

## Not all were Apathetic: National Hunger Marches as Political Rituals in Interwar Britain

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The unemployed of the interwar years are usually depicted as passive, if not apathetic victims of the Depression, standing in dole-queues or hanging around at street corners. "Poverty and bitterness had little political effect", Stephen Constantine, for example, argues in his textbook on *Unemployment in Britain between the Wars*. Rather, it "seemed to induce in most of its victims a political apathy akin to the physical languor from which so many suffered; it did not seem possible to get them to believe that unemployment was anything but an act of God against which no action was worthwhile."<sup>1</sup> This summarises the consensus view which is based on numerous contemporary studies. In February 1932, for example, the German socialist Georg Beyer published an article on the effects of unemployment, arguing that it ultimately led to complete apathy.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, Marie Jahoda and her colleagues observed the same pattern in their landmark study on the unemployed in the Austrian village of Marienthal.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in the late 1930s, the Carnegie U.K. Trust recorded no signs of political activity amongst unemployed young men in Glasgow, Cardiff, and Liverpool. The researchers found that out of 1,490 men, only twenty "were attached in membership to one or other of the political organisations" and came to the conclusion that it "can not be reiterated too often that unemployment is not an active state; its keynote is boredom – a continuous sense of boredom."<sup>4</sup>

The people of St Albans would have disagreed. Three times in 1936, the year the Carnegie U.K. Trust began its study, groups of unemployed marchers passed through this Hertfordshire town on their way to London to confront the Cabinet and Parliament with their fate. The biggest of these marches was organised by the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM), which had already organised five such demonstrations to the capital in previous years. Under its direction, over 1,400 men and women from all over Great Britain walked to London, where, according to the *Daily Herald*, a quarter of a million people welcomed them at Hyde Park

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1 Stephen Constantine, *Unemployment in Britain Between the Wars* (Harlow 1980), 43.

2 Georg Beyer, 'Arbeitslosenprobleme und Gewerkschaften', *Gewerkschafts-Zeitung* 42,9 (27 Feb. 1932), 133-4.

3 The study was first published in 1933. Marie Jahoda, Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Hans Zeisel, *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal. Ein soziographischer Versuch über die Wirkungen langandauernder Arbeitslosigkeit. Mit einem Anhang zur Geschichte der Soziographie* (Frankfurt 1975), 75.

4 Quoted from Constantine, *Unemployment in Britain*, 97.

on 8 November 1936.<sup>5</sup> The event, however, which received the most publicity in that year was the march of the unemployed from Jarrow to London. Organised by the Jarrow Town Council, it had the support of all the town's political parties, and the participants presented a petition to the House of Commons, asking the government to provide work for the town. The third group which passed through St Albans in 1936 was a delegation of the National League of the Blind, advancing on London to see the Prime Minister.<sup>6</sup> An official from the Ministry of Health commented laconically that "it seems now to be the open season for Marches!"<sup>7</sup> And there was also a fourth group marching in that year, the "British Campaigners Association", which walked from Edinburgh to London to meet the Prime Minister and the Minister of Pensions.<sup>8</sup>

While 1936 saw an unprecedented number of national marches to London, the start of the previous year had also witnessed widespread and intense protest against the government's unemployment policy. In January and February 1935, especially in South Wales, hundreds of thousands had marched against the newly established Unemployment Assistance Board and its new scales of benefits. On 3 February, some 300,000 protestors paraded in the Welsh coalfield alone, and the government was ultimately forced to retreat two days later.<sup>9</sup> Although the extent of this protest was unusual, demonstrations by the unemployed had become frequent events by then. Especially in the first half of the 1930s, they often ended in violent clashes with the police. The disturbances in Birkenhead in September 1932 and in Belfast the following month are only the best known and most notorious examples, but by no means the only ones.

Not only in Britain, but also in countries all over the world, unemployed men and women organised and tried to put pressure on those in charge. In the United States, for example, four columns of national hunger marchers left from Boston, Buffalo, Chicago and St Louis in December 1931 and travelled by truck to Washington, DC where they met on 6 De-

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5 An Inspector of the Metropolitan Police's Special Branch estimated that there were only 8,000-10,000 people in the Park at any time. His report is, however, openly hostile to the marchers, and this figure seems much too low. See Peter Kingsford, *The Hunger Marchers in Britain* (London 1982), 215; The National Archives, Kew (henceforth TNA), MEPO 2/3091, p. 27: Hunger March 1936. Inspector Vivian Wright, Special Branch, Metropolitan Police, 16 Nov. 1936, p. 3. In general, numbers given by the police must be considered unreliable during that period. Matt Perry, *Bread and Work: Social Policy and the Experience of Unemployment, 1918-39* (London 2000), 115.

6 TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 73 (Doc. 41A): Chief Constable Canning to Commissioner of Police, 26 Oct. 1936.

7 TNA, MH 57/213: Report for T.W. Williams, for information, 25 Sep. 1936.

8 TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 73 (Doc. 41A): Chief Constable Canning to Commissioner of Police, 26 Oct. 1936.

9 Neil Evans, "'South Wales has been Roused as never Before': Marching against the Means Test, 1934-1936", in David W. Howell and Kenneth O. Morgan (eds.), *Crime, Protest and Police in Modern Society. Essays in Memory of David J. V. Jones* (Cardiff 1999), 176-206.

ember. One month later, Father James R. Cox, a Roman Catholic priest in Pittsburgh, led another 12,000 marchers to the American capital. In the summer of 1932, the Bonus March brought thousands of war veterans to Washington, followed by a second National Hunger March in December 1932, whose 3,000 participants again acted as delegates for a wide range of labour and unemployed organizations.<sup>10</sup> Ireland, Denmark, Germany and many other countries also saw protest marches of the unemployed in the interwar years. Taken together, this behaviour hardly constitutes political apathy.

The Carnegie U.K. Trust, Marie Jahoda and many other researchers defined political activity strictly in terms of formal membership, although lack of financial resources severely limited the ability of the unemployed to stay within any political association.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the fact of being out of work did not create a permanent identity around which a new mass organization could easily be built. At least in interwar Britain, many men and women often drifted in and out of work rather than being permanently unemployed. The unemployed, as E. Wight Bakke emphasized in 1931, were not a "'standing army': [...] with the exception of those concentrated in the depressed areas, most of them have been unemployed, and will probably be unemployed, for comparatively short periods." There was "a continual in-and-out movement" and temporary unemployment was experienced by a large part of the British working class between the wars.<sup>12</sup>

Unemployed protest, therefore, rarely took the form of constant mass pressure. Mostly, it was a brief eruption triggered by specific issues. Ritualistic forms of political dissent with a long historical pedigree such as marches or demonstrations lend themselves more easily to the unemployed than traditional forms of political opposition which required long-term involvement. The protest march offered the unemployed an inexpensive, temporary and informal way of political participation through which they could voice their grievances in person, look for allies, and put pressure on those in charge of government or the local welfare apparatus for

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10 Franklin Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Poor: The Story of Collective Action of the Unemployed, 1808-1942* (Niwot 1991), 284-339.

11 Although familiar with the extreme poverty in the village of Marienthal, the researchers discounted the idea that the unemployed simply could not afford even the reduced membership fees. They observed, however, that associations which offered material benefits to their members were not affected by the crisis or were even able to increase their membership numbers. Jahoda et al., *Marienthal*, 58-63.

12 E. Wight Bakke, *The Unemployed Man. A Social Study* (London 1933), 49; see also Richard Croucher, *We Refuse to Starve in Silence. A History of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, 1920-1946* (London 1987), 13-14.

immediate and concrete improvements. In the United Kingdom as well as in many other countries, the political ritual of protest marches established the unemployed as actors in the public arena and forced politicians to pay attention to their plight.

### The National Unemployed Workers' (Committee) Movement

In interwar Britain, most of these marches were organised by the NUWM.<sup>13</sup> It was the largest and most active of the British unemployed organizations, but by no means the only one.<sup>14</sup> Many of the movement's leadership were also members of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), but the organization retained a degree of independence in its actions and was sometimes criticized by the Communist Party for its lack of revolutionary zeal.<sup>15</sup> All in all, the close connection with the CPGB proved to be a mixed blessing. It provided the NUWM with a dedicated cadre as well as organizational support and thereby ensured its survival during the years after the first national hunger march, when their organisation was in sharp decline. However, its links with the Communist Party also brought it into confrontation with the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the Labour Party. After a short honeymoon, the relationship between the NUWM and the organised labour movement degenerated into mutual hostility under the "class against class" policy of the Communists.<sup>16</sup>

The NUWM's short-term goal was to "rouse the unemployed to constant agitation and struggle against the whole problem of unemployment and against the danger of peaceful toleration of poverty", while its long-range aim was the "destruction of capitalism and the conquest of political and economic power by the workers" as the only solution to unemployment.<sup>17</sup> As with most other political organizations, only a fraction of the people the NUWM claimed to represent became formal members. The movement rarely had more than 25,000 members at any time, but a very high turnover meant that about half a million people passed through its ranks during the 22 years of its existence.<sup>18</sup> In addition, it was able to mobilize large numbers of non-members in support of specific and immediate demands. Hunger marches of the unemployed were among the most effective ways of doing this.

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13 For a history of the NUWM see *ibid.*

14 Richard Croucher, "'Divisions in the Movement': the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and its Rivals in Comparative Perspective", in Geoff Andrews, Nina Fishman and Kevin Morgan (eds.), *Opening the Books: Essays on the Social and Cultural History of British Communism* (London 1995), 23-43.

15 Croucher, *We Refuse*, 99, 104, 115-7. See also Perry, *Bread and Work*, 115-8.

16 Croucher, *We Refuse*, 36, 88-90.

17 National Unemployed Workers' Movement (ed.), *Constitution and Rules, Including Our Aims and Objects* (London, no year), 12.

