

practical though ineffectual prohibition of it; and that each of the three results of prohibition did actually take place. First, wages were necessarily to some extent and in some grades increased. Second, the quality of the workmen in other grades was reduced by changes; and third, the conditions of work becoming more severe, the men rebelled. The notorious severity of the work on the Scottish lines and the uncertainty of promotion rendered it difficult for one of the railways, at least, to get an adequate staff of efficient and experienced servants.¹ This want of inducement to recruits was at once the reason of the strike and the reason of the utter collapse of the railway service which followed it. Given a choice of employments, an efficient worker will choose that employment which offers him the most advantageous terms. When, therefore, a railway company hampers itself by prohibition of combination, a principle frankly acknowledged by almost every other industry, and then further hampers itself by excessive severity of work, it must give high wages or it loses the best of its men, gets relatively inferior men to replace them, degrades the remainder of its employees, and, by severity of work beyond a certain point, forces them into rebellion.²

Besides the feeling that combination among railway servants, ought by some means to be prevented by law, the companies being unable of their own action to prevent it, there was also the feeling that the strike of railway servants presaged a general uprising of labour against capital, and that in resisting the claims of the men, the companies were fighting the battle of the commercial world against the New Unionism. Time alone

(1) The deteriorating influence upon skilled labour of excessive strain and irritating conditions is analogous to the deteriorating influence upon unskilled labour of irregularity of employment. There was a very large proportion of young men on strike. These were the men who really made it. They carried everything before them at the meetings, many of the older men having left the service, or having received increased wages, or having been reduced to a condition of chronic despair.

(2) A not unfair analogy may be traced in the disregard and miscalculation of physical forces which led to the collapse of the Tay Bridge; and in the disregard and miscalculation of physiological and social forces which led to the collapse of the railway system. Both mistakes have been costly. Even Boards of Directors find it hard to contend against Istar.