A TURN OF CENTURY STRUGGLE FOR TRADE UNION RECOGNITION AND HOW A MANAGEMENT VICTORY WAS TURNED TO DEFEAT; AMMON BEASLEY VERSUS THE TAFF VALE RAILWAYMEN

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Panel: Railway Organisations and the Responses of Capitalism and Governments, 1830-1940: A National and Internationally Comparative View

Introduction

The first permanent railway trade union in the United Kingdom, The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS), had been formed at the end of 1871, and had recruited a considerable number of members from among the employees of the Taff Vale Railway Company (TVR), by 1890. However, it was not until after 1917 that formal recognition was granted by the company. In the strike of 1900, even with South Wales coalowners, the company’s main customers, and senior community figures urging the TVR General Manager, Ammon Beasley, to meet the men’s representatives, he kept to his obstinate insistence that he would never concede to any form of collectivism, or brook any interference with the management of his railway. He held to this position through the Conciliation movement of the mid-1900s, the national rail strike of 1911 and until his retirement in 1917. This paper, which is part of work in progress on a doctoral thesis, will examine the character and management style of this man, and how his obstinacy resulted in a change of the law on trade union liability and furthered the cause of the Labour movement in the United Kingdom.

Background

In its early years the ASRS acted as, and was seen to be, more of a ‘friendly society’ than a campaigning trade union. It received support from the Establishment, for example the Archbishop of Canterbury and brewing millionaire M T Bass. Successive general secretaries struggled with the desirability of using the strike weapon in the early years, but even when its use had received support, its employment in individual disputes was to exacerbate division within the Society. This was no more evident than during the Taff Vale strike of 1900. The ASRS, and its successors, have always been the largest union specifically organizing among railway employees. But in the thirty years from its inception until the turn of the twentieth century, several other unions were formed, either to represent specific grades, or to forward a particular political ideology. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) was formed in 1880, the General Railway Workers Union (GRWU) in 1889 and the Railway Clerks Association (RCA) in 1897.

The Taff Vale Railway Company was created by, and for, the ironmasters of Merthyr Tydfil in south Wales, who saw that they needed a more efficient mode of transport to transport the raw materials from, and the finished products to, the port of Cardiff. Thus
in 1836 Parliamentary approval was sought for a railway some 24 miles (38.5 km) in length between the two towns. It was the first railway in Wales and opened throughout in 1841. Prior to advent of the railway, transport had been provided by a combination of tramway and canal. The inland location proved increasingly inconvenient for the ironmasters, and what had been a locally available raw material used in producing iron became the boom industry of the Taff and adjacent valleys. The iron works closed and the extraction of high quality coal was to dominate the business of the area for a century and more. The bulk of these ‘black diamonds’ were exported through the ports of south Wales to destinations across the world and included fuel for the British Navy; and it was the Taff Vale that had the largest share of this traffic. By the time of the 1900 dispute the extent of the Taff Vale network was in excess of 120 miles (193 km), and any interruption of this flow could still have serious consequences for business and national security, although with the creation of alternative and competing routes, the bargaining power of the TVR and its employees was lessened.

The occasion for the appointment of Ammon Beasley was in response to the so-called ‘shareholders’ revolt’ which was sparked by falling dividends and perceived inefficient operating practices. Principal shareholders had set up their own committee of enquiry, comprised of expert witnesses, to establish the true state of affairs. When the committee revealed their report in early 1891, its publication led to the forced resignation of the entire board of directors. One of the key findings was that the company did not have a unified system of management to co-ordinate the work of the different departments; it was clear that the company needed a General Manager to oversee the running of the railway. Mr Beasley was selected for the post.

Until the early years of the twentieth century the customary way of obtaining improvements in pay and conditions was for the men to discuss among themselves, and then present a ‘memorial’ to the directors setting out the issue to be considered; often a deputation would be elected to wait on the Board, and most companies would receive the memorial and/or the deputation. The response from the directors might or might not have been positive, but there was a culture of a shared interest between capital and labour, and a harmonious relationship might well exist. In south Wales the prevailing politics of working men was Lib-Labism; a belief in that shared interest and support for the Liberal Party that dominated Welsh politics, and which had espoused the cause of Welsh nationalism. Integral with this was a strong affinity with Nonconformist Christianity with which the mining communities, in particular, identified, and with it an antagonism towards the established Church of England.

The decade 1890 to 1900 saw Taff Vale men involved in three significant strikes in 1890, 1895 and 1900. The 1895 strike was of a different kind to the others, involving only the fitters employed at locomotive depots and the company workshops and in this paper can be left to one side, whereas the other two involved major disruption to the company and the district. The ‘memorials’ had developed into ‘movements’ as grade based groups of employees periodically campaigned for improved pay and conditions.

Ammon Beasley: a Biographical Note
Ammon Beasley was born on November 27, 1837 the son of a working shoemaker, in the west Midlands town of Rugby. He received his education at the local St. Matthew’s and Wesleyan Schools, and started his working life as a clerk, possibly as a booking clerk at Stoke on Trent. When he became discontented with this job he answered an advertisement for a clerk at the Great Western Railway (GWR) goods station at Wolverhampton c1858. Apparently he discovered it to be in some disarray, but such was the rapidity with which he pulled it round, that he attracted the notice of the District Goods Manager, James Grierson, who was promoted to be Chief Goods Manager at Paddington. Beasley was likewise promoted to Paddington in November 1858 and became one of the principal members of Grierson’s staff; by 1865 he had become Chief Clerk. Grierson himself had been elevated to the post of GWR General Manager in 1863, and later, possibly in 1876, Beasley was appointed as his Principal Assistant. He occupied this post under Grierson, and then under Henry Lambert, after Grierson’s death in October 1887. Physically he was short of stature and autocratic by nature with the ability of total recall, demonstrated by his lack of papers when attending tribunals; an ability he was to put to effective use during his railway career. He had married Lucy Adelaide Watkin a publican’s daughter from Longton, Staffs, on August 18, 1866 and they went on to have six children, of whom only three, and his wife, survived him at his death on March 27, 1924.1

1 Biographical details taken from an obituary in Rugby Advertiser, April 4, 1924, p5, and correspondence with two of his great-grandchildren (2005-7); details of Grierson and Lambert extracted from E T
In 1891 there was some surprise at the appointment of Beasley to the newly created post of General Manager of the Taff Vale, as was expressed by the Railway Times, which commented that; ‘Mr. Beasley’s chances of promotion to the highest administrative office under the Great Western Railway Company were, in the ordinary course of human events, decidedly hopeful. Again, in the comparatively near future, he must have become entitled to a handsome superannuation allowance.’ However, whilst he was the same age as Lambert had been on his appointment to General Manager (54 years), any hope for advancement to that position was not so certain. The normal succession on the GWR at this time was from Chief Goods Manager, as with Grierson, Lambert and Wilkinson, (Lambert’s successor); promotion, to which post, Beasley had missed out on in both 1879 and 1885. He did, however, leave the GWR with the high esteem of his colleagues, who presented him with an illuminated address inscribed with the names of 228 ‘friends and colleagues’, to accompany the gifts of ‘Plate, a Library Clock and a Horse and Carriage’.

