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Chief Minister's May Day Message

Celebrating Worker's Day on the 1st May is an essential part of what being a socialist is all about. The GSLP has always held an event on the evening of 30th April so that we receive the 1st May together as a political family.

For that reason, one of our commitments was to re-establish that date as a public holiday.

We did so immediately upon our election and last year Gibraltar came into line with most of Europe (whether governed by socialists or by political parties of another ideology) and a total of 80 countries around the world.

This year, I want to reflect on the reasons for the importance of this day.

On Workers Memorial Day we commemorate those who have died at work. On the 28th April we gave a holiday to be taken as a long weekend in relation to that day because the significance of the 28th April comes only from the establishment of Health and Safety offices and not from any particular event.

The position is quite different in relation to the 1st May which was the date of a demonstration in 1886 in favour of the eight hour working day which we now take for granted. That demonstration in Chicago was disrupted by police gunfire resulting in the death of many who supported that cause. Those who lost their lives became known as the "Chicago Martyrs".

Around the world, the 1st May has long since been regarded as "Workers' Day" in honour of those who lost their lives at the Chicago demonstration and all those who have campaigned for workers' rights.

Since after the Second World War the church has also dedicated the 1st of May to "St Joseph the Worker", the patron saint of craftsmen and of workers.

It is undeniably necessary to remember that the rights workers enjoy today stem from the sacrifices made before us by workers around the world. That is why it is equally undeniably right to have a particular day in the calendar set aside for this purpose.

As leader of the socialist party, I will be celebrating with my political family tonight at the Central Hall. We will see in the 1st May by distributing red carnations amongst those present. This year that otherwise joyous celebration will be tinged with sadness as we remember our colleague Charles Bruzon, who – together with his family – will be in our thoughts throughout the evening.

Tomorrow the Government has organised an event at Casemates with the unions which I urge all of you to enjoy with us. The event is open to all like last year, no invitations are necessary!

Apart from being able to hear great music from some of Gibraltar's best bands; let us come together to recall the sacrifices that delivered to each of us the rights that protect us at work today; and, in particular, let us remember that those sacrifices did not just happen in Chicago – many happened here too during the General Strike, the fight for parity and other industrial battles that have delivered the benefits we enjoy today.

So let us celebrate the 1st May together. Let us commit ourselves to the commemoration of those who have fought to attain the rights that workers can today rely on and let us understand the significance of a day on which workers down tools in honour of those whose role in history will never be forgotten.

ENDS