18 Sam Davies, 'The Membership of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement 1923-1938', *Labour History Review*, 57,1 (1992), 29-36.

Between the two world wars, the NUWM organised six national hunger marches to London, one further march of Welsh miners to the capital, and four Scottish hunger marches to Edinburgh (see list at the end of this article).<sup>19</sup> It also organised several regional or "district" hunger marches as well as countless local demonstrations. In addition, it gave advice to the leaders of the Jarrow March, who had some sympathy for the movement, but refused the NUWM's aspiration to join forces.<sup>20</sup> The unemployed took to the road so frequently between the wars that the Ministry of Health complained to the Home Office in 1933 that "marches long and short are becoming all too common."<sup>21</sup>

Protest marches of the unemployed were not just a reaction to the Great Depression, but had a long tradition as a powerful political ritual in Great Britain. In 1932, the Attorney-General Sir Thomas Inskip remarked that the "Hunger Marchers had not raised a new problem, but one which had confronted many Governments in the past, and would undoubtedly recur in the future."<sup>22</sup> As early as Good Friday 1870, the Land and Labour League had organised a procession from Clerkenwell Green to Trafalgar Square in London, where the state of the capital's unemployed workers was discussed at a public meeting. In the following decade, the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) began to organise the unemployed of London in processions and public meetings at Trafalgar Square. From January 1886 on, the Marxist SDF also led the unemployed in demonstrations through London's affluent West End. On 8 February 1886, one of these marches ended in a riot in which the unemployed targeted the clubs in St James's Street. Demonstrations and disturbances also occurred in other British cities, and the situation in London climaxed on 13 March 1887, when the police forcefully prevented up to 100,000 people from demonstrating at Trafalgar Square.<sup>23</sup> The beginning of the twentieth century saw the first marches of unemployed from provincial cities to the capital.<sup>24</sup> After the First World

19 For a chronological history of the hunger marches see Kingsford, *Hunger Marchers*.

20 Tom Pickard, *Jarrow March* (London 1982), 21-3. However, members of the NUWM supported the Jarrow marchers. Croucher, *We Refuse*, 180-1. The League of the Blind also declined a NUWM offer of co-operation for their march to London in 1936. TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 150-1 (Doc. 14).

21 Quoted from Kingsford, *Hunger Marchers*, 174.

22 TNA, CAB 27/497, p. 25: Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Committee held in the Minister of Health's Room, House of Commons, on Wednesday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1932, at 4.30 p.m.

23 Richard Flanagan, '*Parish-Fed Bastards*': *A History of the Politics of the Unemployed in Britain, 1884-1939* (New York 1991), 17-38.

24 In 1905, 500 unemployed men from Leicester signed up for a march to London, copying the successful example of a group of striking boot-makers from Northamptonshire. In reaction to these plans, in May 1905 the Independent Labour Party started to organise the unemployed in Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Birmingham for a march to London. This plan was eventually abandoned, but the Leicester contingent took to the road on 4 June 1905. In 1908, groups of unemployed set out from Manchester and Nottingham to march to the capital, and in the following year hunger marches re-

War, rising unemployment again brought the people out to the streets. The first march was made by ex-servicemen from Manchester to London in September 1919. The National League of the Blind, a trade union organisation affiliated with the Labour Party and the TUC, followed their example by sending three contingents to London in April 1920. In October, a deputation of 15 London mayors was received by Prime Minister Lloyd George to discuss the problem of unemployment, and some 20,000 people turned out to support them. The demonstrators were attacked by the police, but many fought back. Under the impression of these events, the various local unemployed and ex-servicemen committees in the capital linked up to form the "London District Council of the Unemployed". The Council was instrumental in the creation of the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement in April 1921, which was renamed National Unemployed Workers' Movement in 1929.<sup>25</sup>

The movement's central figure was its national organizer "Wal" (Walter) Hannington, who was responsible for almost all of the hunger marches between the wars.<sup>26</sup> He started in the summer of 1921 by leading a group of 200 unemployed marchers from London to the Labour Party Conference in Brighton<sup>27</sup>, but the impulse for the NUWM's first national hunger march came from a march in which Hannington was not directly involved. In August 1922, 30 unemployed walked from Birmingham to London, where they enjoyed the hospitality of the Poplar Council. At a reception in their honour, Mayor Charles Sumner expressed the hope that their effort would be the "forerunner of many other such marches."<sup>28</sup> Only two months later, the first national hunger march started and many local, regional and national marches followed before the outbreak of the Second World War.

The remainder of this article will focus on the ritualistic aspects of the national protest marches of the unemployed to London and Edinburgh during the interwar years. These marches were political rituals not only in the sense that they were frequent and public events which united participants and supporters in a common cause. The marches also shared a set of common features and similar patterns of symbolic significance that went beyond the individual political agenda of each march. It is not enough to focus on the concrete material demands made by the marchers. At least

mained much in evidence in many regions. Kenneth D. Brown, *Labour and Unemployment, 1900-1914* (Newton Abbot 1971), 52-4, 87, 98, 113.

25 Croucher, *We Refuse*, 27-31, 38-42; Wal Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles 1919-1936: My Life and Struggles Amongst the Unemployed* (London 1977), 13. Regarding the re-naming see Marx Memorial Library, London, Hannington & Brown Papers, A III: National Unemployed Workers' Movement, Report of Decisions taken at the National Administrative Council Meeting. Held on Saturday & Sunday October 19 & 20 1929 in London, p. 2.

26 For details of his life see: Croucher, *We Refuse*, 34-6.

27 Ibid. 42. Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 29.

28 Quoted from Kingsford, *Hunger Marchers*, 31.

equally important is the fact that the unemployed voiced these demands themselves in public and in a particular form which contested their passive political status in British society.

### The Pattern of the Marches

The most obvious of these common symbolic features was the star-shaped pattern of almost all marches. It was pioneered by the National League of the Blind, who send three contingents from Manchester, Leeds and Newport to London in April 1920. In a brochure from 1950, the League wrote that "[t]hirty years ago, a demonstration in this form was a novelty and had a propaganda value which it has since lost. The League can claim what credit there may be in being the first to use it successfully."<sup>29</sup> The main reason for this loss of propaganda value was that it had been widely copied and extended in scope by the NUWM. All national hunger marches organised by the movement had a star-shaped pattern. Several contingents would start from different centres at the fringes of the country and converge on the capital where they would arrive at the same time. The same pattern was followed by smaller district marches, like the two-day Monmouthshire Hunger March in August 1933<sup>30</sup>, and by the welcome demonstrations in London. The movement would assemble its supporters at different points in the capital from where they converged simultaneously on Hyde Park or Trafalgar Square.<sup>31</sup> The hunger marchers would arrive afterwards from all directions, thereby creating a continuous sense of excitement among those who were waiting for them.

Sometimes, this pattern was slightly altered. During the Scottish hunger marches, for example, the different contingents from all over Scotland usually met outside Edinburgh to enter the city in one body.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, the different groups of Welsh miners came together at Newport in 1927 before marching to London.<sup>33</sup> The 1936 march of the blind also started with three contingents, from Cardiff, Leeds and Manchester, which united at Watford,<sup>34</sup> leaving the Jarrow Crusade as the only major march which

29 University of Warwick, Modern Records Centre, MSS.349 Box 8: National League of the Blind, Golden Jubilee, 1899-1949. Souvenir Brochure. Draft, June 1950, p. 9.

30 Monmouthshire Marchers' Council (ed.), *Monmouthshire Hunger March of August, 1933* (no place, no year).

31 TNA, MEPO 2/3065, p. 76 (Doc. 3C): Meetings and Processions. 20 Oct. 1932, p. 1. In 1936, the police could already talk about the "usual assembly points" for these contingents in London. TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 78 (Doc. 31A): Precis of Information No. 3.

32 The contingents converged on Corstorphine, where they united on 11 June 1933. Harry McShane, *Three Days that Shook Edinburgh: Story of the Historic Scottish Hunger March* (Glasgow 1933), 7-8.

33 Wal Hannington, *The March of the Miners. How we Smashed the Opposition* (no place 1927), 18.

34 TNA, MH 57/212: Memo. National League of the Blind. March of Blind Persons to London. 1936; TNA, HO 45/16545: National League of the Blind march to London. Vivian Wright, Inspector, Special Branch, Metropolitan Police. 6 Nov. 1936, p. 2.

proceeded in a straight line to London. An early plan for this march had also proposed "simultaneous demonstrations" throughout the country "so that all parties would reach London together."<sup>35</sup> However, this plan was dropped in favour of a "non-political" town march. Due to this change of emphasis, the tone of the Jarrow March became less militant than the hunger marches. The petition from Jarrow asked the government for help<sup>36</sup>, while the NUWM in contrast presented the government with a cross-section of the country's unemployed and demanded help. The hunger marchers did not just go to the centre of power like the Jarrow Crusaders, they encircled it. In the words of Hannington, they "steadily closed in upon London, like a besieging army".<sup>37</sup>

This form of demonstration was a ritualistic show of force, because it required extensive preparation, discipline and timing to be successful. The message to the government and the rest of the country was that these protestors were not an unruly mob, but an organised, disciplined body and a serious opponent. It also helped to build up a sense of excitement that peaked with the arrival of the marchers in the capital. In addition, it had a democratic appeal. Hannington – and the organisers of other marches as well – were well aware that they had to limit the number of participants in order to be able to supply and accommodate them *en route*. The ones selected were to act as delegates of their towns, regions, trades, or organizations. The NUWM's headquarters put great emphasis on the principle of delegation, and when the marchers arrived in the capital to express their demands, their leaders could claim with some justification that they spoke for many more than their own numbers.

