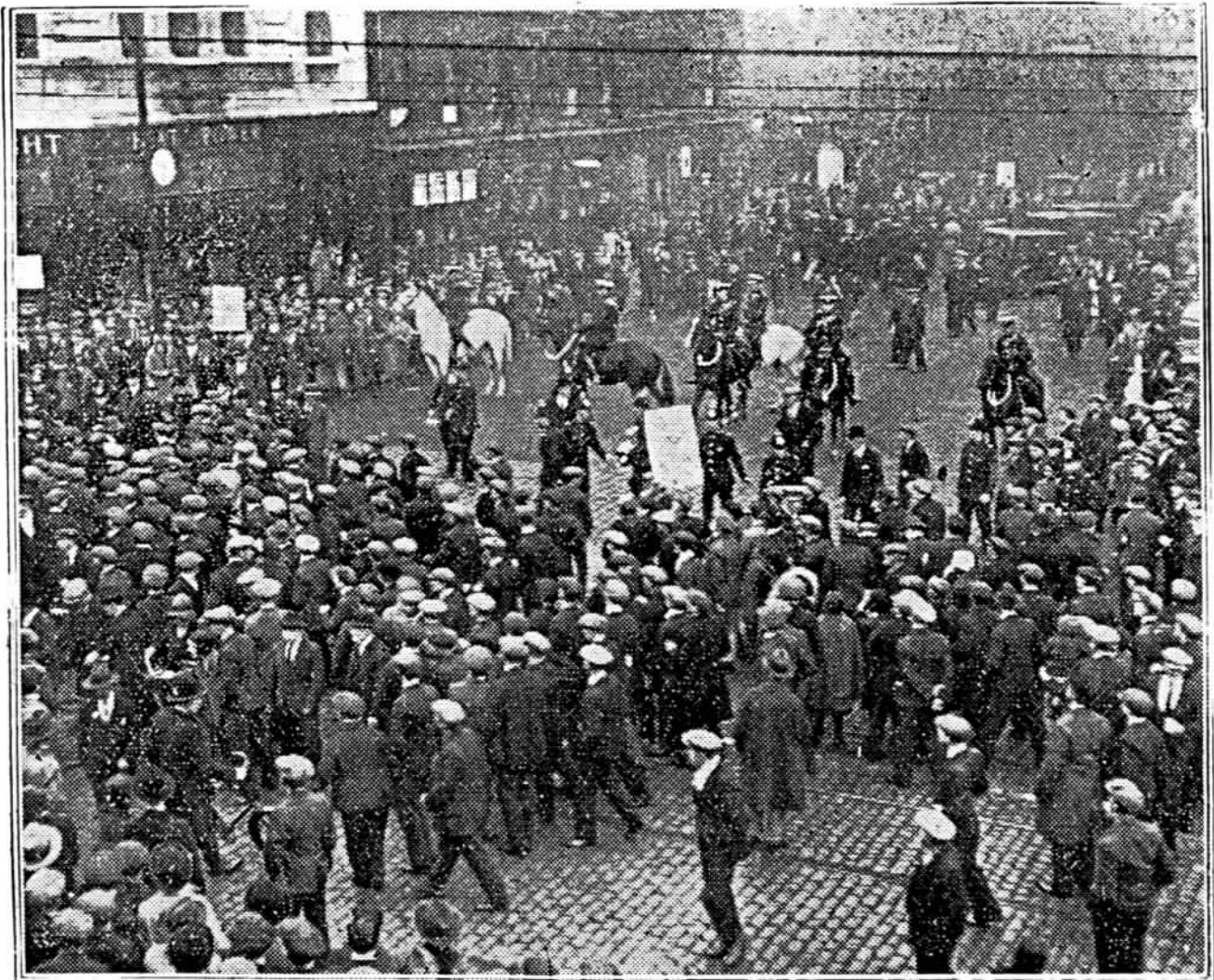


# UNEMPLOYED

## DEMONSTRATIONS



SALFORD and MANCHESTER : OCTOBER 1931

Wilf Gray : Mick Jenkins : Edmund and Ruth Frow

THE POLICE FORCE ON DUTY.



From FIGARO IN LONDON 1832

# 1981

Photographs from Manchester Guardian, 2nd October, 1931 and  
Evening Chronicle, 1st October, 1931.

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## THE MANCHESTER AND SALFORD DEMONSTRATIONS, OCTOBER 1931

1981 is the Fiftieth Anniversary of those huge demonstrations of the unemployed that are still remembered in working-class families.

Although unemployment is the same today as it was then and the affect on the individual is as drastic, the sheer poverty is not quite so severe.

