



## Open Research Online

### Citation

Wilson, Timothy M. (2022). Industrial unrest or class war? Remembering the Cambrian Combine strike and Tonypandy riots of 1910-11 through contemporary press coverage. Student dissertation for The Open University module A329 The making of Welsh history.

### URL

<https://oro.open.ac.uk/85267/>

### License

(CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

### Policy

This document has been downloaded from Open Research Online, The Open University's repository of research publications. This version is being made available in accordance with Open Research Online policies available from [Open Research Online \(ORO\) Policies](#)

### Versions

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding

**The Open University**

**BA (Hons) Arts and Humanities (History)**

**EMA A329 The Making of Welsh History**

**Dissertation**

**Industrial unrest or class war? Remembering the Cambrian  
Combine strike and Tonypandy riots of 1910-11 through  
contemporary press coverage.**

**May 2022**

**Timothy M. Wilson**

Word Count 6993

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr Gideon Brough and Dr Catherine Preston for their encouragement, support and guidance in the writing of this dissertation

## Table of Contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Welsh newspaper coverage of the strike and riots	9
3	English newspaper coverage of the strike and riots	18
4	Conclusion	27
5	Bibliography	30

## Introduction

The overarching question of this dissertation is whether the events in the Rhondda valley in 1910-11 were merely examples of industrial unrest, or an attempt by the State to engage in a class war and thereby subjugate the Welsh miners and the wider working class. It is therefore important at the outset to offer a definition of these terms. Industrial unrest is defined as ‘A state of disagreement between employers and employees, resulting in action taken by employees as a protest, such as striking.’<sup>1</sup> A dictionary definition of class war is given as, ‘Conflict between different social classes, especially (in Marxist ideology) the conflict of interests between the workers and the ruling class in a capitalist society, regarded as inevitably violent.’<sup>2</sup> This conflict will be analysed through the lens of contemporary Welsh and English newspapers.

The details which led to the Cambrian Combine miners’ strike and subsequent riots in the town of Tonypany are many and varied. Suffice to say, a combination of economic, social and political factors played a part in the strike and contributed to what would come to be known as the Great Labour Unrest throughout the United Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> In the context of British industrial relations few disputes can match the length, bitterness and violence seen in the Rhondda valley during the strike which began in 1910 and lasted for almost a year and witnessed the death of one miner.

The intention of this dissertation is not to analyse the political and economic factors per se, which led to the strike and violence which followed, but rather, to critically analyse events as they were portrayed by the English and English-language Welsh press.

---

<sup>1</sup> Anonymous, ‘Industrial unrest’, Oxford Dictionaries, Available at [industrial unrest - definition of industrial unrest in English from the Oxford dictionary \(open.ac.uk\)](https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/industrial-unrest), Accessed 17 May 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous ‘Class war’ Oxford Dictionaries, Available at [class war - definition of class war in English from the Oxford dictionary \(open.ac.uk\)](https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/class-war), Accessed 17 May 2022.

<sup>3</sup> D. Smith, ‘From Riots to Revolt: Tonypany and the Miners’ Next Step’, in *Wales 1880-1914*, ed. by T. Herbert and G. E. Jones (Cardiff, 1988), p. 2. The ‘Great Labour Unrest’ was a series of strikes which took place across Britain between 1910 and 1914 many of which were violent in nature.

Furthermore, through the analysis of newspaper primary sources, this dissertation will seek to establish if, and to what extent, Welsh and English newspapers were supportive of the miners; or conversely, if and to what extent they supported the mine owners; among them D. A. Thomas, founder and owner of the Cambrian Combine collieries. With reference to the Tonypandy riot, this dissertation will also explore the question of whether the riots were fuelled by press coverage, particularly that of the Welsh press. This dissertation will seek to use editorials, correspondence and first-hand news reports to answer these questions.

It is perhaps pertinent at this point to emphasise the relative gap that exists in the historiography of both the 1910-11 strike and riot as they pertain to the Welsh and English press. However, valuable studies have been undertaken in Wales by Aled Jones,<sup>4</sup> Lisa Peters<sup>5</sup> and Joanne Cayford<sup>6</sup> in this respect. Jones' study plots the development of the Welsh print media from its origins in the late eighteenth century to the twentieth. Furthermore, it examines ownership, production and distribution of a vast array of Welsh titles. And whilst no specific mention is made of the subject of the 1910-11 strike or riots, the character and style of journalism in late Victorian and Edwardian Wales is examined. Peters' study meanwhile highlights the tensions which were inherent in the battle for readers in the provincial Welsh newspaper market in the late Victorian and Edwardian period (albeit in a different Welsh geographical location to the one under examination in this dissertation). Nevertheless, it may be safe to assume that these same rivalries existed between newspapers in the Rhondda, given their differing political allegiances. Meanwhile Cayford's exhaustive essay on the history of the *Western Mail* discusses the role played by the newspaper during the 1910-11 dispute and unrest. It highlights the fact that although the *Mail* used to support

---

<sup>4</sup> A. Jones, *Press, Politics and Society: A History of Journalism in Wales* (Cardiff, 1993)

<sup>5</sup> L. Peters, *Politics, Publishing and Personalities: Wrexham Newspapers, 1848-1914* (Chester, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> J. Cayford, *The Western Mail 1869-1914: A Study in the Politics and Management of a Provincial Newspaper*, PhD Thesis, 1992. pp. 300-319.

old-style trade unionism, it became increasingly hostile to the miners and the philosophy of socialism more widely.

In the English historiographical context, militant agitation, as viewed through the English press has been studied by David Vessey.<sup>7</sup> Both essays are written in the context of the women's suffrage movement. Nevertheless, they examine how, in the case of the 'Words as well as Deeds' essay, the emerging popular press was used by supporters of the suffrage movement through the use of correspondence columns and personal testimony to further extra-parliamentary awareness and debate. The 'Votes for Women' study examines the role of elite newspapers as a means of offering a more balanced and far less sensationalised way of narrating the same issues.

In the final quarter of the twentieth century historians have paid considerable attention to both the strike and the riots. However, these studies, for instance by Williams<sup>8</sup> and O'Brien<sup>9</sup> have for a large part, focused on the economic, social and political causes of the strike exclusively and the subsequent violent disorder. These include analyses of political and administrative decisions taken at the time by the Liberal Home Secretary Winston Churchill and also the Glamorgan police chief constable Lionel Lindsay. Furthermore, Williams discusses at some length the social and working conditions of the South Wales miners.

Although economic, political and social factors surrounding the industrial unrest and violence cannot be ignored, it is the intention of this dissertation to examine such factors through the lens of the English-language Welsh and English contemporary elite and popular press. To this end, chapter two will primarily examine two Welsh newspapers; the daily *Western Mail* and the weekly *Rhondda Leader*. It is important at this juncture to bear in mind

---

<sup>7</sup> D. Vessey, 'Words as well as Deeds: The Popular Press and Suffragette Hunger Strikes in Edwardian Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 32.1 (2021), p. 68. By the same author: 'Votes for Women and Public Discourse: Elite Newspapers, Correspondence Columns and Informed Debate in Edwardian Britain', *Media History*, 27.4 (2021), p. 476.

<sup>8</sup> L. J. Williams, 'The Road to Tonypandy', *Llafur*, 1.2 (1973), pp. 41-52.

