

UNEMPLOYED MARCH IN NORTH
WALS:

When Welshmen don't sing on the march, there's something seriously wrong - and there's no singing when the quarrymen of Pen-y-groes and their families march to Caernarvon. Their problem is serious - for 350 of them are out of work, and some of them haven't worked for years. Caernarvonshire has the highest percentage of men on the dole in the country - and one of the worst-hit places of all is Pen-y-groes. The march is planned by the Unemployed Committee, with the support of local M.P.s and mayors and of the church. Not long ago, the slate quarries of the Nantlle Valley gave work to 3,000 men; today, there is work for barely 300.

In the campaign to bring life back to the valley, some progress has been made already; an empty factory is to be re-started, and a second is to be built; but they will give work to less than half of the men who are trying to keep their homes going on the dole. Pen-y-groes, once so prosperous, is a village of houses where there is nothing to spare, and shops where there is nothing for sale; a village stripped of its younger men and women, who have gone elsewhere for jobs. Four of the seven pubs have closed. Customers are few - this one left years ago, and has returned on a visit. For others, whether they like it or not, social life centres round the Labour Exchange.

So they march to the county town, to let the world know of their plight - and the people of Caernarvon turn out to welcome them; the icy fingers of unemployment touch Caernarvon, too - and everyone, from county councillors to schoolboys, back the quarrymen. For these are not beggars asking for charity - they are skilled craftsmen demanding the right to work....