In 1931, young people leaving school were often able to get a job because they were regarded as a source of cheap labour. Unemployment often began at the end of apprenticeship, or when the young person demanded an adult wage. The hated "Means Test", which assessed needs on a family wage, thus making youngsters responsible for the rest of their family, often led to boys and girls leaving home. Thousands of people were disallowed Benefit under the clause that they had not been genuinely seeking work, at a time when factories had notices "NO HANDS WANTED" outside their gates.

The frustration and degradation endured by unemployed people exploded in the face of Police provocation during the two October demonstrations, turning peaceful marches, taking legitimate demands to their elected representatives, into running battles. To their credit, half-starved though they were, the unemployed fought the Police and many were injured.

In Salford, on October 1, there were twelve arrests and a week later, in Manchester, on October 7, there were twenty-six. Most of those arrested were imprisoned.

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T H E  
M E A N S T E S T

Head bent, eyes glued  
on nothing.  
Unnoticed puddles  
'neath his feet  
That dragged as though  
stooped shoulders held  
them down.

He'd been refused relief  
because 'twas said -  
"He'd last week earned  
a crown  
More than the scale at  
which man's needs are  
weighed".

Last week it was !  
He'd lived a week since  
then;  
With what he'd earned  
He'd had a slap-up feed.  
Now he'd been told -  
"He thrifty should have  
been".

He did not know,  
But surely, should have  
seen  
The writing on the wall  
regards his job  
And saved a bit to see  
him through the period  
in between  
His being fired and when  
his dole was due.

The tow-path narrowed,  
Head bent, he did not see:  
His hunched, bent back  
declared his misery.  
A splash ! No sign of struggle  
did he give;  
Accepting wet embrace,  
No reason left, to live.

"Of unsound mind !"  
The verdict was declared.  
Of his treatment,  
No one asked, or cared.  
'Twould not have done  
To murder, place as cause:  
For administration, is not  
to break the law.

"How many souls are floating  
in that void  
Twixt heaven and hell,  
Because of words employed  
By those who'd cloak  
Their employ in esteem,  
And give a name  
To what they haven't seen ?"

BILL DUTSON



## UNEMPLOYED STRUGGLES

### The 1931 Crisis

The world economic crisis, heralded by the Wall Street crash in October 1929, led to mass unemployment in Britain. By the end of 1930, the numbers unemployed were registered as 2,300,000. This figure was by no means the full total as many women, for example, did not register.

The Labour Government failed to grapple with the problem and were no match for the capitalists who were determined that the full burden of the crisis should fall on the workers. A Committee, headed by Sir George May, was set up to look at the National Expenditure. They reported that the Budget deficit during the year 1932-1933 would be one-hundred-and-twenty-million pounds. Immediately, decisions were taken to introduce stringent cuts in public expenditure.

Unemployment Benefit was to be cut by ten per cent and it was also recommended that Health Service, Maternity and Child Welfare should be reduced. The Cabinet was divided and a split rapidly developed. On 23 August 1931, Ramsey MacDonald, Jimmy Thomas and Philip Snowden deserted the Labour Party and joined the Conservatives and Liberals to form a National Government.

A General Election was held in an artificial atmosphere of panic. The Labour Party, although it polled over six-and-a-half million votes, only returned fifty two members to Parliament, while the Conservatives, standing on the policy of a National Government, with MacDonald as Prime Minister, received double the votes but four-hundred-and-seventy-one seats. It was a resounding defeat for the Labour Party.

The newly formed National Government, with Ramsey MacDonald at its head, pressed home the projected attacks on working-class life. Cuts were made in the pay of Civil Servants, Teachers and other public employees, including the Armed Forces. On September 12, Sir Austin Chamberlain announced in the House of Commons that a shilling a day reduction was to be made in the pay of Naval Ratings. This led to the sailors in the Fleet at Invergordon to refuse to obey orders on September 15. They held mass meetings in barracks and on board ship and refused to sail. The Government was forced to retreat and revise the cuts.

Unemployment Benefit, however, was severely cut. A single man received 15/3d (about 77p) a week, instead of 18/-d (90p). In addition, the Means Test, perhaps the most hated piece of legislation ever enacted, came into force at the beginning of September 1931. Under its provision, thousands were struck off Benefit and impoverishment and want became commonplace in working-class districts. Suicide by unemployed workers became frequent.

There was a fight-back, led by the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, under the leadership of Wal Hannington, whose book "Unemployed Struggles" gives a full account. Huge demonstrations took place throughout the country and Labour leaders and Trade Unions frequently played a sorry part. The story of the two big events in Manchester and Salford at the beginning of October 1931, are told by participants in the following accounts.

