more common, and state pensions are at risk. We have also seen the rise of the 'gig economy', where companies hire workers casually for one short job at a time. These workers don't have

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the usual rights to paid holidays, the minimum wage or redundancy pay. Solidarity with other workers is as important as ever.

The history of International Workers' Day

In May 1886, 400,000 workers in many parts of the USA went on strike, demanding an eight-hour working day. The strike started peacefully, but on the third day of protests in Chicago there was some violence. The police shot at unarmed workers, killing several of them. The next day there were more protests and someone threw a bomb. Seven police officers and four workers were killed by the bomb or police shooting just after the bomb. The person who threw the bomb was never identified, but eight workers were arrested. Seven of them were sentenced to death, and one of them was sent to prison for 15 years.

This event, known as The Haymarket Affair, was very important in bringing working people together in the USA. Many people didn't believe the men were guilty, and the trial was criticised for being unfair. The Haymarket Affair became an international symbol of the struggle for workers' rights, and May 1 was chosen to be International Workers' Day. On this day, socialist parties and trade unions called for workers to demonstrate for the eight-hour day and in favour of peaceful protest. The eight-hour working day became law for public workers in 1892 in the USA. Since then, workers' movements all over the world have continued to fight for and win this right.

How is Workers' Day celebrated now?

Celebrations and protests take place in different ways in different countries around the world. May 1 is a public holiday in countries such as South Africa, Tunisia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and China. In many countries, including France, Greece, Japan, Pakistan, the United Kingdom and the United States, there are demonstrations on International Workers' Day.

Workers' Day is a day for working people to have a rest from their usual labour. It is an opportunity to campaign for workers' rights, show solidarity with other working people and to celebrate the achievements of workers all over the world.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

International Workers' Day

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

1. Nowadays, a lot of people have basic protection and rights where they work because workers took action in the past.	**True**	**False**
2. Since 2008, working conditions have become much better for a lot of workers.	**True**	**False**
3. In May 1886, many workers in the USA decided to take action because they thought they were working too many hours.	**True**	**False**
4. The Haymarket Affair had the effect of dividing working people in the USA.	**True**	**False**
5. An eight-hour working day has continued to be an important condition for workers.	**True**	**False**
6. Most people around the world celebrate Workers' Day in the same way.	**True**	**False**

Task 2

Write the correct form of the word in CAPITAL LETTERS in the gaps.

1. The Haymarket protests started ..... but later there was violence. PEACE

2. Police shot ..... workers, who could not defend themselves. ARM

3. Working conditions have got worse since the global ..... crisis in 2008. FINANCE

4. The Haymarket Affair became a symbol of the struggle for workers' rights and the right to ..... protest. PEACE

5. There are ..... in many countries on 1 May. DEMONSTRATE

6. Workers' Day is a day to celebrate the ..... of workers around the world. ACHIEVE

LIVEWORKSHEETS