Again, Hannington's numerous writings indicate how the NUWM's national organizer wanted the hunger marchers to be perceived, and he frequently stressed that the men and women were delegates who represented a far greater number than their own. According to Hannington, in 1927 the miners, for example, were "marching as the standard-bearers of the thousands of downtrodden men and women in the Welsh coalfield."<sup>38</sup> In September of the following year, Hannington led the first Scottish hunger march to Edinburgh: "It was decided to recruit 250 men, to be selected on a representative basis from various localities," he explained shortly after the event, "and that these men should act as an army of delegates

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35 Quoted from Frank Ennis, 'The Jarrow March of 1936: The Symbolic Expression of Protest', University of Durham, MA Thesis (1982), 144.

36 The Jarrow Petition was signed by 11,572 persons and read: "Jarrow has endured industrial depression without parallel in the town's history, all efforts for the resuscitation of industry have failed and the future holds no prospect of work for the many thousands unemployed. Therefore the petitioners humbly pray that the necessary active assistance be given by the Government for the provision of work in the town of Jarrow ..."; quoted from Pickard, *Jarrow March*, 15.

37 Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 247.

38 *Ibid.* 161.

representing the whole of the unemployed of the Scottish coalfields, the jute workers of Dundee and shipbuilding workers of Greenock."<sup>39</sup> In his description of the farewell given to the Scottish contingent at Glasgow at the start of the 1929 hunger march, he again stressed that the "marchers were something more than individual volunteers; they were representatives, because they had all been endorsed at great mass meetings held in their respective towns throughout Scotland."<sup>40</sup> The same principle of delegation was applied elsewhere. According to the official programme of the 1929 march, it transformed the participants into "the selected representatives of their districts; the courageous standard bearers of the huge army of unemployed. They are facing personal hardships on the wintry roads in order that the voice of the millions now starving shall be heard and answered."<sup>41</sup> In the programme of the 1932 march, Hannington again asserted that the "men and women who are undertaking this great march have been selected in their localities as the representatives of the great mass of unemployed."<sup>42</sup>

How much emphasis the NUWM placed on the principle of delegation is also reflected in its official communications. In the instructions for the 1934 march, for example, the NUWM headquarters stressed that "all marchers must be elected either by their Trade Union branch, Ex-Service Men's Club, Unemployed Branch, Co-operative Guild or at Mass Meetings. This condition must be observed."<sup>43</sup> Although the Labour Party again boycotted the hunger march of that year, Clement Attlee recognized in the House of Commons two days after the reception of the contingents in Hyde Park that "you have here in London a body of men who have marched from various districts and who by admission of independent witnesses of every kind have behaved with perfect order. We have the testimony, too, of entirely independent witnesses that these men are fair representatives of the great mass of the unemployed of this country".<sup>44</sup>

### The Military Theme

If the pattern of the march was a show of strength, so was the military theme which dominated all national protest marches and imbued them with an additional symbolic meaning. The hunger marchers tried hard to convey a picture of military order, organization and discipline on their

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39 Id., *Our March against the Starvation Government, ... this is the Story of the Scottish Unemployed March to Edinburgh, September 1928, and its Achievements* (no place 1928), 6.

40 Id., *Unemployed Struggles*, 183.

41 National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement (ed.), *Why Are We Marching? The National Unemployed March to London* (London 1929), 9.

42 Wal Hannington, *Why Are We Marching? Programme of the National Hunger March to London Against the Means Test* (no place 1932), 5.

43 TNA, MEPO 2/3071, p. 556: March Circular No. 5. National Congress & March Council. 9 Jan. 1934, p. 1.

44 On 27 Feb. 1934. Hansard, 5<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 286, c. 1067.

way to London or Edinburgh. After all, according to Karl Marx, the unemployed were the "industrial reserve army" and the movement was leading them, in Hannington's words, in a "war against starvation."<sup>45</sup> The dominance of the military theme also reflected the NUWM's origins. Many of its leaders had been involved in the Shop Stewards' Movement during the First World War, but the organization itself was created by uniting the various local Unemployed Ex-service Men Organisations under the roof of the London District Council of the Unemployed in 1920.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the military theme gave the unemployed a moral advantage. On 23 November 1918 Lloyd George had promised "to make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in", and the former soldiers were quite ready to remind him and his successors that the government had failed to deliver.<sup>47</sup> In addition to having an undisputed claim to their country's gratitude, the veterans were familiar with hardship, knew discipline and were willing to fight back when attacked by the police. They were the ideal hunger marchers and the movement made ample use of them.<sup>48</sup>

The theme of the unemployed war hero was a powerful one and would live on until the end of the 1930s. The NUWM played on it extensively, and the marchers' war medals featured prominently in most of the marches organised by the movement. On Armistice Day (11 November) 1922, for example, the NUWM organised several thousand men to march past the Cenotaph after the official ceremony. The veterans' military medals were pinned on to the banners of their contingents, while the men themselves had pawn tickets attached to their coats to show their destitution. Bands joined the march, which was headed by a wreath bearing the words: "From the living victims – the unemployed – to our dead comrades, who died in vain."<sup>49</sup> Five years later, the Welsh miners staged a similar demonstration in Bath on their way to London, many of the men "with rows of medals on their breasts for services rendered in the capitalist war".<sup>50</sup> In 1933, a delegate of a district march waved his campaign medals in front of the county's Public Assistance Committee while stating his

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45 Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 265.

46 Ibid. 13. Hannington himself had started his work among the unemployed in such a local committee in St Pancras, although he had been exempted from serving in the war.

47 Parliament decided in November 1918 to pay all unemployed a voluntary 'donation', but this was terminated for civilians in November 1919 and for former servicemen in March 1921.

48 Many of the participants in the first hunger march were former soldiers, as were about 60% of the miners' march and all its leaders. Kingsford, *Hunger Marchers*, 33, 84. As late as 1936, the police credited a former sergeant major with the splendid organization of the hunger march contingent from Lancashire and Merseyside. TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 37 (Doc. 41R): Hunger March 1936. Vivian Wright, Inspector, Special Branch, Metropolitan Police, 16 Nov. 1936, p. 13.

49 According to Hannington, the NUWM mobilized 25,000 veterans on this occasion. Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 77.

50 Id., *March of Miners*, 22.

case.<sup>51</sup> Three years later, the hunger marchers again walked past the Cenotaph in London on 11 November after the official ceremony.<sup>52</sup> As late as 1938, some of the Scottish marchers wore their medals from the Great War on their way to Edinburgh.<sup>53</sup>

The theme of the forgotten hero was also addressed in the marchers' slogans. A banner in 1922 read, for example: "In the Trenches Yesterday, Unemployed Today."<sup>54</sup> When interviewed by the press, the marchers often emphasized the military record of their comrades. "Some of them are ex-Servicemen and are used to route marches," one man told the *Cumberland Evening News* in 1934, "and this reminds them of the days when they had to do it."<sup>55</sup> The theme of the forgotten war hero was omnipresent during the marches, and it was noted when the participants were too young to be veterans of the First World War.<sup>56</sup> The press highlighted the spirit and enthusiasm of marching veterans of the First World War as late as 1938. However, since most of them were by then too old to march, the journalists also discovered a new type of veteran, who combined youthfulness and heroism: "Most of the marchers are young men, many of them still in their teens, and a considerable number have recently returned to Scotland after fighting for some months with the International Brigade in the Spanish Government forces."<sup>57</sup>

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- 51 Phil Harker, *Lancashire's Fight for Bread! Story of the Great Lancashire Hunger March* (no place 1933), 14-15.
- 52 They laid down two wreaths, reading "Peace – We do not and will not forget" and "They gave their lives, we dedicate ours to the future of youth." When some of the hunger marchers made disparaging remarks and called the ceremony a hypocrisy, Hannington reprimanded them. According to the police, he told them that the purpose was to show the public that the workers were mourning their dead who had been killed for capitalism. TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 45 (Doc. 41N): Hunger Marchers. Vivian Wright, Inspector, Special Branch, Metropolitan Police, 11 Nov. 1936.
- 53 Ian MacDougall (ed.), *Voices from the Scottish Hunger Marches*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh 1991), i. 409, note 309.
- 54 Kingsford, *Hunger Marchers*, 43.
- 55 'Hunger Marchers' Day of Rest at Carlisle. Procession of Footsore and Weary Scotsmen', *Cumberland Evening News*, 30 Jan. 1934; clipping in TNA, MH 57/104A.
- 56 "These men were all young", the workhouse master of Bromsgrove reported to a Ministry of Health Inspector, "the master tells me that not more than 6 or 7 were old enough to have been ex-servicemen"; TNA, MH 57/99: Unemployed Marchers - 1930. Report by H.K. Nistel, District 8. 28 Apr. 1930, p. 1. Four years later, a local reporter noticed mostly young men among the marchers in Leeds: "Only occasionally did one see an older man in the ranks who might have learnt to march amidst the mud of Flanders." 'The Road to London', *Yorkshire Observer*, 8 Feb. 1934; clipping in TNA, MH 57/104A. These are the only such sources I found.
- 57 Nevertheless, the First World War soldier was still the role model: "Typical for the spirit of the marchers was the enthusiasm of William M'Leod, who came alone from Fort Augustus to join other marchers from the north at Inverness. He was 18 days on the road, and was without company for the first two days, twice spending the night in a haystack on his way to Inverness. M'Leod, who was for many years a gardener in Fort Augustus, belongs to Edinburgh, which he left during the war to serve in the Royal Artillery." 'Week-End March', *Edinburgh Evening News*, 28 Nov. 1938, p. 7.