There had been a large response to the advertisement and the competition was formidable, but the Railway Times could report that the Taff Vale directors had met on Tuesday, October 6, 1891, when ‘…it was decided to offer the newly created office of general manager of the company to Mr. Beasley, who, it is understood, intimated his acceptance of the position on Thursday…’. His knowledge of railway work and administrative ability were seen as ‘…exactly what the Taff Vale Railway Company has long needed.’ The writer reminded his readership that the shareholder’s ‘Committee of Investigation’ had recommended that the overall responsibility for control of the company’s functions should be placed under one head, and Beasley’s appointment fulfilled that recommendation. It was now expected that this would benefit the shareholders, customers and the ‘proper development of the resources of the district’. Although in one major respect the article misread the future. As Beasley had come from the GWR, it was expected that there would be closer relations between his old and new employers, and conjecture that closer cooperation might lead to a large combination of railway and dock interests in and around Cardiff. Nothing approaching this would occur until the government-instigated Grouping of 1922, and the TVR remained staunchly independent until Beasley’s retirement in 1917.

Bagwell in describing the run up to the 1900 dispute, notes that Mr Beasley had reduced working expenses of 59 per cent of gross receipts at his appointment to 57.7 per cent by the end of 1899, and raised the ordinary dividend by two and a half percent, in spite of two major strikes in the mines. But his claim to fame did not rest solely on improved efficiency, and in his interview with the Railway Magazine in 1898 Beasley attributes the provision of various benefits provided for the employees and particularly the establishment of a non-contributory pension scheme, to the company chairman A E guest, whose motive is described as an ‘…outcome of a desire on the part of Mr

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2 Railway Times, Oct. 10, 1891.
3 The illuminated address is in the possession of Mr A Heron, a great-grandson of Ammon Beasley.
4 The Railway Times, Oct. 10, 1891 based on an article in the South Wales Daily News.
Guest…to do all in his power to cement the friendly relations which I hope exist, …between the board and the great body of their staff.’

The pension scheme was established in 1892 and may have been Beasley’s idea; however, one of the other benefits listed was the provision of privilege tickets, of which he says, ‘Of course there are usual facilities…for obtaining privilege tickets all the year round.’ Only three years before, there had been a ‘privilege ticket movement’ among the men whereby they sought to obtain such a facility, which was already commonplace on other railways. In reporting to their colleagues, ‘…the men regretted that the management, or the board of directors would not receive a deputation upon the subject’. That financial considerations weighed more heavily than the welfare of the men was also illustrated by the TVR’s approach to the Employer’s Liability Act of 1898. Under the 1880 Employer’s Liability Act it was possible for a company to opt out of its provisions if the company had created its own provident fund, thus it was possible for the directors to mitigate the financial implications of the Act. Contracting out was also allowed under the subsequent Act of 1898, but that Act stipulated that any private scheme had to be certified by the Registrar of Friendly Societies as being ‘on the whole not less favourable to the workmen than the provisions of the Act’. The Taff Vale did contract out, although the London and North Western Railway (LNWR), that had contracted out after the 1880 Act, decided to cease opting-out following the passage of the 1898 Act, suggesting that the TVR had a more financially cautious regime than its larger neighbour.

Also in the Railway Magazine interview he states: ‘…my career…has simply been a career of hard work, which is precisely what most other railwaymen would say if asked. If I had come here [to the TVR] with any expectation that I was going to have an easy time - which I did not - subsequent experience would have shown my mistake. One great feature of railway work is that however hard and exacting it may be, it is not monotonous and for that one may be at least thankful’. His words had a greater prescience than, perhaps, he could have imagined. The events of 1898 to 1903, which encompass the General Manager’s involvement in the strike of August 1900, are detailed in a later section.

Railway historian Hamilton Ellis, who seemingly had little sympathy for the strikers, having commented on the generous pension arrangements asks the rhetorical question, ‘Who, under such liberal management, would wish for Union protection?’ Ellis concludes that the main grievance was ‘non-recognition’ and that, from the company’s viewpoint, it was ‘outrageous’ for their well treated and adequately paid workers to withdraw their labour, ‘…the tail was wagging the A.S.R.S. dog, which was doing nothing to abate “that vehement caudality “.’ Whilst Beasley had triumphed, Ellis suggests that his pride was ‘sorely hurt’, and writes, ‘One is reminded of a severely just,

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6 Illustrated Interviews No. 13 - Mr Ammon Beasley, Railway Magazine, Vol. III, July 1898, p16
7 Ibid
8 Glamorgan Free Press, Jan. 26, 1895, p3
9 P S Bagwell, The Railwaymen, p121
10 Ibid
11 Railway Magazine p16
12 Hamilton Ellis, British Railway History: An Outline from the Accession of William IV to the Nationalization of Railways, 1877-1947, 2nd Impression (London, 1960) p225
possibly clerical father of numerous children, gloomily wondering why, when they had been so well treated and so piously brought up, they could be so wicked,…  

It is not clear on what Ellis is basing his assessment, but evidence suggests that the paternalistic attitude was tempered with a hard edged determination for the business to succeed, and always adhering to the principle that he and his Board had absolute control. During the strike this even impinged on his domestic space when he put up tents in his garden at Penarth for those who went on working. 

Immediately after Beasley’s tenacity had secured the ‘Taff Vale judgement’ from the House of Lords, and revealed the vulnerability of trade unions, he was feted in railway, and other boardrooms across the United Kingdom, and received monetary and other material rewards. Although he did not need these, for by 1901 he was living in considerable comfort with his wife at ‘North Cliff’, Penarth where he employed a cook, two housemaids, a kitchenmaid, and a coachman, all living in, and also a gardener who lived at North Cliff Lodge. 

