

There is a movement afoot for the repeal of the Trades Disputes Act.

In the last session the Government introduced a Bill for the ratification of the Washington Convention. That Bill was temporarily withdrawn, but has been re-introduced this session and Industry is threatened with having imposed upon it conditions which are unreasonable compared with the conditions of competitor countries who do not observe them.

LOCAL RATES AND RESTRICTIONS.

Apart from charges imposed on industry by Parliament there are the local, and municipal charges. These may be in the form of restrictions, sometimes unreasonable in themselves and sometimes a severe handicap because foreign competitors suffer from no such restrictions.

Such are, for example, so-called fair wages clauses which cannot be enforced on foreign works and may in some cases even prevent a local industry from competing for local work against a foreign industry. At times when the industry is hard-pressed, inability to compete for such reasons may make the difference between continuing to keep the works running and dismissing workpeople.

But the actual costs of *local rates* are the most serious local charge upon industry. It is to be noted that rates are a "prior charge," that is to say, they have to be paid whether there is a credit balance on the working of an industry or not. They are not a tax upon profits.

High rates have various effects besides that of preventing an industry from making profit. They increase the cost of production, and since this cost has to be charged to buyers, they either raise the cost of production to all other industries using the products of the industry so charged or they compel those other industries to buy abroad. This means throwing men out of work. But men out of work mean extra cost to the tax-payers and therefore less money available for industry, or they mean still higher rates for local maintenance of the unemployed. It is not necessary to show that where rates are highest unemployment is usually worst or that where unemployment is worst rates are highest because there are the too familiar features of the so-called "black spots" or "depressed areas".