Consistently, the leaders of the movement also linked their men to the Great War. When Hannington described the farewell given to the miners in Wales, he was reminded of "one of the troop train departures in the early days of the war."<sup>58</sup> Addressing the hardships endured by the Scots in 1928, he pointed out that many of the marchers "had slept rough before, between 1914 and 1918, but this time they were 'roughing it' for their own Cause, not for capitalism."<sup>59</sup> On reaching Edinburgh, the men "were now a well drilled and disciplined army with even ranks and every man in step, marching in companies of twenty. [...] No body of the regular army could have marched better than we were marching now."<sup>60</sup> And Harry McShane, the leader of the Scottish march of 1933, described that "columns of men were marching, men with bands, banners, slogans, everyone equipped with knapsack and blanket, their field cooks on ahead: an army in miniaure, an unemployed army, the hunger marchers."<sup>61</sup>

The organizers placed great stress on discipline and appearance, and as a result, the columns of unemployed looked like army companies on the march. During the march to Brighton in the summer of 1921, Hannington had already emphasized that "every man was in step" when they entered the town. According to his account of the march in the movement's newspaper *Out of Work*, hundreds of people "lined the route to see our arrival. The one thing they marvelled at was the well-drilled and disciplined way in which the men marched after doing seventeen miles that day."<sup>62</sup> The movement's headquarters issued precise instructions on "Marching Formation and Leadership" for later hunger marches: there was to be a space of six yards between each company, and it was regarded as "very essential" that the men marched in step. This had "a more striking effect upon the public, and demonstrates efficiency and control, and further, it is possible to cover much more ground with a minimum of fatigue." The chief contingent leader was to signal the halt and the fall-in whistle, and if it was "at all possible to get a bugler with each contingent, it should be done. A bugle will be found extremely useful for assembling the men in the towns and for calling all marchers into the Halls at night." Marchers who did not submit to the strict discipline were to be dismissed from the ranks.<sup>63</sup> Mobile field kitchens often travelled ahead of the marchers to pre-

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58 Hannington, *March of the Miners*, 15-18.

59 Hannington, *Scottish Unemployed March*, 7. Similarly Harry Adams remarked: "The capitalist press reports were lying, as usual, when they say that it is cruelty to get these men marching such long distances. When the workers marched for the capitalists' benefit during 1914 to 1918 there were no such reports of the hardships they had to endure"; TNA, MEPO 2/3071, Part 4, p. 372; Meeting, 18.2.1934. Report by William Reilly, Sergeant.

60 Hannington, *Our March against the Starvation Government*, 10-12.

61 McShane, *Three Days*, 3.

62 No. 11. Quoted from Croucher, *We Refuse*, 42.

63 TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 127-8: Circular 'Marching Formation and Leadership.' National Headquarters Committee, N.U.W.M., 1936. See also TNA, MEPO 2/3071, p. 548-51: March Circular No. 6. National Congress & March Council, 12 Jan. 1934; re-emphasized in *ibid.*,

pare meals on the road. When the Scottish marchers of 1933 had their lunch in the city centre of Edinburgh, the *Edinburgh Press* described the scene as a "military bivouac".<sup>64</sup>

The Jarrow March was organised along the same lines. The men "marched by army rules" and also had a field kitchen, a medical detachment and former soldiers in their ranks.<sup>65</sup> When one of them injured himself during the march, the newspaper reported that he "bemoaned" his fate: "While in the Army he did mile after mile without ever having to fall out."<sup>66</sup> Traditional working-class elements such as banners, flags and music bands<sup>67</sup> blended well into the dominant military theme, and songs were sung on every occasion. The hunger marchers preferred "The International" and "The Red Flag," while the Jarrow marchers performed more neutral songs like "There's a long, long, trail awinding."<sup>68</sup> Another mark of distinction was provided by the marshal of the Jarrow March, Councillor David Riley, who walked at the head of the contingent with his bowler hat on, thereby adding a middle-class touch to this event.<sup>69</sup>

### Marching to Mobilize

Every march unfolded in two very different locations: the road and the capital. As already pointed out, the synchronized converging of several contingents on London or Edinburgh was a show of strength, and the time-consuming march through the country served to build up tension for the arrival at the capital. But the time on the road also had the crucial function of mobilizing supporters and instilling a sense of mission and determination into the marchers. The second phase in the capital marked the climax of every march and the logical conclusion of the event, and so the participants' homeward journey by train or bus was distinctly less dramatic.

At every stop on the way to London or Edinburgh, the marchers held public meetings to drum up support for their cause. Advance guards made announcements, chalked messages on the streets and handed out leaflets to inform the inhabitants of towns and villages about the marchers'

p. 543: March Circular No. 7, 18 Jan. 1934, p. 2. In 1932, the NUWM also ordered "the march to be organised as far as possible on military lines"; TNA, MEPO 2/3064, p. 364: Demonstrations on 18<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October. Confidential. Memo Metropolitan Police, p. 1. For the 1929 march, see Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 189-90.

64 McShane, *Three Days*, 10-11.

65 Ellen Wilkinson, *The Town that was Murdered: the Life-Story of Jarrow* (London 1939), 208.

66 'Jarrow March Gets under Way', *North Mail*, 6 Oct. 1936. Quote from: 'Jarrow Marchers: Paddie [the marchers' dog] has to Ride - One of First Three Casualties', *Northern Echo*, 9 Oct. 1936. Both clippings in TNA, MH 57/213.

67 Ibid. For Jarrow March see TNA, MH 57/213: March of the Unemployed from Jarrow to London. Commencing Monday, 5 Oct. 1936. From: J. Robinson, Manager Jarrow & Heburn Employment Exchange, 26 Sep. 1936.

68 'Happy Men of Jarrow March', *Northern Echo*, 8 Oct. 1936; clipping in TNA, MH 57/213.

69 Kingsford, *Hunger Marchers*, 219.

arrival. In addition, every contingent seemed to feature some musical instruments to attract attention on entering a community, thereby summoning the people to the meeting-place. One purpose of these meetings was to collect funds. While much of this money was used to cover the expenses of the march itself, especially return tickets, sometimes the marchers were able to achieve a surplus.<sup>70</sup> According to a Ministry of Health official in 1936, the hunger marchers even deliberately chose their routes through towns where they could expect successful collections. He complained that they wanted "to go to Harrogate", although it had no casual ward, "because they do well in funds there from the sympathetic old ladies of Harrogate."<sup>71</sup>

At least of equal importance, however, was the attempt to create a sense of unity between the marchers and the people in the communities through which they passed. "Give us your help, my boys / We're fighting the battle for you", the Scottish marchers sang when they entered a town or village.<sup>72</sup> "The Marchers are your Brothers & Sisters; Your Comrades on the Road. Their fight is your fight", a leaflet urged the working-class population in 1934: "Turn out in your Thousands to greet the Marchers. Give them a rousing enthusiastic working-class welcome to your Town."<sup>73</sup> Some handbills especially addressed the unemployed and asked them to "show your appreciation of the men who are doing so much for you and yours."<sup>74</sup>

What the marchers did was to endure the hardship of walking up to twenty miles or more a day, and the organisers were often attacked for making the life of the unemployed even more distressing by luring them into these punishing exercises.<sup>75</sup> However, the hardship they endured stressed the urgency of their grievances. "These men were the victims of capitalism, and were driven by misery and starvation to come to London to demand a decent standard of living", a speaker of the NUWM explained to his audience in 1932, according to the police. "No rational man would march 500 miles [...] if capitalism had provided them with a decent home and a decent standard of living."<sup>76</sup> And the programme of the 1936 march

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70 For example, the Scottish marches of 1928 and 1933, the hunger march of 1936 and the Jarrow March achieved a financial surplus. The use of this money was sometimes controversial. See TNA, HH 57/213: Memo to Mr. Roundell, Ministry of Health, 6 Jan. 1937; Croucher, *We Refuse*, 95; Harry McShane and Joan Smith, *Harry McShane: No Mean Fighter* (London, 1978), 203, 219.

71 TNA, MH 57/212: Hunger Marchers. R.J.R. Farrow, Yorkshire District No. 9, 17 Oct. 1936, p. 3.

72 Hannington, *Our March Against the Starvation Government*, 9-10.

73 Marx Memorial Library, London, Hannington & Brown Papers, E.

74 TNA, MEPO 2/3064, p. 69: N.U.W.M. to All Wimbledon Unemployed [1932] (handbill).

75 See, for example, Sir John Gilmour in the House of Commons on 21 Dec. 1933. TNA, MEPO 2/3071, p. 100.

76 TNA, MEPO 2/3064, p. 75: N.U.W.M. meetings. J. Holmes, Sergeant, 28 Oct. 1932, p. 2.

challenged the critics: "Surely, nobody will believe that we have undertaken this arduous endeavour lightly or without just cause."<sup>77</sup>

By enduring hardship for the benefit of all unemployed, the marchers could also be constructed as martyrs. Hannington stressed the challenges of the 1936 march to his readers: "Hardships are involved in the march; the contingents have to set out irrespective of inclement weather; they sometimes march twenty and thirty miles in the rain, to sleep as best they can on the hard floors of halls which are placed at their disposal." By submitting to the march, the participants "express a spirit of self-sacrifice and struggle; they readily face the hardships. Most of them have left families at home whilst they undertake this hazardous march. Only men and women with a burning sense of injustice would undertake such an endeavour."<sup>78</sup> To suffer for the sake of others was an essentially Christian quality, and some, indeed, interpreted the hardships of the marches in this context. Former Councillor Roberts of East Ham, for example, called the 1932 hunger marchers "the 'cross bearers' of the organised unemployed movement."<sup>79</sup> For the *Oxford Mail*, they were the "Courageous Pilgrims of Poverty"<sup>80</sup>, while the unemployed of Jarrow were on a "crusade" for their town and were also referred to as "pilgrims" in the press.<sup>81</sup> In 1920, the blind marchers were also often described as "pilgrims" in newspaper articles.<sup>82</sup>

In the ideal case, communities along the road would respond to the marchers' self-sacrifice by forming reception committees and providing accommodation, food and political support. The organisers of all marches tried to make some form of advance arrangements to secure a hall for the night as well as extra rations for the men and women. The advance party of the Jarrow marchers, for example, consisted of a Conservative and a Labour representative to "stress the non-political nature of the March"<sup>83</sup>, and they were especially successful in securing support.<sup>84</sup> By contrast, the hunger marchers depended to a much larger degree on local working-class

77 London Reception Committee for the National Protest March (ed.), *Why we March. Programme of the National Protest March* (no place [1936]), 5.