His business interests continued to expand when he helped found and was elected first president of Bristol Channel Dock Owners’ Association in 1905. He was re-elected unanimously in 1906, and remained in post until the organisation was wound up at the Grouping in 1922. His high standing among the railway companies, nationally, was still evident in 1914 when he was unanimously elected to be Chairman of the General Managers’ Conference of the Railway Clearing House for the year 1915. At the age of eighty years he retired from the post of General Manager, and was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Board in 1917. 

When the Liberal government sought to tackle industrial disputes through the creation of Conciliation Boards and thus side-stepping the question of union recognition in the 1907 agreement; whilst credited to Lloyd George, Bagwell’s research suggests that it was mainly the work of Sam Fay, General Manager of the Great Central Railway, which if known at the time would have almost certainly ensured rejection by the railwaymen. And Ammon Beasley is quoted as saying ‘My company accepted the scheme as an alternative to recognition…I do not think it would ever been accepted by my board at all events, if it had not been so understood.’ 

When Ammon Beasley died in 1924, the regional, railway and local press carried obituaries celebrating his long and active career. The Great Western Railway Magazine observed that, when he retired, ‘…there were more than twice as many trains running between Cardiff, and the Valleys as when he became General Manager and the mineral traffic was between 60 and 70 per cent heavier.’ Particular reference was made to his ability as a Parliamentary witness, when he was ‘…always complete master of his case, and frequently discomfiting counsel. On several occasions he insisted upon legal points contrary to legal advice and invariably was justified in the result.’ 

13 Ibid, p226  
14 From correspondence with two of Beasley’s great-grandchildren; Ms A Weightman and Mr A Heron (2005-7)  
15 National Census 1901: RG13/4989 ff 5-6, sched. 9-10  
16 The Railway News, July 14, 1917, p49  
17 Bagwell, The Railwaymen, pp269-270  
18 Bagwell, The Railwaymen, pp271  
19 Great Western Railway Magazine, Vol.XXXVI, May,1924, p186
legal roles he had extensive experience, whether promoting the great number of Parliamentary Bills the TVR submitted to Parliament or opposed, appearing as a witness in the TVR Case and before Parliamentary committees, or prosecuting employees charged with offences such as embezzlement. And, then referring to the Taff Vale case, revealed that this ‘house magazine’ was true to the anti-trade union principles of its management, by claiming that ‘revolutionary changes in the law’ had resulted ‘...eventually in placing these organisations in a position of privilege practically above the common law of the land.’

The article describes Beasley as feeling ‘the advance of years’ but continuing to be active and interested in life. Although his own education had been fairly basic he was able to send his sons to Westminster and St Paul’s and his daughters to Cheltenham Ladies College, and one son became a judge and was subsequently knighted. He was described as ‘...not only a great railway manager with a relentless conception of efficiency.’ He was also ‘...a great fighter for what he believed to be right, and he pursued his aim with unwavering purpose and skill. ... He was a towering figure amongst railway managers, and when it came to a fight, whether between masters and men, or between company and company, or company and public authorities, he was indomitable.’

The course of the 1900 Strike

*Fig 2: One of a series of contemporary newspaper cartoons: Welsh Railways Research Circle Archive, TV103, Cartoons re 1900 Strike, 2*

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20 Herbert Williams, *Railways in Wales* (Swansea, 1981) p73
21 *Pontypridd Observer*, April 10, 1910, p2
22 *GWR Magazine*, May,1924, p186
23 From correspondence with two of Beasley’s great-grandchildren; Ms A Weightman and Mr A Heron (2005-7)
24 *GWR Magazine*, May,1924, p186; This tribute also appeared in the *Rugby Advertiser*, where it was credited to the *News of the World*: *Rugby Advertiser*, April 4, 1924, p5
In the run up to the 1900 strike it was the signalmen who made much of the running in pressing management for improved conditions and pay, and it was a signalman and his part in campaigning that helped precipitate the strike. The almost constant unrest among the signalmen on the Taff Vale, and other companies in south Wales, had brought the organisers of the various ‘movements’ or campaigns to the particular notice of senior management and the directorate, to whom they presented their claims. It is significant that, of the seven individuals named in the Glamorgan Free Press report of the January 1895 ‘movement’, four either had been, or were to be, dismissed by the TVR. One of those was John Ewington, and it is probable that this is when he first came to the attention of the directors. In 1895 Ewington was one of the delegation elected as the men’s representatives and in 1899/1900 he was the secretary of a similar ‘movement’, the previous secretary having been dismissed in 1897.

In 1898 the second major Miners’ strike of the decade caused the railway companies to withdraw the guaranteed week to which the men were entitled under the 1890 settlement. On Sunday, October 9, 1898, the first of five mass meetings was held in Cardiff protesting against TVR tardiness in restoring the guaranteed week. Following the series of meetings the men called a further meeting for November 6 to consider strike action, but the meeting did not proceed with the strike threat at request of ASRS General Secretary Richard Bell. The guaranteed week was restored as from October 24.

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25 Glamorgan Free Press, January 26, 1895, p3
26 R Parr, Date Entered Service (DES) August 1883, National Archives, Kew (NA) RAIL 684/95: The register gives reason for leaving as ‘Dismissed’, but no explanation, only the Superintendent of the Line’s correspondence reference
The next eleven months saw quietude among south Wales railwaymen that was to be disturbed by an open letter to the *Railway Review* published on September 1, 1899. The correspondent, ‘Unionist’, sought to challenge prevailing attitudes, particularly among signalmen in letting the points won in 1890 to be neglected. Three weeks later at the Pontypridd Empire on Sunday, September 24, 1899 the signalmen of the Taff Vale agreed on a five point programme; their grievances, to be presented to the company. And as Alcock commented ‘...the Taff Vale were confronted once again with the agreement of 1890, which had been signed by Inskip [Chairman of the TVR], Harford [General Secretary of the ASRS], and Richards, the signalmen’s delegate.’ This was printed in full following the open letter.

