

May Day 2008:

Advance International Working Class Unity and Independent Political Action

Workers around the world today are celebrating May Day – International Workers’ Day – protesting imperialist war and domination, capitalist exploitation and all forms of oppression. **In the United States, the ILWU (International Longshore and Warehouse Union) voted to conduct an eight hour work stoppage in opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq and Afghanistan, shutting down the ports on the west coast.**

This ILWU May Day anti-war initiative has been supported by state labor federations, labor councils and local unions in various parts of the United States, as well as by NYCLAW (New York City Labor Against the War) which has been in the forefront of anti-war labor organizing since 9-11. In addition, there have been significant efforts to link up the May Day anti-war protest actions with demonstrations in defense of immigrant workers’ rights which are taking place today in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, New York, Boston and elsewhere.

Beginning in 2006, hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers in the United States have participated in mass protests on May Day against increasing government attacks on themselves and their families. These protest actions of immigrant workers and their allies have helped to revive May Day as a day of workers’ protest in the USA. It is critical that the struggle for immigrant rights be linked with the struggle for national liberation of the immigrants’ homelands from the yoke of U.S. imperialism, as well as with the struggle against U.S. imperialist war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The outstanding anti-war leader Cindy Sheehan (now independent candidate for Congress against Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi) wrote to the ILWU in support of their May 1 work stoppage: “... your decision to stop work on the West Coast docks on May 1, 2008 points the way for all of us who struggle to end the disastrous war and occupation of Iraq. This illegal and immoral war has been forced on us by the Republican administration, and has been funded enthusiastically by both the Democratic and Republican parties in Congress. The Democratic Party, under the leadership of Nancy Pelosi, continues a policy of full cooperation with and financial support for the Bush administration’s war. While many Democrats will utter words that are critical of the highly unpopular war, their party simply will not use its political power to take any action to stop the carnage. The ILWU has shown that it is an independent workers’ union, morally superior to the Democratic Party in every respect.”

Former Afro-American Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney (now independent candidate for President of the United States on behalf of the Power to the People coalition) has also strongly supported the ILWU May Day initiative. Both Sheehan and McKinney are scheduled to be keynote speakers at the San Francisco May Day Rally against the war, in support of immigrant workers’ rights and in support of all workers on International Workers’ Day. It is in the interest of workers and oppressed nationalities in the USA and around the world to support both of their candidacies.

May 1, 1886, close to 200,000 U.S. workers struck for the 8-hour day; 340,000 participated in demonstrations around the country. In 1889, an international Marxist workers’ association voted in Paris to designate May 1, 1890 for a world-wide struggle for the 8-hour day. Thus, May 1, as an international day of workers’ protest, was “born in the USA.”

However, May Day workers’ protests in the USA became a thing of the past in the post World War II period when U.S. workers were “lulled to sleep” and bribed with small privileges into supporting U.S. imperialism against workers and oppressed peoples of other lands (e.g. U.S. labor support for the Vietnam War).

May Day 2008, U.S. immigrant workers’ protests, combined with the ILWU-initiated May Day labor anti-war protests are helping to link the U.S. multi-national working class back with the rest of the international working class and the oppressed peoples of the world. Let’s build on these positive initiatives! Let’s work toward linking these struggles with each other and in solidarity with the heroic Iraqi Resistance and the Afghani people, against imperialism, headed by U.S. imperialism (the principal source of war in our time), for working class power and socialism in the USA and the world.

**Workers of the World
and Oppressed Peoples Unite!**

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