

1975 May Day Celebrations Reflect Advances and Tasks

Several thousand workers and others gathered in dozens of cities across the country to celebrate May Day, the holiday of the international working class, this year—to clearly and loudly state their declaration of war against the ruling class, to put forth the specific demands of the working class and to discuss the major struggles coming up this year and how to continue to link them up ever more tightly into a mighty fist.

More workers helped to plan and build for this year's U.S. May Day events than last year, although the overall number, of course, is still small. But this greater participation shows the way things are developing, as the workers took the main fighting slogans of this year's May Day, "Fight, Don't Starve!" and "Workers Unite To Lead the Struggle Against All Oppression!" to the plants and their communities.

In fact, one of the biggest strengths of May Day events this year was that a closer connection was developed between the day-to-day struggles of the class in their shops, communities, etc., and the rallies and their specific demands, including demands around unemployment, against wage cuts, police repression, imperialist wars, deportations, cutbacks, especially in services, and in defense of the right to strike. In several cities, for example, workers dinners were held to build up to May Day, with workers from various industries coming together to discuss how to build May Day and relate its general slogans and specific demands to their on-going struggles.

The May Day events ranged in size from 1200 in New York City and the San Francisco Bay Area, to 200 in cities such as Boston and Cincinnati, to smaller events, including 40 in Denver and 55 in Birmingham—the first May Day celebrations in those cities in many years.

While the number of people who came out for May Day this year was generally bigger than last year, size alone wasn't key. As one postal worker in the San Francisco Bay Area said, "The crowd was bigger, especially on the march, but more important was the people out there in the park—they were really listening to those speeches."

This intensifying interest in May Day on the part of a growing number of workers reflects the deepening of the imperialist crisis, the sharpening of the class struggle and the greater questioning of the system that is going on more and more. In several cities, a number of bystanders joined the marches or came to the rallies to listen to the speeches and songs, watch the skits, etc.

In addition to individual workers and workers' organizations in various industries, May Day events in many cities included participation by the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee (UWOC), Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization (VVAW/WSO), the Revolutionary Student Brigade (RSB), workers' committees to stop police repression, the Iranian Students Association (ISA), local workers' newspapers and other local organizations.

Speeches greeted the victories of the liberation forces in Cambodia and Vietnam as great blows against our common enemy—the U.S. monopoly capitalist ruling class—and drew out the lessons of the protracted battle against imperialism in Indochina.

New York and Bay Area

May Day in New York, celebrated on May 3, saw 1200 marching into Union Square, with fists and hundreds of red flags raised proudly in the air, stepping to the beat of the chants. There were contingents from the garment center, steel, metals industry, auto, post office, phone company, electrical, bakery, hospitals, veterans, office workers and over 75 unemployed workers in the UWOC contingent. After speeches from the United May Day Committee, UWOC, VVAW/WSO and Bob Avakian of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Union (whose speech is reprinted on page 12 of this issue), the rally concluded with the singing of the Internationale and Union Square rang with the words, "The international working class shall be the human race!"—words repeated at May Day celebrations everywhere.

One unemployed worker who came to the New York rally said, "This was my first demonstration. I never knew before that the working class could get together as a group...When I went home I gave my daughter the May Day flag and she marched all over the living room chanting, 'Fight, Don't Starve!' " It was the first demonstration also for a hospital worker who said, "I'll tell my friends who didn't come today that they missed a tremendous march and rally—but don't worry, there'll be many more!" The feelings



May Day march in Detroit.

of many who came to the rally were expressed by an auto worker who said: "This is for real. People are tired of things coming down on them. It's time for a change. People are ready for change. When people say you can't fight city hall, we got to show them we can run right through them." Other workers also said they planned to carry back to their friends and families the fighting spirit of the May Day rally.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, in building up to May Day, a slide show about May Day and the class struggle was shown in several dozen places, and workers dinners and meetings were held in each of several key industries. In some plants, the wearing of May Day buttons became a skirmish in the class war and an act of defiance to the bosses, with several thousand sold.

When the day for the march came, April 27, in Oakland, over 800 people did so, chanting "The working class is freedom bound, gonna' lead the fight against all that keeps us down!" Many residents came to their doorsteps and windows, checking out the march, giving the fist, and picking up on the chants. When the march returned to the park for a rally, hundreds of people joined, swelling the total to about 1200 people, mainly working people of all nationalities.

The May First Workers Movement, an areawide political workers' organization, provided a solid core of active workers to help give political leadership to May Day in the Bay Area—from the initial planning meetings to the march and rally. There were 20 contingents at the rally from different industries and arenas of struggle. And a significant number of Portuguese workers marched together with workers from their plants, inspired by May Day here and the developing workers' struggle in Portugal.

There were also other May Day celebrations in San Francisco's Chinatown (where some 200 people, mainly immigrant Chinese workers, gathered on April 19 to build for the April 27 areawide event), at Berkeley High School (where students active in the campaign for Justice for Tyrone Guyton put on a rally), and in Watsonville, scene of a recent farmworkers' strike involving Mexican immigrant workers, where some 50 people gathered on May 1 to celebrate with a skit and speech focusing on the farmworkers' struggle and the fight against deportations.

Other Rallies

In Dayton, over 100 people marched militantly through a multinational working class neighborhood and held a spirited rally in a park. This is the first time in Dayton since the '30s that workers and others took to the streets to celebrate May Day.

May Day Committee meetings in Dayton were attended by a good number of workers actively involved in various struggles, and the meetings dealt not only with planning details of the march but also included

lively discussion of the demands of May Day, the victories of the Vietnamese and Cambodian peoples, the history of the class struggle in the U.S., the international solidarity of the working class, and how to build day-to-day struggles towards the goal of revolution.

May Day was marked in Birmingham by an evening program, including a dinner, singing, speeches and a play by the Birmingham Workers' Theatre. Speakers included a representative from UWOC, a woman active in a local tenants struggle, a brother active in the struggle to free the Atmore-Holman Brothers (nine Black inmates in Alabama prisons active in prison struggles), and the RU.

With banners flying, 75 workers, students and others marched down Main Street in Houston. When about 10 members of the Ku Klux Klan tried to break up the march, attacking people with spray mace, workers in the march fought back and trashed the Klansmen, and the marchers, chanting "Workers United Will Never Be Defeated!" continued on with even more spirit and determination than they had before.

A May Day rally in Honolulu on May 4 drew 150 people, including workers from construction, hotels, the sugar and pineapple industries, and on-going strikes, and also GIs, students and people fighting against evictions from their communities. Speakers included a hotel worker, a city bus driver, a member of VVAW/WSO, and representatives of several local groups involved in struggles around saving the jobs of sugar plantation workers and stopping the construction of a highway that would destroy agricultural lands and evict farmers and workers from their homes.

In a number of cities, in addition to May Day marches there were cultural evenings or dances, either as a build up to May Day or immediately after the May Day marches themselves. In Detroit, for example, 175 people came to an On To May Day cultural evening which included songs by Prairie Fire, a speech by a member of the May Day Committee, and a skit about what workers learned through the Vietnam war.

At almost all the May Day events, there were speeches by RU members who talked about the fighting tasks facing the class in the coming year and the need to build political workers' organizations that can direct all these struggles against our common enemy. And many of the RU speeches also brought out, in the context of building these immediate and long-range struggles, the importance of the creation in the very near future of a revolutionary communist party in the U.S., and of workers and others discussing the draft programme for the Founding Party Congress proposed by the RU.

Other May Day celebrations were held in Atlanta, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Pottstown-Reading, Seattle, South Baltimore, and Washington, D.C., as well as other cities and on a number of campuses. ■