By October a south Wales all-grades committee had been formed from employees of the Taff Vale, Rhymney, Barry and Cardiff Railways, but the ballot for strike action did not reach the necessary 90 per cent majority. On Sunday, October 1, 1899, Barry and Rhymney men met to formulate their own programme. A fortnight later, on October 15, a mass all-grades meeting at Pontypridd expressed support for the joint committee, and on Friday, October 27, 1899, Bell published a rallying call in the *Railway Review*. In a more local initiative Taff Vale signalman and local organizer, Moses Jones, wrote to the TVR directors on Tuesday, November 28, asking them to receive a deputation, however, it was not until Saturday, December 9, 1899 that they replied declining to see the men. Also in December the Executive Committee of the ASRS offered arbitration to the four companies, but failing their acceptance, they would ballot for a strike. As the response by the end of the year amounted to no more than formal acknowledgements a mass meeting was called for Sunday, January 14, 1900 at the Park Hall, Cardiff, which overwhelmingly agreed that if companies did not agree to receive their representative within seven days the men were to hand in their notices. A week later a meeting of Taff railwaymen at Aberdare confirmed their support for the Cardiff resolution. As Bagwell describes it, the ‘tactical moment’ came after the mass meeting of Sunday, January 28, when Richard Bell could report that the required 90 per cent plus approval for strike action had been received from the men of all four companies. At this point Bell advised that they should give the companies ‘seven to ten days’ to change their minds. The momentum with regard to the TVR was then lost for some months. Although, the Barry, Rhymney, and Cardiff directors did agree to see deputations during February and made significant concessions after Bell had advised them of the ‘men’s impatience’, when Ammon Beasley of the Taff Vale met with deputations from signalmen, brakesmen and guards on February 9, only minimal concessions were made, and the main claims for a 2s a week rise and an eight hour day were refused. In both February and March, John Ewington was part of signalmen’s deputations seen by the TVR board, without positive outcomes. Park Hall, Cardiff was again the venue for a mass meeting of 2,000 on March 11, when on this occasion, despite Bell giving a fighting speech, the proposed ballot received insufficient support.

27 G W Alcock, *Fifty Years of Railway Trade Unionism* (London, 1922) pp306-7
28 *Pontypridd Observer*, Sept. 30, 1899, p3?
29 G W Alcock, *Fifty Years*, pp306-7
30 *Merthyr Express*, January 27, 1900; P S Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p211
31 P S Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p211
32 G W Alcock, *Fifty Years*, p308
On Saturday, April 28, signalman Ewington was ordered to move to Treherbert from Pontycynon on promotion, a move he declined due to family circumstances. Just under a fortnight later on Thursday, May 10 he was taken seriously ill with glandular fever and he was not fit to return to work until July. In the meantime representatives of various grades continued to meet with TVR managers but without satisfaction, as is illustrated by the platelayers meeting at Pontypridd on Tuesday, June 5, when delegates reported back on an interview with the company Engineer. The answer received was unsatisfactory and unanimous support was given for a ballot of all platelayers with a view to strike action. Six weeks later on Tuesday, July 24, when Ewington was due to return to work, he found that his position at Pontycynon had been filled on a permanent basis; he was offered a post at Llwynypia in the Rhondda, which would require him to move house. His colleagues decided that he should decline the offer. On the following Sunday, July 29, a mass meeting of signalmen, guards, brakesmen and shunters at Pontypridd gathered to consider the next steps to be taken in pursuance of their pay claim, but before considering the intended business Ewington was asked to put his case to the meeting. It was resolved to press for Ewington’s reinstatement to his original position with the company given seven days to respond; if the response was not positive, notices were to be signed and submitted before August 6. With no positive response from the company, over 300 Signalmen gave notice effective from midnight August 19; on the same day a letter, from ASRS district organizer James Holmes, was published in the *South Wales Daily News* advising the men to postpone putting in their notices until August 13. Holmes, a dedicated socialist, when faced with the intransigence of Beasley, was keen to strike a blow for Socialism. This was evidenced by part of an article he wrote for the *Railway Review* in July containing the sentence, ‘There is nothing I would like better than to measure swords with this Taff Vale Railway dictator.’ It was deleted by the editor.

On Saturday, August 11, Ewington, plus two supporters, met with three directors, who offered him the post of relief signalman at Pontycynon, which would allegedly save him from moving house; his supporters expressed the opinion that he should accept, probably not knowing the extent of travel involved. The next day there was a mass meeting at St Andrews Hall, Cardiff to receive reports on correspondence with the TVR management, and an update on the Ewington case. With respect to the latter it was again resolved that the men would not be satisfied until the signalman was ‘reinstated at Pontycynon’, i.e. his original post. It was reported at the meeting that the majority of platelayers had been awarded a pay rise. The accessibility of the TVR Board to its staff was generally maintained throughout the period of the strike threat, as if to reinforce the message that this was the way industrial relations had to be conducted. On the Tuesday, August 14, a deputation of signalmen was allowed to see the directors, followed by the locomen on the next day.

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33 G W Alcock, *Fifty Years*, p309-10
34 *Pontypridd Observer*, August 4, 1900, p4?
36 G W Alcock, *Fifty Years*, p312
37 *Merthyr Express*, August 18, 1900, p6
Arbitration was proposed again on the Wednesday, this time by the Cardiff Chamber of Commerce, at an interview with James Holmes, when they suggested that an acceptable arbitrator be appointed. By the Thursday approximately 800 Taff Vale men had handed in their notices, as reported in Saturday’s Pontypridd Observer, which briefly summarized the positions of each side, with the reporter expressing sympathy with Ewington, and pointing out that the men faced increased living costs.\textsuperscript{38} Not unexpectedly, on Friday General Manager Beasley declined a request for an all-grades deputation to see the directors with Holmes; and rejected the proposed arbitration. On the same day Bell was thwarted in his attempt to see Chairman Vassall.

The meeting at Pontypridd on Sunday, August 19, heard Moses Jones report back on the meeting of the signalmen with the directors, and also on the offers made by the company in respect to the claims made by guards, shunters and firemen; all of which were rejected by the men. With the signalmen on strike from the following day, the assembly concluded that they had no option but to cease work, even, as they were warned by Holmes, many would face prosecution; the motion to strike was carried with only a few against.\textsuperscript{39} In London, on the same day, the Executive Committee (EC) of the ASRS met to consider the situation with two representatives from the TVR present. After a lengthy debate an amended resolution was passed, condemning the men for their action, but agreeing to grant strike pay. And Bell was to go to South Wales to resolve the matter as soon as possible. The content of the resolution was telegraphed to south Wales that evening.\textsuperscript{40}

Monday morning saw the suspension of all goods traffic, with just a few passenger trains worked by officials and ‘blacklegs’. Bell arrived in the morning and in the evening he wrote a letter to Beasley requesting a meeting with the directors to resolve the dispute. This met with an absolute refusal to meet with anyone but the men.

