

War and Workers' Rights Highlight May Day Celebrations

Posted By [James Parks](#) On May 1, 2008 @ 11:10 am In [Legislation & Politics](#) | [1 Comment](#)



Workers around the globe today are celebrating International Labor Day, better known as May Day, to make it clear they want to live in a world where people live in peace and prosperity.

On the U.S. West Coast, thousands of dockworkers are participating in a voluntary action by members of the Longshore Division of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union ([1] [ILWU](#)). The workers are refusing to work on the docks for eight hours today to demand that the United States immediately end the war and occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan and withdraw U.S. troops from the Middle East.

The dockworkers' action has drawn support from workers throughout the country, including the [2] [Washington State Labor Council](#) and the [3] [Martin Luther King Jr. County Labor Council](#) in Seattle. Workers in Seattle will march along the waterfront to demand an end not only to the war in Iraq but also to the war on workers, both here and abroad.

The Vermont AFL-CIO also endorsed the action, saying the war in Iraq is "immoral, unwanted and unnecessary." The Vermont resolution adds that the war will only be brought to an end by "the direct actions of working people."

In San Francisco, members of the Letter Carriers [4] [\(NALC\)](#) Branch 214 will observe two minutes of silence in all carrier stations at 8:15 a.m. PDT in support of the dockworkers. The San Francisco Labor Council endorsed the Letter Carriers' action. Members of the NALC in Greensboro, N.C., and the New York Metro Area local of the [5] [Postal Workers](#) also will observe a period of silence.

The AFL-CIO Executive Council last year approved a statement saying that the war in Iraq is turning into a civil war and it's time for the United States to [6] [end its military involvement there](#).

The plight of the nation's workers was also in the spotlight today. Speaking during an International Workers' Day symposium on "Global Capital—Global Unions," at the [7] [National Labor College](#), AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka says the battle for workers' rights and an economy that works for everyone transcends politics.

The progressive movement must directly challenge the policies of the corporate agenda. However, challenging the corporate agenda requires more than throwing out Republicans and electing Democrats. Important players in both parties champion the corporate agenda, advanced most powerfully and consistently by Wall Street.

We have to dismantle the corporate agenda and install a working families agenda so that we can re-establish the balance of power between workers and their employers, rebuild the relationship between wage growth and productivity, and restore the American Dream.

May Day is the day that most nations around the world honor workers, but it is not officially observed in the United States, which celebrates Labor Day in September. That historical quirk is [8] [no accident](#).

Ironically, “May Day” was founded by U.S. workers—and taken away from them as a day to celebrate by a federal government fearful of the wave of large demonstrations for the eight-hour workday and massive strikes for justice on the railroads, in the mines and factories that had begun in [9] [1877](#). Click [10] [here](#) to learn more about the history of May Day.

On this May Day, the International Trade Union Confederation ([11] [ITUC](#)) called for [12] [decent work](#) for everyone. In a statement, the ITUC says:

For most of the world’s people, decent work is but a distant dream. Millions of children are at work instead of school, workers are deprived of their fundamental rights and subject to exploitation by unscrupulous employers and repressive regimes, and inequality is growing within and between countries as a small minority accumulates incalculable wealth at the expense of others. The means to deal with all these challenges exist, but the political will to resist the powerful interests that stand in the way of progress is lacking.

We demand a fundamental change to global governance, putting decent work at the core of a new globalization and making the global institutions respond to the real needs of people instead of following the erroneous policies of the past.

In other May Day events, the AFL-CIO’s [13] [Solidarity Center](#) is sponsoring an art exhibit in the lobby of the federation’s headquarters in Washington, D.C. The exhibit features pictures of workers around the world on the job. The pictures were taken by their

co-workers as part of a Solidarity Center project to document what workers' lives are really like in the global economy.

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URLs in this post:

[1] ILWU: <http://www.ilwu.org/>

[2] Washington State Labor Council: <http://www.wslc.org/>

[3] Martin Luther King Jr. County Labor Council: <http://www.kclc.org/>

[4] (NALC): <http://www.nalc.org/>

[5] **Postal Workers**: <http://www.apwu.org/>

[6] end its military involvement there: <http://blog.aflcio.org/2007/03/07/end-our-military-involvement-in-iraq/>

[7] National Labor College: <http://www.nlc.edu/>

[8] no accident: <http://blog.aflcio.org/2006/08/31/labor-day%e2%80%94poor-cousin-to-may-day/>

[9] **1877**: <http://www.slate.com/id/2140846/?nav=navoa>

[10] here: <http://blog.aflcio.org/2006/08/31/labor-day%e2%80%94poor-cousin-to-may-day/>

[11] ITUC: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/>

[12] decent work: <http://blog.aflcio.org/2007/10/31/join-the-global-call-to-action-for-decent-work-for-all>

[13] Solidarity Center: <http://www.solidaritycenter.org/>