

May 1 Has Many Titles

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Today, May 1, is observed in various ways throughout the world. In many countries, it is Labor Day, or International Workers' Day. Its purpose is to honor the sacrifices and contributions of the working class and the labor movement to society. On May 1, 1886, unions across the US went on strike to support a bold new concept – an eight-hour workday. Rallies were held in many cities, including Haymarket Square in Chicago. On May 4, someone threw a bomb into the crowd and the police opened fire. In the end twelve people died, including seven police officers, and more than 100 were wounded. Eight demonstrators were tried for murder. Four of them were executed and one committed suicide in prison. The government never produced any evidence that those convicted had any part in the actual bombing, or even knew the bomber. The trial received worldwide attention – and this was in the time before television, internet, and telephones. The international labor movement used the Haymarket Riot incident as a springboard to rally people to support workers' rights and began its annual observation of May 1 as "May Day". The International community celebrates it with rallies and speeches on the value of labor.

In those times, all attempts to improve conditions for poor and working people were branded as "socialist" or "communist". Many established powers tried to interfere with May Day celebrations because they feared these new ideas. They wanted to replace a political observance with a religious one or a legal one. In 1955 Pope Pius XII proclaimed May 1 as the feast day for St. Joseph the Worker. In 1958, the U.S. Congress designated May 1 as "Loyalty Day". President Dwight Eisenhower issued the first Loyalty Day proclamation. May 1, 1959 was the first official Loyalty Day. Every president since has followed his example. Congress also established May 1 as Law Day in 1961. These are legal holidays but they are not federal holidays and very few people observe them.

Even though May Day observances began in the United States, it is primarily observed as Labor Day in other countries. May 1 has also been an important point for the celebration of spring, summer, and fertility by cultures throughout the world.

Oh, and by the way, the eight-hour workday became standard – along with laws requiring overtime pay – in 1938.

A few weeks ago, I wrote about the history and contents of the U.S. Constitution. Many people mistakenly believe that it includes some things that just aren't there.

- The Constitution does not guarantee "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". That phrase is in the Declaration of Independence, and it is *not* a law.
- The words "God" and "Creator" do not appear in the Constitution. The founders did not want the government to choose a religion for its citizens.
- There are no political parties mentioned.
- There are no provisions for local governments. Cities, towns, and other municipalities exist with the permission of each state government.

- They can be formed or disbanded only with the state's permission.
- The Constitution does not require the government to use capitalism as the nation's economic system.

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- For more information, go to www.infoplease.com or www.usa.gov.
 - If you have questions or suggestions for future articles, please let me know.

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