



ILO Staff Union

May Day 2010 – A Day for Remembrance

Many of us have come to look at May 1st as an opportunity to enjoy some good weather and take advantage an extended weekend after a long and cold winter. However, there is a good reason why among the United Nations organizations in Geneva, May Day is a holiday recognized and celebrated only by the staff of the ILO. This is due to the fact that the work of the ILO – in promoting workers' rights, employment promotion, social safety nets, tripartism and social dialogue – is inextricably linked to the work of the labour movement at large.

For this reason, the Staff Union encourages you to use this day as one of remembrance - not simply of the origins of May Day in Haymarket in 1886, nor of the memory of the 76 trade unionists murdered and the thousands of others physically assaulted and subjected to harassment, intimidation or arrest by the authorities in 2008, but also of what motivated you to come to work for the ILO.

The ILO Staff Union calls for a day of remembrance of the values upon which our organization was founded:

- That “universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice”;
- That “the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries”;
- That “labour is not a commodity,” “freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress,” “poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere,” and that these principles, and “the war against want” can only be carried out through tripartite “discussion and democratic decision with a view to the promotion of the common welfare.”

On Saturday, May 1st 2010, the ILO Staff Union will participate in the May Day march in Geneva, as well as in a number of other duty stations. We will march not to further any local or national political agenda, but rather out of a deep conviction and belief in the values of our Organization – that labour is indeed not a commodity that can be outsourced, out posted or sold to the lowest bidder; that freedom of association is essential to progress within the ILO – and efforts to stifle freedom of expression cannot be tolerated; and that “precarity anywhere constitutes a threat to employment security everywhere.”

As the staff of the secretariat of the ILO, in headquarters and in the field, we invite you to march with us, and to take a stand against precarious work, for fair, transparent and merit-based recruitment procedures, and for equality of treatment of all staff irrespective of category, duty station, gender, or funding source.

If you cannot join us, we ask that you take some time to reflect on what brought you to work for the ILO – whether it was protecting workers' rights through international labour standards and the supervisory machinery, recognition of the principle of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of child labour or forced labour, the struggle against discrimination in employment, recognition of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value, preventing unemployment, or the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the workers against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment, provision for old age and injury, protection of migrant workers, the organization of vocational and technical education or other measures. We invite you to renew your commitment, and to take a stand to ensure that our Organization respects these fundamental values in all aspects of its work.

As ILO Officials, Labour Day is of direct concern to us.

We invite you to join us at:

- 14:15 in front of the Brasserie Bagatelle (20 boulevard James Fazy, across the street from Notre Dame Church)

- 15:00: the march will start from Boulevard James-Fazy, going to Place des 22 Cantons, rue de Chantepoulet, rue et Pont du Mont-Blanc, Place du Port, Place Longemalle, rues Basses, rue de la Corraterie, Place Neuve, and the Parc des Bastions