THE GREAT SALFORD UNEMPLOYED DEMONSTRATION OF 1931

My introduction to the working-class movement in Salford began in 1931. I was drawn into the bitter class struggles taking place during that period, as a rank-and-file member of the Seamen's Minority Movement. Later, my involvement in the work of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement carried this work on among the vast ranks of the unemployed. It is something I value very much now (as an old man) on looking back over my past life. The experiences gained convinced me of the need to join the Communist Party, which I did early in 1932.

The National Government of the day launched a bitter attack on the conditions of working people. Wage cuts, millions out of work and a vicious Means Test for the unemployed were the order of the day. These policies were ruthlessly carried out by the reactionary Government, headed by Ramsey MacDonald, acting as a tool for the most ruthless elements of British Imperialism. Taking advantage of the fiasco following the sell-out of the General Strike, and the splitting of the Labour movement, they came in for the kill. They were determined to solve their crisis at the expense of one section of the community, "the working-class". Only those who lived through this period can know the hardship and degradation inflicted on the working-class at that time. To their eternal credit the workers fought back. The hunger marches from Jarrow and many other parts of the country are now enshrined as part of "British Working-Class History". It is necessary to understand this background of social persecution and working-class resistance, to realise why this march took place. Organised by the Unemployed Workers' Movement in Salford, it was known as "The Great Salford Unemployed Demonstration". To many of the participants it was often referred to as the "Battle of Bexley Square".

The march was planned for the first day in October 1931. I remember it was a dull grey day, with nature truly reflecting the times. Slight rain began falling as I rode my bike down to the docks that morning. I went aboard one or two ships and then decided to go up to Hyndman Hall, in Liverpool Street. I knew that the Demonstration was taking place and was eager to take part in it. It was heartening to see the croft adjacent to the hall crowded with workers. I can remember saying to myself: "I can hardly believe it! Where have they all come from?" One thing was obvious, the unemployed of Salford were behind the demonstration, and large numbers had turned up to support it.

I left my bike in the Hall and went to join the march. They were about to start in columns of four. As there was one short in the first four I joined it. Alongside me was a young fellow who later died in Spain, fighting in the ranks of the International Brigade to stem Fascism.

We set off and almost immediately there was a slight brush with the the Police. Leaving the croft we turned left, and turned up Liverpool Street. We came to the cross roads, Windsor Street on the left and Albion Street on the right. The police threw a cordon across the road in order to divert us from our planned route. We went through them like a knife through soft putty. I remember my head going down as if in a Rugby scrum. With the pressure of our comrades behind we pushed them to one side quite easily. Ah! Unity and determination is strength, all right, I remember thinking to myself as we went along our planned route. All the time the lad with the

drum kept up his rat-a-tat-tat from the fourth row back. I was to see a lot of this fiery little Scot in the years to follow. We were both comrades together in the ranks of the West Salford Branch of the Party. His name was Hughie Graham. He certainly helped to keep our spirits high that day with his rhythmic drumming.

The Demonstration was quite impressive and a lot of people lined each side of the road. It was plain that most of the crowd were with us in opposition to the things we were demonstrating against. Looking back after fifty years, I am little hazy about the exact route we took, but I believe it was along Regent Road and Oldfield Road, joining Chapel Street at the Tank. This is the only route which would make sense. It traverses a thickly populated area, and in Regent Road a busy shopping centre. It was, however, a disciplined and well-marshalled demonstration under complete control of the organisers. There were a lot of placards and banners carried and slogans called out.

Morale was high and at no time was there any reason for the brutal police attack on the marchers which took place when we reached Bexley Square. On arriving at the Square, the deputation was in the process of presenting themselves when the deliberately planned attack took place. I remember hearing a shout and turning to look back I saw police charging out of a side street and attacking the marchers with their batons. They had been lying in wait for our arrival. The whole thing had been planned, so was the taking into custody of the leaders of the delegation. They were badly beaten up by the police in custody, then charged with assault and resisting arrest. Eddie Frow had his nose broken by police in the cell. Coming up before the magistrate they were given vicious sentences.

I was kept busy for a while trying to protect myself. A big, beefy plain-clothes member of the Force, who had kept level with us all the way, suddenly went for me. He pulled my felt hat over my head and tried to push me down. I used an old sailor's trick which probably saved me from being nicked. Instead of resisting I sat down quickly and pulled him forward suddenly with as much strength as I could. Losing his balance, his own weight did the rest. He flew over my head. I was pinned by the lower part of his body and his legs. Two lads came to my rescue and pulled me clear. One of them said "Get away from here or they'll have you". I moved to another part of the crowd and the word went around. "They've got Eddie Frow and the leaders of the demonstration".

