

MAY DAY

The History of May Day

May Day is the May 1 celebration with a long and varied history, dating back a millennia. In the late nineteenth century, the working class was in constant struggle to gain the 8-hour work day. Working conditions were severe and it was quite common to work 10 to 16 hour days in unsafe conditions. Death and injury were commonplace at many work places.

As early as the 1860's, working people agitated to shorten the workday without a cut in pay, but it wasn't until the late 1880's that organized labor was able to garner enough strength to declare the 8-hour workday. This proclamation was without consent of employers, yet demanded by many of the working class.

At this time, socialism was a new and attractive idea to working people, many of whom were drawn to its ideology of working class control over the production and distribution of all goods and services. Workers had seen first-hand that Capitalism benefitted only their bosses, trading workers' lives for profit. Thousands of men, women and children were dying needlessly every year in the workplace, with life expectancy as low as their early twenties in some industries, and little hope but death, rising out of their destitution. Socialism offered another option.

A variety of socialist organizations sprang up in the later half of the 19th century, ranging from political parties to choir groups. In fact, many socialists were elected in the government offices by their constituency. But again, many of these socialists were ham-strung by the political process which was so evidently controlled by big business and the bi-partisan political machine. Tens of thousands of socialists broke ranks from their parties, rebuffed the entire political process, which was seen as nothing more than protection for the wealthy, that created anarchist groups throughout the country.

Literally thousands of working people embraced the ideals of anarchism, which sought to put an end to all hierarchical structures (including government), emphasized worker controlled industry, and valued direct action over the bureaucratic political process. It is inaccurate to say that labor unions were "taken over" by anarchists and socialists, but rather anarchists and socialist made up the labor unions.

At its national convention in Chicago, held in 1884, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (which later became the American Federation of Labor), proclaimed that , "Eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labor from and after May 1, 1886." The following year, the FOTLU, backed by many Knights of Labor locals, reiterated their proclamation stating that it would be supported by strikes and demonstrations. At first, most radicals and anarchists regarded this demand as too reformist, failing to strike 'at the root of the evil.'

A year before the Haymarket Massacre, Samuel Fielden pointed out in the anarchist newspaper, *The Alarm*, that, "Whether a man works eight hours a day or ten hours a day, he is still a slave."

Despite the misgivings of many of the anarchists, an estimated quarter million workers in the Chicago area became directly involved in the crusade to implement the eight hour work day, including the Trades and Labor Assembly, the Socialistic Labor Party and local Knights of Labor. As more and more of the workforce mobilized against the employers, these radicals conceded to fight for the 8-hour day, realizing that 'the tide of opinion and determination of most wage-workers was set in this direction.' With the involvement of the anarchists, there seemed to be an infusion of greater issues than the 8-hour day. There grew a sense of a greater social revolution beyond the more immediate gains of shortened hours leading to a drastic change in the economic structure of capitalism. Not surprisingly the entire city was prepared for mass bloodshed, reminiscent of the railroad strike a decade earlier when police and soldiers gunned down hundreds of striking workers. On May 1, 1886, more than 300,000 workers in 13,000 businesses across the United States walked off their jobs in the first May Day celebration in history. In Chicago, the epicenter for the 8-hour day agitators, 40,000 went out on strike with the anarchists in the forefront of the public's eye. With their fiery speeches and revolutionary ideology of direct action, anarchists and anarchism became respected and embraced by the working people and despised by the capitalists.

The names of many - Albert Parsons, Johann Most, August Spies and Louis Lingg - became household words in Chicago and throughout the country. Parades, bands and tens of thousands of demonstrators in the streets exemplified the workers' strength and unity, yet didn't become violent as the newspapers and authorities predicted.

More and more workers continued to walk off their jobs until the numbers swelled to nearly 100,000, yet peace prevailed. It was not until two days later, May 3, 1886, that violence broke out at the McCormick Reaper Works between police and strikers. For six months, armed Pinkerton agents and the police harassed and beat locked-out steelworkers as they picketed. Most of these workers belonged to the "anarchist-dominated" Metal Workers' Union. During a speech near the McCormick plant, some two hundred demonstrators joined the steelworkers on the picket line. Beatings with police clubs escalated into rock throwing by the strikers which the police responded to with gunfire. At least two strikers were killed and an unknown number were wounded.

Full of rage, a public meeting was called by some of the anarchists for the following day in Haymarket Square to discuss the police brutality. Due to bad weather and short notice, only about 3000 of the tens of thousands of people showed up from the day before. This affair included families with children and the mayor of Chicago himself. Later, the mayor would testify that the

crowd remained calm and orderly and that speaker August Spies made "no suggestion... for immediate use of force or violence towards any person...".

As the speech wound down, two detectives rushed to the main body of police, reporting that a speaker was using inflammatory language, inciting the police to march on the speakers' wagon. As the police began to disperse the already thinning crowd, a bomb was thrown into the police ranks. No one knows who threw the bomb, but speculations varied from blaming any one of the anarchists, to an agent provocateur working for the police.