<sup>9</sup> A. M. O'Brien, 'Churchill and the Tonypandy Riots', *Welsh History Review*, 17.1 (1994) pp. 67-99

the political tendencies of these two Welsh newspapers. The *Western Mail* was founded in Cardiff in 1869 by the prosperous and influential Bute family, and as such, supported the aspirations of mine-owners, industrialists and capital. David Evans, a journalist working for the *Western Mail* at the time, has contributed to the historiography with a comprehensive analysis of the events; from an explanation of historic and contemporary wage structures and conditions of employment, to the strike and violent unrest themselves, and the eventual return of the defeated miners to work.<sup>10</sup> Evans' important primary source is but one of many which will be considered in the course of this dissertation. By way of contrast, the *Rhondda Leader* was founded in 1899 and was politically liberal. The paper became the *Rhondda Leader*, *Maesteg*, *Garw* and *Ogmore Telegraph* from 1908.<sup>11</sup> In using these primary sources, particular attention will be given to the authorship of articles, editorials and correspondence, and more specifically, the syntax employed, which by definition, reveals much about those most closely connected with the strike and ensuing violence.

It is the intention of this study to also analyse two English newspapers, namely, the *Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*. The analysis of these titles will provide the focus for chapter three. The rationale for the selection of these titles is similar to that of the aforementioned Welsh newspapers. The *Times* newspaper is one of Britain's oldest dailies, and although it had a reputation for independent journalism it was always viewed as a newspaper of the Establishment. The Edwardian period however witnessed its editorial reputation being drawn into some question.<sup>12</sup> Founded in 1821, the *Manchester Guardian*

---

<sup>10</sup> D. Evans, *Labour Strife in the South Wales Coalfield: 1910-1911*, Available at [Labour strife in the South Wales coalfield, 1910-1911. A historical and critical record of the mid-Rhondda, Aberdare Valley and other strikes : Evans, David, b. 1875 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#) Accessed 21 March 2022.

<sup>11</sup> 'The Rhondda Leader', Welsh Newspapers Online, Available at [The Rhondda Leader - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#), Accessed 21 March 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Anonymous, 'The Times', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Available at <https://academic-eb-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/levels/collegiate/article/The-Times/72520>, Accessed 22 March 2022.

became a daily in 1855 and was described as ‘Britain’s non-conformist conscience.’ The paper earned a reputation for investigative journalism and ‘its dispassionate discussion of issues.’<sup>13</sup> As a footnote to the discussion on the use of newspapers as a primary source, the historian must take account of the fundamental *raison d’être* of the industry; and that is to sell newspapers. Therefore, this dissertation takes into account the sometimes inaccurate or incomplete news report, and the multitude of personal opinions expressed through editorials and correspondence.

As previously mentioned, there exists very little in the historiography of press analysis of the Cambrian Combine strike and Tonypandy riots; this dissertation hopes to fill some of those gaps.

---

<sup>13</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Guardian’, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Available at <https://academic-eb-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/levels/collegiate/article/The-Guardian/38320>, Accessed 22 Mar. 22.

## Chapter 2 Welsh newspaper coverage of the strike and riots

The 1910 strike began in earnest when the management of the Cambrian Combine collieries locked out 800 men on 1<sup>st</sup> September.<sup>14</sup> This was in response to some miners' refusal to work the Bute seam at the Ely pit; the issue being payment for working in what were described as 'abnormal places.' These were areas of the colliery which were deemed difficult, and in many cases dangerous to mine.<sup>15</sup> Difficult places, in the case of the Ely pit, were areas where large amounts of stone in the coal made extraction problematic and as a consequence reduced the amount the miners were paid - the Rhondda and neighbouring valleys were deep steam coal pits and geologically difficult to mine compared to the anthracite pits of Carmarthenshire. A dangerous place was deemed to be part of the pit that was liable to flooding or where there existed a low roof with all the inherent problems that could bring, namely roof collapse.

From the very outset the *Western Mail* appeared to be showing its opposition to the growing industrial unrest, not only in the Rhondda but also in the wider Welsh coalfield. The unrest, from the *Mail's* perspective, was centred around political considerations as much as industrial. In an article from September 1910, the paper stated, 'Mid-Rhondda is far from being the only place where there is such general unrest – unrest which is encouraged by young leaders of the Socialistic faith...'<sup>16</sup> Cayford in quoting an editorial in the *Mail* from the same month supports the suggestion that the unrest in the South Wales coalfield was, as far as the *Mail* was concerned, '...political rather than industrial'.<sup>17</sup> The *Mail's* reporting at this time, without question, was delivering its verdict on the miners more militant local

---

<sup>14</sup> Smith, 'From Riots to Revolt: Tonypany and *The Miners' Next Step*', pp. 107–37.

<sup>15</sup> J. Davies, *A History of Wales* (London, 2007), p. 477.

<sup>16</sup> Anonymous, 'The Threat to Strike', *Western Mail*, 17 September 1910, p.7. Available at [The Threat To Strike. | Western Mail | Saturday 17 September 1910 | British Newspaper Archive](#) Accessed 18 April 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Cayford, *The Western Mail 1869-1914*, p. 312.

leadership, together with what it believed to be the rejection of traditional Welsh liberal values in favour of a tide of socialism which appeared to be appealing to an increasing number of Welsh working-class communities, particularly in South Wales.

Nevertheless, by the Edwardian period the *Western Mail* had shifted its philosophy of cautious support of moderate liberal trade unionism to that of a more hostile position. The paper had been more or less supportive of striking miners in the late nineteenth century, but with the growth of socialism and the nascent Independent Labour Party, which were both active within Welsh working-class communities, the *Mail* grew ever more antagonistic.<sup>18</sup> Whilst the paper seemed happy, to an extent, to throw its weight behind the more moderate and conciliatory South Wales Miners' Federation leaders - henceforth referred to as the SWMF - such as William Abraham (Mabon) and William Brace, the emergence of more popular younger socialist miners' leaders such as Noah Ablett and C. B. Stanton drew scorn from the *Mail*. As if to confirm this, a denunciation of nameless local miners' leaders was issued in the *Mail's* editorial column from November 1910 when it proclaimed that 'Too long have our ears been filled with the babel cries of petty irresponsible leaders...', it continues with a condemnation of '...men of no position except in local groups, men of no particular experience, men who are incapable of realising the consequences of the courses they advise.'<sup>19</sup> If there existed an element of sympathy by the paper towards the social and economic plight of the families of striking miners, then the *Mail's* readership were left in no doubt about the paper's position on politics, and particularly socialism, not only in respect of it gaining political footholds within communities, but also its power in infiltrating the SWMF

---

<sup>18</sup> Cayford, *The Western Mail 1869-1914*, p. 311.

<sup>19</sup> Anonymous, 'The Real Leaders', *Western Mail*, 3 November 1910, p. 4. Available at [As U. T. I:•teis•ti. T.r. !awl I. !alio | Western Mail | Thursday 03 November 1910 | British Newspaper Archive](#) Accessed 21 April 2022.

to the extent of taking control ‘...lock, stock and barrel...’<sup>20</sup> David Evans, a *Western Mail* reporter, and who was regarded by some as a staunch supporter of the mine owners,<sup>21</sup> but writing on this occasion in a personal capacity, states ‘...the leaders...of the Cambrian Combine and Aberdare Valley strikes...had little or no official experience of leadership, and were all avowed Socialists...’<sup>22</sup> It would appear that Evans and the authors of the *Mail’s* concerted attack on local miners leaders shared similar views, if indeed they were not, if often at least, one and the same author.

