

STATE BANK OF INDIA OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION (Chennai Circle)



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Circular to All Unit Secretaries / Members:

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Dear Comrade,

MAY DAY THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DAY WITHOUT LABOUR NOTHING PROSPERS

In the late nineteenth century, the working class was in constant struggle to gain the 8-hour work day. Working conditions were severe and it was quite common to work 10 to 16 hour days in unsafe conditions. Death and injury were commonplace at many work places and inspired such books as Upton Sinclair's **The Jungle** and Jack London's **The Iron Heel**. As early as the 1860's, working people agitated to shorten the workday without a cut in pay, but it wasn't until the late 1880's that organized labor was able to garner enough strength to declare the 8-hour workday. This proclamation was without consent of employers, yet demanded by many of the working class.

02. The history of the Labour Day dates back to May 1, 1886. On this day, labour unions in the United States of America decided to go on a strike with the demand that workers should not be allowed to work more than 8 hours a day. This strike was followed by a bomb blast in Chicago's Haymarket Square on the 4th of May. This led to the death of several people and police officers. In addition, more than 100 people were injured in the blast. Although the protests in the U.S. didn't lead to any immediate result, yet it helped establish the 8-hour work day norm in India and other countries in the world. Since then, the Labour Day is observed as the day for parades and demonstrations all around the globe.

03. Labour Day in India or May Day was first celebrated in Chennai (then known as Madras) on May 1, 1923. The initiative was taken by the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan. The leader of the party, Comrade Singaravelar arranged two meetings to celebrate this occasion. One meeting was held at the Triplicane Beach, and the other took place at the beach opposite Madras High Court. On the meeting, Singaravelar passed a resolution which stated that the government should announce a national holiday on the May Day or Labour Day in India. He also emphasized the need for non-violence within a political party. This was the first time a red flag was used in India.

04. The Labour Day is a special occasion when people worldwide celebrate the true spirit of the working class. It's the day when workers get together and showcase their strength which indicates how effectively they can struggle to bring in positive reforms for the working class of the society. During this pandemic COVID-19 situation when the work force is experiencing their difficulties, We are observing yet another 'May Day' today to show case our unity and solidarity by remembering the struggles, campaigns launched by the trade unions against the hegemony of the capitalist class and pay our homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives for defending the trade union rights of the workers. Trade unions the world over have played an important role in emancipation of mankind from the clutches of the colonial rulers, the socio-economic transformation of the country. This is emphatically supported by the statement of Mr. Clarence Darrow:

"With all the faults, trade unions have done more for humanity than any other organisation of men that ever existed. They have done more for decency, for honesty, for education, for the betterment of race, for the development of character of men than any other association of men".

05. The day is a reminder to all of us, the need to stand united, the need to fight unitedly all the attempts to exploit the labour and the need to continue the struggle in a sustained manner particularly in the wake of the globalization process which is causing havoc all over the world. The market oriented policies of deregulation and liberalization have exposed even the so called strong economy of USA and the gap between the haves and have not's has been widening. The ill advised economic policies implemented by the WTO have led to increase in poverty, job losses, unemployment, denial of social security benefits to the working class.

06. The existing social security cover for the organised sector employees both in the public and private sectors is under threat. Be aware of the threats before us in protecting the social security benefits like Pension, Provident Fund, and free access to medical facilities etc, which are hard won rights of the working class, secured through decades of struggle in the twentieth century. These gains are now being reversed through privatization of pension funds, provident funds and cuts in subsidies and welfare benefits. The neoliberal austerity measures being implemented across the world today specifically target the social security benefits, in order to pass on the burden of the economic crisis to the working people.

07. Opening up of FDI in Insurance Sector and privatization move of PSBs are threat to the work force. The Banking Sector especially the Public Sector Banks, are passing through a very rough patch of their existence. There are attempts to privatize the Public Sector banks and hand over them to the Private Corporate bodies. The Corporates and Private players in real estate and other industries are being encouraged/allowed to start their own Banks. The travesty is that the corporate bodies have been responsible for the whopping NPAs in the Public Sector Banks. Government has embarked upon a policy of disinvestment, sell out and privatization of Public Sector Banks, notwithstanding the fact that, our Banking Sector survived the onslaught of the global recession in 2008, due to the fact the Banks were in the Public Sector and were under strict regulatory control of the R.B.I. This needs to be stoutly protested by us.

08. Hence, it is time for us to take a pledge to continue our struggles and campaign through a united action. The need of the hour is unity and solidarity of all the officers under the banner of SBIOACC, take up the issues through our Federation and Confederation and fight all the ill-effects of economic reforms and ensure the emergence of India as a truly egalitarian society where workers, labourers, peasants live with self respect and dignity.

09. Let us all enliven the spirit of May Day by continuing our struggles and campaigns to save the Public Sector Banks and Private Sector Undertakings defend our trade union rights and involve whole heartedly in the nation building process through our ethics:

"Nation First, Institution Next and Individual Last".

With Revolutionary greetings,

Comradely yours,



(R.BALAJI)
GENERAL SECRETARY