Enraged, the police fired into the crowd. The exact number of civilians killed or wounded was never determined, but an estimated seven or eight civilians died, and up to forty were wounded. One officer died immediately and another seven died in the following weeks. Later evidence indicated that only one of the police deaths could be attributed to the bomb and that all the other police fatalities had or could have had been due to their own indiscriminate gun fire. Aside from the bomb thrower, who was never identified, it was the police, not the anarchists, who perpetrated the violence.

Eight anarchists - Albert Parsons, August Spies, Samuel Fielden, Oscar Neebe, Michael Schwab, George Engel, Adolph Fischer and Louis Lingg - were arrested and convicted of murder, though only three were even present at Haymarket and those three were in full view of all when the bombing occurred. The jury in their trial comprised business leaders in a gross mockery of justice similar to the Sacco-Vanzetti case thirty years later, or the trials of AIM and Black Panther members in the seventies. The entire world watched as these eight organizers were convicted, not for their actions, of which all of were innocent, but for their political and social beliefs.

On November 11, 1887, after many failed appeals, Parsons, Spies, Engel and Fisher were hung to death. Louis Lingg, in his final protest of the state's claim of authority and punishment, took his own life the night before with an explosive device in his mouth. The remaining organizers, Fielden, Neebe and Schwab, were pardoned six years later by Governor Altgeld, who publicly lambasted the judge on a travesty of justice.

Immediately after the Haymarket Massacre, big business and government conducted what some say was the very first "Red Scare" in this country. Spun by mainstream media, anarchism became synonymous with bomb throwing and socialism became un-American. The common image of an anarchist became a bearded, eastern European immigrant with a bomb in one hand and a dagger in the other.

Today we see tens of thousands of activists embracing the ideals of the Haymarket Martyrs and those who established May Day as an International Workers' Day. Ironically, May Day is an official holiday in 66 countries and unofficially celebrated in many more, but rarely is it recognized in this country where it began. Over one hundred years have passed since that first May Day. In the earlier part of the 20th century, the US government tried to curb the celebration and further wipe it from the public's memory by establishing "Law and Order Day" on May 1. We can draw many parallels between the events of 1886 and today. We still have locked out steelworkers struggling for justice. We still have voices of freedom behind bars as in the cases of Mumia Abu Jamal and Leonard Peltier. We still had the ability to mobilize tens of thousands of people in the streets of a major city to proclaim "THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE!" at the WTO and FTAA demonstrations.

Devansh Khetan, Class-10D

SIGNIFICANCE OF MAY DAY

May Day usually denotes celebration of labourers or working classes on a particular day worldwide. The first day of May is internationally recognized as the "International Worker's Day".

In most countries it is a public holiday and a pan-national organization of socialists and communist political parties chose this date to commemorate the Haymarket affair that took place in Chicago on May 4, 1886.

According to Nelson Lichtenstein, director of the Centre for the study of work, labour and democracy at the University of California, Santa Barbara, "May Day had ancient roots in the spring festival of rebirth. It is a day from medieval England and other peasant societies. So for the working classes it is seen as a moment of rebirth". He added, "Because of the violence at the Haymarket, which stood for the anarchy and revolution, the federal governments adopted 'Labour Day' and placed it in September. As a matter of fact, in spite of the Haymarket incident, the U.S. government was reluctant to adopt 'international worker's day'."

Regarding the inception of May Day, the most commonly known fact is that on May 1, 1886, approximately 35000 workers walked off their jobs, a large section of them being immigrants. In the U.S. Labour history it is known as Chicago Haymarket protest and the demand of the labourers was the standardisation of eight-hour workdays. Right from Chicago, this labour protest spread across France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Ultimately the European Governments recognized 'International Labour/Worker's Day'. The

working classes observe this day holding meetings, processions, etc with red flags and festoons as their symbol of movement and international labour solidarity. Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan organized first May day celebration in Chennai on May 1st, 1923. The red flag of the socialists was first introduced on that day.

In India, it is also known as "Antar-rashtriya Shramik Diwas".

Rituraj Bhattacharjee, Class: 10E

EVERYBODY KNOWS THE FIRST OF MAY

Everybody Knows what happened in May ,
All went on strike for this day ,
In United States and Chicago too ,
Well , it's a festival in Europe though .

Everybody knows they wanted justice,
Eight hours a day and not a tick – tock more ,
Everybody knows that eight hours will suffice,
The want of the Lords .

Everybody knows that followed through years,
Everybody knows the rise and fall ,
Everybody knows every other man's fears ,
Everybody knows this and that and all .

More than a century, everyone has known ,
The strife and fear, between rich and poor ,
More than knowing , everybody has shown ,
What best and worst for every sure .

Now everybody knows , it's finally a holiday ,
March , strife , slogans , demonstrations a play ,
It's lost and buried in history ,
It's yet another day , it's another May's first day .

Everybody knows though every lip is mute ,
That's how it goes ,
Waiting for a Miracle .

Allen David Simon, Class 10E

MAY DAY CELEBRATION IN OUR SCHOOL

Without Labour Nothing Prospers.

