



Liberty Equality Matrimony

MAY DAY 2015

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“The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens... cherishing all the children of the nation equally.”

As we approach the Easter Rising’s centenary, Vote Yes for Equal Marriage on 22 May to help deliver on the promise of the Proclamation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Art Montague'.

The modern celebration of May Day evolved from the campaign by the Knights of Labour for the eight-hour day in the United States and Canada in the mid-1880s. At that time, workers were being forced to work anywhere from 10 to 14 hours per day. On May 1st, 1886, national strikes took place in both countries involving over 250,000 workers in support of this campaign, however, in Chicago, police attacked and killed six striking workers.

The next day, at a demonstration against this police brutality in the city’s Haymarket Square, a bomb exploded among the police cordon killing eight officers. Eight striking trade unionists were arrested and tried for murder. The trial focused as much on their politics as it did on the allegation of murder and four were eventually convicted and executed in November 1887.

They became known as the Haymarket Martyrs. Shortly afterwards, May 1st or May Day, was declared to be International Workers’ Day when the International Working Men’s Association (the First International) designated the day as a holiday to commemorate the Haymarket Martyrs.

In Ireland, the first Monday of May was declared a Bank Holiday by the then Minister for Public Enterprise, Ruairi Quinn TD, in 1994, in honour of May Day and those people who have campaigned and continue to campaign for workers’ rights as well as progressive, economic, social and political change.

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