

International Women's Day and the IAM



Traditionally, March is Women's History Month and March 8th marks International Women's Day (IWD). IWD is commemorated by the United Nations Organizations and is designated a national holiday in many countries.

Each year organizations, governments and women's groups around the globe plan events throughout the month of March to mark the economic, political and social achievement of women, as well as bring awareness where progress is lacking.

This year's theme is *Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities: Progress for All*. In that spirit, the IAM Women's and Human Rights Department is calling on all our members to get involved with our JOBS Now! campaign.

Right now, American families are hurting. Thousands of our sisters and brothers are being laid off. We need to tell Congress that investing in manufacturing, increasing skills training and creating jobs will create opportunities, will move our country and the economy forward. It's time for JOBS Now!

This International Women's Day, let your elected officials know it's good skilled JOBS that will bring us equality, opportunity and progress.

- Mail your JOBS Now! Postcards to Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Reid.



- Log on to the activist center at www.goiam.org and send an electronic letter to your representatives in Congress.
- Spread the word.

History of International Women's Day



In 1869 British MP John Stuart Mill was the first person in Parliament to call for women's right to vote. On 19 September 1893 New Zealand became the first country in the world to give women the right to vote. Women in other countries did not enjoy this equality and campaigned for justice for many years.

In 1910 a second International Conference of Working Women was held in Copenhagen. A woman named Clara Zetkin (Leader of the 'Women's Office' for the Social Democratic Party in Germany) tabled the idea of an International Women's Day. She proposed that every year in every country there should be a celebration on the same day - a Women's Day - to press for their demands. The conference of over 100 women from 17 countries, representing unions, socialist parties, working women's clubs, and including the first three women elected to the Finnish parliament, greeted Zetkin's suggestion with unanimous approval and thus International Women's Day was the result.

The very first International Women's Day was launched the following year by Clara Zetkin on 19 March (not 8 March). The date was chosen because on 19 March in the year of the 1848 revolution, the Prussian king recognized for the first time the strength of the armed people and gave way before the threat of a proletarian uprising. Among the many promises he made, which he later failed to keep, was the introduction of votes for women.

Plans for the first International Women's Day demonstration were spread by word of mouth and in the press. During the week before International Women's Day two journals appeared: The Vote for Women in Germany and Women's Day in Austria. Various articles were devoted to International Women's Day: 'Women and Parliament', 'The Working Women and Municipal Affairs', 'What Has the Housewife got to do with Politics?', etc. The articles thoroughly analyzed the question of the equality of women in the government and in society. All articles emphasized the same point that it was absolutely necessary to make parliament more democratic by extending the franchise to women.

Success of the first International Women's Day in 1911 exceeded all expectation. Meetings were organized everywhere in small towns and even the village halls were packed so full that male workers were asked to give up their places for women. Men stayed at home with their children for a change, and their wives, the captive housewives, went to meetings.

During the largest street demonstration of 30,000 women, the police decided to remove the demonstrators' banners so the women workers made a stand. In the scuffle that followed, bloodshed was averted only with the help of the socialist deputies in Parliament.



In 1913 International Women's Day was transferred to 8 March and this day has remained the global date for International Women's Day ever since. During International Women's Year in 1975, IWD was given official recognition by the United Nations and was taken up by many governments.

Source: www.internationalwomensday.org