Many bitter lessons were learned that day which we have carried with us for the rest of our lives. We saw how the iron fist concealed in the velvet glove is taken out and used without hesitation when the ruling class feels it is necessary. Times of crisis and political struggle, such as this, expose the sham of the impartiality of the "Law". In the eyes of the Establishment and dominant Ruling Circles, the role of the Police and Judiciary is a class role, one to be used to protect their own privileged position at the expense of the working-class and all other sections of the community. We must never forget this. If we do, it will be at our peril. Such political lessons were shown very clearly by the event of the "Great Salford Unemployed Demonstration of 1931".

WILF GRAY

THE BATTLE OF BEXLEY SQUARE - OCTOBER 1, 1931

Salford Branch of the Unemployed Workers' Movement held frequent open-air and indoor meetings during 1931. Those in the open were outside the Labour Exchange, or on crofts, or where there was a suitable space such as in Unwin Square. The indoor weekly meetings were held in the large room at Hyndman Hall. I spoke frequently at these meetings.

The Branch Committee met in a room near the Dock Gate in Trafford Road. George Watson was the Secretary and Walter Crabtree, later a Labour Councillor in Salford, acted as Treasurer of our sparse funds.

The demonstration on Thursday, October 1, was advertised by chalking on the pavements and walls. A piece of "Bluemould" sold to scour the doorstep and flags outside the house was the most useful tool, together with a pail of whitewash and a brush. During the days before the meeting, the announcement of it could be seen on all sides throughout Salford.

We assembled on a croft near Hyndman Hall, in Liverpool Street, where Tommy Morris and I addressed the crowd. We then moved off, a compact mass of unemployed workers marching in fours, up Liverpool Street, left along Trafford Road, down Regent Road and along Oldfield Road to "The Tank" (so called because after the First World War an ancient tank had been placed there). We then turned left to go down Chapel Street to the Town Hall, in Bexley Square. The intention was for a deputation to present a number of demands to the City Council which was then sitting.

During the course of the march from Liverpool Street, many thousands joined in until there must have been about fifty thousand in all. Alex Armstrong ran alongside ringing a large bell and leading the slogan, shouting:

"Down, Down, DOWN with the National Government.

Down, Down, DOWN with the Means Test

Down, Down, DOWN with the cuts."

Hughie Graham beat a drum and Dick Dearden proudly held the Hammer and Sickle aloft. When we reached Bexley Square, the Salford Police met us with a savage baton charge. But the unemployed workers had their blood up and fought back.

I was quickly seized by the Police and rushed into the Police Station where I was pushed between four constables who let fly with their batons. Blood poured from my nose and I had to be taken to Salford Royal Hospital to staunch the flow. When I returned to the Police Station I gave vent to my anger and indignation by telling Major Godfrey, Salford Chief of Police a few home truths. I called him a Fascist and used a few other phrases more usually heard in an engineering workshop than in polite company.

Later, in Court, I was remanded until the case was heard. I defended myself with the object of making clear the issues involved and defending the democratic right of workers to demonstrate and defend themselves from such vicious attacks on their standard of living. I was sentenced to five months' imprisonment, which I served in Strangeways Jail.

EDMUND FROW

MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, OCTOBER 2, 1931

The protest demonstration of Salford unemployed against the reduction of outdoor relief began quietly yesterday morning, when about 200 men lined up at Liverpool Street croft and marched with banners and drum to the Town Hall, where the City Council were considering the recommended "cuts". In their circuitous route along Cross Lane, Regent Road, and Oldfield Road hundreds more joined the procession and crowded the pavements, and the demonstrators numbered about 1000 by the time they reached Bexley Square, where the Town Hall stands.

With the exception of a brief scuffle with the police at the corner of Albion Street and Liverpool Street, when the processionists were prevented from passing through Albion Street, the demonstration had been conducted peaceably. The demonstrators repeatedly shouted the slogans on the banners, "No Cuts in Dole", and etc, bawled at the accompanying crowds to fall in, and sang the "International" and the "Red Flag".

Trouble began at the entrance to Bexley Square in front of the Town Hall, where the crowds in the procession and on the pavements formed a solid mass, and, with shouts and cries, were propelled to the opening of the square, which was guarded by mounted police. A contingent of uniformed and plain-clothes officers tried to push back the crowd to prevent them from entering the square and this resulted in a few scuffles. Twelve men were arrested, some of them being carried struggling into the Town Hall by five and six officers, while the crowd shouted and some women screamed.

Three officers were slightly injured, but no one was seriously hurt.

The disturbance attracted hundreds of people from the neighbourhood, and at one time the crowd in Chapel Street and surrounding Bexley Square reached considerable proportions. In less than half-an-hour they were nearly all dispersed.

In the afternoon over 2000 men attended a meeting of unemployed at Liverpool Street croft calling for solidarity in support of the arrested men, who will be charged at Salford Police Court this morning.

