

Study Source F and H. Use Sources F and H, and your own knowledge, to explain why the Jarrow Crusade took place

In 1936, after they had already sent a number of deputations to the Board of Trade in London, Jarrow made one last effort to get them noticed. A march organised by the people of the town was made the 270 miles from Jarrow to London; its object to attract attention to the plight of the town, appealing for sympathy and help. There are many reasons, both long term and short term as to why the Jarrow Crusade took place as the problems they suffered grew so bad they thought the only way possible was to get help from the government.

In the long term, the crusade happened because of the vast amount of unemployed men that was on the increase which had been caused by the extreme decline of old industries. When England moved back to the Gold Standard in 1925 after the First World War, the pound was fixed at a high value and a policy of free trade had been introduced. This made British goods very expensive to purchase abroad whereas foreign goods became much cheaper in Britain. The outcome was that foreign countries started selling pounds on international markets forcing the British government to buy them at high prices, resulting bankruptcy of the government in August 1931 when Britain's reserves of gold and foreign currencies ran out. During this time, America had gone into what was called The Great Depression in 1929 due to the Wall Street Crash. This crisis alerted people from all over the world to stop spending money and begin to save. This hit industry hard, particularly in Britain, and especially in the town of Jarrow in the North of England.

The town of Jarrow was solely dependant on the family ship building business of Palmer's Yard for employment as it offered work to nearly everyone who lived in the town. However it soon began to do increasingly badly in business since, if no one wanted to buy or sell anything, then no new ships were required to transport goods around. In 1930 British shipbuilders built 1,400,000 tonnes of shipping but the figure had fallen to 133,000 tonnes in 1933. Palmer's Yard proved too small to compete with the new types of ships and technology which were in demand at the time but there was no investment available to improve matters or provide other alternative types of work. Eventually, orders dried up completely leaving the yard and the workers with nothing.

Source F states that those who 'in better days had invested their savings were left with worthless paper'. This was due to the act of the National Shipbuilder's Security Ltd which was set up in 1930. The company bought and scrapped most of the shipbuilding industries in Britain in 'an alleged attempt to save yards' from the economic collapse. Stating that it was only an 'alleged' attempt to save Palmer's Yard shows that the author could see that they did not help the situation in hand as they took advantage of the financial situation by buying Palmer's Yard at 'scrap prices'. If the company did intend to help then they would have purchased the yard at a reasonable price so that the people of Jarrow could have

had at least some money to maybe start another business to help them to their feet. Ellen Wilkinson also says that 'nothing effective could be done unless the government was prepared to act. This shows that she blamed the government for the state Jarrow was in. The fact that this source was written by the MP for Jarrow at the time proves that it is a reliable source as she was there at the time the Depression happened, she lived in the town and she was the spokesperson for the others so everyone else must have been feeling the same too.

Given that the main source of income of the town was now no more, countless numbers of people were now left with no work. The number of unemployed people in Jarrow was 2,987 in 1927 but this amount had gone up to 7,178 people in 1933, which is nearly 80% of the whole town. People depended on unemployment benefits provided by the government for their survival. However the dole money was not nearly enough to live on, it was considerably less than the minimum wage and was only given to men. People were forced to live in small, dirty, cramped conditions as they were desperately poor and Jarrow was left in an appalling state with help from hardly anyone as Jarrow was not a very well known town.

Therefore, it was these main reasons which resulted to the forming of the Jarrow Crusade. The citizens of Jarrow urgently needed attention from the government as it was only them who could help so they thought a petition should be carried out to try to get the government to help solve their unemployment problem.

The shorter term reasons for the crusade were mainly that Jarrow was being ignored. Fundamentally the problems were of the fault of The National Government for introducing policies of rationalisation and amalgamation in small towns that could not afford to lose business. They had ruined many workers as pointed out in Source F earlier and the closure of Palmer's Yard meant that there was no hope of finding alternative work. Source F implies that although other organisations were 'attempting' to help such as the NSS, only the government could help, but they did not. To make matters even worse still, the government introduced the Means Test as part of a cost-cutting exercise in the Depression. It required everybody in Jarrow to be checked of all their possessions to see if they qualified for unemployment benefits. If they were found to have been in possession of something which could be worth some money they were forced to sell it and if you had a steady income, including pensions, you were not qualified at all. Unsurprisingly, this struck to many as unfair especially if a whole family were expected to survive on one pension. Though the government had spent £2,000,000 on the Special Areas Act, they were not prepared to do any more; however this had hardly benefited the people of Jarrow anyhow. That was partly a reason as to why the march took place too.

Source H is part of an account by a steward closely involved in the march. In it he says how it was first to be called the 'Jarrow Hunger March'. This shows that the people of Jarrow were so poor; they couldn't even afford food to eat and were

hungry. In addition, it states how there were other marches being held around the country too but they weren't received too well indicating that the problem they suffered was widespread. It is evident that the people of Jarrow did not want to be labelled troublemakers and therefore they wore their best suits on the march. They wanted to show that though they did not have much anymore, they tried hard and wanted to stress that they were not threatening and were non-violent. The choice of the word 'crusade' strongly suggests that these men were on a task to get themselves noticed as protests had been made but nothing effective had been done about it. It can also be considered a mission as previous marches had failed and were told to 'go back to Jarrow and work out your own salvation' by the President of the Board of Trade in 1936 which made this final march their biggest attempt to be noticed.

It is evident that the purpose of Sources F and H were to highlight the problems that Jarrow were suffering. Both authors were closely involved to the events of the Crusade which makes the sources reliable as they are primary source accounts written by people who actually lived in the middle of what happened. Therefore it is possible to conclude that the others who lived in Jarrow felt the same way about the ordeal and that is why all the reasons mentioned lead to the Jarrow Crusade.