

**Fight for your rights!**



## Cardiff Dock Strike, 1891

*Shipping Federation unfair to seamen!*

Seamen's wages were set each time they signed up for a new voyage.

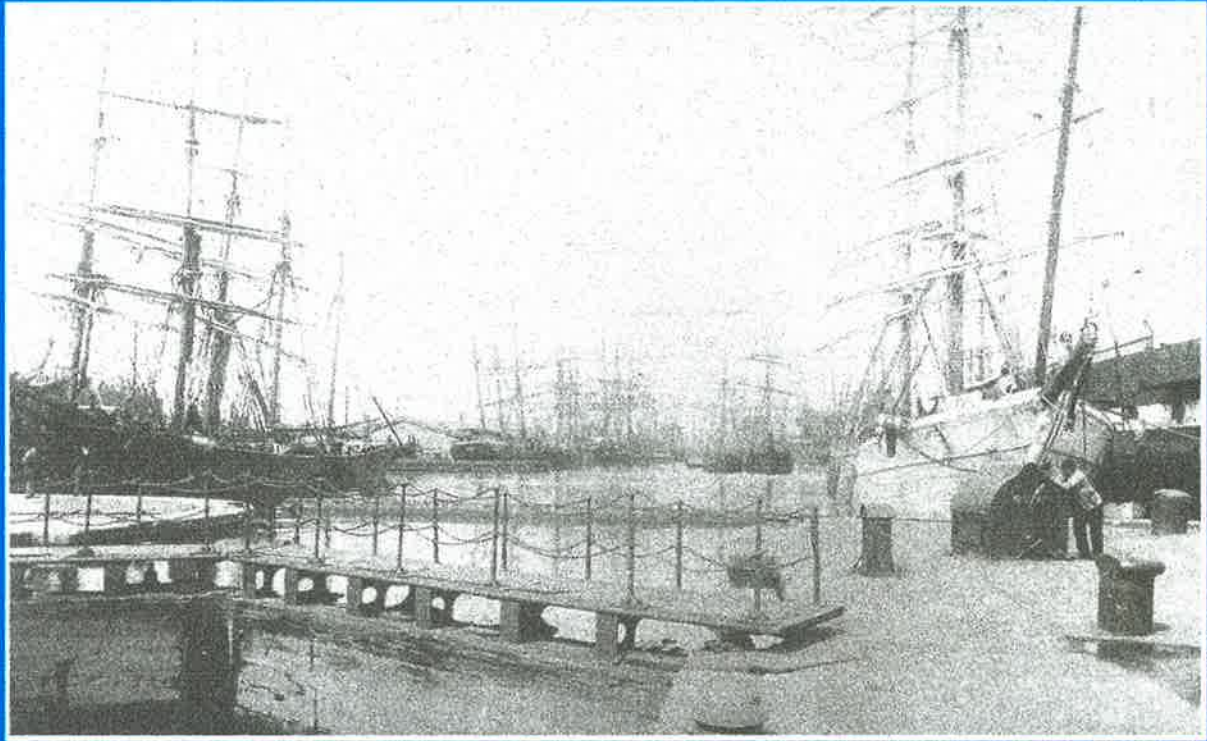
Boarding house keepers would give seamen credit for one month's pay, but once seamen ran out of money, they had to sign on for work, whatever the pay.



Trade Union demonstration, 1890

## *Seamen strike – demand fixed wage*

The Dock Strike started on 5 February 1891. Strikers demanded fixed wages and that only union members would be given work.



Cardiff Docks, c.1890

## *Dockers and coal tippers strike in support of seamen*

The Seamen's Union needed the support of all dock workers and their unions to make their voice heard. The Dockers Union joined the strike, but they were not strong. Coal tippers also struck in support but they did not issue their own demands.



Strike supporters, including women and children, 1891

## *Strike fails – no fixed wage yet for seamen*

The unions were not strong enough to take on the Shipping Federation and make them agree to a fixed rate for seamen.

The trimmers, dockers and seamen all had different demands and did not strike together. If they had coordinated, their action might have been more effective.



