1) Through the strength of more than 600,000 workers uniting in a strike, on May 1, 1886, in the United States of America the working hours were agreed upon as 8 hours in a day. With regard to the blood and spilled to achieve this victory, the first of May was recognized as the "Worker's Day" by the Second Conference of the International Workers League held in 1890 at Paris and has been celebrated worldwide everywhere since then.

2) In Burma, Mayday was initiated and celebrations held by the Oil Field Workers in May 1, 1938. At that time, although Burma was under British rule, more than 2000 white and blue collar oil workers of the oil fields in Yaenanchaung and Chauk entered into a strike and succeeded in demand for more wages and annual increments.

3) In 1945, the Second World War was over and Burma again fell under British rule. In 1946/47, based on the sound national spirit and for the national cause, Government servants from many ministries and departments including the Police, Post and Telegraph, Railways and workers from the companies made a general strike unanimously opposing the White Paper Project of the British Government. As a result, the colonial government had to allow General Aung San, the national leader of Burma to form and lead a government and to have a right to form and shape the future of Burma.

4) In 1948, a constitution was promulgated, by which Burma was to be formed as a democratic country guaranteeing the basic human rights of all races and walks of the people including equality, freedom of organizing, freedom of expression, freedom of livelihood, equality under the law. In the same year, Burma joined the United Nations as a member.

5) After independence, in February of 1949, under the AFPFL (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League) government, nation-wide general strike of all walks of government servants was held expressing dissatisfaction at lay-offs and reduction of salaries and through this freedom of expression, their demands were achieved.

6) In 1946, the ILO, which was founded in 1910, was recognized as a special institution of the United Nations. From Burma, a representative of the Trade Union Congress of Burma TUCB, a representative of employers and that of the government started regularly attended the ILO Annual Conference held at Geneva in every June. In accordance with the resolution of that ILO Committee, the government to guarantee the security of the workers' lives promulgated laws. The living standard of the workers in Burma was highly regarded in the world and looked up by other countries.

7) But, after the military coup in 1962 by the Revolutionary Council, democratic constitution and laws were revoked and decrees and orders ruled the country. Since then, freedom of association that had been exercised by the workers had disappeared and guarantees to the life of workers and job securities became almost non-existent. The Workers' Association formed by the authorities only did what the authorities like to see.

8) The Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) promulgated the constitution of the Socialist Republic Union of Burma, with the aim of withholding the power forever. Under their rule, Burma, which was one of the richest countries in the region, became a least developed country (LDC) status. The life of the workers became very harsh and government service personal was reduced to corruption to fulfill their daily life.

9) In 1988, the State Law and Order restoration Council (SLORC) made a coup after the people's democratic movement. After the coup, the authorities have been using "forced labor"
including children in infrastructure projects of transport and communication, dams and reservoirs, roads and bridges and; construction projects. It also has been using people of all ages and sex as the forced conscripted porters at the military offensives and operations at the border. Due to these situations, the United Nations, ILO and the human rights organizations have pointed out and denounced its human rights record. ILO has urged the SLORC not to continue the practice of forced labor, in accordance with the resolutions in its 29th convention.

10) ILO has also urged the SLORC to abide by the Convention No: 87 and 98, which concerns the right of freedom in organization, which is instrumental for the full guarantee of the workers' rights.

11) ILO has pointed out and objected to the violation of the Burmese authorities of the resolutions prohibiting the children at 18 and under-aged to join the labor force.

12) In accordance with the policy of the NLD on workers affairs, there must be the right of the worker's unions and trade unions to participate and demand in the legal fold in its' proper accredited rights in the democratic system.

13) NLD has been striving for a genuine democratic state which will guarantee full workers' rights. On this auspicious 108th anniversary of the World's Workers' Day, the NLD calls upon all the workers from all walks of life to join hands with us in our struggle.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
9th waning day of Tagoo, 1359
May 1, 1997