The names of the arrested men are: George Watson (secretary of the Salford Branch of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement), Carlton Avenue, Broughton, Hugh Nelson, Ruth Street, Salford, Harry Sandiford, Leganda Street, Salford, William Walters, Falkland Avenue, Salford, William Roberts, Sussex Street, Broughton, James Royce, Arthur Street, Pendleton, William Dodd, Dean Street, Broughton, William Gibson Allan, Carter Street, Greenheys, Manchester, Clement Miller, Every Street, Ancoats, Manchester, Edward Frow, Stretford Road, Manchester and Albert Edward Lister and Sydney Bullock.

SALFORD MPs SEE HOME SECRETARY

Mr J Toole, MP, and Mr Ben Tillett, MP, last night had an interview with the Home Secretary in regard to the Salford disturbances. Sir Herbert Samuel had no information regarding the affair, but he promised to make inquiries. Mr Toole has put down a private notice question for today.

EVENING CHRONICLE: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1931

Councillor Hardy rushed into the Council Chamber where the Council were discussing the proposals of the Economy Committee, and declared to the Mayor: The treatment of the unemployed that is going on in the Square outside the Town Hall is un-British. I appeal to you to come outside and quell the bother. They are being treated in a most inhuman manner." Other Councillors then rushed from the Chamber, and Councillor G Howard, quickly returned exclaiming: "Things are happening in the Square that should not be tolerated for a moment."

Councillor Hardy suggested that the Council should suspend its sittings as a protest against the methods used against the unemployed. The Mayor appealed to the members not to allow the excitement of the moment to get the better of their judgment, and said the regulations were in the hands of the police.

SALFORD CITY REPORTER: OCTOBER 2, 1931

Text of circular handed to Councillors prior to the meeting on October 1.

National Unemployed Workers' Movement (Salford Branch)

To All City Councillors: In view of the drastic economy cuts proposed by the National Government, and also the economy proposals of the Finance Committee of the City Council, the Salford Branch of the NUWM organised a demonstration of protest to the Special City Council meeting. A deputation will be elected to put the demands of the unemployed, embodied in the attached charter, forward, and we have notified the Mayor to this effect. In view of the statements and promises made by members of the Council on the question of unemployment, we consider it necessary to inform you of the intention of the organised unemployed.

Yours fraternally, G Watson, Hon Sec.

The Salford Demands taken from SALFORD CITY REPORTER, October 2, 1931:

1. That the proposal of the Finance Committee for 'economy' be rejected by the City Council.
2. That the City Council protest to the National Government against its economy proposals, and demands no wage cuts, no dole cuts, not one worker off benefit, not a penny more tax on food.
3. That the scale of relief be twenty shillings per week for all unemployed over eighteen years of age, five shillings per week for each dependant child, fifteen shillings per week for young persons sixteen to eighteen years, ten shillings per week for wife or other adult person, ten shillings per week for those between fourteen and sixteen.
4. That disablement pension and earnings of wife and children be not taken into consideration when assessing the amount of relief.
5. Every householder applicant to receive one cwt of coal per week during the winter.

6. One pint of free milk per day for all children under five years of age.
7. Abolition of all test schemes, 'educational' classes and training centres.

#### DISTRESS IN SALFORD

Despite the protests of the unemployed, the City Council made a £70,000 cut in Relief. Other sectors were also affected. In February 1932, expenditure on education was cut by £26,300. The number of teachers in the schools was reduced by 77 and the average number of children in a class increased to 42. The sum of £4,000 allocated for free meals for necessitous children was reduced by £1,500 with the result that the number of children obtaining meals dropped from 911 in February to 518 in September 1932.

Salford became designated a distressed area and cuts at the expense of the unemployed continued. In November 1933, the new Unemployment Act was introduced. Poor Law Relief in Salford was reduced from £73,531 for the year ending March 1933, to £44,118. This was a reduction of nearly thirty thousand pounds.

It is difficult to describe the affects of this in human terms and human misery. A Survey conducted by the Salford Branch of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement at the time in the Ellor Street area found that few houses had any furniture as it had been pawned to get money for food and that the diet of most unemployed people consisted of bread, margarine and cups of tea.

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MRS BROADHURST

Remembered by Wilf Gray

It was early in 1932 when I first met Mrs Broadhurst. We were to work together as comrades in the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. She was a pale-faced, slightly built woman of about medium height. Her manner when relaxed was modest and unassuming, almost self-effacing. Her wearing apparel was always plain and neat. She generally wore a dark coloured coat and skirt, with black shoes and stockings; this was brightened by a white shirt-type blouse, black tie and a dark cloth narrow-brimmed hat with a small silver badge at the front.