Trade Union demonstration

## **Taff Vale Railway Strike, 1900**

*1,000 railway union members strike over unfair treatment of one worker*

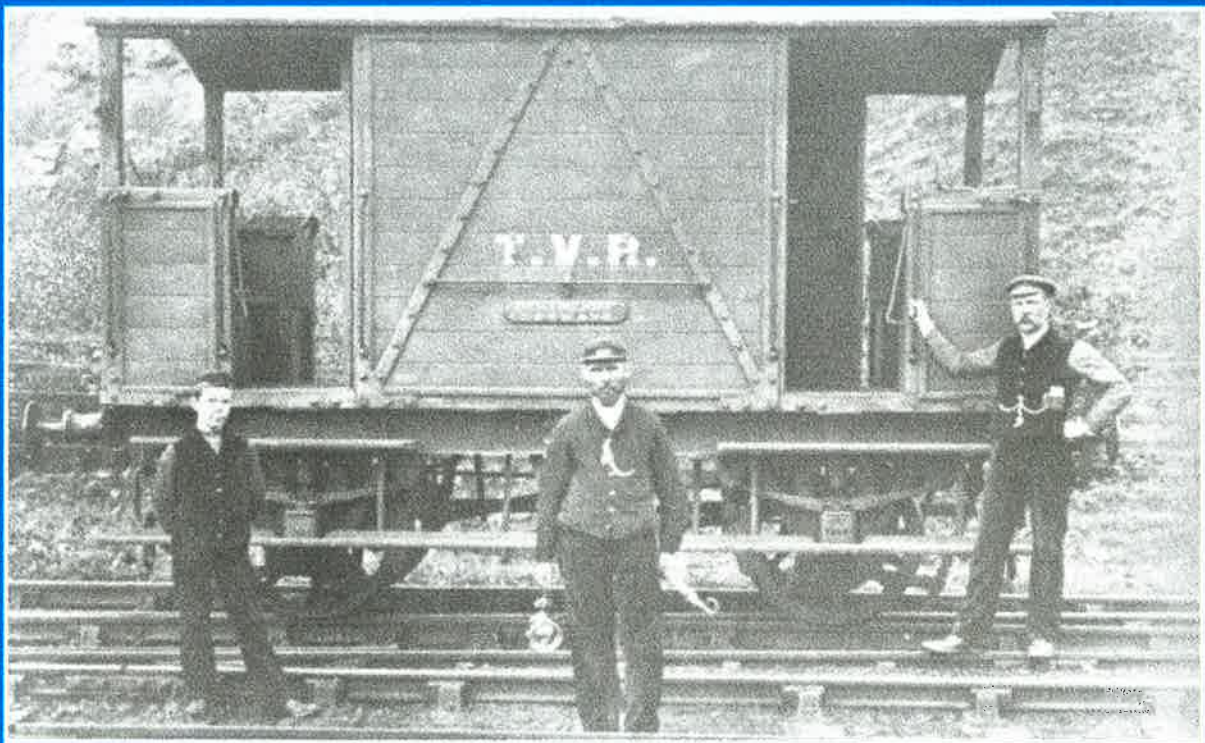
The Taff Vale Railway (TVR) Company did not allow their workers to form themselves into a union to complain about shared grievances. Although many of its workers were members of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS), the company did not recognize it.

Railway men worked long, irregular hours and as the TVR Company was determined to keep costs down, wage increases were unlikely.

On 20 August 1900, 98% of TVR workers went out on strike, prompted by the unfair treatment of John Ewington, who had been refused higher pay and was punished for his requests by being moved to a different station. Some strikers had not given the full two weeks notice to management that was required.

Strikers tried to stop the railway from running by putting grease on railway inclines, uncoupling the wagons and preventing the strikebreakers (blacklegs) from working.

Strikers wanted to form a union, or a conciliation board so their grievances could be heard and dealt with properly. They also wanted the removal of all blacklegs.



TVR workers, 1900

*House of Lords upholds £23,000 damages  
to company for lost business*

The TVR Company prosecuted the ASRS, and in 1901 the House of Lords ruled that the union was responsible for the strike and its effects. They ordered that they had to pay £23,000 to the TVR Company for loss of earnings and £25,000 in legal costs.

**TAFF VALE RAILWAY.**

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**NOTICE.**

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THERE WILL BE

**NO TRAINS RUN**

BY THIS COMPANY,

**ON SUNDAY,**

**AUGUST 26<sup>TH</sup>.**

**A. BEASLEY,**

Cardiff, August 24th, 1900. GENERAL MANAGER.

Poster announcing that no trains would run due to strike.



## *Blow for unions – can now be sued for strikes*

Known as the Taff Vale Judgement, this effectively made union members responsible for a company's loss of earnings during a strike. Striking became useless as a method of fighting for workers' rights.



