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# Speak Out Now

revolutionaryworkers.org speakout@revolutionaryworkers.org (510) 343-9105

## May Day Is Still Our Holiday!

Workers around the world celebrate every May Day (May 1st) as International Workers Day, not just to honor working people, but to commemorate our struggles against capitalist exploitation. This workers' holiday began in the United States in the 1880s during the fight for the 8-hour day. Hundreds of thousands of American workers in 1886 went on strike and held demonstrations across the country. As a result of the movement, many workers won reduced hours.

That seems like a long time ago and many of us can't imagine something like that happening today. In the U.S. the number of strikes has dropped greatly over the past decades. Unions are often led and staffed by people whose only experience has been at the bargaining table. As a result strikes that are anything but a warning to the bosses have been rare. So workers have no real strike experience.

Some workers in the U.S. are fighting back joining workers around the world in the struggles against cuts in wages and medical care, long hours, dangerous working conditions, race and gender discrimination, and other abuses by the bosses.

Here are just a few recent examples - in the U.S.:

~ In 2018, 84,000 hospital workers and more than 12,000 telecommunications workers struck.

~ Teachers and other school employees across the country have gone on strike to improve wages, reduce class sizes, and strengthen their health plans. This began with the illegal, statewide, strike in West Virginia last year that won big gains.

~ More than 30,000 workers at Stop & Shop supermarkets in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island went on strike for 11 days, largely against increases in healthcare costs.

~ Nearly 20,000 hotel workers went on strike in 2018 against low pay and other abuses, often under the banner "One job should be enough!"

~ Workers at an Amazon warehouse in Minnesota walked off the job for three hours to protest speed-up. It was their second job action in four months.

~ Locomotive manufacturing workers in Erie, Pennsylvania struck for nine days this winter against contract concessions, including a new two-tier wage system that would have divided workers.

In other parts of the world:

~ In France, hundreds of thousands of people, mostly working people, began protesting gasoline tax increases last fall, including strikes and other demonstrations. They have held demonstrations across the country every weekend since, creating a major crisis for the government.

~ A 24-hour nationwide general strike in Belgium in February over pay and working conditions shut down the country as both private-sector and public-sector workers stood together against the bosses and the government.

~ Thousands of workers in China have gone on strike or conducted other forms of protest against bosses withholding wages and cutting hours as the nation's economic growth has slowed down. One estimate is that there were 1,700 job actions in 2018, up from 1,200 in 2017.

~ In India, 200 million workers struck for two days in January, while farmers and students also protested against rising prices, high unemployment, and privatization of government services, as well as for a higher minimum wage, social security for all workers, and better labor laws.

Sometimes these fights may not have won all that workers were fighting for, but what workers gained was the experience of organizing and standing together and an understanding of their power.

We can fight back! Workers across the U.S. and the world are doing it. But we need to keep expanding the struggle and joining together to win what we need and deserve.