78 Wal Hannington, *Why Do They March? Explaining what the New Unemployment Assistance Scales and Regulations will Mean* (no place 1936), 3-4.

79 TNA, MEPO 2/3064, p. 213; Meeting. B. James, P.C., 23 Oct. 1932, p. 2.

80 *Oxford Mail*, quoted from Kingsford, *Hunger Marchers*, 212. The *North Mail* called Jarrow marchers "pilgrims" on 1 Oct. 1936. TNA, MH 57/213.

81 'Men "Not Available for Work"', *North Mail*, 1 Oct. 1936; clipping in TNA, MH 57/213.

82 See, for example, 'Blind Men's March', *Leeds Mercury*, 6 Apr. 1920, p. 7; 'Blind Men's March', *The Times*, 6 Apr. 1920, p. 7.

83 Their task was to "confirm the arrangements that have been provisionally made, and also to arrange for public meetings to solicit support"; TNA, MH 57/213; March of Unemployed from Jarrow to London Commencing Monday, 5 Oct. 1936. J. Robinson, Manager Jarrow Employment Exchange, 26 Sep. 1935, p. 1.

84 'Happy Men of Jarrow March', *Northern Echo*, 8 Oct. 1936; clipping in TNA, MH 57/213. See also *ibid.*: Jarrow Marchers. To Mr. Roundell from H.H. Sersale, Assistant General Inspector, Yorkshire District No. 9, 12 Dec. 1936; Wilkinson, *The Town that was Murdered*, 202.

organizations and encountered the greatest difficulties when they were marching against a Labour government. While they, too, were often well supplied by local reception committees<sup>85</sup>, they sometimes had to rely heavily on Poor Law Institutions, for example during the 1930 march.<sup>86</sup> In 1920, the blind marchers were often able to spend the night at private homes of supporters on their way to London.<sup>87</sup> In 1936, however, the situation had changed. The blind marchers now slept in halls, public baths, schools, and workhouses, while the Public Assistance Committees (PAC) supplied blankets and sympathisers often paid for the meals.<sup>88</sup> The other marchers also approached local authorities, organizations or churches on arrival for accommodation outside the workhouse and the PACs for blankets and basic rations when no advance preparations could be made.<sup>89</sup> As in Chippenham in April 1930, the marchers would sometimes rather spend the night in the open than entering the workhouse<sup>90</sup>, and when they entered the "Institution", conflict often ensued.

From the first hunger march on, the government's consistent aim was – as it was put in 1932 – to "use every effort to prevent any action likely to encourage this march or a repetition of it."<sup>91</sup> The marchers could not be turned away when they applied for entry to the workhouse, but during the first hunger march the local authorities were already instructed to treat them strictly as "casuals".<sup>92</sup> This instruction was repeated again and again during later marches and meant that the marchers had to be searched and to take a bath on entry. In addition, they would receive only the so-called

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85 See, for example, TNA, MH 57/212: Unemployed Marchers. Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Contingent. To Mr. Roundell from V.L. Harkness, G.I. District No. 5, 31 Oct. 1936.

86 Croucher, *We Refuse*, 112.

87 The League's own publications state incorrectly that the marchers "slept wherever they could in Workhouses and church halls." Tom J. Parker (ed.), *The National League of the Blind and Disabled, 1899-1974: Years of Excitement ... and Disappointment* (Glasgow, no year), 4 (University of Warwick, Modern Records Centre, MSS.349, Box 1).

88 TNA, MH 57/212: Memo. National League of the Blind. March of Blind Persons to London, 1936.

89 The Jarrow marchers, for example, had to go to a Public Assistance Institution on four occasions and were almost everywhere supplied with food by sympathizers; TNA, MH 57/213: Marchers 1936 – Progress report, 5 Nov. 1936.

90 'Hunger Marchers at Chippenham. Stay all Night in Market Place', *Wiltshire Times*, 26 Apr. 1930; clipping in TNA, MH 57/99.

91 TNA, MEPO 2/3064, p. 399: Memorandum to General Inspectors. Unemployed March. H.W.S. F[ran]cis, Ministry of Health, 26 Sep. 1932, p. 1.

92 Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 87. These instructions were repeated before every march. TNA, MH 57/99: Memorandum to General Inspectors. Unemployed March. R.H.H. Keenlyside, Ministry of Health, April 1930; TNA, MEPO 2/3064, p. 399-401: Memorandum to General Inspectors. Unemployed March. H.W.S. F[ran]cis, Ministry of Health, 26 Sep. 1932; TNA, MEPO 2/3071, Part 1, p. 98-9: Circulated Paper IVa/2/1934: Memorandum to General Inspectors. Hunger Marchers. H.W.S. Francis, Ministry of Health, 22 Jan. 1934; TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 108 (Doc. 23C): Circulated Paper IV/12/1936: Memorandum to General Inspectors. E.D. Macgregor, 1 Oct. 1936.

casual diet consisting of bread, cheese, and tea. In theory, they also had to be locked into the casual ward after dark and detained in the "Institution" for at least two nights, but this was almost never enforced. As one Ministry of Health official phrased it: "No local authority faced with a wandering horde of wayfarers is going to do anything but get rid of them and hand the nuisance to the neighbours as soon as possible."<sup>93</sup>

For the hunger marchers, the treatment as casuals was unacceptable. They perceived themselves as victims of capitalism, not as tramps or vagrants. At stake was not their comfort, but their status in society. They tried everything to evade at least some of the workhouse rules, while the government tried everything to enforce them strictly. The casual diet in particular was a big source of conflict because of the symbolism involved. Another issue was the restricted freedom of movement, especially the detention rule. When faced with the threat of detention at Basingstoke in 1930, for example, the marchers refused to enter the workhouse. They went back into town where they created disorder "by their singing and shouting and playing of cornets and whistles" until the superintendent of the police asked the workhouse master to waive detention.<sup>94</sup> Few workhouse masters succeeded in searching the marchers, but they frequently pointed out that the men had collected large amounts of money and were therefore not destitute. Occasionally, bizarre requests were made to defy the rules. A clearly puzzled inspector reported in 1936, for example, that the Scottish East Contingent had demanded "to sleep two in a bed which is said to be a habit in Scotland."<sup>95</sup> While this was refused, the marchers more often than not succeeded in breaking workhouse regulations on their way to the capital. Such symbolic victories over the local authorities and, by implication, over the Ministry of Health and of Labour, were celebrated and prepared the ground for the final confrontation with the government in London.

### Climax in the Capital

On arrival in the capital, the focus of conflict shifted away from the local authorities to the government. Instead of covering distances, the marchers' goal was now to occupy space, especially the central and symbolically laden areas of the two capitals. The 1933 Scottish marchers, for example, had their lunch in Parliament Square in Edinburgh, marched through the grounds of Holyrood Palace singing "Connolly's Rebel Song" and "The International", sat down on Princess Street and even spent one night on this prestigious boulevard.<sup>96</sup> In London, the first area the hunger marchers

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93 TNA, HLG 30/62: Committee on the Hunger Marchers. Memo to Sir Arthur Lowry. W. Rucker, 5 Dec. 1932, p. 1.

94 TNA, MH 57/99: Unemployed Marchers. J. Topping to Sir Arthur Lowry, 29 Apr. 1930.

95 This happened in Leicester; see TNA, MH 57/212: G.I. District No. 5: Unemployed Marchers. Scottish East Contingent. To Rundell from V.L. Harkness, 30. Oct. 1936.

96 MacShane, *Three Days*, 8-13.

tried to fill was the site of the welcome demonstration, either Hyde Park or Trafalgar Square. Most of the time the Park was chosen, and the Jarrow marchers also held a welcome meeting there.<sup>97</sup> The NUWM went to great lengths to make these meetings as large as possible. In 1936, for example, 100,000 leaflets entitled "The Marchers are Coming" and 30,000 copies of the "Programme of the March" were printed in addition to other forms of advertising.<sup>98</sup> Mass meetings were also held to support deputations to the government and before the marchers returned home. The movement was anxious to turn them into demonstrations of all workers, employed or unemployed, and to get as many working-class organizations as possible visibly involved.<sup>99</sup> A further aim was to collect money and to give the marchers a mandate for talks with the government. But their most important purpose was to gain publicity, thereby bringing the plight of the unemployed into the public arena. The government, in return, tried everything to deny the marchers this publicity.