Anybody who was misled by her normally quiet and unassuming manner could be in for a rude awakening. In speaking on behalf of unemployed workers seeking outdoor relief from the Guardians, or National Assistance Board, she became completely transformed. She was a Scot, born in the Gorbals, who came to Salford with her parents as a young girl, Scotland's loss was our gain. Her slight Scottish accent became very pronounced as she withered her adversaries with fiery eloquence and ironic scorn, when fighting workers' cases before these Boards. Nevertheless, she knew how to put her case (none better) in a logical manner. She had an uncanny knack of assessing the strength of her own case, and in finding her opponent's weak spots.

At first she had no official support from any organisation in fighting on behalf of working people applying for outdoor relief. The Police were called on two occasions at least to remove her from the building. The building used was situated on Eccles New Road and had been the old workhouse (known locally as the "Grubber").

Our seamen's branch of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement in Salford, was opposite the Seamen's Mission, down Trafford Road. We realised that this comrade was going to be barred altogether if something was not done quickly to prevent it. This was being done on the grounds that she was an unauthorised person to be on the premises (in reality, because she was such a thorn in the authorities side). We discussed this and invited Florrie to become a member of our branch. We could not let this comrade be stopped from carrying on her dedicated work in the interests of working people in Salford. It was the period of the infamous National Government, brought in under MacDonald and carried on under Baldwin, a time of vicious wage cuts, mass unemployment and great hardship for the working-class.

As a member of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, Comrade Broadhurst had the right to represent unemployed workers before the Public Assistance Committee, or National Assistance Board, in Salford. We armed her with a typewritten Authorisation from our Branch which I signed as Secretary. Wal Hannington and the National Committee of our organisation had fought hard and bitterly to win this right for our Branches from the Government.

Towards the end of 1935 it became obvious that Comrade Broadhurst was very ill. She went away to Kent, seemed to recover for a while, and married a Kentish coal-miner. One day towards the end of 1939 I was told by a member of her family that Comrade Broadhurst had died from Tuberculosis.

SALFORD CITY COUNCIL MUNICIPAL  
ELECTIONS. NOVEMBER, 1933.

REGENT WARD.

Work and Vote for the Communist Candidate,

**MRS. F. BROADHURST**

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Fellow Workers,

This election is taking place during the fifth winter of the world economic crisis. During these years our wages and conditions have been worsened, Unemployment has greatly increased while unemployment benefits have been reduced and the Anomalies Act and Means Test brutally used against us.

The report of the Medical Officer of Health for 1931-32 records that 28 children died in Regent Ward under one year old. In Claremont Ward only 3 and in Seedley 4. Why? In this ward many houses are old and many workers on low wages and unemployed. Whereas in Claremont and Seedley the people have higher wages, better houses and more breathing space. The City Council save £18,000 by controlled tipping which creates vermin infected areas breeding disease and death. IN LETTERS OF BLOOD EVERY WORKER CAN READ, WE WORKERS HAVE HAD TO BEAR THE BURDEN OF THE CRISIS, NOT THE WEALTHY EMPLOYERS.

Now the National Government and Capitalists are preparing to extend the means test, to impose an "earnings test" on dockers, to attack wages and conditions as at the Rubber Works while at the same time increasing food prices.

We are told that all these attacks are made to enable the Capitalists to lead us into prosperity. INSTEAD OF PROSPERITY CAPITALISM IS LEADING US INTO GREATER MISERY AND SEMI-STARVATION, AND PREPARING ONCE MORE TO DRIVE US ON TO THE BATTLE-FIELDS IN ANOTHER IMPERIALIST WAR.

# **National Unemployed Workers' Movement, Manchester.**

The National Government has launched the most vicious attack on your standard of life. Using the argument of EQUALITY and SACRIFICE the Capitalist Class are going to drive down to starvation millions of unemployed men, women & children by reducing Unemployment by 10% & imposing a "means test" which means that hundreds of thousands will be thrown off Benefit.

## **UNEMPLOYED OF MANCHESTER**

You can prevent this by lining up in our demonstration and marching to Spring Gardens to demand

**Not a Penny off the Dole!**

**Not a Worker off Benefit!**

The Procession will assemble behind

**ARDWICK GREEN PARK,**

**Tuesday, Sept. 29th at 2-30 p.m.**

**Unemployed Workers! Rally in  
Your Thousands.**

T. T. Rogerson, Handbill Specialist, 73, Miller Street, Manchester.

This leaflet was issued for a similar demonstration. Leaflets issued for the two demonstrations described are not available.

