

# The history of labour day



Originally called eight-hour day, labour day stands for the representation of the fight to shorten working hours in the nineteenth century which was a movement that forever changed working conditions deeply impacting on the lives of workers for the future to come. The original cause of eight-hour day (labour day) was the fight for 8 hours of rest and recreation to be given with 8 hours of work in an attempt to provide balance to workers between their work and personal lives as plead by the unionists' who did not ask for extra money but rather more time which eventually lead to the 40-hour week known today. Over the years this historical occasion was formed into the national holiday we know as labour day.

Australia and New Zealand were the first to successfully implement and provide rights of recreation and rest to its labourers, leading the world with Sydney at the labour movements core. Labour day and its creation all starting in the year 1855 as there was a great need present for stonemasons during great large scale building operations, provided by the influx of prosperity and wealth brought by the gold rush which meant large amounts of difficult labour for workers. During the construction of two structures which were identified as the church buildings of Holy Trinity Millers Point and the Mariners Church, workers participated in a construction standstill, hosting a 14 day strike in order to fight for balance in the work and personal lives of workers as they were most often expected to complete gruelling 10 hours of work daily from Monday through to Friday and working a total of around 8 hours on Saturdays with an expected work week of around 58 hours per week of hard labour. In order to celebrate the victory previously experienced by workers and promote its campaign established in 1871, a

picnic and march was held each year during the first weekend of October. Although efforts for the reduction of work hours started in 1871 the first ever holiday for its commandment was held in 1855, organised by a Balmain member and unionist named Jacob Garrard who was described as a member of the salvation army since 1896 who had been an inspired and good willed Methodist (a Methodist is described as a member of a segment of the Christian church which is aimed at and notorious for protesting and standing up for what they believe.) Jacob Garrard is a prime example of missionary and Christian influence, in this instance responsible for the modern day labour movement.

Despite the grave Christian influence in the formation of the eight-hour campaign this fact regularly overlooked in the modern era by historians and recent generation, a terrifying fact highlighted by the labour leader Kevin Rudd.

Just as the Christians and missionaries responsible for the creation of the eight-hour day grave concerns are raised regarding the work hours of today's society as well through the raising of awareness and protection of those who may be venerable. Recent concerning statistics regarding modern labour highlighted the facts that over 60% of people start their jobs before 8am and end their shifts after 6pm during the workdays with 30% of Australia's population spending time at their workplace on the weekends. Just as the workers protested for during the average of 22% of Australia's population work more than 50 hours per week.

The fight for a fair balance of work and free time has resurfaced with families working longer and more unpredictable and what is described as unsocial hours with subsequently less and less personal time away from work.

Reasoning's of large amounts of labour performed by workers can be categorised into sections of those who are passionate about their career who often struggle to balance their time spent at work and time they have for necessities such as socialising or much needed rest which commonly leads to irregular work and rest patterns. Included in the list of people who are overworked are those who invest heavily in the improvement of their position and the progression of their workplace who without provided rest and recreation time would over work themselves and once again over look their personal time and vital time to rest. The other demographic of those who are over worked include those who have no other choice but require the financial aid of their profession, but due to the lack of personal time away from constant work provided by modern jobs.

Modern work has been altered from the beliefs and rights fought for intensely throughout 1855. Recently workers, in order to receive an income labourers are forced to comply with their work hours as they cannot afford to be without a job, forced to work from early to late which dramatically impacts the social and personal lives of worker often causing adverse health effects and mental illnesses such as depression or anxiety.

As listed perfectly in the holy bible " those who work and are not draining to society are ones to be praised and encouraged. But it is important to remember that even God himself rested on the seventh day which truly is a

sign of the importance of rest and time spent away from work which is portrait not only by the preaching's of those fighting for fair work and rest times but through their actions as well.