



PRESS RELEASE

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Chief Minister's May Day Message - 1st May : Learn the Lessons

The historic reasons for celebrating the 1st of May as Workers Day do not diminish by the passage of time.

Each year it is as important as the last to remember what the celebration represents and why all workers' industry is an essential part of our economic prosperity.

Alongside that must also come the rights of workers to a reasonable length of time at work each day, not open to exploitation and abuse.

In Gibraltar we are now privileged to enjoy the Constitutional freedom to associate as we like and with who we like.

That right protects the right to belong to a Trade Union.

No-one can be denied that right and it would be a very foolish employer indeed who sought to deny recognition to a modern Trade Union in the work place.

But that is not to say that we have got everything right.

Even in our generation there are workers who still don't have the right to an occupational pension in the private sector.

I will take legislation to Parliament shortly, I hope with the support of both employee and employer representative organisations, to fix that anomaly.

And some still suffer exploitation even today as some unscrupulous employers (few and far between in Gibraltar though) ignore the law and threaten employees with reprisals if they tell the authorities.

Some are paid less than the minimum wage.

Some have deductions made from their wages without their consent or legal authority.



Some are not registered so the employer can avoid social insurance payments (so no state pension or health cover is provided to the worker).

So remembering and celebrating the 1st May isn't a throwback to the seventies, when Trade Unionism might have been more in vogue.

It's not a throwback to more militant days.

It's a way of understanding how the privileges we enjoy today have been accrued through the struggle of generations past.

Because if we don't remember, we won't be allowing history to teach us anything.

And that would mean that our children's future might be as bleak as the past our grandfathers broke us free from.

So celebrate workers day.

But remember it's about more than a lovely long weekend with the family.

And take a minute to explain to your kids why we are having a party at Casemates on the 1st May.

It's about the memory of those who blazed a trail for us.

It's about workers not being abused.

It's about Grandad and Grandma.

And what they went through at work.