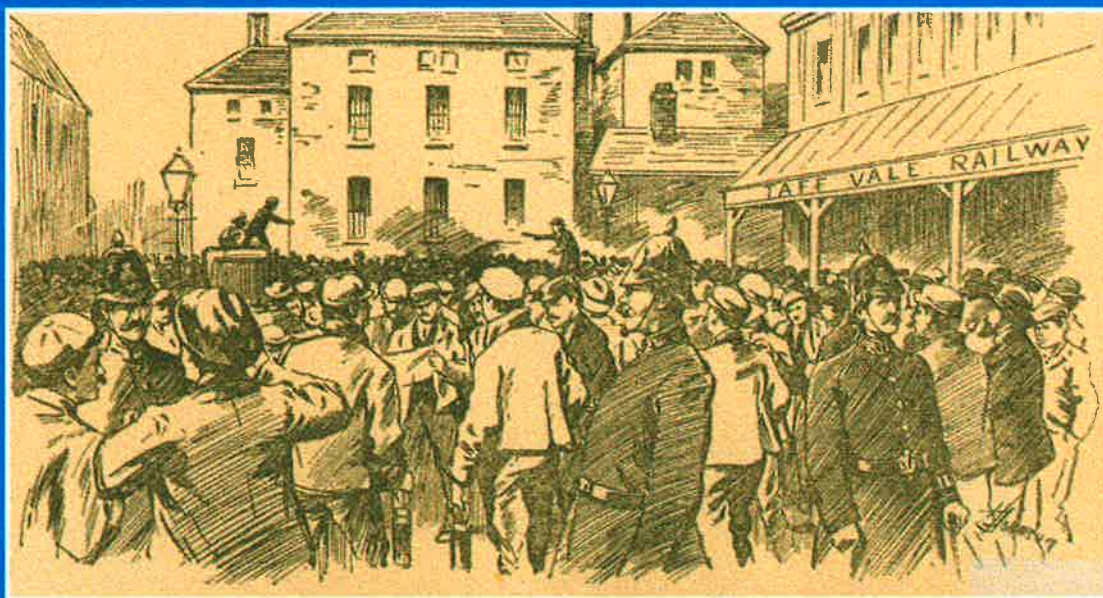
Pickets outside the Taff Vale Railway office

## *But...Trade Disputes Act 1906 passed!*

After the Taff Vale Judgement, union leaders realized that it was important to have laws to protect workers. They needed MPs in Parliament that would represent and support workers' and union rights.

More working class men stood and were elected to Parliament. The Taff Vale Strike and Judgement also directly led to the development of the Labour Party.

Keir Hardie, the country's first Independent Labour MP was elected in 1901 and his Trades Dispute Act was passed in 1906. No longer could unions be sued for loss of earnings during a strike.



Cartoon from The Daily Graphic

## Seamen's Strike, 1911

### *Cardiff seamen strike for better conditions and pay*

Seamen's work was casual and there was no minimum wage. Cardiff seamen's wage rates were the lowest in Britain.

Seamen wanted a standard wage, overtime payments and a conciliation board, where the unions, ship owners and the Shipping Federation could discuss and resolve issues. They began to strike on 14 June 1911.

'Captain' Tupper encouraged the action and organized pickets to prevent work continuing during the strike.



Banner announcing strike

## *Ship owners bring in labour to break strike, Chinese seamen attacked*

Some violent scenes erupted when striking seamen and Tupper tried to stop ship owners bringing seamen in from other ports to do the work of the strikers. A ship in Roath Basin was stormed by the strikers when Tupper told a crowd that it had Chinese sailors on board waiting to sign on.



Chinese seamen under police escort.

## *Innocent Chinese living in the city caught up in violence*

Tensions overspilled and the longstanding Chinese community living in Cardiff was attacked. On the night of the 20 July all but one of the laundries in the city run by the Chinese community were attacked.



One of the Chinese laundries attacked by rioters.

## *Seamen's strike over, management meets most of their demands*

The strike eventually finished at the end of August following a settlement which the Lord Mayor helped to negotiate in City Hall.

This time, unlike in the Seamen's Strike of 1891, all dockworkers supported the seamen's cause and stopped work in sympathy.

A fixed wage rate was finally achieved and seamen who were paid monthly also gained pay increases of up to 17%. There would be no overtime payments though.