The extent to which the *Western Mail* offered its overt support to the mine owners during the year long strike can be seen by an article written by an anonymous reporter on 31 December 1910. The article is in the form of an interview with D. A. Thomas, owner of the Cambrian Combine collieries. During the course of the article Thomas suggests that the general public are ‘...very ill-informed...’ as regards the wages of some of the miners. This situation, he explains, will be rectified by a statement given by Thomas at the request of the *Mail’s* editor and be published in the paper at a later date. Furthermore, the article clearly lays out Thomas’s argument against the strike. He cites his opposition to men striking in support of those from other pits along with an assertion that if the striking miners were allowed a secret-ballot they would be in favour of returning to work.<sup>23</sup> Thomas’s interview for the *Mail* is interesting but also somewhat puzzling, not least because, as Peter Stead argues, Thomas was, at times, at pains to point out the attributes of the younger socialist miners’ leaders, and this Stead asserts, was to the detriment of the older, more traditional

---

<sup>20</sup> Cayford, *The Western Mail 1869-1914*, p. 313.

<sup>21</sup> D. Smith, ‘Tonypandy 1910: Definitions of Community’, *Past and Present*, 87. (1980), p. 165.

<sup>22</sup> Evans, *Labour Strife in the South Wales Coalfield*, p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> Anonymous, ‘Anomalies of a Strike’, *Western Mail*, 31 December 1910, p. 5. Available at [‘Anomalies Of A Strike. Negotiations In Midrhondda Dispute. Mr. D. A. Thomas On The Position. Question Of Plenary Powers. Men’s | Western Mail | Saturday 31 December 1910 | British Newspaper Archive](#) Accessed 22 April 2022.

trades unionists like Mabon.<sup>24</sup> It may therefore perhaps not be unreasonable to question the veracity of Thomas's interviews and comments to the *Mail*, or indeed the wider press. For as one miner suggests, Thomas enjoyed putting '...cats among pigeons.'<sup>25</sup>

The contrast with which the strike was portrayed by English-speaking Welsh newspapers was often nuanced but also at times quite marked. None more so than in the case of the *Western Mail* and the *Rhondda Leader, Maesteg Garw and Ogmoredale Telegraph*. The latter newspaper's editorial late in October 1910 spoke of its disappointment of the failure to resolve the dispute. With seemingly no blame being apportioned to either side, the editor of the *Leader* focuses on '...workmen – numbering close upon 12,000...out on the streets with nothing but a mere pittance of a strike pay to support them during the hardy trials of the coming winter.'<sup>26</sup> The *Leader's* editor appears to have a social conscience not only in regard to the striking miners and their families but also the wider community, namely, local businesses who are dependent on trade with all those connected with the coal industry. Moreover, local businesses would undoubtedly be casting an eye on the approaching Christmas trade, and with large swathes of the community engaged in a potentially prolonged strike, this could mean widespread hardship for the entire community.<sup>27</sup>

The extent of the industrial unrest in the South Wales coalfield would appear to have reached such seriousness by the autumn of 1910 that a letter was published in the *Rhondda Leader* on the 5 November. Signed by Mabon, Richards and Onions, the leaders of the SWMF, the letter is addressed to fellow members urging them not to escalate the strike; the argument put forward being that, in addition to the 12,000 Cambrian Combine men drawing

---

<sup>24</sup> P. Stead, 'The Language of Edwardian Politics', in *A People and a Proletariat*, ed. by D. Smith (London, 1980), p. 159.

<sup>25</sup> Stead, 'The Language of Edwardian Politics', p. 159.

<sup>26</sup> Anonymous, 'Editorial Notes', *Rhondda Leader*, 29 October 1910, p. 4. Available at [EDITORIAL NOTES. | 1910-10-29 | Rhondda Leader Maesteg Garw and Ogmoredale Telegraph - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#) Accessed 22 April 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Anonymous, 'Editorial Notes', p. 4.

on the ‘Fed’s’<sup>28</sup> strike funds, any additional striking workmen claiming union funds would ‘...end disastrously for all concerned’<sup>29</sup> By its inclusion the letter seems to beg the question as to whether the *Leader* is lending its support to a more moderate trade unionism; a position perhaps more in step with that of the *Mail*, but at the same time, a stance which reflected the *Leader’s* liberal values.

The *Western Mail’s* response to, and reporting of the Tonypandy riots was in many ways similar to the posture it took of the strike, namely, firmly on the side of law and order and the preservation of the mine owners’ property. The riots, which began on 8 November 1910 in the main street of the town, were a culmination of local anger and frustration at increased police, and the threat of, military presence within the area. Additional police had been drafted in from London to guard colliery property and to protect non-unionised strike breakers or ‘blacklegs’. The vocabulary used by the *Mail* in various accounts penned by its correspondents reveal much about the newspaper’s stance. In an article published on the 9 November, the day after the first episode of violence in Tonypandy, the *Mail’s* own correspondent describes Mid-Rhondda as ‘...in a state of anarchy.’<sup>30</sup> The report further states that there were ‘scenes...without parallel in any civilised country. It was pandemonium let loose.’<sup>31</sup> If the semantics used by the *Mail* in opposition to the strike were harsh, then the invective aimed at those involved in the violent unrest was on another scale. Strikers were portrayed as ‘...unworthy of their manhood and of their traditions as brave men.’<sup>32</sup> Whether or not this slight by the *Mail* on the working-class men of the Mid-Rhondda provoked further

---

<sup>28</sup> A colloquial term used for the South Wales Miners’ Federation (SWMF)

<sup>29</sup> Abraham, W., Onions, A., Richards, T., ‘Leaders’ Appeal to Miners’, *Rhondda Leader*, 5 November 1910, p. 5. Available at [Combine Workers Bring Out Tools. | 1910-11-05 | Rhondda Leader Maesteg Garw and Ogmere Telegraph - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#), Accessed 22 April 2022.

<sup>30</sup> Anonymous, ‘Raids on Shops’, *Western Mail*, 9 November 1910, p. 5. Available at [Raids On Shops. | Western Mail | Wednesday 09 November 1910 | British Newspaper Archive](#), Accessed 26 April 2022.

<sup>31</sup> Anonymous, ‘Raids on Shops’, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Anonymous, ‘Raids on Shops’, p. 5.

violence is a moot point. What is clear, however, is that the newspaper was unequivocal as to who was responsible for the rioting, and this they reported in graphic terms.

In comparing sources taken from the *Western Mail* and the *Rhondda Leader* in respect of the riots, it can be easily observed just how the two newspapers framed the events in very different ways. If the *Mail's* viewpoint was an outright condemnation of the violence, then the *Leader* adopted a more balanced and reflective approach. This was demonstrated by an editorial published on 19 November 1910.<sup>33</sup> Written ten days after the initial unrest, the *Leader's* editor, whilst condemning the looting which took place in Tonypany as '...an outrage...',<sup>34</sup> is nevertheless trying to mollify the situation in stating 'It is very desirable that in periods like the present nothing should be said to irritate the situation.'<sup>35</sup> The vocabulary used is measured and conciliatory. There appears a desire on the part of the newspaper to attempt to restore both the social and industrial fabric of the community. The editorial continues, 'We have...one string to our fiddle...when that fails us, blank barrenness is our plight.'<sup>36</sup> Here there appears to be both an optimistic and pessimistic tone, but nevertheless a clear reference to the Rhondda's dependence on the coal and associated industries. Furthermore, much is made of the spirit of community that exists in the area. In particular, the editorial highlights the '...devotion and activity...'<sup>37</sup> of all denominations of the church as they seek to alleviate hardship and the prospect of famine. Given the influence that the church exercised in many Welsh communities at the time, the editor has no hesitation in ending the piece with the words '...let one and all remember that the prayers of all should work for peace and concord.'<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Anonymous, 'Editorial Notes', *Rhondda Leader*, 19 November 1910, p. 4. Available at [EDITORIAL NOTES. | 1910-11-19 | Rhondda Leader Maesteg Garw and Ogmore Telegraph - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#) Accessed 27 April 2022.