Although the strike had just commenced there was violence and sabotage on the first day; for example around Pontypridd, a driver and fireman were kidnapped at Coke Ovens, and not far away, at Hafod, signalling and telegraph wires were cut. Such actions prompted the company to offer a £100 reward for information. Apart from the signalmen, who had handed in their notices by August 6, the other strikers were in breach of contract, and the company was quick to obtain summonses in the local police courts. By Wednesday two men, found guilty of violence against a chargeman, were given prison sentences, and those tried for breach of contract were required to pay damages of up to ten pounds per man;\textsuperscript{41} legal action of both types was to continue. The organization of the pickets was very effective and reached across the company’s network, whether in turning back ‘blacklegs’ at Cardiff GWR station or harassing the crews of the few trains that the company managed to operate.\textsuperscript{42} The effectiveness of the picketing prompted the company to seek injunctions against Bell and Holmes on the Thursday, and such was the intensity of feeling generated by the strike, that the local press was voicing fears of a ‘general labour war’.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{38} Pontypridd Observer, August 18, 1900, p4\textsuperscript{39} Pontypridd Observer, August 4, 1900, p4\textsuperscript{40} P S Bagwell, The Railwaymen, p215-6\textsuperscript{41} Merthyr Express, August 25, 1900, p 3\textsuperscript{42} See P S Bagwell, The Railwaymen, p218-9\textsuperscript{43} Merthyr Express, August 25, 1900, p8
become involved in an attempt at mediation. The turning point came when two letters were published in the *Times* on Friday, August 24; one was from James Inskip, who when chairman of the Taff Vale in 1890 was willing to negotiate with Edward Harford, the ASRS General Secretary, face to face, and the other from Sir W T Lewis, the influential south Wales industrialist with dock, coal and railway interests. Inskip wrote that it was lamentable that the directors had not seen fit to meet with Bell, and Lewis proposed a conciliation board for the railways of south Wales. The letters assisted Mr Hopwood from the BoT, but he had to return to London on Monday, August 27 before a settlement had been reached. But whilst a final settlement had eluded him, he had persuaded the men to abandon the issue of union recognition. The sticking points were the re-employment of all strikers, and the retention of ‘blacklegs’. At that point Lewis stepped in and with the cooperation of Russell Rea, a director of the TVR, the two met with Bell and Holmes and eventually a settlement was reached late on the Thursday evening, whereby the strikers would be reinstated within one month, plus a nod towards Lewis’s proposed four-company conciliation board. In reporting this, the editor of the *Merthyr Express* pointed out that both Hopwood and Lewis had dealt directly with ASRS officials, with Lewis acting as ‘the ASRS mouthpiece’. And commented that, ‘It is morally certain that Mr Bell and Mr Holmes would have made not less strenuous efforts on behalf of peace had they spoken face to face with the directors and Mr Beasley…Certain it is that the men’s own feeling would have been mollified by…recognition of this principle…In all likelihood…Ewington would have been called upon to accept the company’s offer in regard to himself, and there would have been no strike.’

On the following morning the settlement was ratified by the men and the strike officially ended at 10:30am on Friday, August 31. Prior to the settlement it had been agreed to refer Ewington’s case to the BoT, and there is no reference to improvements in pay and conditions in the settlement, only the establishment of a conciliation board; the rest dealt with the re-employment of the strikers with no break in service or loss of pension rights, and the withdrawal of legal action. Even on the Saturday morning Beasley was refusing to re-employ all of the strikers and it took a further intervention by Lewis to secure full re-employment. Normal Train service was resumed on Saturday, September 1.

*Fig 3: One of a series of contemporary newspaper cartoons: Welsh Railways Research Circle Archive, TV103, Cartoons re 1900 Strike, 5; W T Lewis promotes Conciliation Boards*

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44 *Merthyr Express*, Sept. 1, 1900, p3
46 Ibid, p5
Free Labour

The key weapon, which Ammon Beasley sought to employ against his striking workers, was ‘Free Labour’, principally from the National Free Labour Association (NFLA), whereby he hoped to undermine the effects of the strike by obtaining an alternative workforce. At the time of the 1890 strike Ben Tillett, fresh from victory in the London Docks, sought to take the message and his union across the land, and particularly to south Wales. His arrival at Cardiff in 1890 coincided with the threatened strike on the four railways that served the coalfields of the Cardiff hinterland and also in the docks along its coast. Tillett was ready to give his support, and spoke at mass meetings of railwaymen, but at the same time the Shipping Federation was formed by the employers to counter the trade unionist threat, and was foremost in the creation and encouragement of ‘free labour’. This was a pool of men who could be mobilised at short notice to enable employers to break strikes. These could be very effective when replacing the unskilled labour represented by the ‘new unionism’, but less effective when called upon to replace those with skills that had to be learnt, for example railway trainmen and signallers.

The ‘free labour’ movement, which was to play a significant part in the 1900 strike, came to attention in TVR Board minutes in 1895 when the NFLA wrote to the Taff

Vale to interest the company in its services. The directors’ immediate response was to consult with other companies; the outcome of which, after a further exchange of letters with the Association, was apparently to decline membership and/or support. But in anticipation of the 1900 strike Beasley contacted the NFLA, and the experience with ‘free labour’ during the dispute, changed attitudes and resulted in a very positive response to a similar approach in the aftermath. When asked to support the establishment of a Cardiff branch of the organisation in April 1902, encouragement was offered and the sum of £50 given towards the cost of establishing the branch. Besides arrangements to bring ‘free labour’ from major employment centres such as Glasgow, Manchester and London, advertisements appeared in national newspapers from August 17, 1900 which attracted over two hundred applicants. Lists of imported men expected at Cardiff suggest that at least 500 men made the journey, although with some mass contingents the exact number is not recorded against the scheduled arrival time of their train. The ‘free labour’ contingents were apparently a mix of railwaymen and non-railwaymen, and ‘after the strike was over Mr Beasley admitted that although “400” men came to Cardiff from all parts of the country…only “about 190” were found suitable.’ Given the purpose of the free labour contingents it is unlikely that many intended to stay, but the 200 individual railwaymen, in varying grades, probably had other intentions. This enthusiasm on the part of men from other companies to become strikebreakers, was demonstrated in 1890, 1895 and 1900, and the question needs to be asked as to what encouraged them to leave their current employer to travel to a different part of Britain, to unfamiliar and potentially hostile localities. Some may have been unemployed, whilst others may have been attracted by higher wages; the promised rates of pay were included in the newspaper advertisements, and presumably were attractive to those who responded. During the 1890 strike Harford claimed that the companies were offering better pay and conditions than that sought by their current employees. And commented that, ‘If the directors could offer these wages to men whom they knew nothing of, why could they not give the same wages to men of established character, who had been in their employ for over 20 or 30 years?’ The point would have been lost on the Taff Vale directors.

