Wherever railroad combination went on in these years there was a persistent attack, local, state and nation. That is, the thing that they demanded and prayed for they steadily fought. It was not the coming of the railroad that they fought, it was the way the railroad came. There was something mysterious about it coming. Where did the money come from? Where did the money they paid it go to? How could it do legally the things that it did do? Demand rights of way, cross their streams, choose this town and not another town - it might be beneficial and essential factor, but there was something terrifying about the power. The railroad itself was largely responsible for this. (L.p.234)

See Digest of Regulations (L. p.234)

One of the chief grievances of those that complained was what legislatures of the states and Congress gave them under their charter. The states and Congress had begun by answering the prayer of the settler, the miner, the manufacturer for a railroad to get out his products by giving them railroads, and they had had to hire people practically to undertake the operation. "If you will build a railroad to the Coast," they practically told the Union Pacific, "we will give you alternate sections of land, with whatever may be on them. We will protect you from hostile legislation." That is, the Government became the ally and the supporter of the railroad, and did it at the demand of the people. When abuses began to develop, it was slow in recognizing and relieving them. Congress had dealt with water

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

ways before, and there was a pretty good body of regulations for rates, turn pikes, canals. The conditions of the traffic by water are such that they largely regulate themselves, too. There was the common law about carrier or highway. Everybody had a right on it, an equal right. The same was true of water ways. Custom and age old regulation of the high way as belonging to rich and poor, big and little, took care very largely of that. But now there comes a new kind of transportation, unknown to the common law. Men secured free a right of way through the country. So anxious was the people of that country to have the railroad that they gave it out right - the right to cross their property. This happened in Illinois very largely. (See Gary) Building a railroad costs a great deal of money. It cannot be done by one individual or ten, the public must be appealed to, its stock and bonds floated. It builds its rails, it considers it a private affair. All the individualism of the country came out with these first railroad builders. Vanderbilt expressed it in his "The public be damaned." See Hendrick

The railroad built, the feeling was that they should do as they pleased. The shipper in Galesburg to St. Louis might find that he had to pay more to send his wheat there than the man in Minneapolis was paying to send it to St. Louis. Galesburg wants to build itself up as an industrial town but it has a neighbor that the railroad is more interested in. It may be because some prominent stockholder lives there, because the railroad itself owns large tracts of land there, because it has in the back of its head the idea that it may build a branch from that town instead of from Galesburg that will

Construction of Rig. Miss. R. alley of R.R.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

take it nearer to some very large manufacturing centre or to some point that it wants to open up. People had nothing to say about these things. That is, the blessing that had come into their community they very soon discovered to be an autocrat over their destinies.

Farmers were particularly loud in their accusations, and with good enough reason. Moreover, by 1880 the disastrous results to the communities that had so encouraged the railway, because of reckless promotion, began to be obvious. What the farmer had not realized was that those who had brought the railroad to him were not building a road for the sake of developing business, operating, opening the country, as Hill had done, but they were mere promotors, adventurers. They had secured right of way, they had secured land, they had sold bonds, they had made a makeshift road, - streaks of rust they came to be called. The road was never properly run, nothing was done for the communities. Those who had put money into its stock found that they were getting nothing. Finally the whole thing went into bankruptcy and the promoters disappeared from that section, to re-appear in some other section, to promote something else - precisely as the same type of people are doing today.

Road after road went into the hands of a receiver. Moreover, many communities had suffered from the bitter competition, strife for business between railroads. (See last par., 1.p.239)

The shipper had no protection in the matter of rates. (System of Public Rebates, p.240) The way this system worked for individuals and for one set of men in a business against another set

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.