<sup>34</sup> Anonymous, 'Editorial Notes', p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Anonymous, 'Editorial Notes', p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Anonymous, 'Editorial Notes', p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Anonymous, 'Editorial Notes', p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Anonymous, 'Editorial Notes', p. 4.

As if by contrast, the *Rhondda Leader* reported in late November 1910 of a ‘crowded’<sup>39</sup> gathering at the Theatre Royal in Tonypanyd at which Mr Harry Quelch, a socialist lecturer was addressing the audience. The *Leader* reports that in his preamble to the lecture, the Chairman states that despite early optimism over the formation of the Cambrian Combine in regard to the positive effects on the community, it has in fact turned out to be ‘...the greatest curse to Mid-Rhondda.’<sup>40</sup> citing a diminution in both trade and ‘comforts.’<sup>41</sup> With reference to the Tonypanyd riot, the Chairman states that whilst he wishes to distance himself from the violence, he nevertheless asserts ‘...that there was cause for it.’<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps the most surprising inclusion for a newspaper which placed itself squarely in the politically Liberal camp, was the extensive report of the speech of Harry Quelch which followed the Chairman’s preamble. Quelch began, so states the report, by proclaiming that it was ‘...monstrous blasphemy, impudence and audacity...’<sup>43</sup> that anyone should claim ownership of the earth’s natural resources. He continued by skilfully mixing the philosophy of socialism with a hint of Welsh nationalism as he went on to contend that ‘People in Wales were fond of singing “The Land of My Fathers.” If that were so, then the land belonged to the people.’<sup>44</sup>

Arguably, the most controversial and possibly even inflammatory part of Quelch’s address, was his reference to the riots as being ‘...justifiable, but not necessary.’<sup>45</sup> Quelch further contends that the ‘capitalists’ in the form of the Combine are to blame for the strike and riots due to the lack of ‘reasonable terms’ being offered to the miners. This in turn, he

---

<sup>39</sup> Anonymous, ‘Authorities Blamed for Riots’, *Rhondda Leader*, 26 November 1910, p. 6. Available at [Authorities Blamed for Riots. | 1910-11-26 | Rhondda Leader Maesteg Garw and Ogmores Telegraph - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#), Accessed 27 April 2022.

<sup>40</sup> Anonymous, ‘Authorities Blamed for Riots’, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Anonymous, ‘Authorities Blamed for Riots’, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Anonymous, ‘Authorities Blamed for Riots’ p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> Anonymous, ‘Authorities Blamed for Riots’, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Anonymous, ‘Authorities Blamed for Riots’, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Anonymous, ‘Authorities Blamed for Riots’, p. 6.

argues, resulted in the introduction of the military and to a situation in which ‘The capitalists fought like cannibals.’<sup>46</sup> The *Leader’s* report left the reader of the paper in no doubt that according to Quelch, the Rhondda was in the midst of a ‘class war.’<sup>47</sup>

Of course, many other English language Welsh newspapers populated the market at the time of the 1910 strike and riots. Among them were titles which included, the *Cambrian*, the *Evening Express* and the *Llanelly Star*. The *Cambrian* which was published in Swansea and promoted the interests of the mining, agricultural and commercial industries adopted an objective position. In its edition published on 18 November, the paper covers stories as diverse as; allegations of police brutality towards miners; a letter arguing that, if necessary, pit ponies should be sacrificed in favour of a victory for the striking miners, and an article extolling the virtues of Leonard Llewelyn, the general manager of the Cambrian Combine, as a ‘Hero of the Rhondda Strike.’<sup>48</sup>

The Llanelly Star, a conservative newspaper, printed a front-page eye-witness report of the riots from ‘Mr Bowen Davies, the well-known Llanelly grocer...’<sup>49</sup> The account tells of the ‘...malicious wrecking of the shops of unoffending tradesmen...’<sup>50</sup> Mr Davies further reports that the local Chamber of Trade, of which many of the shop owners are members, had recently donated twenty-five pounds to the miners strike fund and this, he states, ‘...was their reward!’<sup>51</sup>

In the Edwardian era Welsh newspapers enjoyed a degree of circulation beyond the borders of the Principality. These included, amongst others, the *Cardiff Times* whose

---

<sup>46</sup> Anonymous, ‘Authorities Blamed for Riots’, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Anonymous, ‘Authorities Blamed for Riots’, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Anonymous, ‘Hero of the Rhondda Strike’, *The Cambrian*, 18 November 1910, p. 3. Available at [HERO OF THE RHONDDA STRIKE | 1910-11-18 | The Cambrian - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#), Accessed 30 April 2022.

<sup>49</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Coal Riots’, *Llanelly Star*, 12 November 1910, p. 1. Available at [The Coal Riots. | 1910-11-12 | Llanelly Star - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#), Accessed 30 April 2022.

<sup>50</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Coal Riots’, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Coal Riots’, p. 1.

circulation reached parts of the English border counties.<sup>52</sup> It is difficult to assess exactly the extent of influence that these newspapers exercised over their limited readership in England. Conversely, what is known is that as long ago as 1876 there were those in Wales who were warning about the increasing influence of the English press. If measures were not taken to curb their influence, they argued, then the effects on the morality of the Welsh would be 'dire'<sup>53</sup> It is to the English press that this dissertation now turns with an analysis of how it viewed the events in the Rhondda in 1910.

---

<sup>52</sup> The National Library of Wales, 'The Cardiff Times', Welsh Newspapers Online, Available at [The Cardiff Times - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#), Accessed 1 May 2022.

<sup>53</sup> Jones. *Press, Politics and Society*, p. 111.

### Chapter 3 English Newspaper coverage of the strike and riots

In his essay on the role of elite English newspapers in Edwardian Britain, Vessey contends that the prominence given to a report in a newspaper was dependent upon the authority of the correspondent who was reporting it.<sup>54</sup> If this was indeed the case then the *Times* deemed the unrest in the Rhondda only worthy of mention on page six of the paper's 11 November 1910 edition.<sup>55</sup>

Several articles appear on the page, these include; reports of progress in negotiations regarding the strike; a report regarding the welfare of pit ponies, the maintenance of the Combine pits, and brief mention is also given to the material state of the town of Tonypany in the aftermath of the rioting. All of the articles are of great interest to the historian, and will be analysed in turn in this dissertation. However, one of the most interesting inclusions on page 6 is a letter written to the editor of the *Times* by Edgar R. Jones, the Liberal MP for Merthyr Tydfil, and himself a native of the Rhondda.<sup>56</sup>

Jones's letter begins with sentiments of regret that he feels over recent violence in Tonypany and that the '...good name of Welshman is in danger of being lost.'<sup>57</sup> He believes that opponents of organised labour are using the violent unrest to undermine the ethos of trade unionism. Jones is particularly critical of some of the London newspapers in what he sees as sensationalist journalism. He argues that the vocabulary used to describe the situation in the Rhondda as 'civil war' and depictions of Welsh workers as 'savages'<sup>58</sup> is unwarranted.<sup>59</sup> An indication that Jones is addressing a predominantly English audience is

---

<sup>54</sup> Vessey, 'Votes for Women and Public Discourse', p. 478.

<sup>55</sup> Anonymous, 'The Chances of a Settlement', *The Times*, 11 November 1910, p. 6. Available at [The Chances Of A Settlement. \(open.ac.uk\)](#), Accessed 2 May 202

<sup>56</sup> Debrett's House of Commons and the Judicial Bench, Volume 1916 (London, 1867), Available at [Debrett's House of Commons : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#), Accessed 2 May 2022.