So ended the life and work among the unemployed workers of Salford of this dedicated woman. There are not many of us left who belonged to that generation, but I am confident that she is still remembered with admiration and, yes, gratitude for her fight on behalf of working people in that city. It was long ago Florrie, but we who were your comrades can never forget you. What better epitaph could any working-class fighter wish for than to be remembered in the hearts and minds of her comrades.

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#### MANCHESTER DEMONSTRATION - OCTOBER 7, 1931

On Tuesday, October 6, 1931, the "Manchester Evening News" carried an innocent news item, to the effect that the Manchester City Council had agreed to receive a deputation from the unemployed the following day after the formal closure of the council meeting. On the following day thousands assembled at Ardwick Green to march to the Town Hall in support of the deputation. The "Manchester Evening News", that same night, reported:

"The procession then marched into Downing Street and walked in an orderly way towards town. A band was playing and the men waved banners and collected money. They tried to induce bystanders to join in."

A well-behaved crowd, not the slightest sign of any intention of seizing the Town Hall and appointing a new City Council! The press tried to write down the size of the particular demonstration, but estimates were that from 20,000 to 50,000 unemployed men and women, among them large numbers of young people took part.

As the procession reached the junction of Downing Street and Fairfield Street, mounted police could be seen stretched across Downing Street on the Piccadilly side. Behind the mounted police stood a double row of foot police, and behind them were tram cars, double-deckers, on both sets of tram lines, and on either side of the trams were vehicles of every description, moved into position by the police. By the time the head of the procession reached the cross roads the whole of the roadway between Fairfield Street and Ducie Street along London Road was completely blocked.

#### BATONS DRAWN

In front of the mounted police was a group of police officers and sergeants. The leaders of the demonstration approached them and asked what was the matter, why this terrific mobilisation of force? It was a peaceful procession in support of the deputation. They were told that the Chief Constable of Manchester had banned them from marching to Albert Square. Why? asked the leaders. It would disrupt the traffic of the whole town was the reply. But, said the leaders, you've done that yourself more effectively than if we had a dozen processions! The Evening News report said "At this point a long argument occurred with the men's leaders. They were told that the City Council had adjourned and that most of the members had left the Town Hall." In the group talking to the police

and using all their authority to prevent a clash were seven City Councillors. They were George Hall, Annie Lee, A E Jones, two councillors both named Cox, E Hope and C Matthews.

The unemployed leaders withdrew and had an exchange of opinion and decided to appeal to the unemployed to forgo the march to the Town Hall, and instead to march to All Saints and hold a meeting there. One of the leaders got up on the window sill of the corner pub and put the proposal to the crowd. Before he had finished speaking, batons had been drawn and were being used freely and indiscriminately. Within seconds, a peaceful slogan-shouting crowd was being batoned, pushed and shoved and forced to engage in struggles in self-defence.

"In a second the cross-roads were a welter of fighting men, of horses pushing through the struggling confusion, of policemen hitting right and left with batons, of marchers retaliating with stout sticks to which their placards had been nailed, with stones, bricks, lumps of coke. Firemen appeared and a couple of hoses quartered the crowd like machine-guns spraying water. In an incredibly short space of time after the sudden breakdown of endurance, it was possible to see the cross-roads. Broken banners, broken sticks, a wash of water, a litter of hats, caps and helmets met the eye, with here and there a man lying."

Thus reported the "Manchester Guardian" the next day.

London Road, on the other side of Fairfield Street, contained a mass of impatient unemployed workers who could see the blocked road ahead but did not know what was going on. The baton charging by the police injured many, but did not shift the crowd because of its density.

#### POLICE HARASSMENT

The leaders of the demonstration, Arthur Jackson, Steve Nuttall, Chris Flanagan and others, were trying to guide the crowd into Whitworth Street and towards Oxford Street and All Saints. Hundreds had already moved in that direction. As the numbers moving down Whitworth Street increased, so they found they were being followed by policemen still using their batons and before long running fights were taking place all along Whitworth Street, Portland Street and in some of the side streets all the way to Oxford Street. Thousands were strung out, with the police harassing them all the way. At the junction of Portland Street and Oxford Street a large body of police was assembled.

As hard pressed groups of unemployed approached Oxford Street, so the police stationed there went into action, though some of them remained stretched across Oxford Street, guarding the approach to Albert Square. By this time the traffic in Oxford Street, Portland Street and the streets around had come to a standstill. Traffic in Oxford Street filled the whole of the carriage-way and that did not allow much room for the fights and skirmishes that were taking place. The result was that many workers got hurt and also many plate glass windows were smashed. Windows of tram cars were broken. Terrified passengers got out and found themselves entangled in the running skirmishes. Then, to the horror of all, tenders full of policemen, plain clothes men and firemen were rushed further along the road to All Saints. The whole of the southern side of the town centre seemed to be involved in chaos and running fights.