The company had planned well for the strike and the ‘imported men’ or ‘blacklegs’ were accommodated in the Paint Shop at Cathays Works, with dormitory style accommodation and institutional catering from a makeshift kitchen, photographs of which survive (see Fig.4). But it had not anticipated the effectiveness of the picketing, due mainly to the large number of men willing to take part, and the efficiency of their organization from a strike headquarters set up in the Colborn Hotel, Cardiff. Pickets were not just deployed in Cardiff and at TVR premises, but also at Paddington station in

48 NA RAIL 684/10, TVR Directors’ Minute Book No.10, May 28, 1895, Min.1547, June 11, 1895, Min.1555 & June 25, 1895, Min.1569; the exact content of the correspondence is not recorded, but the secretary is instructed not to reply to a second approach from the NFLA.

49 NA RAIL 684/11, TVR Directors’ Minute Book No.11, April 22, 1902, Min.810.

50 NA RAIL 1057/1791, TVR v. ASRS: Account of Strike, 1900-02 Parts I & II, List of new men employed, & Men sent back after strike.


52 Merthyr Express, August 16, 1890, p8.

53 NA RAIL 1057/1791, TVR v. ASRS: Account of Strike, 1900-02, Part III Photographs.
London, and at Newport station in south Wales. This enabled the Cardiff headquarters to have advance warning of the arrival of the ‘blacklegs’, and this was effective even in the middle of the night. At 2:0 am on August 23, Richard Bell met a group of forty men at Cardiff GWR station when they arrived from London. ‘Since many of them had been unaware that a strike was in progress he had no difficulty in persuading twenty-eight of them to take the next train back to London.’

Many would-be ‘blacklegs’ had an all-expenses-paid trip to south Wales, with the NFLA ‘paying all expenses from London and other centres to Cardiff, and the ASRS meeting all expenses of the 166 men out of the 197 who were persuaded to return to their homes.’

The chief protagonists of ‘free labour’, the Shipping Federation, were naturally pleased by the 1901 ruling that a trade union could be sued in its own name, and wrote to the Taff Vale board to express their appreciation of what had been achieved.

Fig 4: One of five photographs of facilities provided for the ‘imported men’ at Cathays Works: NA RAIL 1057/1791, TVR v. ASRS: Account of Strike, 1900-02, Part III Photographs (5)

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54 TVR v. ASRS, December 11, 1902. Evidence of R Bell, Q5075 cited in P S Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p218
55 TVR v. ASRS, December 11, 1902. Evidence of Mr H M Ingleden, Q4822 cited in P S Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p217
56 NA RAIL 684/11 *T.V.R. Directors’ Minutes Book No.11*, Jan. 28, 1900, Min. 466
Other than the NFLA recruits the individuals were probably either current or previous railwaymen and came from a wide range of companies, and whilst from all over Great Britain, they came predominately from London, north west England and Scotland. The critical issue as negotiations entered the final phase was the rate of reinstatement of existing employees and the timing of the departure of the ‘imported men’. This was a sticking point for Beasley, as he was determined to have the final word on who, he should, or should not employ. Various figures were published for the number of imported men remaining from the optimistic, and clearly inaccurate, figure of thirty from the *Merthyr Express* on September 8, to a figure of 76 in the *Railway News* of February 16, 1901.57

The *Merthyr Express* noted the men’s irritation over a statement by Beasley on the eve of the settlement expressing ‘the view that the terms of the settlement gave the company a free hand with regards to the dismissal or retention of the imported workmen.’, and as to employees dismissed for refusal to obey orders during the strike, ‘he also contended that they were excluded from the terms of the settlement.’58 As noted above it took a further intervention from Lewis on the Saturday morning to resolve the matter, and work resumed ‘on the promise that all the strikers should be reinstated according to seniority in their respective grades’ within the month. The issue of the imported men was never resolved, despite repeated attempts by the men to persuade the company to remove them, as with the deputation to see the directors in January 1901,59 and there were also allegations of partiality being shown to these men.60 In this matter Beasley had had his way, and at the Grouping in 1922 twelve imported-locomens were still in the employ of the Taff Vale.61

**1890 & 1900 compared**

In 1900 various comparisons were made with the strike of 1890, when, in a remarkable show of unity, almost the entire non-clerical workforce of four railway companies had struck for reduced hours, a guaranteed week and improved pay. Although seriously affected by the stoppage almost every section of the community, with the principal exception of the boards of directors, was sympathetic to the men’s cause. In an editorial from 1900 the writer claims that the strike had originated because of alleged victimization, but that the emphasis had changed when the company refused to meet with the men’s representative; ‘Against this the Directors have set their faces with characteristic firmness...’. The editor, of this Liberal newspaper, was critical of this stance, and accepted that the men had a good case, comparing the position of the directors *vis-à-vis* the shareholders, with the men’s representatives and the men. Recalling the 1890 Strike, which had started with similar antagonism from the directors, points out that the men’s representative was met, and the dispute was settled. He then singled out railways as being of a different order to other enterprises with their

58 *Merthyr Express*, September 8, 1900, p4
59 NA RAIL 684/11 T.V.R. Directors’ Minutes Book No.11, Jan. 28, 1900, Min. 465
60 Ibid, Min 466
Parliamentary grant of a monopoly in an area. This being the case, he asks, should not Parliament have provided a mechanism for the avoidance of strikes.\textsuperscript{52}

In 1890 the Cardiff Chamber of Commerce had been criticized for their support of the railway directors in their opposition to dealing directly with the ASRS, but in 1900 they discussed the possibility of arbitration with ASRS representatives. Although the press was cynical of the Chamber’s motivation, it does appear to indicate a change in attitude among Cardiff’s business community. On both occasions the Mayor of Cardiff had also offered to act as a mediator, and along with that of the Chamber of Commerce in 1900, such offers of mediation were rejected by the company, but they were prepared, or perhaps felt obliged, to accept that of the BoT.\textsuperscript{63}

Two major industrialists and coalowners, D A Thomas and Sir W T Lewis, had routinely been willing to speak with the miners’ representatives such as William Abraham (Mabon) and David Morgan, from before 1890, and expressed their disappointment at the failure of Beasley and the TVR Board to do the same with respect to Bell and Holmes. Thomas, who was the Liberal MP for Merthyr throughout this period, showed active support for the men and their union during both strikes. In 1890 he advised the men to not alienate the public, to avoid extreme language, to not eschew mediation, and if it comes to a strike ‘remember that union is strength and stick loyally to one another like men.’\textsuperscript{64} And then after the 1900 strike he gave financial support for the defence of Holmes, by providing a loan to permit the briefing of counsel.\textsuperscript{65} This was perhaps all the more remarkable as he was a director of the TVR from 1891 to 1896 and again from 1909 to 1916.