<sup>57</sup> Anonymous, 'The Chances of a Settlement', p. 6.

<sup>58</sup> Anonymous, 'The Chances of a Settlement', p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Anonymous, 'The Chances of a Settlement', p. 6.

suggested by his use of the word ‘rag’ in the context of the Tonypandy riots. In the letter he argues that the riot is little more than excitement, or something akin to a ‘rag’ with which ‘...sons of noble families and high breeding...’<sup>60</sup> partake at Oxford and Cambridge universities. He further contends that the riots were not a deliberate act. Nevertheless, Jones recognises that should the people of the Rhondda fail to prevent further violent scenes then their cause will be undermined, and this will encourage ‘...enemies of the worker and of Welshmen occasion to scoff.’<sup>61</sup> Jones’s correspondence, by its tone and content, demonstrably supports Vessey’s argument that the *Times*, despite its changeable circulation in the first decade of the twentieth century,<sup>62</sup> was a newspaper consumed by ‘...professionals and the constitutional elite...’,<sup>63</sup> and therefore opinions expressed through its correspondence columns were worthy of note.

In contrast to the Liberal parliamentarian’s letter to the editor – which, if not entirely supportive of the working-class of the Rhondda, is at least empathetic to their cause - page six of the same edition of the *Times* carries a series of reports from ‘Our Special Correspondent’ in Cardiff. The section entitled ‘The Chances of a Settlement’<sup>64</sup> aims to analyse the causes of the strike and riot. Whilst largely avoiding the use of inflammatory vocabulary the report draws together the possible reasons for the unrest. It suggests that the miners, in respect of industrial relations at least, would prefer to deal with individual mine owners, and therefore this stance, according to the *Times* is a ‘...negation of the right of capital to combine in self-defence.’<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, there is also the suggestion that the success of any negotiated settlement of the strike is contingent on the ‘...discipline and a

---

<sup>60</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Chances of a Settlement’, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Chances of a Settlement’, p. 6.

<sup>62</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Times’.

<sup>63</sup> Vessey, *Votes for Women and Public Discourse*, p. 479.

<sup>64</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Chances of a Settlement’, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Chances of a Settlement’, p. 6.

regard for the terms agreed...<sup>66</sup> by the trade unions. The reporting appears to be laying the responsibility for the return to industrial and social stability almost entirely at the door of the miners and the working-class of the South Wales coalfield, and demonstrates the paper's clear support of the mine owners.

In terms of its journalistic employment policy, the assertion made by Aled Jones that '...many Welsh journalists acted as correspondents for English newspapers.'<sup>67</sup> is plain to see in several of the articles in the *Times*' 11 November edition. In this respect in reporting on the prospect of mediation between the mine owners and trade unions, the *Times* mentions the *Western Mail* by name.<sup>68</sup> And herein lies the intimation that *Western Mail* journalists were also working for the *Times*. Moreover, more than a hint of support by the *Times* for the mine owners, through the employment of Welsh journalism, can be detected by the report carrying an explanation of D. A Thomas's position regarding mediation in the strike negotiations. The paper reports Thomas as stating that '...until perfect tranquillity is assured in the Rhondda Valley...'<sup>69</sup> he (Thomas) is in no doubt that there is little or no chance of negotiations with '...the other side.'<sup>70</sup> In analysing the reports on page six, there seems little doubt as to where the *Times* stands in its support for the mine owners. Its guarded use of inflammatory language – for instance 'the mob'<sup>71</sup> is only used once – and its desire to print extensively the opinions and arguments of mine owners and their managers, does little to disguise its political, economic and social position in respect of the strike and the accompanying violent unrest.

Despite the apparent desire of the *Times* to throw its considerable intellectual and journalistic weight behind the mine owners cause, the London elite newspapers nevertheless sought, as Vessey argues in his essay on the women's suffrage movement, to offer a platform

---

<sup>66</sup> Anonymous, 'The Chances of a Settlement', p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> Jones, *Press, Politics and Society*, p. 41.

<sup>68</sup> Anonymous, 'The Chances of a Settlement', p. 6.

<sup>69</sup> Anonymous, 'The Chances of a Settlement', p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> Anonymous, 'The Chances of a Settlement', p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> Anonymous, 'The Chances of a Settlement', p. 6.

for ‘...informed public debate...’<sup>72</sup> However, sometimes that reasoned debate could enter the realms of sarcasm and contempt. As an example of this, an article in the *Times* from 16 November reported - again through its correspondent in Cardiff - that striking miners’ ‘...peacefully smashed...’<sup>73</sup> the windows of the house of a colliery official who refused to cease working. It was not the first time that the *Times* reported on alleged intimidation of colliery officials by striking miners. In an article from 11 November, the general manager of the Cambrian Combine, Leonard Llewellyn told a Press representative that winding enginemen were prepared to work on maintenance and safety of the pits during the strike. However, he states that ‘Most abominable letters were sent to them, and their wives were terrorized.’<sup>74</sup> Llewellyn goes on to say that death threats were issued to the enginemen if they went to work.<sup>75</sup>

Perhaps one of the most vituperative reports on the situation in the South Wales coalfield was issued by the *Times* on 16 November.<sup>76</sup> The targets of the invective were not only the Labour party’s Keir Hardie MP and the Liberal Edgar Jones MP, but also the Welsh miners and socialism. Hardie was accused by the paper of hypocrisy in that he cited the Trades Dispute Act as a means of supporting the miners right to peacefully picket and peacefully persuade other workers; something which according to the paper, was ‘ridiculous’<sup>77</sup> The paper argued that the Act gave the miners no right to engage in violence and therefore questioned the Act’s very existence.<sup>78</sup> Not only was the *Times* appearing to seek to undermine trade union rights but it went further in attacking the philosophy of socialism. With an obvious eye to serious and growing industrial unrest occurring elsewhere

---

<sup>72</sup> Vessey, *Votes for Women and Public Discourse*, p. 477.

<sup>73</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Welsh Strike in Parliament and in Wales’, *The Times*, 16 November 1910, p. 11. Available at [The Welsh Strike in Parliament and in Wales. \(open.ac.uk\)](https://open.ac.uk), Accessed 3 May 2022.

<sup>74</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Chances of a Settlement’, p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Chances of a Settlement’, p. 6.

<sup>76</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Welsh Strike in Parliament and in Wales’, p. 11.

<sup>77</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Welsh Strike in Parliament and in Wales’, p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Welsh Strike in Parliament and in Wales’, p. 11.

in the United Kingdom<sup>79</sup>, the paper states that the locations at which industrial and labour unrest was most prevalent were '...conspicuous centres of Socialism, and the Welsh miners are no exception.'<sup>80</sup> In a full-blooded attack on the miners and the working classes of the Rhondda, the *Times* castigates those it sees as violent and rebellious and conflates these issues with the fact that the areas at the centre of unrest are represented at Westminster by Hardie and Jones. This is framed by the *Times* as '...not a mere coincidence...'<sup>81</sup>

If the *Times*' editorial policy can be described broadly as representing the Establishment and the values of conservatism and capital, then the *Manchester Guardian* subscribed to, as Vessey argues, a more '...provincial liberal opinion.'<sup>82</sup>

In the early stages of the strike the *Guardian* adopted a largely impartial view of the dispute, and certainly showed few signs of out-and-out support for either the miners or the mine owners. In an article published on 28 October 1910 and entitled 'Winter Coal Strike Feared – Gloomy Prospect in South Wales',<sup>83</sup> - and which pre dates the Tonypany riots by only a few days - the paper makes it clear that there exists amongst all the miners' on strike in the South Wales coalfield significant resentment and hostility towards the mine owners. This, the *Guardian* reports, is in large measure as a result of mine owners' representatives being unable or unwilling to engage in an act of conciliation in negotiations. That said, it is reported that the workmen working for the Cambrian Combine, numbering some ten thousand, were prepared to reject the advice of their more conciliatory leader William Abraham and the executive of the SWMF and to strike. Such was the level of support for a strike amongst the

---

<sup>79</sup> The 'Great Labour Unrest' was a period between 1911 and 1914 of industrial and labour disputes across the United Kingdom. Many of the disputes were violent.