Hardly surprisingly, the BBC refused the hunger marchers access to the airwaves<sup>100</sup>, while transmitting messages from the police in which the public was asked to stay away from demonstrations.<sup>101</sup> The police were concerned that the marchers might try to seize a microphone during an outside broadcast, but this only happened once.<sup>102</sup> The Metropolitan Police also asked film companies to abstain from filming the marchers in 1932, 1934, and 1936, arguing that "the showing of such pictures either in this country or abroad would be contrary to public interest", and most companies complied.<sup>103</sup> When a sympathizer tried to film the hunger marchers' demonstration on Armistice Day 1936, he was immediately removed by the police.<sup>104</sup> Most mainstream newspapers were hostile to the hunger

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97 According to Ellen Wilkinson, this meeting was planned at short notice. The marchers "hastily got permission to hold one in the Park, and hoped for an audience from the crowds there. The Communist Party had gathered a big demonstration on a general unemployment protest. They generously gave way for an hour and asked their great audience to swell our Crusade meeting, which grew to enormous size when it was known that Jarrow Crusaders were there." Wilkinson, *The Town that was Murdered*, 208-9. See also: Pickard, *Jarrow March*, 17.

98 TNA, MEPO 2/3053, p. 20-1: Hunger March and Demonstration Hyde Park. J.M. Mempron (?), Inspector, Special Branch, Metropolitan Police, 8 Nov. 1935, p. 5-6.

99 TNA, MEPO 2/3064, p. 429-31: National Unemployed Workers' Movement. London District Council. To all Branches, [1932].

100 For example in 1936: TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 131 (Doc. 18A).

101 TNA, MEPO 2/3064, p. 48 (Doc. 27B). In 1932, two messages were broadcast, and the first of these was also given to the press; TNA, MEPO 2/3071, p. 74: National Hunger March on London, October and November 1932, p. 4.

102 TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 16 (Doc. 29).

103 TNA, MEPO 2/3071, Part 1, p. 63 (Doc. 14C): Hunger Marchers. Taking of Pictures by Film Companies; TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 87-8 (Doc. 27°): Precis of Information No. 2: Hunger Marchers - 1936. James Whitehead, Assistant Commissioner 'A', 21 Oct. 1936.

104 TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 45-6 (Doc. 41N): Hunger Marchers. Vivian Wright, Inspector, Special Branch, Metropolitan Police, 11 Nov. 1936. The Jarrow marchers, however, were

marchers anyway, and, indeed, many ignored them for as long as possible. The streets, squares and parks were what was left to the movement.

The police had no legal authority to prohibit an orderly demonstration, but they could regulate the routes to avoid traffic problems. The hunger marchers had to co-ordinate their demonstrations with the police and complained that the Commissioner tried to push them into side streets as much as possible.<sup>105</sup> When they requested the same treatment as the Lord Mayor's procession, the police made it clear that they would not divert traffic for what they considered a private political demonstration.<sup>106</sup> The police had the right to ban processions to Westminster Palace when Parliament was in session, but this was easily circumvented by the marchers, who split up into small groups and reassembled at Parliament Square or Whitehall.<sup>107</sup> All the meetings and processions aimed to bring a delegation of hunger marchers into the centres of political power. Reception of a delegation by the Prime Minister, Parliament or a Cabinet member was to be the final climax of each march,<sup>108</sup> but with the exception of the first protests in the early 1920s, the marchers were not usually successful in this regard.

Prime Minister Lloyd George received a deputation from the Executive of the National League of the Blind at 10 Downing Street on 30 April 1920.<sup>109</sup> However, when the NUWM brought representatives from different parts of the country to London to see him in October 1921, he refused to meet them. Instead, the unemployed were received by the Ministers of Health, Labour, Agriculture, the Home Secretary and some other officials.<sup>110</sup> A year later, Bonar Law considered meeting the hunger marchers, but ultimately also decided against it. The delegation was again received

filmed on at least one occasion, see: 'Men "Not Available for Work"', *North Mail*, 1 Oct. 1936; clipping in TNA, MH 57/213.

105 TNA, MEPO 2/3064, p. 371: NUWM meeting at The Bell, Hendon. Morris, Sergeant, 9 Oct. 1932, p. 1; TNA, MEPO 2/3064, p. 171-2: N.U.W.M. Whitehead, Sergeant, 25 Oct. 1932, p. 1-2.

106 TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 22-3 (Doc. 38); TNA, MEPO 2/3053, p. 13: Chief Constable to G.R. Strauss, M.P., 4 Nov. 1936.

107 TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 80 (Doc. 31A): Precip of Information No. 3.

108 The royal family played only a marginal role in the plans of the NUWM. In 1922, the King refused to receive a petition from the marchers which asked him to recall Parliament. In 1934, the Movement considered asking the Prince of Wales to receive a deputation. Two years later, the police expected that the hunger marchers would ask the King to receive a deputation. Wal Hannington, *The Insurgents in London: Being a brief, interesting and concise history of the Great National Hunger March to London which commenced on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1922, and continued until the end of February, 1923* (London, 1923), 16-17; TNA, MEPO 2/3071, Part 4, p. 534: Suggested Reception by H.R.H. Prince of Wales of Hunger Marchers. Not signed, 24 Jan. 1934; TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 71 (Doc. 41°): Police Report to the Commissioner. Canning, Chief Constable, 26 Oct. 1936, p. 3.

109 University of Warwick, Modern Records Centre, MSS.349 Box 8: National League of the Blind, Golden Jubilee Draft Brochure, p. 10.

110 Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 40-1.

by the Ministers of Health and of Labour, but this time the unemployed refused to state their case unless the Prime Minister was present.<sup>111</sup> Bonar Law's successors followed his example, and in 1932 Ramsay MacDonald did not even reply to the marchers' letters.<sup>112</sup> The only marchers to enter Downing Street were a group of women led by Maud Brown, who were received by MacDonald's daughter Ishbel in 1934.<sup>113</sup>

The Prime Ministers' behaviour was not just a reaction to the Communist leadership of the hunger marches, although this certainly made it easier for them to justify their position.<sup>114</sup> To receive an official delegation of the hunger marchers, they also feared, would set a precedent and symbolically undermine the representative form of government. MacDonald made it clear in the House of Commons on 27 February 1934 that he was always willing to meet with unemployed while he was in his constituency, but that not every person or group had the right to see him in London. "If anyone who cares to come here either [...] in a first-class carriage or after having slept in public halls or elsewhere thinks that he has a constitutional right to demand to see me and take up my time, whether I like it or not, then I say that he has nothing of the kind", he told the House of Commons. "If the individual is multiplied fifty-fold [...] and they think that they have a constitutional right to compel me to see them, then I say that they are much mistaken; they have no such right."<sup>115</sup> When a meeting could be construed within the framework of representative government, Prime Ministers as well as their colleagues in the cabinet were less hesitant to receive the unemployed. Bonar Law met three leading members of the movement during a visit to Glasgow in December 1922, arguing that he did so in his capacity as Scottish representative, not as Prime Minister.<sup>116</sup> In 1931, Ramsay MacDonald met some leaders of the NUWM in Downing Street on condition that they were accompanied by MPs.<sup>117</sup> He also received a deputation from Jarrow in January 1934 while visiting his constituency in Seaham<sup>118</sup>, whereas two years later his successor Stanley Baldwin did not meet the crusaders from Jarrow when they went to London, even though the marchers had the backing of all major political parties.

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111 On 22 Nov. 1922. *Ibid.* 82.

112 TNA, PIN 7/126: Minute Sheet. To Secretary from G. H. Ince, 19 Feb. 1932.

113 Kingsford, *Hunger Marchers*, 196.

114 In 1934, the Prime Minister's private secretary replied on behalf of Ramsay MacDonald: "I have been instructed by the Prime Minister to say that it is impossible to accede to your request. The deputation can do no service to the unemployed. The communist purpose of these marches is common knowledge." Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 286.

115 Hansard, 5<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 286, c. 1078-9.

116 The deputation consisted of Harry McShane, J. Mulligan and Allan Campbell. Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 93.

117 Kingsford, *Hunger Marchers*, 133. Hannington, however, was denied entrance. Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 221.

118 Wilkinson, *The Town that was Murdered*, 194-7.

The behaviour of cabinet ministers followed a similar pattern of re-drawing symbolic boundaries. The Ministers of Labour and of Health received the marchers from Birmingham and a deputation of the hunger marchers in 1922, but both refused to do so again during later marches.<sup>119</sup> Only in 1927 and 1936 did the Minister of Labour meet a delegation of hunger marchers under the fiction that they were the constituents of the MPs who accompanied them.<sup>120</sup> In May 1936, several months before the second march of the blind on London, Minister of Health Kingsley Wood also received a deputation from the National League of the Blind which was accompanied by four MPs.<sup>121</sup> In addition, the NUWM leadership testified before official committees in London on issues relating to unemployment, for example, before the Unemployment Insurance Statutory Committee at the Ministry of Labour in June 1935.<sup>122</sup>

The Secretary of State for Scotland also refused to meet the Scottish marchers in 1933<sup>123</sup>, but the policy of the Divisional Offices towards deputations from the unemployed was more liberal than in England. In 1928, the Scottish marchers were received by officials from the Scottish Board of Health and the Ministry of Labour respectively<sup>124</sup>, and when this was repeated in 1932, the Ministry of Labour demanded an explanation. The local official defended himself, emphasizing that the event was only "something of the nature of a hunger march" and that "it would have conveyed a wrong impression if the Departments concerned had not met the deputation. [...] In the last few years we have met such deputations on several occasions, and while in my opinion they do no good I think it is better to do so than have it blazed abroad that the Ministry of Labour or any other Department is unwilling to receive them."<sup>125</sup> In 1938, Scottish government officials again received a deputation from the marchers in Edinburgh.<sup>126</sup>

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119 TNA, PIN 7/126: National Unemployed Workers' Movement. Request to Ministers to Receive Deputations. Memo, no date; TNA, HLG 30/62: Letter to Robinson from H.W.S. Francis, Ministry of Health, 25 Oct. 1932 and Memo: Previous History of Reception of Hunger Marchers. B.L.P., 25 Oct. 1932.