Celebrating the end of the Seamen's Strike

## Laundry Workers' Charter, 1911

### *Female laundry workers strike in Cardiff* *Strike lacks organisation*

The summer of 1911 saw 'labour troubles' in Cardiff, as workers from several industries came out on strike, protesting about conditions, workers rights and pay. Hauliers and brewery workers were pictured by the Western Mail on the 25 July encouraging others to strike, and women workers also protested.

Cigar girls from J R Freemans and Sons, bottling girls and laundry workers were said to be roaming the streets of Cardiff, with no clear leaders, organisation or direction.



Dowlais steel workers holding a meeting during the 1911 strikes.

## *Cardiff branch of Women's Labour League gives leadership*

Mrs Schofield, Secretary of the Cardiff branch of the Women's Labour League organised a meeting at the Ruskin Institute to help and advise the girls. She and Margaret Bondfield (then Secretary of the Women's Labour League, she would later become the UK's first female Cabinet minister) searched Cardiff's streets and parks for striking women, holding impromptu meetings to encourage their support and action.

On that Monday night a march was held, the long procession of women walking under the banner of the Worker's Union.

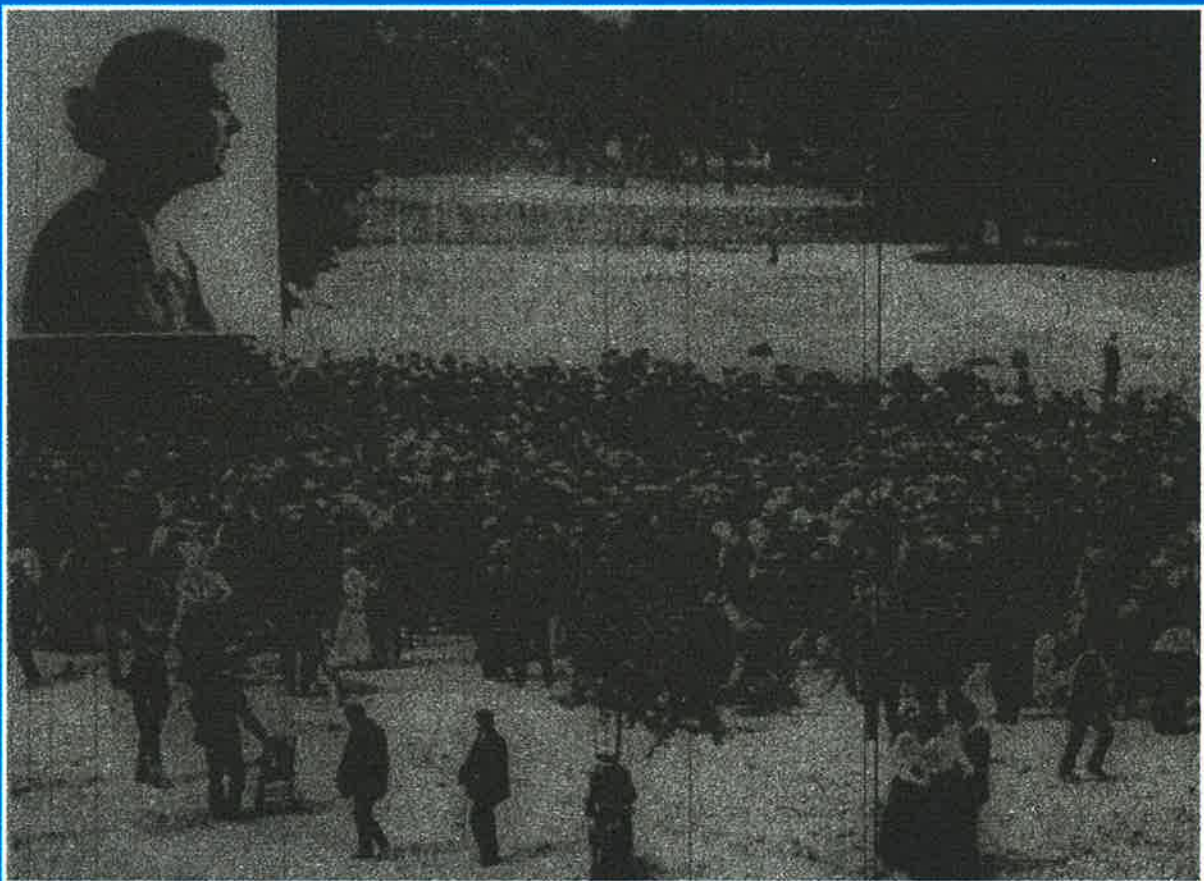
The following day, assisted by Matt Giles (full time organiser for the Worker's Union in South Wales), the League analysed the protestors and realised the larger number were laundry workers. Throughout the day they worked to recruit more to their cause.