<sup>80</sup> Anonymous, 'The Welsh Strike in Parliament and in Wales', p. 11.

<sup>81</sup> Anonymous, 'The Welsh Strike in Parliament and in Wales', p. 11.

<sup>82</sup> Vessey, *Votes for Women and Public Discourse*, p. 479.

<sup>83</sup> Anonymous, 'Winter Coal Strike Feared', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 October 1910, p. 3. Available at [WINTER COAL STRIKE FEARED: GLOOMY PROSPECT IN SOUTH WALES - ProQuest \(open.ac.uk\)](#), Accessed 8 May 2022.

men in the Rhondda that after a month's 'mature consideration'<sup>84</sup> they were prepared to sacrifice their wages for 'a paltry'<sup>85</sup> ten shillings a week strike pay. This, the *Guardian* suggests, is symptomatic of more profound grievances on the part of the miners. The report, which is from the *Guardian's* correspondent in Cardiff, is written in such a way as to be, if not exactly advancing the miners' cause, then at least lending empathetically to it.<sup>86</sup> With the social, economic and political temperature rising in the Rhondda, the paper writes, almost prophetically, that 'The dissatisfaction is undoubtedly growing, and the prospects of a grim winter strike in the heart of the Rhondda Valley has to be faced.'<sup>87</sup>

In a column published on 12 November 1910, the *Manchester Guardian* led with the headline 'Coal Trade War.'<sup>88</sup> Several articles appear on the page, some written by 'Special Correspondents' and others presumably by English-based journalists. The overall tone of all of the articles is sober and measured in terms of vocabulary. The editor has been careful to exclude anything which might be construed as inflammatory; language which arguably may have otherwise been seen as easy to employ in order to sell newspapers, given the violent disorder on the streets of Tonypandy only three days previously. For instance, in the reporting of further and widening strike action as the result of the importation by the Cambrian Combine of non-unionised labour, the paper states that the strike committee warns that the area might face '...further bloodshed.'<sup>89</sup> The *Guardian's* reporting in this respect appears, at least in terms of its language, in stark contrast to that used by, for example, the *Times*. Furthermore, when asked by the *Guardian* for his opinion on the use of non-unionised men,

---

<sup>84</sup> Anonymous, 'Winter Coal Strike Feared', p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Anonymous, 'Winter Coal Strike Feared', p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> Anonymous, 'Winter Coal Strike Feared', p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Anonymous, 'Winter Coal Strike Feared', p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> Anonymous, 'Coal Trade War', *Manchester Guardian*, 12 November 1910, p. 13. Available at [COAL TRADE WAR: PROTESTS AGAINST IM-PORTED STOKERS FATAL RESULT OF RIOTS ANOTHER STRIKE THREATENED DEATH OF AN INJURED STRIKER ANTI-SOCIALISTS AS STOKERS COALOWNERS' NON-CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE EXTENSION FO STRIKE FEARED MR. STANTON AND THE POLICE - ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer - ProQuest](#), Accessed 6 May 2022.

<sup>89</sup> Anonymous, 'Coal Trade War', p. 13.

Mr. Watts Morgan, a miners' agent, is simply reported as saying '...it might cause further trouble.'<sup>90</sup> What appears to be missing, particularly in this edition of the *Guardian's* reportage is the invective aimed at the striking miners, their leaders and the political philosophy of socialism. In fact, one report goes as far as to highlight the fact that '...the Anti-Socialist Union of Great Britain has despatched a number of voluntary workers to the coalfield.'<sup>91</sup> This was in response to an appeal by the Combine's general manager Leonard Llewellyn for help in maintaining and repairing idle colliery equipment.

Whilst many of the articles, interviews and letters written to the English, and for that matter the Welsh newspapers, were concerned with industrial, political and trade union personalities, the church on occasions entered the debate. In his essay, L. J. Williams asserts that in South Wales there were some Nonconformist ministers who were once miners or sons of miners.<sup>92</sup> It is therefore perhaps unsurprising to read a letter from three Nonconformist ministers (Congregational, Calvinistic Methodist and Baptist) and one Anglican vicar, to the Editor of the *Manchester Guardian* and published on 18 November 1910.<sup>93</sup> Of course it is not known for certain whether any of those whose names appear on the letter had any direct links or personal experiences with the coal industry; albeit D. T. R. James signs himself as Vicar of Llwynpia, a village close to Tonypany. This does suggest therefore that the other ministers were local. However, what is clear is that, in the opinion of the ministers, the press is mistaken in blaming striking miners for the riots. They, (the ministers), claim that the riots were caused by a small number of '...half-drunken, irresponsible persons...'<sup>94</sup> of which the majority were from outside the Tonypany area. The letter also claims that a group of ten

---

<sup>90</sup> Anonymous, 'Coal Trade War', p. 13.

<sup>91</sup> Anonymous, 'Coal Trade War', p. 13.

<sup>92</sup> L. J. Williams, 'The Coalowners', in *A People and a Proletariat*, ed. by D. Smith (London, 1980), p. 96.

<sup>93</sup> Anonymous, 'The Welsh Riots', *Manchester Guardian*, 18 November 1910, p. 6. Available at [CORRESPONDENCE: TARIFF "REFORM" AND EMIGRATION - ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer - ProQuest](#), Accessed 9 May 2022.

<sup>94</sup> Anonymous, 'The Welsh Riots', p. 6.

thousand striking men marched peacefully in the area with no sign of causing the ‘...slightest disturbance whatsoever.’<sup>95</sup> The ministers would seem to be in no doubt as to the general good conduct and moral upstanding nature of the striking men. Not only does the letter state that the miners are profoundly sorry for the damage caused to the tradespeople of Tonypandy during the riots, but also that they, (the ministers), consider those describing the miners as ‘...irresponsible rioters and looters.’<sup>96</sup> are doing them a great disservice.

As with Edgar Jones’s letter to the *Times*, the letter from the four church ministers published in the *Guardian* would support Vessey’s argument that although both newspapers had contrasting political and editorial agendas, they recognised the importance of correspondence in order to frame ‘...authoritative discourse...’<sup>97</sup>

English newspapers of the Edwardian period that were perhaps more interested in entertaining their readership than engaging in informed political and social debate included the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mirror*. These three titles were at the forefront of a nascent British popular press who sought to bring something more to British journalism than the nineteenth century ‘educational ideal’<sup>98</sup> and to transform the agenda into a ‘representative ideal’<sup>99</sup> It can be argued that the sensational and headline grabbing aspect of reporting was relevant not only in England but also in Wales in the early decades of the twentieth century. A glimpse of this ‘new journalism’<sup>100</sup> is seen in an edition of the *Daily Mail* dated 9 November 1910. The paper devotes a significant part of page seven to what it describes as the ‘Welsh Riots’<sup>101</sup> The majority of the report is from the paper’s ‘Special

---

<sup>95</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Welsh Riots’, p. 6.

<sup>96</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Welsh Riots’, p. 6.

<sup>97</sup> Vessey, ‘Votes for Women and Public Discourse’, p. 480.