Lewis’s role in the settlement has been described above, and mention made of his proposed conciliation board; this latter solution to industrial strife was a reiteration of a similar proposal made at the time of the railway and dock disputes of 1890. Lewis has had a reputation for uncompromising anti-unionism, and Daunton specifically links Beasley and Lewis, declaring that they were ‘clever and unscrupulous in their dealing with labour disputes, weaving a web of such complexity and confusion that the unions were usually trapped and reduced to frantic but useless writhings.’\textsuperscript{66} This in part describes Beasley’s handling of the 1900 dispute, but in respect to mediation and arbitration Lewis can be seen as more pragmatic and possibly more progressive than his contemporary. However it might have been more true to type when he had been involved with the formation of the Free Labour Protection Association in July 1897.\textsuperscript{67}

**The Aftermath of 1900**

In its ‘Gossip’ column the *Merthyr Express* of September 15 carried an optimistic report that the railwaymen were pleased with the proposed conciliation boards, and were further encouraged by support from Sir Fortescue Flannery of the Railway Companies

\textsuperscript{62} *Merthyr Express*, August 25, 1900, p5

\textsuperscript{63} *Merthyr Express*, Sept. 1, 1900, p3

\textsuperscript{64} *Merthyr Express*, August 9, 1890, p3

\textsuperscript{65} G W Alcock, *Fifty Years*, p313

\textsuperscript{66} M J Daunton, *Coal Metropolis: Cardiff, 1870-1914* (Leicester, 1977) p189

The deadline for the creation of the local conciliation board had been set as October 31, and ten days previous a mass meeting of railwaymen noted that the proposal was before the four local companies, and passed a motion in support, with a proviso that, should the proposal not be accepted, they would form a board in combination with the miners and other trade unions. Sir W T Lewis’s proposal did not come to fruition, in part due to the refusal of Ammon Beasley to allow any other organization to have a say in the management of his railway. When the matter was discussed by the TVR Board on November 6, it was resolved: ‘That Sir William Lewis be informed that the Directors cannot consent to depute the management of the staff to any outside body.’ On October 3 Richard Bell had become the first railwayman to be elected to Parliament, as the junior member for Derby, and one of his declared intentions was to amend the 1896 Conciliation Act, such that it would be unlawful to refuse to meet the elected representative of the men.

The Board of Trade ruled on the treatment of John Ewington and the decision was received by the company on Monday, October 22; the ruling was that Ewington had initially been treated unfairly, but that the company’s final offer was fair. Having rejected that offer he was not reinstated, and by April, 1901 he was working as coal hewer.

One piece of legal action, which was not withdrawn, was the injunction against Bell and Holmes, and although it was not considered to be possible to sue the union in its own name under existing legislation, the Trade Union Acts of 1871 and 1876, Beasley persisted. An interim injunction was granted on August 31 and on September 5 Mr Justice Farwell ruled that a trade union could be sued in its own name. The ASRS appealed, and on November 12 the Master of the Rolls and two other law lords reversed the decision, ruling in favour of the ASRS. But that was not to be the end and against the advice of the TVR’s solicitors, at Beasley’s insistence the lawyers acting for the TVR took the case to the Lords, and on July 22, 1901 judgement was given in the company’s favour.

It was not, however, until Friday, December 13, 1901 that the claim for damages was lodged and nearly twelve months later, on Wednesday, December 3, 1902, that the hearing of the damages case commenced before a jury. The hearing lasted until December 19, and the sum of £23,000 awarded to the Taff Vale was paid by the due date of March 23, 1903. In 1902, before the case for damages was heard, Richard Bell decided that it was not appropriate for Society funds to be used in defence of James Holmes, as he had exposed the union and its members to legal action, and Bell engineered an objection to the funding of his defence. But Holmes’ popularity ensured that a defence fund was created, which only succeeding in raising the necessary amount in time by a short-term loan from D A Thomas, and when that was due, a donation and interest free loan from ASLEF in January 1903.

68 Merthyr Express, Sept. 15, 1900, p5
69 Merthyr Express, October 27, 1900, p4
70 NA Rail 684/11 T.V.R. Directors’ Minutes Book No.11, Nov. 6, 1900, Min. 382
71 Merthyr Express, October 27, 1900, p5
72 NC RG13/ Parish of Llanwonno
73 P S Bagwell, The Railwaymen, p223
74 G W Alcock, Fifty Years ,pp313-4
Not surprisingly tensions ran high on resumption of work, and this cost at least one brakesman his job when he was dismissed for ‘using abusive language towards one of the imported men on the Company’s property & for being under the influence of drink whilst on duty’.75 Continuing discontent of the men with respect to the retention of ‘imported men’ and the non-reengagement of former employees were two of the issues raised with the General Manager at a meeting with the men’s representatives on November 26, along with an improvement in pay for all signalmen. The directors decided that no action could be taken at that time, neither would they grant an across the board for the pay increase, but a concession was made for relief signalmen.76 At their meeting on January 22, 1901 the directors took the opportunity to remove a further representative of the signalmen, when following consideration of the report into a collision, they directed that Moses Jones should not be re-employed as a signalmen. They did offer him a more junior post at some distance from his home,57 which apparently he did not accept, and the ASRS awarded him a fifty pound victim’s allowance.78 At the same meeting the directors intimated that they would receive a delegation consisting of one man from each grade on the following Monday, but they declined to discuss the formation of a conciliation board. The men sent their deputation to the directors on January 28,1901 to argue for the removal of the ‘imported men’; they made no further headway.79

