

Module 04: The End of Optimism? The Great Depression in Europe

Evidence 9: "Police Attack Hunger March. Big Battle as Jobless Protest 'Means Test'," *Worker's Age*, November 15, 1932

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For more than three hours, on November 1, the fully mobilized police of the metropolis of the British Empire battled with the thousands of Hunger Marchers and their sympathizers in order to prevent the latter from getting a hearing for their demands in parliament. About five thousand jobless had converged on London the week before in a Hunger March under the auspices of the National Unemployed Workers Movement (N.U.W.M.), supported by the Communist Party and by a large number of unions and local Labor party branches. The chief demand in the program of the unemployed was the abolition of the hated "Means Test," according to which the jobless have to "prove" that they are without means before they can get relief. The operation of the "Means Test" has deprived any relief and humiliated hundreds of thousands more. Throughout their route, the marchers received demonstrations of the sympathy of the English working people. In London, about 50,000 workers turned out to cheer them and demonstrate along with them. The MacDonald "National"-Tory government immediately mobilized its forces of repression and called into action the entire police. . . . Brutal attacks were launched on the jobless demonstrations, especially at the tremendous meetings in Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square. On the eve of the day upon which the Hunger Marches announced their intention of marching to Parliament and presenting their demands, W. A. L. Hennington, head of the movement, and other leaders were arrested on the charge of sedition, and the offices of N.U.W.M. raided and destroyed. The authorities hoped that by depriving the movement of its leaders, they could easily disperse it, but the three hour battle on November 1 showed their mistake. While not as broad or as deeply rooted as the unemployed movement of some years ago, the present Hunger March represents a significant action of British labor. . . .

Source: "Police Attack Hunger March. Big Battle as Jobless Protest 'Means Test'," *Worker's Age* (15 Nov 1932).