<sup>98</sup> D. Vessey, ‘Words as well as Deeds: The Popular Press and Suffragette Hunger Strikes in Edwardian Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 32.1 (2021), pp. 68-92.

<sup>99</sup> D. Vessey, ‘Words as well as Deeds’, pp. 68-92.

<sup>100</sup> Vessey, ‘Words as well as Deeds’, pp. 68-92.

<sup>101</sup> Anonymous, ‘Welsh Riots’, *Daily Mail*, 9 November 1910, p. 7. Available at [Town Looted by Miners \(open.ac.uk\)](https://open.ac.uk), Accessed 10 May 2022.

Correspondent' who claims to have witnessed first-hand the violence at various collieries. The journalism contained within the article is of particular interest to the historian not least because of its attention to detail. However, the violent events leading up to the destruction of shops and businesses in Tonypany are described in such a way as to perhaps owe more to the art of fiction writing in their description, than to frontline journalism.<sup>102</sup> Facts, as the journalist sees them, are conveyed throughout with clarity and precision, but always through the lens of the Establishment. For example, the *Mail* reports Leonard Llewellyn, the Combine general manager describing the protesting miners as '...a lot of wild animals...'<sup>103</sup> Similarly, on the same page, a sub-heading describes 'Town Looted by Miners',<sup>104</sup> leaving little doubt in the minds of its readers who the *Mail* believed was responsible for the violence.

Meanwhile, another of the popular dailies, the *Daily Mirror* adopts a different approach. Pages three and four of the 10 November 1910 edition<sup>105</sup> report in some detail on negotiations to end the strike, and also on the ongoing disturbances at the Glamorgan pit and looting in Tonypany. Unlike the *Daily Mail* however, the *Mirror* reports events as they happen – once again, from the perspective of a 'Special Correspondent' – and the paper avoids the use of graphic descriptions of violence. In the immediate aftermath of the Tonypany riot, it would have been perhaps easier for the *Mirror's* editor to focus on the violence with an eye to increasing sales. However, with a circulation of 630,000 in 1910<sup>106</sup> and what would become the world's leading daily newspaper by 1914, the *Mirror's* editor at the time Hamilton Fyfe is quoted by Vessey as saying that the paper was compiled in order that '...absorption by the most ordinary intelligence.'<sup>107</sup> was the primary function.

---

<sup>102</sup> Anonymous, 'Welsh Riots', p. 7.

<sup>103</sup> Anonymous, 'Welsh Riots', p. 7.

<sup>104</sup> Anonymous, 'Welsh Riots' p. 7.

<sup>105</sup> Anonymous, 'Soldiers Guard Welsh Mines' *Daily Mirror*, 10 November 1910, 3-4. Available at [--- | Daily Mirror | Thursday 10 November 1910 | British Newspaper Archive](#), Accessed 12 May 2022.

<sup>106</sup> Vessey, 'Words as well as Deeds', pp. 68-92.

<sup>107</sup> Vessey, 'Words as well as Deeds', pp. 68-92.

## Conclusion

This dissertation has sought to answer the key question of whether the strike involving miners employed by the Cambrian Combine, and the subsequent violent disorder in Tonypany and surrounding area, was in fact a case of industrial unrest, or a targeted attack on the working class of the Rhondda valley. An analysis of some of the elite and popular Welsh and English press has been used to this end.

In the context of the English-speaking Welsh Press, one of the principal players in 1910 was the *Western Mail*. As has been shown in this dissertation, the *Mail* was vehemently opposed to the emerging new strand of trade unionism in Wales. Whilst offering its support to the old guard of SWMF leaders such as Mabon, it became, and remained hostile to the increasingly influential socialist leaders such as Ablett and Stanton. With the potential to exercise such power over so many men, and therefore influence the working classes of the Welsh coalfield in the ways of socialism, the *Western Mail* took it upon itself to condemn the new breed of miners' leader and set itself as a bastion of conservative values. The journalist David Evans who worked for the *Mail* at the time of the strike and violence, viewed the course of events as 'A Guerilla War',<sup>108</sup> and in his writing for the paper, although it was expressed anonymously, there is evidence to suggest that the *Mail* believed that what had begun as industrial unrest had escalated to a state of class war, with the miners and even working-class women and children portrayed as the enemy.<sup>109</sup>

By way of contrast, the *Rhondda Leader* sought to unify the community. As a local newspaper – the *Leader* was published in Tonypany – it recognised the importance of drawing together and giving voice to the various strands of class and socio-economic groups within the Rhondda. Mine owners, miners' leaders, politicians and church leaders all

---

<sup>108</sup> Evans, *Labour Strife in the South Wales Coalfield*, p. 63.

<sup>109</sup> Anonymous, 'Raids on Shops', p. 7.

contributed to the debate. In the tradition of true Welsh liberal values, the *Rhondda Leader* was in the vanguard of those Welsh newspapers who viewed the events of 1910-11 as nothing more than a case of regrettable, yet resolvable industrial unrest and social disquiet.

The English press was quite different in many respects. Apart from employing special Welsh correspondents reporting news ‘on the front line’, their English readership was largely removed from, and therefore unaffected by, events in the Rhondda. In the case of the *Times* newspaper, it used its position as an organ of the Establishment to support mine owners and the interests of capital. Furthermore, it demonstrated its support for military intervention to restore order in the Rhondda at the time of the riots, and indeed, was critical of Churchill when he seemed reluctant to do so.<sup>110</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* on the other hand, despite being an elite English newspaper, occupied similar ground to that of the *Rhondda Leader*. Both espoused the political, social and economic philosophy of liberalism and overall neither were prepared to favour one particular side during the strike or subsequent violent unrest.

It is impossible for a study of this length to do justice to the entire contemporary press industry in England and Wales in its coverage of the events in the Rhondda in 1910-11. So much so that the Welsh-speaking press has sadly been side-lined. However, what this dissertation has achieved is an analysis of the major players in the Welsh and English newspaper industry, and concluded that, with perhaps the exception of the *Western Mail* and the *Times*, the press broadly portrayed events as just another case of industrial unrest, and were not in the business of fanning the flames of a class war. Of course, an oversimplification of a newspaper's position on any given issue should be avoided, nevertheless, inference on that position can be gained by the evidence presented. It is in this respect, that it is hoped that

---

<sup>110</sup> Anonymous, ‘The Welsh Strikes’, *The Times*, 16 November 1910, p. 6. Available at [The Welsh Strikes. \(open.ac.uk\)](https://www.open.ac.uk), Accessed 16 May 2022.

Timothy Mark Wilson

this dissertation has added to the growing historiography and debate surrounding the Cambrian Combine strike and Tonypandy riots.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Abraham, W., et al., 'Leaders' Appeal to Miners', *Rhondda Leader*, 5 November 1910, p. 5.

Available at [Combine Workers Bring Out Tools.|1910-11-05|Rhondda Leader Maesteg Garw and Ogmores Telegraph - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#), Accessed 22 April 2022.

Anonymous, 'Anomalies of a Strike', *Western Mail*, 31 December 1910, p. 5. Available at

['Anomalies Of A Strike. Negotiations In Midrhondda Dispute. Mr. D. A. Thomas On The Position. Question Of Plenary Powers. Men's | Western Mail | Saturday 31 December 1910 | British Newspaper Archive](#), Accessed 22 April 2022.

Anonymous, 'Authorities Blamed for Riots', *Rhondda Leader, Maesteg Garw and Ogmores Telegraph*,

26 November 1910, p. 6. Available at [Authorities Blamed for Riots.|1910-11-26|Rhondda Leader Maesteg Garw and Ogmores Telegraph - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#), Accessed 27 April 2022.