*Committee of strikers drafts LAUNDRY WORKERS  
CHARTER*

*Charter sets out acceptable working conditions  
in laundries*

On the Wednesday, a meeting of laundry workers was held in a crowded Cory Hall. After electing a committee, who then left to draft the Laundry Workers' Charter in another room, the rest of the meeting entertained themselves with an impromptu concert!



Laundry strike photographs in the Western Mail.

## *Dispute settled amicably*

The laundry employers contacted the Union for talks even before the Charter had been finished. Both Matt Giles and Margaret Bondfield attended and spoke to the association of employers that had been established that morning.

Bondfield described, "the negotiators were businesslike and eager for a settlement; we came to terms in a friendly spirit, and the charter which lifts this industry from chaos to ordered progress, was signed."



Margaret Bondfield

## General Strike, 1926

*Big fall in coal prices! Mine owners call for lower wages, longer working days*

After rejecting a 13% wage reduction and an extra hour on the working day as proposed by the Government, miners were locked out of pits across the country on the 30 April 1926.

Over the next two days, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) tried to reach an agreement with the Government and mine owners, but the Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin called off the negotiations.



Welfare Miners Road Race, 1926

## *3 million on general strike in support of miners*

The key industries of transport, printing, docks, iron and steelworks came out in support of the miners creating a general strike.



Women boiling water during the General Strike.

## *Cardiff city, docks and transport come to standstill*

In Cardiff a central strike committee was set up in Charles Street. On 4 May transport, printing, iron and steel workers stopped work, followed eight days later by shipwrights and boilermakers. Local labour halls were used as meeting and organization centres.



Children outside Splott Labour Hall, waiting for soup.

## ***SEAMEN NEED COAL EXPORT WORK*** *– urge miners to end strike and accept lower wages*

However, Cardiff's seamen refused to support the strike. They relied on the miners for their work, shipping Welsh coal out to the world. They even called on the miners to work longer hours for the sake of unemployed seamen. Many of Cardiff's business people and middle class also supported the Government.



Special constables guarding the buses that continued to run during the General Strike.

*General strike over...Starvation forces miners back to work on employers' terms*

After ten days the TUC called off the strike and the miners continued alone. With no other support they were eventually forced back to work, for longer hours and less pay.



General Strike over

## Allied Steel and Wire Pensions Protests, 2002-2007

### *Cardiff's Allied Steel and Wire company in receivership*

Allied Steel and Wire (ASW) was formed in 1981 through a partnership between British Steel and Guest, Keen and Nettles. Britain's second largest steel company, it employed around 1,000 people in Cardiff.

Cheap European imports, the increasing cost of materials and a big drop in the stock market forced ASW into receivership on 10 July, 2002.

The company's property and goods were sold to repay the money it owed to their creditors, and it was announced the pension scheme would be cut. Those workers who had paid into the scheme all their lives would not get their full pensions.



*Over 800 steelworkers lose jobs  
Shock as redundant workers lose pensions*

● Around 800 in Cardiff lost their jobs and their pensions.



Allied Steel and Wire pension protest, Cardiff

## *Angry protests in Cardiff and London*

From 2002, marches in Cardiff were organized, and protestors sought support at the Labour Party conference. Vigils and protests were held outside Westminster and the Senedd to put pressure on the Government to pay the pensions in full, and for new laws to protect worker's pensions.

The Government set up the Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) in 2004 to help workers get up to 90% of their pensions by paying them compensation. That year the Pensions Act was also passed, improving the running of pension schemes and setting up the Pension Protection Fund to provide benefits to those who had paid into pension schemes but had received no pensions.

However, this Fund would only give to those who lost their pensions after 2005, so did not include the ASW workers.

## *Workers demand compensation – take Government to court in UK and Europe*

In January 2007 the European Court of Justice ruled that the UK Government had broken European law by not protecting pensions.

*Workers win 90% of their pensions, some fight on for 100%*

Finally, in December 2007, the Government announced a £2.9 billion rescue package for pensioners. This, added to the FAS, meant that workers, including ASW workers, would now get 90% of their pensions.

Some still fight on for 100%...



Allied Steel and Wire pension protest, Cardiff