Work is worship. This beautiful universe is God's work. God himself is a worker. God wants man to work. Man has to work for earning his bread. The labourers and the farmers, who do a lot of physical work enjoy a more healthy life than those who lie in bed. Lazy men fall ill quickly. Those who can do multi- tasking are the super heroes.

In our school ,we felicitate the super heroes of the school, every year . Yes ,I am indeed referring to the bhaiyas of our school without whose help this institution on 30, Mother Teresa Sarani would not run.

Clad in blue and white striped shirts and brown pants, these superheroes do everything from cleaning the classrooms to helping the sick or injured in the infirmary. Also, their hands conduct wonderful experiments in the science labs which are more interesting than those written in our textbooks.

To quote Luc De Clapiers, "The fruit derived from labours is the sweetest of all fruits".

May God shower health and happiness to them and their families.

Koustav Saha , 7B.

DADA'S DAY

On the 1st of May (May Day), a special occasion for our School's non- teaching staff or our dadas as we call them in our school, is held. It is also called Dada's day.

When I heard about Dada's day for the first time in Class III, I saw our seniors bringing flowers for our dadas. I couldn't understand what was happening, but then I asked one of my seniors as to what

was going on. He said that it was Dada's day and everyone was offering flowers to our dasas for their kindness and service.

The program began at about 7:50 AM. It started with the speech of Father Principal, who made us understand the importance of Dasas in our lives. From helping us to tie our shoe laces to keeping our lost things in the "Lost and Found" section, Dasas are always around to show us the way.

As the Dasas sat near the podium, the students put up a short cultural program for them.

Some boys of Class IV, performed a dance. Another group of boys sang a song on Kindness.

Then Dasas were given gifts and the program concluded with the School anthem.

Now, I understand the importance of the dasas even better.

Sohan Ganguly Class - VI B.

RABINDRA JAYANTI 2018

"Literature is not merely an expression of words; it is a symphony of feelings expressed through it."

This was perhaps, the thought that resonated in Rabindranath Tagore's mind whenever he took up his fountain pen. And this is the reason why one finds a divine touch- a touch synchronized with emotions, culture, patriotism and serenity in all his literary works; all his masterpieces. Be it the thousands of poems, numerous short stories of varying genres, a dozen of novels and double as many plays, or the hundreds of songs (Rabindra Sangeet) written and composed by him, they have always permeated our lives and influenced us in many ways. Hence, the 9th day of May, that is, the birth anniversary of this multi-faceted genius, is indeed a day of great pride and honour for all of us who belong to the same nation as Tagore does.

The 157th Birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore at SXCS was an occasion marked with grandeur, euphoria and exuberance as the entire institution paid tribute to the "Bard of Bengal". The emcees of the ceremony were Soumitri Chattopadhyay and Tiash Saha, who threw light upon how Rabi Thakur occupies a dignified position in our hearts and how he is a persona common to every Bengali household. Their short speech was followed by a series of vocal presentations- firstly, the group of B,Ed trainee teachers performed "Hey Nuton" and "Jagorone Jai Bibhabore", after which the choir led by Mr. Anindya Majumder sang "Aguner Poroshmani", "Akash bhora", "Monomor o meghero songee" and a couple of

such popular Rabindra-Sangeet tracks, which set up the foundation for a fiesta to come. The vocal presentations were continued by our teachers- Mr. S. Chatterjee, Ms. A. Chakraborty, Ms. N. Biswas and Ms. S. Jaiswal, who blended a couple of original Bengali and adapted Hindi Rabindra sangeet tracks of the same compositions.

Rabindranath Tagore had been instrumental in creating a new form of dance known as "রবীন্দ্র নৃত্য" which was the first modern dance in India. As a tribute, three of our teachers- Ms. K. Dutta, Ms. A. Gupta and Ms. J. Basu took to the stage and mesmerized the audience with their exhilarating steps, in accordance with Tagore's form of dance stated earlier. The audience were again left dumbstruck in awe when the orchestra came up to perform a sort of a "fusion" of Rabindra sangeet and western music , which was perhaps, the biggest highlight of the day. Those who have witnessed Ratul Das playing the sitar and Sayanho Biswas playing the violin simply cannot forget the melody of the fusion. The ten minute long rendition was often greeted with loud applauses from the crowd and once they concluded their performance, everyone was probably yearning to shout "once more, once more" !

Finally, "রোগের চিকিৎসা"- a humorous play written by Tagore, was staged by the students, directed by Mr. J. Mondal. It revolved around a young boy who was very fond of eating eggs and hence, stole a duck from the farm of a doctor, followed by many comic incidents. The students did a fabulous job and beautifully portrayed their respective characters, showing no sign of over-acting or forced laughter. The play was enjoyed by all, especially the younger students.

Thus, the ceremony comprised various epitomes of the works of this literary maestro, and went on to emphasize on the ingenuity of Tagore across all fields of art, and thus was a grand success.

Soumitri Chatterjee, Class XII B



Class-7(B) Drawn By :- Anugaman Debroy



Amyaman Debroy