Anonymous, 'Coal Trade War', *Manchester Guardian*, 12 November 1910, p. 13. Available

at [COAL TRADE WAR: PROTESTS AGAINST IM-PORTED STOKERS FATAL RESULT OF RIOTS ANOTHER STRIKE THREATENED DEATH OF AN INJURED STRIKER ANTI-SOCIALISTS AS STOKERS COALOWNERS' NON-CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE EXTENSION FO STRIKE FEARED MR. STANTON AND THE POLICE - ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer - ProQuest](#), Accessed 6 May 2022.

Anonymous, 'Editorial Notes', *Rhondda Leader*, 29 October 1910, p. 4. Available at

[EDITORIAL NOTES.|1910-10-29|Rhondda Leader Maesteg Garw and Ogmores Telegraph - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#), Accessed 22 April 2022.

Anonymous, 'Editorial Notes', *Rhondda Leader, Maesteg Garw and Ogmores Telegraph*, 19

November 1910, p. 4. Available at [EDITORIAL NOTES.|1910-11-19|Rhondda Leader](#)

[Maesteg Garw and Ogmore Telegraph - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#), Accessed 27 April 2022.

Anonymous, 'Hero of the Rhondda Strike', *The Cambrian*, 18 November 1910, p. 3.

Available at [HERO OF THE RHONDDA STRIKE|1910-11-18|The Cambrian - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#), Accessed 30 April 2022.

Anonymous, 'Raids on Shops', *Western Mail*, 9 November 1910, p. 5. Available at [Raids On Shops. | Western Mail | Wednesday 09 November 1910 | British Newspaper Archive](#), Accessed 26 April 2022.

Anonymous, 'Soldiers Guard Welsh Mines', *Daily Mirror*, 10 November 1910, pp. 3-4.

Available at [Soldiers Guard Welsh Mines. Infantry and More London Policemen Sent To Strike District. Further Rioting, Presence Of Military Helps To | Daily Mirror | Thursday 10 November 1910 | British Newspaper Archive](#), Accessed 12 May 2022.

Anonymous, 'The Chances of a Settlement', *The Times*, 11 November 1910, p. 6. Available at [The Chances Of A Settlement. \(open.ac.uk\)](#), Accessed 2 May 2022.

Anonymous, 'The Coal Riots', *Llanelly Star*, 12 November 1910, p.1. Available at [The Coal Riots.|1910-11-12|Llanelly Star - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#), Accessed 30 April 2022.

Anonymous, 'The Real Leaders', *Western Mail*, 3 November 1910, p. 4. Available at [As U. T. I:•teis•ti. T.r. !awl I. !alio | Western Mail | Thursday 03 November 1910 | British Newspaper Archive](#), Accessed 21 April 2022.

Anonymous, 'The Threat to Strike', *Western Mail*, 17 September 1910, p. 7. Available at [The Threat To Strike. | Western Mail | Saturday 17 September 1910 | British Newspaper Archive](#), Accessed 18 April 2022.

Timothy Mark Wilson

Anonymous, 'The Welsh Strike in Parliament and in Wales', *The Times*, 16 November 1910, p. 11. Available at [The Welsh Strike in Parliament and in Wales. \(open.ac.uk\)](#), Accessed 3 May 2022.

Anonymous, 'Town Looted by Miners', *Daily Mail*, 9 November 1910, p. 7. Available at [Town Looted by Miners \(open.ac.uk\)](#), Accessed 10 May 2022.

Anonymous, 'Winter Coal Strike Feared', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 October 1910, p. 3. Available at [WINTER COAL STRIKE FEARED: GLOOMY PROSPECT IN SOUTH WALES - ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer - ProQuest](#), Accessed 8 May 2022.

Debrett's House of Commons and The Judicial Bench 1916, (London, 1867). Available at: [Debrett's House of Commons : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#), Accessed 2 May 2022.

Evans, D., *Labour Strife in the South Wales Coalfield:1910-1911*, (Cardiff, 1911). Available at: [Labour strife in the South Wales coalfield, 1910-1911. A historical and critical record of the mid-Rhondda, Aberdare Valley and other strikes : Evans, David, b. 1875 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#), Accessed 21 March 2022.

James, D. T. R., et al., 'Correspondence: Tariff "Reform" and Emigration', *Manchester Guardian*, 18 November 1910, p. 6. Available at [CORRESPONDENCE: TARIFF "REFORM" AND EMIGRATION - ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer - ProQuest](#), Accessed 9 May 2022.

## Secondary Sources

Anonymous, 'The Guardian', Encyclopaedia Britannica, Available at <https://academic-eb-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/levels/collegiate/article/The-Guardian/38320>, Accessed 18 May 2022.

Anonymous, 'The Rhondda Leader', Welsh Newspapers Online, Available at [Rhondda Leader Maesteg Garw and Ogmore Telegraph - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](http://RhonddaLeaderMaestegGarwandOgmoreTelegraph-WelshNewspapers.library.wales), Accessed 18 May 2022.

Anonymous, 'The Times', Encyclopaedia Britannica, Available at <https://academic-eb-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/levels/collegiate/article/The-Times/72520> Accessed 18 May 2022, Accessed 18 May 2022.

Cayford, J., *The Western Mail 1869-1914: A Study in the Politics and Management of a Provincial Newspaper*, PhD Thesis, 1992.

Davies, J., *A History of Wales* (London, 2007).

Jenkins, P., *A History of Modern Wales 1536-1990* (London, 2014).

Jones, A., 'Print, Language and Identity: Newspapers in Wales since 1804', in *Newspapers in International Librarianship: Papers Presented by the Newspapers at IFLA General Conferences*, ed. by H. Walravens and E. King (Berlin/Boston, 2003), pp. 229-240.

Jones, A., *Press, Politics and Society: A History of Journalism in Wales* (Cardiff, 1993).

McEwen, J. M., 'Tonypany: Churchill's Albatross', *Queen's Quarterly*, 78.1(1971), pp. 83-95.

O'Brien, A. M., 'Churchill and the Tonypany Riots', *Welsh History Review*, 17.1 (1994), pp. 67-99.

Peters, L., *Politics, Publishing and Personalities: Wrexham Newspapers, 1848-1914* (Chester, 2011).

Timothy Mark Wilson

Smith, D., 'From Riots to Revolt: Tonypany and the Miners' Next Step', in *Wales 1880-1914*, ed. by T. Herbert and G. E. Jones (Cardiff, 1988), pp. 2-23.

Smith, D., 'Tonypany 1910: Definitions of Community', *Past and Present*, 87. (1980), pp. 158-184.

Stead, P., 'The Language of Edwardian Politics', in *A People and a Proletariat*, ed. by D. Smith (London, 1980), pp. 148-165.

The National Library of Wales, 'The Cardiff Times', Welsh Newspapers Online, Available at [The Cardiff Times - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](https://www.library.wales/collections/welsh-newspapers), Accessed 18 May 2022.

Vessey, D., 'Votes for Women and Public Discourse: Elite Newspapers, Correspondence Columns and Informed Debate in Edwardian Britain', *Media History*, 27.4 (2021), pp. 476-490.

Vessey, D., 'Words as well as Deeds: The Popular Press and Suffragette Hunger Strikes in Edwardian Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 32.1 (2021), pp. 68-92.

Williams, C., *Capitalism, Community, and Conflict: The South Wales Coalfield, 1898-1947* (Cardiff, 1998).

Williams, L. J., 'The Coalowners', in *A People and a Proletariat*, ed. by D. Smith (London, 1980), pp. 94-113.

Williams, L. J., 'The Road to Tonypany', *Llafur*, 1.2 (1973), pp. 41-52.