

# EAST SIDE WOMEN, STARVING, WILL KEEP CHILDREN FROM SCHOOL

Dorothy Day

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"The women on the East Side are going on an enforced hunger strike," said Mrs. Ida Harris, 83 Madison Street, yesterday afternoon. "We are not going to buy any potatoes or onions or meats."

"We can't buy them. We haven't any money," a woman in the crowd interposed. "We've got to go hungry."

It was at one of the numerous street meetings that were being held all over the East Side yesterday that Mrs. Harris told the following plans for the week:

Last night there was a meeting of the mothers in Forward Hall.

This morning, at 9 o'clock, the women of the East Side will meet in front of the Forward building and march to City Hall again, where the committee of four will present the mayor with their demands for lower prices.

## *To Keep Children from School*

**Beginning tomorrow, the mothers will keep all of their children out of school. This, also, is not a voluntary measure. The women claim that they cannot feed their children and when their children go to school they have an increased and voracious appetite. Some of the mothers say that they will put their children to work, while others plan merely to keep them home shut up, where romping will not increase their desire for the food their slim purses will not buy.**

Saturday an immense parade will start at the Forward building and march all over the East Side. "We will not make a noise," Mrs. Harris said. "The women will not whine nor cry out, not beg for food. We will walk with our heads bowed, with our babies in our arms. At the head of the procession a woman will carry an American flag, side by side with a white flag with the word 'STARVATION' printed on it in black letters.

"We want the people to know that our children, born and brought up in America, are walking under a starvation banner, not the Stars and Stripes."

Protest meetings were held all afternoon on Ludlow, Essex and Rivington streets and in front of the Forward building. The day was warm and the women and men and children stood all over the street.

A large meeting which was held in Seward park was dispersed by the policemen on the beat. Dauntless, the women speakers stood upon the fountain and addressed the women in the street, by the Forward building, heedless of the cars and trucks that splattered mud over them.

One by one, some with children in their arms, some of them too old to have children, climbed laboriously on the fountain rail and in impassioned words told of the prices, their hunger, the want of their families. The long months of want – the demonstrations of the morning in City Hall park had loosened their tongues and they told little, petty facts that they had never thought of telling before. Little miseries which they were too proud to disclose came from their lips, and they were surprised to find that each and every one of them had the same troubles.

### *Go Without Breakfasts*

“I have a husband and a baby and myself to feed, and even with \$15 a week we have to go without breakfast,” said Dorothy Jacobs, 116 Ludlow street.

Another woman, with a baby in her arms and one dragging at her skirts, spoke up from the crowd. “My husband is in the hospital and I have six children. Only one of them is working, and he makes \$6 a week. It’s very hard to feed seven on \$6 a week. Most of the time we don’t eat.

“The teachers send the children home from school and say that they are ragged and blue around the mouth. They tell us to feed them more. But how can we?” She said her name was Mrs. Maginta, but she refused to give her address. “I won’t have people coming and prying and peeking into my affairs. I don’t want them to be sorry for me.”

Some of the women talked quietly, others so energetically that strands of gray, drab hair tousled around their faces. Their whole bodies quivered and tears streamed down their cheeks. Then they would suddenly stop, realize that they had been saying the same old, hard facts, just what everybody else had said – that potatoes and onions and meat had gone up, that they were starving. And a cold despair would take the place of the fire in their words and looks, and they would get down and let some other hungry soul take their place.

Joseph Hartigan, when interviewed on the riot and food situation yesterday afternoon, said: “For the last 15 days riots have been going on – incipient riots and protest meetings – in the Bronx, at 102d street and Second avenue, in Brownsville and on the East Side. Pushcarts were overturned, the peddlers were belabored by fists, as well as by rotten vegetables. This was reported to me by the retail merchants themselves. I did not let these facts reach the newspapers, because I was afraid of inciting a riot, and, as a public official, I had to do all that I could to keep the people calm.”

### *Hartigan Has His “Remedies”*

“In such crises the men most fitted to solve the problem are those in the food business. The mayor can do nothing. To dig up new sources of food supply and to take action on speculation – these are the only sure ways to lower the cost of food. But both these things would take two years.

“The only immediate relief to be obtained is by the national government appointing a board of food control to conserve foodstuffs and keep them from being sent to Europe. As a matter of interstate commerce, this would have to be done by the government.

“There is no doubt that these riots will attract official attention and serve to hasten action in this line, although the effect desired may not be immediate.”