120 Hannington, *The March of the Miners*, 27-8; id., *Unemployed Struggles*, 165; TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 42-3 (Doc. 41P): Hunger Marchers. Vivian Wright, Inspector, Special Branch, Metropolitan Police, 12 Nov. 1936; *ibid.*, p. 34 (Doc. 41R): Hunger March 1936. Vivian Wright, Inspector, Special Branch, Metropolitan Police, 16 Nov. 1936, p. 10.

121 'Welfare of the Blind. Deputation to Minister of Health', *The Times*, 21 May 1936, 12.

122 National Unemployed Workers' Movement (ed.), *Our Case. Evidence given by the N.U.W.M. Representatives before the Unemployment Insurance Statutory Committee at the Ministry of Labour urging the Repeal of Anomalies Act* (London, no year). See also Croucher, *We Refuse*, 114-5.

123 Sir Godfrey Collins. McShane, *Three Days*, 8.

124 Hannington, *Our March Against the Starvation Government*, 15-18.

125 All quotes TNA, PIN 7/126: Minute Sheet. G. H. Ince, 20 Feb. 1932. See also TNA, PIN 7/126: Letter to Humbert Wolfe from J. M. Cramond, Ministry of Labour, Divisional Office for Employment & Insurance, Edinburgh, 7 Mar. 1932.

126 'Unemployed Marchers', *Scotsman*, 28 Nov. 1938, 7.

In the House of Commons, the unemployed could always present petitions by enlisting the aid of sympathetic MPs, as the Jarrow marchers did in 1936. Some of the men watched the process from the gallery, but were disappointed by the brief affair.<sup>127</sup> Ellen Wilkinson consoled them by pointing out that the "actual presentation" of the petitions "at best could only be a gesture. What mattered more, in a practical sense, was the crowded meeting of members of all parties in the biggest committee room in the House of Commons".<sup>128</sup> The hunger marchers tried to present their case in person at the bar of the House in 1922 and 1929, but were refused permission to do so.<sup>129</sup> They made another unsuccessful attempt in 1932, this time to present a petition which they claimed bore the signatures of one million people.<sup>130</sup> In February 1934, their request to speak at the bar of the House to bring forward their cause was again refused.<sup>131</sup> The NUWM also tried to influence MPs in meetings, but a more spectacular approach was "mass-lobbying" in which large crowds would try to gain entrance into Westminster Palace on a certain day to see their MP.

Refusal to receive the marchers as a deputation was always justified by the argument that this would serve no "useful purpose"<sup>132</sup>, and that the unemployed should voice their grievances through their respective MPs. There was a certain inconsistency in this argument, since the government did receive deputations of trade unions and other organizations. As it was denied direct access to the places of political power, the NUWM resorted to forcing its way into government buildings to make a point. In 1922, some 130 marchers entered the lobby of Parliament in small groups, where they revealed posters with slogans and began to sing "The Red Flag" on a pre-arranged signal. Several of the Labour MPs present joined in the singing, but the marchers were eventually ejected.<sup>133</sup> Similar events were organised during later marches, for example in 1929, when a group of marchers addressed the House of Commons from the public gallery and

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127 Wilkinson, *The Town that was Murdered*, 209; Kingsford, *Hunger Marchers*, 221. According to Pickard, however, Ellen Wilkinson had arranged that most of the marchers were at a boat tour on the Thames at the time. Pickard, *Jarrow March*, 19-20.

128 Wilkinson, *The Town that was Murdered*, 210.

129 In December 1922, Labour MP George Lansbury presented a petition by the marchers in the Commons that they would be heard at the bar of the House. This was not conceded. Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 88. For 1929 see Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald's speech in the Commons on 27 Feb. 1934; Hansard, 5<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 286, c. 1075-7.

130 Kingsford, *Hunger Marchers*, 151-60. I was not able to verify whether this was indeed the number of signatures, but it is significant that the police who were temporarily in possession of the petition did not seem to dispute this claim.

131 TNA, MEPO 2/3071, Part I, p. 18: 'Hunger Marchers' to London - 1934. Sprules, Superintendent 'A', 6 Mar. 1934, p. 2.

132 TNA, PIN 7/126: National Unemployed Workers' Movement. Request to Ministers to Receive Deputations, [1932]; TNA, HLG 30/62: Previous History of Reception of Hunger Marchers. B.L.P., 25 Oct. 1932.

133 Hannington, *Insurgents in London*, 15-16; id., *Unemployed Struggles*, 90.

sang "The International" in the lobby.<sup>134</sup> In March 1934, about 60 marchers again "commenced to sing 'The Red Flag' lustily" in the central hall of Parliament, as the police report phrased it.<sup>135</sup>

No. 10 Downing Street was too well protected by the police to be successfully penetrated by the marchers. However, they succeeded in entering other government buildings on several occasions and were forcefully ejected by the police each time. In December 1922, for example, a delegation occupied a room in the Ministry of Health, while a larger group of marchers waited outside the building.<sup>136</sup> In 1929, a group of marchers raided the Ministry of Labour, occupied the board room and demanded to see the minister Margaret Bondfield or her parliamentary secretary.<sup>137</sup> A year later, three parties simultaneously targeted the Ministries of Health and Labour, and the House of Commons. While they found the Ministry of Labour too well protected, they succeeded in occupying a room in the Ministry of Health and in forcing their way up to the doors of the House of Commons chamber before they were overpowered by the police.<sup>138</sup>

### Conclusion

The hunger marches successfully established the unemployed as actors in the political arena between the wars, despite the fact that those out of work are notoriously hard to organise. Many workers drifted in and out of employment, which made organizing them a difficult task and prohibits any comparison with traditional forms of political involvement such as political parties, associations or trade unions. Those who were out of work were usually reluctant to spend their meagre resources on membership dues, unless the respective organization offered them concrete benefits in return. The NUWM did so by representing its members before local authorities or the National Insurance Umpire at Kew,<sup>139</sup> but many left the movement after their case had been decided. "I greatly admire the men, ragged and underfed like the others, who keep the organisation going", George Orwell wrote about the NUWM in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), "for it is not easy to coax even a penny-a-week subscription out of the pockets of people on the P.A.C."<sup>140</sup>

Because of the delegation principle used in all protest marches, the number of participants is no indication of the events' success. Nor can the government's reaction alone be used to determine the success or failure of each march. While both aspects are certainly important, the greatest

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134 Ibid. 197.

135 TNA, MEPO 2/3071, Part I, p. 20: 'Hunger Marchers' to London - 1934. Sprules, Superintendent 'A', 6 Mar. 1934, p. 4.

136 Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 94-6.

137 Ibid., 203-5.

138 Ibid. 215.

139 Croucher, *We Refuse*, 113-4.

140 George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (San Diego 1958), 83-4.

achievement of the marches was that the government was forced to respond to what the Bishop of Durham termed "organised mob pressure."<sup>141</sup> The bishop failed to recognize that the emphasis on discipline gave the marches a new quality and made them quite different from "mob" action of the past. The marches were a new and direct form of ritualistic political participation, and the government seriously considered enacting new legislation to prevent more of them.<sup>142</sup> While the National League of the Blind had pioneered the marches, the NUWM developed them into highly organised political rituals after the First World War, and by 1936, other organizations had also adopted them for their causes. This in itself is an indication that the marches were regarded as a successful expression of public political action.

The unemployed marchers were not only concerned with the scales of benefits, but also tried to pressurize the government into doing something more than just handing out cash allowances. Compared with countries like the United States, British unemployment policy was essentially passive.<sup>143</sup> The so-called Depressed or Special Areas, where unemployment remained very high even after the rest of the country had recovered from the slump, received little government aid or support. In a letter to *The Times* in October 1936, Ellen Wilkinson described how her constituents in Jarrow had approached the government for help again and again: "Net result – the cold statement of the President of the Board of Trade that 'Jarrow must work out its own salvation.' Nothing now remains for us but to place our case before the citizens of our country."<sup>144</sup> A month later, Clement Attlee spoke on behalf of the hunger marchers in the House of Commons, putting forward basically the same argument.<sup>145</sup>

By marching through the country, the unemployed did indeed achieve the publicity they sought and needed to become a factor in national politics. Especially for the NUWM, the street was the most effective mass medium, and one to which it had unrestricted access.<sup>146</sup> On the street, the movement reached more people of a different sort than through the *Daily Worker* or its own short-lived newspapers. Before the age of television, the unemployed marchers provided the towns and villages along the road

141 Herbert Dunelm, letter to the editor, *The Times*, 24 Oct. 1936; clipping in TNA, MH 57/213.

142 After the first national hunger march, the Conservatives already demanded a bill to ban future marches. Hannington, *Unemployed Struggles*, 106. In 1932, a Cabinet Committee drafted such a bill, but did not introduce it in Parliament; TNA, HLG 30/62: Memo. Hunger Marchers. H.W.S. F[rançis], 31 Oct. 1932; Letter to Sir Arthur Lowry from H.W.S. Francis, 16 Nov. 1932. See also Hansard, 5<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 285, c. 2070.

143 Frederic M. Miller, 'The Unemployment Policy of the National Government, 1931-1936', *Historical Journal*, 19 (1976), 453-76.

144 Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 26 Oct. 1936; clipping in TNA, MH 57/213.

145 TNA, MEPO 2/3091, p. 33: Hunger March 1936. Vivian Wright, Inspector, Special Branch, Metropolitan Police, 16 Nov. 1936.

