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Abstract

Between the First and the Second World War, national protest marches from the provinces to London or Edinburgh became frequent events. The best remembered of these marches is still the Jarrow 'Crusade' of 1936, although the 'Hunger Marches' of the Communist-dominated National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM) were more frequent, bigger and much more complex. Nevertheless, it is virtually forgotten today that the National League of the Blind invented this particular form of protest after the Great War. The National League was a trade union of blind workers, not a charity, and affiliated with the Labour Party and the TUC. To create support for a Blind Persons Act which would conform to its own demands, the League in 1920 sent to London three contingents which converged simultaneously upon the capital. In 1936, the League organized a second march, which, however, failed to evoke a similar public response. The NUWM's extensive use of this form of political protest from 1922 on had discredited it and also diminished its news value. In addition, the National League's leadership was divided about the usefulness of the march. However, the blind had pioneered many of the features of later marches in 1920 and significantly shaped this attention-grabbing form of political protest.
Some of the material presented in Chapters 2 and 4 has been previously used for the article ‘Forgotten Pioneers of the National Protest March: the National League of the Blind Marches to London, 1920 and 1936’, Labour History Review Vol. 70(2) (2005): 131–65. ix.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEU ASW AUBB BA COS CPGB CRP EC Gen.

Organising a march, rally or demonstration - when you do and do not have to contact the police before the event.

- limit the amount of people who attend.
- stop a sit-down protest if it blocks road traffic or public walkways. If there's no march involved.
- If there's no march organised as part of your protest, you do not have to tell the police.


- Don't include personal or financial information like your National Insurance number or credit card details. What were you doing? What went wrong? Millions of people come out to the streets carrying the photographs of their relatives that defended their Motherland and defeated the Nazis. This means that their lives, their ordeals and sacrifices, as well as the Victory that they left to us will never be forgotten. We have a responsibility to our past and our future to do our utmost to prevent those horrible tragedies from happening ever again. Hence, I was compelled to come out with an article about World War II and the Great Patriotic War. From the end of the Napoleonic Wars to the outbreak of World War I in 1914, western Europe remained at peace and there were few occasions where propaganda on a national scale was called for. Historically propaganda was associated with periods of stress and turmoil during which violent controversy over doctrine accompanied the use of force. In a state of total war, which required civilians to participate in the war effort, morale came to be recognized as a significant military factor, and propaganda slowly emerged as the principal instrument of control over public opinion and an essential weapon in the national arsenal, culminating in the establishment in Britain of the Ministry of Information in 1917 under Lord Beaverbrook and. Between the First and the Second World War, national protest marches from the provinces to London or Edinburgh became frequent events. The best remembered of these marches is still the Jarrow ‘Crusade’ of 1936, although the ‘Hunger Marches’ of the Communist-dominated National Unemployed Workers’ Movement (NUWM) were more frequent, bigger and much more complex. Nevertheless, it is virtually forgotten today that the National League of the Blind invented this particular form of protest after the Great War. The National League was a trade union of blind workers, not a char