

My thanks (and apologies!) must go to W H Auden and his 1936 poem *Night Mail*. The journey parallel is obvious of course, but Auden finishes his with the line; *For who can bear to feel himself forgotten?* The Poplar Councillors of 1919 never forgot the people who voted them into power.

The March to The High Court - 1921

This is the March for Justice and Order,
Walking from Poplar to High Court Recorder,
Help from the rich to give aid to the poor,
Don't stop at the corner, don't lie on the floor,
Walking the Dock Road, it's not even a climb,
We move on to Limehouse, still keeping in time.
Past Cut and Basin, amid anthracite smoulder.
Loving this burden, we all proudly shoulder,
Aptly named Ratcliff, our marching it passes
Silent miles of worn working classes.
We all turn our heads as Shadwell approaches,
A song from our lips, this marching now coaxes.
History cannot turn our course;
No slumbering on, a line we now cross.
Through Aldgate we stroll, our time we now take,
Minorities looks blank, is this a mistake?

The Tower it approaches, our job nearly done.
From Tower Street to Monument we slowly ascend,
The distant steam heard, from black metropolis trains.
On to the High Court and judgement, possibly gaul,
Set on this hard road, like Justice's men.
All London waits for her:
In darkest alleys, beside ticking work clocks,
Men long for news.

Through Cannon to Mansion, onward like tramps,
Justice and joy, for each girl and boy,
Expect no welcome or invitations
To sit quietly down or visit relations,
Just all now adjust to new situations,
As judges deliver their declarations,
Amid gossip, lies and false accusations.
News circumstantial, news financial,
Let us skirt by St Pauls down the street with Queen in,
Let us down to Embankment with mud in the margin,
Let us stand for our uncles and cousins and aunts,
Let us stand for the poor and those with no chance,
Let us stroll to the High Court with placards and pipebands
(And notes to oversee our parodies).
Everyone present, all are on cue,
The red of the flags, our case we know true,
The chatty, the catty, the boring, the adoring,
The cold and official, our support now is soaring.
The clever, the stupid, the short and the long,
The pinstriped or gifted, they know we're not wrong.

Thousands swear they'll keep,
Dreaming of our defiant responses,
Or of friendly tea besides the church or the park:
Asleep in working Poplar, asleep in well-set Ken and Chel,
Asleep on planet Westminster,
They continue their dreams,
But shall wake soon and hear news of what beset us,
And no one will fear that rent collector's knock,
For to prison we went, we led with our heart,
And not one needs to feel themselves forgotten.

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