



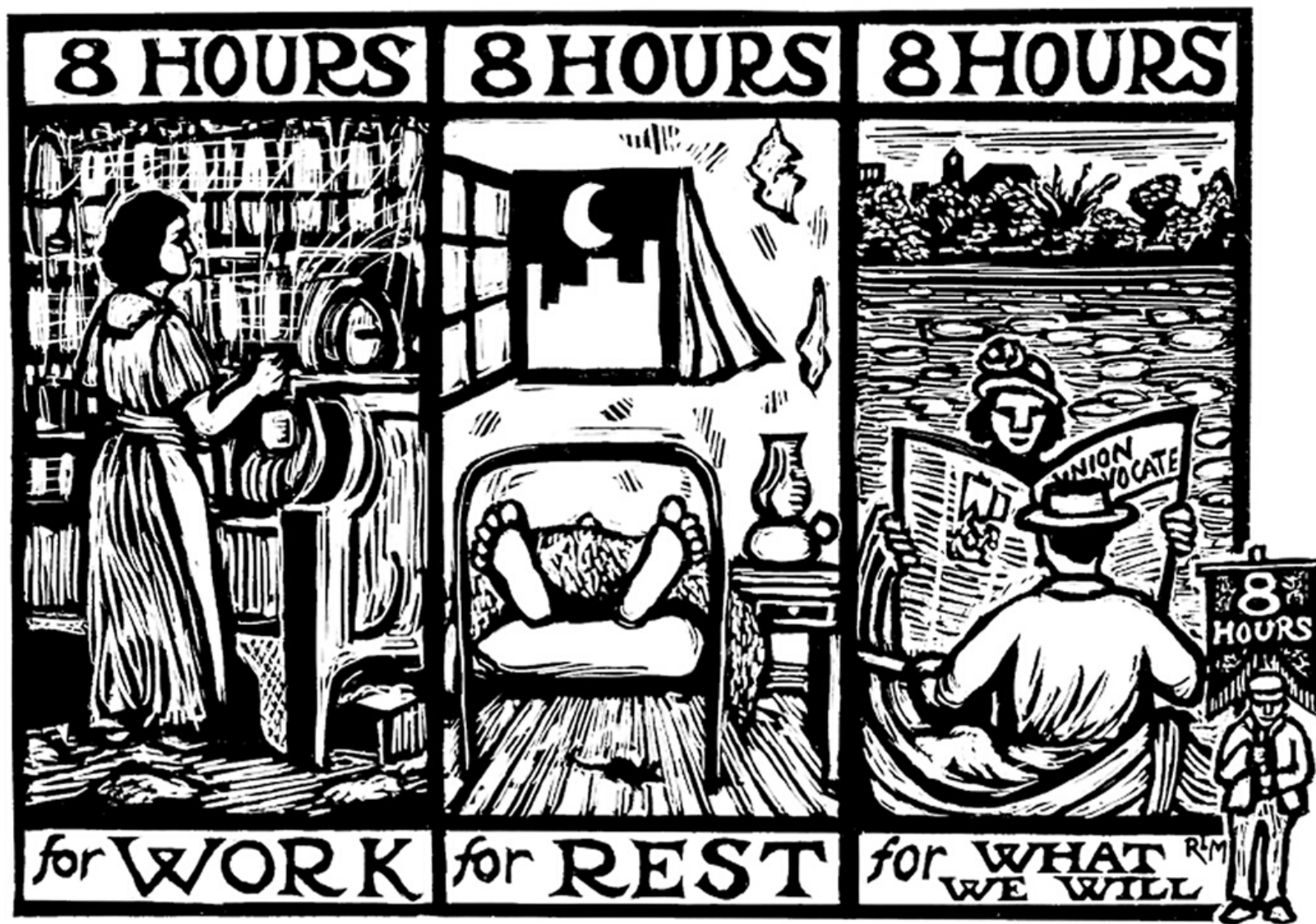
MAYWORKS

K'JIPUKTUK | HALIFAX

Why **MAY**works?



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ORIGINS OF MAY DAY

The arrival of spring has traditionally been celebrated as the end of a time of want and the beginning of a time of plenty. Across Europe, May 1 came to be the day on which this transition was understood to take place and in rural areas the day was marked with community wide festivities. Spring also often marks the shift in types of work being done. In some industries, such as tourism and farming, production ramps up, in others spring marks a shift in the type of work being done, as in the fishery or construction, and in some industries spring marked the beginning of a season of lay-offs as was the case for the lumber industry and many textile factories.

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ORIGINS OF MAY DAY

On May 1, 1886 almost 100 years after the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in North America and after many decades of fighting for a reduction in working hours, hundreds of thousands of workers across the United States walked off the job demanding an eight-hour-day and improvements to their working conditions. The choice of the day was undoubtedly done deliberately to connect the need for changes in working conditions to a date marked by celebrations of change for the better. Since those massive demonstrations in 1886, May 1 has been forever linked with the labour movement. Every year around the globe on this date there are demonstrations, parades and events drawing attention to issues facing working people. Mayworks K'jipuktuk/Halifax is part of this global movement.



May Day Parade in New York in the early 1900s.

Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress

MAY DAY IS MAY FIRST



**JEWISH AND PALESTINIAN WORKERS
MARCH TOGETHER IN THE 1947 TEL AVIV
MAY DAY PARADE.**

*Photograph courtesy
of the Government Press Office, Israel*



**SADLY, MANY OF THE ISSUES THAT
WERE BEING PROTESTED IN 1886 CONTINUE
TODAY. HALIFAX MAY DAY RALLY, 2019.**

*Photograph courtesy
of Mayworks K'jipuktuk/Halifax*

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PART OF THE 2017 MAY DAY PARADE IN HALIFAX.

Photograph courtesy of Mayworks K'jipuktuk/Halifax

ART AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

From the first sign made to protest unfair conditions and the first song sung about the suffering of workers to the banners and chants that advocate for workers today, the labour movement and art have been intertwined. There is not an artistic medium that has not been used to express the struggles of workers, from visual arts to performance art, from literature to fashion to comedy. Art has also served as a way to connect struggles of workers today to the struggles of workers in the past and this role is particularly visible in the use of art in May Day protests and marches.



The 2006 Los Angeles May Day parade focused on the rights of immigrants, highlighting the deep connection between the immigrant justice movement and the labour movement. Many musicians participated in the march including this mariachi band.

Photograph courtesy of Jonathan McIntosh



Street theater at May Day 2012 in New York.
Photograph courtesy of All Nite Images



There is a long tradition of puppets, both as part of street theater performances and on their own at May Day parades. These were seen at the 2013 May Day parade in Halifax.
Photograph courtesy of Mayworks K'jipuktuk/Halifax

DO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE?

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Here are some of the many sources about
the history of May Day and the connections between art and
political movements that we find particularly interesting.

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