However, thousands did get to All Saints. The Evening News reported "In All Saints Square, thousands of men congregated. The police had

made determined preparations to deal with any disorder that might arise. In addition to a big force of constables, 20 mounted police patrolled the thoroughfare." The meeting was in an indignant and angry mood. It was all the leaders could do to prevent a head-on collision with the police. The meeting was virtually surrounded by a huge force of police. "At various intervals they (policemen) altered their positions, taking more strategical points as the crowd shifted their position. Many of the policemen had been rushed to the spot in motor-cars from headquarters, while others arrived in Fire Brigade tenders."

Meantime, needless to say, the deputation was split up and its members out of contact with one another. However, around four o'clock two of them managed to get to the Town Hall to register a protest at the action of the police. They had to explain that they did not know where the rest of the deputation was. The deputy Lord Mayor, Mr (later Sir) Noton Barclay, received them along with five councillors who took part in the march and the argument with the police.

#### DEMONSTRATIONS OUTSIDE THE COURTS

News of these happenings spread round the working-class quarters like wildfire and, with the appearance of the evening papers, indignation and anger rose high. In the industrial towns around Manchester the unemployed and employed workers were amazed to read of these events. The following morning the atmosphere was even more tense. Thousands of workers surrounded the Manchester and Salford Courts. The Salford case was a continuation of the trial arising out of the previous week's demonstration. The court houses were guarded by hundreds of uniformed and plain clothes police, including large numbers of mounted police. In both places more reserves were hidden in the courts and in buildings around. In all, 38 unemployed workers were tried that morning.

Again, let us call on the "Manchester Evening News" to authenticate this version of these events. Its edition on the day of the trial carried headlines spread over the whole seven columns of the front page in heavy black type:

#### POLICE GUARD COURTS, SHOPS AND BANKS

and again over two columns in heavy black type:

#### BIG FORCES HIDDEN IN RESERVE

At the side of its two-column story was a photograph showing some of the mounted police used to keep the crowds in order. The police and the authorities deliberately created a civil war atmosphere and acted in that manner against the unemployed. Leading members of the NUWM and known members of the party did not dare go too near either Bexley Square or Minshull Street, Salford and Manchester Police Courts, because they might have been grabbed and charged with assaulting the police, creating a disturbance, causing a breach of the peace, or all of them combined. The Evening News opened its story with "Extraordinary police precautions were taken. Salford Town Hall, Post Office and Banks and leading shops were specially guarded."

Police, in large numbers, were kept inside the Salford Town Hall and the police court buildings in Manchester. Bodies of mounted police were kept within easy call. The surrounding streets in both cases were patrolled and guarded by police. Nowhere was a group of people

allowed to collect; to stop for a minute with one or two friends was to invite a couple of quick striding policemen to come over and tell you to move on.

#### RULING CLASS JUSTICE

In both courts the police displayed a collection of brickbats, hammer-heads, pieces of iron, stones, sticks, spanners and broken bottles. It looked as though the scrap yards of Manchester and Salford had been scoured. Charges of assaulting the police seem to have been liberally and indiscriminately handed out. "I am satisfied these men all assaulted the police. The assaults, however, were of varying degrees," So said Mr Percy Macbeth, the Salford Stipendiary Magistrate who tried the Salford cases according to the "Manchester Guardian". And making the punishment fit the crime, he handed out sentences from five months to being bound over.

So outrageous was the conduct of the Salford police authorities that they did not dare announce the court verdicts until the end of the day after all the cases had been tried. They feared the crowds milling around in the streets outside. At the Manchester trial all sorts of charges of assault and battery against the police were preferred against the 26 who appeared in that court. Sentences of four, three and one month's imprisonment, and fines of 40 and 20 shillings were imposed. One of the leaders was charged with assaulting the police. He claimed he was at the Town Hall at the time of the alleged assault. He called three councillors to give evidence to prove this. Only one put in an appearance and in a letter to the "Daily Worker" he explained what happened to him.

"May I register my protest at the procedure at the Manchester Police Court on Thursday, 8 October. I personally arrived at the Court at approximately 9.55 am to find the place guarded by a strong posse of foot police, the surrounding streets being patrolled by a mounted detachment. Admission to the courts was being refused and I was told that the whole gallery was and had been full for a long time. Upon disclosing my identity I was admitted into the hall only to find admission to the courts again barred. After tramping from place to place inside the building I was ultimately allowed upstairs. Here again, a similar comedy was enacted until finally I arrived at the Court Room, having spent 40 minutes in attaining my objective. The public gallery contained five men only, and I protested at the following procedure - the repeated calling of witnesses for the defence, witnesses who obviously had been denied admission to the building, makes my point."

MICK JENKINS