The Legal Issues

The legal framework under which industrial relations were conducted in 1890 and 1900 relied on Acts of Parliament enacted between 1871 and 1876, which had clarified or replaced earlier legislation. An 1859 act had established that ‘…peaceful persuasion to induce workmen to abstain from working, in order to raise their wages was lawful.’80 In the Royal Commission, prior to the Trades Disputes Act 1871, the issue of whether a trade union was a legal entity was considered but not established; it highlighted that it was not feasible to sue every individual member of a union. Under this law trade unions could settle disputes with regard to union property, but it was assumed, not sue outside bodies or be sued by them. It also had removed the idea of conspiracy from the conduct of trade union affairs. The Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act of 1875 repealed the 1859 measure, but replaced it with a more strongly worded section on picketing. However it stated that acts done ‘by two or more persons…in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute’ did not render themselves liable to criminal prosecution. It specifically outlawed violence and ‘watching and besetting’, although attending outside homes or workplaces for gathering or promulgating information

75 G Griffith, DES Oct 12, 1891, NA RAIL 684/96
76 NA RAIL 684/11, TVR Directors’ Minute Book No. 11, Dec. 18,1900, Min 418
77 Ibid, Jan. 22, 1901, Min 443
78 ASRS EC Minutes March 11, 1901, Min 63 cited in High Court of Justice: TVR v. ASRS: Chronological History, p28
79 NA RAIL 684/11, TVR Directors’ Minute Book No. 11, Jan. 28,1901, Mins 465-6
would not be regarded as watching or besetting. The Act of 1876 simply tidied up issues arising out of operation of the 1871 legislation.\textsuperscript{81}

Thus from 1876 it was widely assumed that trade unions could function effectively without fear of the law, although until the 1890s no attempts were made to test that assumption. But as McCord has revealed the Judicature Act of 1873 had made changes to the legal system, the significance of which, had not been noticed by employers or unions.\textsuperscript{82} This piece of legislation combined Common Law with Equity, which had previously been separate systems, and, an introduction from the Equity to the Common Law courts, brought the concept of ‘representative action’, which, potentially, got around the difficulty of suing each individual member of a trade union. This feature of law was not clarified by the courts in prominent cases such as \textit{Spink v. Federation of Trades} (1899) or \textit{Allen v. Flood} (1897), or even by the Royal Commission on Labour (1891-4), which accepted that a union could not sue or be sued in court except with regard to its own property, as understood from the 1871 Act.\textsuperscript{83} It was to take the dispute of 1900 and the dogged persistence of Ammon Beasley to discover the weakness, when the ruling of Justice Farwell, that a trade union could be sued in its own name was upheld by the House of Lords. Various attempts were made to change the law and nullify the effect of this ruling, once the implications for collective action had been realised, but these were to be unsuccessful until after the return of a more sympathetic government in 1905. The Trades Dispute Act of 1906 was the outcome and established in law the immunity from prosecution that trade unions had assumed they possessed from 1876.

\textbf{The Political Issues}

James Holmes the ASRS organizer, who came to national prominence during the Taff Vale dispute, had already made history in 1899 by persuading the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to support the creation of a Parliamentary Election Fund to facilitate the entry of representatives of Labour into Parliament. The ASRS was also prominent in the meeting of February 27 and 28, 1900 at which the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) was created, with the aim of setting up a separate political party which would decide its own agenda independent of the existing parties.\textsuperscript{84} Although the fund had been approved by a majority at the TUC, only a limited number of unions initially affiliated. But as the outcome of the legal action following the settlement of the Taff Vale strike became more clear the number of affiliations rose rapidly; from the end of 1900 to the following summer forty-one unions had signed up, but once the Lords had ruled, between spring 1902 and winter 1903 a further 127 unions had joined.\textsuperscript{85} In the years running up to the election of 1905 discussions were underway between Ramsey MacDonald of the LRC and Herbert Gladstone of the Liberal party that resulted in an electoral pact which secured the election of twenty-nine LRC candidates. When

\textsuperscript{81} H A Clegg, et al, \textit{A History of British Trade Union}, p45-6
\textsuperscript{82} Norman McCord, \textit{Taff Vale Revisited, History}, Vol.78, No.253, 1993, pp243-60
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid, p250
\textsuperscript{84} P S Bagwell, \textit{The Railwaymen}, pp206-7
the new Parliament assembled on February 12, 1906 the twenty nine, plus one more, declared themselves to be a new political party, the Labour Party.

**Conclusion**

Taff Vale is often listed with Peterloo and Tolpuddle as one of the pivotal moments in Labour history. As a strike it was a failure; its aims were not achieved, and it placed trade unions in a position of weakness. Yet as the writer in the souvenir booklet from the 1906 AGM of the ASRS commented, ‘Looking back upon the Taff Vale dispute and the momentous legal decisions which followed, we realise that the failure of the strike produced results far more beneficial and widespread than its success could possibly have accomplished. That which in 1900 appeared to be a serious disaster, has since proved to be a blessing in disguise [sic]. The Taff Vale dispute and decisions are indelibly stamped upon the history of Trade Unionism, and have done more to educate the rank and file of the workers to the economic necessities of their position than any previous decisions in history.’

In considering Ammon Beasley; what made a man so obstinate, to cling on to an outmoded principle, when he could clearly see the world changing around him? He was not alone among general managers, there were many others such as Lord Claud Hamilton of the Great Eastern, who refused any hint of recognition to trade unions, but the future lay with men like George Gibb of the North Eastern, who had submitted a dispute to arbitration as early as 1897. However before Beasley ever came to the Taff Vale there were those such as Chairman James Inskip, and a director, D A Thomas, of his own company prepared to treat with union leaders and independent arbitrators. And there is a whiff of hypocrisy, for Vassall and Beasley would speak to W T Lewis who in turn had spoken with Richard Bell, and TVR director Russell Rea met with both Lewis and Bell at a joint meeting during the strike.

He was indeed a man of considerable ability who kept to his principles, but his obstinacy was to achieve the very opposite of the principle for which he was fighting. Trade union liability for damages during a strike was reversed, and the workmen now had their own political party, which would one day take the railways into state ownership. All of that may well have happened without Ammon Beasley, but he did add considerable momentum to the process.

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86 G W Alcock, *Fifty Years*, pp312-3
87 G J Alderman, *The Railway Interest 1870-1914* (Leicester, 1973) p165
Fig 5: A modern cartoon illustrating the effects of the Trades Disputes Act 1906 by Steve Bell for the cover of - Geoff Revell, The Story of the Taff Vale Railway Strike (RMT, London, 2006) – The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, or RMT, is the present day successor of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (used by kind permission of Steve Bell).