146 Bernd Jürgen Warneken, "'Die Straße ist die Tribüne des Volkes'. Ein Vorwort', in id. (ed.), *Massenmedium Straße. Zur Kulturgeschichte der Demonstration* (Frankfurt 1991), 7-16.

with the most graphic impressions of the problems in the Depressed Areas.<sup>147</sup> It was also due to them that George Orwell could write in 1937: "After all, even the middle classes – yes, even the bridge clubs in the country towns – are beginning to realise that there is such a thing as unemployment."<sup>148</sup>

What the hunger marchers ultimately did was to address the status of the unemployed in British society. Their organizers placed great emphasis on classic middle-class values, like discipline and order, and gave the marches a strong military theme. The aim was to impress the onlookers and to appear respectable, and the military theme therefore had few revolutionary implications.<sup>149</sup> On the contrary, by playing on the theme of the forgotten war hero, the marchers demanded financial recognition for service in a war which they now generally denounced in hindsight. Even those who had not served at the front could feel that they had contributed to victory, because "the Great War" had affected society as a whole as no conflict had done before. Since the British government had sent the men into war, unemployed veterans could turn directly to it rather than to the local authorities for help after the conflict. Modern warfare had turned welfare into a moral right which could be claimed in the national political arena by symbolic actions, and by coming to London the hunger marchers indeed placed the responsibility for their fate literally on the doorstep of the Prime Minister and his cabinet. While on the road, they also solicited the support of their fellow citizens in regions that were less affected by the problem. After the next global conflict which again produced millions of

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147 When Hannington led the Welsh to Bath in 1927, he mused that the local elite had probably never seen "an army of miners." Hannington, *March of the Miners*, 20.

148 Orwell, *Wigan Pier*, 86-7.

149 The police were very alert to any threat of organised armed resistance on the part of the marchers, and while rumours flourished, they never discovered any credible evidence. The hunger marchers only claimed the right of self-defence against attacks by the police, and plans for a 'Workers' Defence Force' at the beginning of the 1930s were defensive in nature. Plans for such a 'Defence Force' started in 1930 when the movement was concerned that people would stay away from its demonstrations out of fear. The NUWM's National Administrative Council decided in August 1930 that: "The building of the Workers Defence Corps must be considered one of the tasks of our Movement if we are to protect the thousands of workers, who come on to the streets, under our leadership against the brutality of the police violence of the Labour Government, and in this way break down the fear of police brutality by organised defence methods." Marx Memorial Library, London, Hannington & Brown Papers, A III: NUWM, Report of Decisions taken at the National Administrative Council Meeting. Held at its meeting held [sic] in London on Saturday and Sunday August 23rd & 24th. 1930, p. 7. It later advocated "that the Corps be run on the lines of H.M. Army, i.e. that ex-soldiers who have been trained to drill be deputed to instruct the workers how best to defend themselves against police charges and to use all available weapons, cover etc., to counter such charges." TNA, MEPO 2/3064, p. 380 (Doc. 15F): N.U.W.M. Buckell, P.S., Special Branch, 5 Oct. 1932, p. 2. See also TNA, MEPO 2/3064, p. 289: Revolutionary Matters. Canning, Superintendent, 12 Oct. 1932, p. 4; *ibid*, p. 283: N.U.W.M. Matters. Canning, Superintendent, 15 Oct. 1932, p. 2. TNA, MEPO 2/3064.

war veterans, this solidarity was finally institutionalized with the creation of the modern welfare state under Attlee. In addition, the British government accepted that it could and should play an active role in creating jobs. By participating in politics through the ritual of the hunger marches, the unemployed of the interwar years were partly responsible for this development.

### **List of National Protest Marches in Interwar Britain**

#### **April 1920: 1<sup>st</sup> March of the National League of the Blind of Great Britain and Ireland**

Participants: 250 / Number of Contingents: 3

05 Apr. 1920: Start of contingents (Manchester, Newport, Leeds).

25 Apr. 1920: Reception at Trafalgar Square.

Date of return unknown.

#### **Oct. 1922 - Feb. 1923: 1<sup>st</sup> "Great National Hunger March on London" (NUWM)**

Participants: 2,000 / Number of Contingents: Unknown / Women's Contingent: No

17 Oct. 1922: Start of 1<sup>st</sup> contingent (Glasgow).

17 Nov. 1922: Reception at Hyde Park.

30 Dec. 1922: Last reinforcements reach London (340 Scots).

07 Jan. 1923: "Unemployment Sunday": Demonstration at Trafalgar Square.

24 Jan. – 13 Feb. 1923: Recruiting marches to the North and South from London.

17 Feb. 1923: Demonstration at Trafalgar Square.

20 Feb. 1923: Marchers return home.

#### **Nov. 1927: Welsh Miners' March (NUWM & Rhondda Miners' Federation)**

Participants: 270 / Different Contingents unite at Newport / Women's Contingent: No

08 Nov. 1927: Start of 1<sup>st</sup> contingents (Rhondda).

20 Nov. 1927: Reception at Trafalgar Square.

27 Nov. 1927: Demonstration at Trafalgar Square.

28 Nov. 1927: Marchers return home.

**Sept. 1928: 1<sup>st</sup> Scottish Hunger March (NUWM)**

Participants: 250 / 3 Main Contingents unite at Armadale.

Women's Contingent travels by train to Edinburgh and enters city with the marchers.

16 Sept. 1928: Start of 1<sup>st</sup> contingent (Dundee).

22 Sept. 1928: Arrival at Edinburgh.

25 Sept. 1928: Marchers return home.

**Jan. - Mar. 1929: 2<sup>nd</sup> National Hunger March (NUWM)**

Participants: 800-1,000 / Numbers of Main Contingents: 9 / Women's Contingent: No

23 Jan. 1929: Start of 1<sup>st</sup> contingent (Glasgow).

24 Feb. 1929: Reception at Trafalgar Square.

03 Mar. 1929: Demonstration at Trafalgar Square.

04 Mar. 1929: Marchers return home.

**Mar. - May 1930: 3<sup>rd</sup> National Hunger March (NUWM)**

Participants: 350 / Numbers of Main Contingents: 12 / Women's Contingent: Yes

30 Mar. 1930: Start of 1<sup>st</sup> contingent.

01 May 1930: Reception at Hyde Park.

07 May 1930: Demonstration at Tower Hill.

08 May 1930: Marchers return home.

**Feb. 1932: 2<sup>nd</sup> Scottish Hunger March (NUWM)**

Participants: 1,500 / Number of Contingents: 5

21 Feb. 1932: Marchers arrive at Edinburgh.

22 Feb. 1932: Marchers return home.

**Sept. - Nov. 1932: 4<sup>th</sup> National Hunger March (NUWM)**

Participants: 1,500 / Numbers of Main Contingents: 13 / Women's Contingent: Yes

26 Sept. 1932: Start of 1<sup>st</sup> contingent (Glasgow).

27 Oct. 1932: Reception at Hyde Park.

30 Oct. 1932: Demonstration at Trafalgar Square.

05 Nov. 1932: Marchers return home.

**June 1933: 3<sup>rd</sup> Scottish Hunger March (NUWM)**

Participants: 1,000 / Contingents unite at Corstorphine.

06 June 1933: Start of 1<sup>st</sup> contingents (Aberdeen & Dundee).

11 June 1933: Arrival at Edinburgh.

14 June 1936: Marchers return home.

**Jan. - Mar. 1934: 5<sup>th</sup> National Hunger March (NUWM)**

Participants: 1,460 / Numbers of Main Contingents: 12 / Women's Contingent: Yes

22 Jan. 1934: Start of 1<sup>st</sup> contingent (Glasgow).

24-25 Feb. 1934: "Congress of Action" with 1,494 delegates.

25 Feb. 1934: Reception at Hyde Park.

04 Mar. 1934: Demonstration at Trafalgar Square.

07 Mar. 1934: Marchers return home.

**Sept. - Nov. 1936: 6<sup>th</sup> National Hunger March ("National Protest March") (NUWM)**

Participants: 1,464 / Numbers of Main Contingents: 7 / Women's Contingent: Yes

26 Sept. 1936: Start of 1<sup>st</sup> contingent (Aberdeen).

08 Nov. 1936: Reception at Hyde Park.

15 Nov. 1936: Demonstration at Trafalgar Square.

16 Nov. 1936: Marchers return home.

**Sept. - Nov. 1936: March of the British Campaigners Association**

Participants: c. 50 (13 reach London) / Number of Contingents: 1

20 Sept. 1936: Marchers leave Edinburgh.

08 Nov. 1936: Arrival at Hyde Park.

**Oct. - Nov. 1936: 2<sup>nd</sup> March of the National League of the Blind of Great Britain and Ireland**

Participants: 140 / Numbers of Contingents: 3

12 Oct. 1936: Start of 1<sup>st</sup> contingents (Leeds and Manchester).

29 Oct. 1936: Contingents unite at Watford.

01 Nov. 1936: Reception at Trafalgar Square.

02 Nov. 1936: Marchers return home.

**Oct. - Nov. 1936: Jarrow "Crusade" (Jarrow Town Council)**

Participants: 207 / Number of Contingents: 1 / Ellen Wilkinson, MP, the only participating woman.

05 Oct. 1936: Marchers leave Jarrow.

01 Nov. 1936: Reception at Hyde Park.

03 Nov. 1936: Public Meeting at Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street.

04 Nov. 1936: Presentation of Petitions in the House of Commons.

05 Nov. 1936: Marchers return home.

**Nov. 1938: 4<sup>th</sup> Scottish March (NUWM)**

Participants: 500 / Contingents unite at Corstorphine.

11 Nov. 1938: Start of 1<sup>st</sup> contingent (Inverness).

27 Nov. 1938: Reception at Edinburgh.

28 Nov. 1938: Demonstration at Waverley Market.

28 Nov. 1938: Marchers return home.