

ARTICLE

South Africa's Haymarket: the Knights of Labor and political violence in the United States and South Africa, 1886–1892

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Abstract

This article compares and connects two episodes of political violence in the late nineteenth century: the Haymarket Affair in Chicago in 1886 and the bombing of the offices of the De Beers Company, chaired by Cecil Rhodes, at Kimberley on the South African diamond fields in 1891. These episodes were connected by the existence in both countries of an American and then global movement, the Knights of Labor/Labour. The Knights' American history was shaped by Haymarket. Their South African history was radically altered by the De Beers explosion, which both the Knights and their enemies interpreted through the prism of Haymarket. They drew lessons from it that determined their own conduct and may have contributed to the demise of the South African Knights less than two years later. This article charts those connections and the context to the De Beers explosion, the trial that followed, and the lessons that South African Knights drew from the experiences of their American brothers and sisters.

Keywords: nineteenth century; Haymarket Affair; Chicago; South Africa; Knights of Labor/Labour; political violence

At about 10:40 on the night of 9 July 1891, an explosion shook the town of Kimberley in South Africa's Cape Colony. Dynamite ripped through the headquarters of the De Beers Consolidated Mining Company. No one was killed or injured, but bricks, glass, broken cabinets, and paperwork lay scattered across the central offices. Market Street was littered with broken glass from the windows of shops opposite. Noise from the explosion resounded throughout the town and all the way along the road to the nearby town of Beaconsfield, and windows were reported to be smashed by the shock wave all the way there. Crowds of Kimberley people assembled on nearby streets, wondering about the cause of the noise. They were joined by excited people rushing from Beaconsfield in carts, and then by Mr Gardner Williams, the general manager of De Beers. According to the *Kimberley Independent*, Williams arrived 'as cool as a cucumber', and immediately began the task of ascertaining the damage. The De Beers Company issued a £500 reward for any information leading to the arrest of the perpetrators, and then set a team of bricklayers and builders to work through several nights to repair the damage and re-pristinise the central office.¹

Tales of heroism soon leaked to the press. Newspapers seized on the story of Roy Campbell Peat, a one-armed ex-soldier serving as nightwatchman at the offices. After a 'blinding flash', Peat was thrown to the ground by the explosion, only to then race revolver in hand to protect the great stock of uncut diamonds kept on site from theft by the dynamiters. Yet no diamonds were taken. All that remained of the act at the scene of the crime was 'a long length of wire . . . corded round

¹'Dynamitards in Our Midst', *Kimberley Independent*, 10 July 1891.

the verandah post', which 'suggested that the dynamite charges had been fired by means of an electric battery'. The wires belonged to the Telephone System Company, but there were no further clues as to who had placed them there and detonated the charge, or why.² No witnesses immediately came forward to the Kimberley Detective Department. Rumours flew of men darting around the vicinity of the offices, in false beards and fake moustaches, lighting the fateful charge with a cigar, hoping to raid the premises for its precious stones or even murder the employees and managers of De Beers. The police began to trawl through these stories, and, as they accumulated, one phrase was repeated in many of them, and came to the attention of politicians in Cape Town at the colonial parliament. This, they were saying, was the work of the Knights of Labour.

The explosion at the De Beers offices on 9 July 1891 appears as little more than a blip in most histories of the South African diamond fields. William Worger mentions the explosion in his work on that region during the late nineteenth century, but only briefly.³ No one died in the blast, no diamonds were stolen, the offices were easily repaired, and the event was far overshadowed by the trends that Worger and Robert Vicat Turrell so ably describe: the steady monopolization of diamond extraction by De Beers after 1888, and their growing control over the distribution and world supply of diamonds in the 1890s.⁴ But those objectives were not achieved as smoothly as they might appear in retrospect. The detonation of dynamite on 9 July was both a culmination and a negation of six months of agitation on a scale seldom seen on the diamond fields. The origins of that agitation went back to 1888, when Cecil Rhodes and Barney Barnato agreed to amalgamate the diamond mines under the name of De Beers. The company then cut back on production, especially at the Bultfontein and Dutoitspan mines, leaving hundreds of white settlers and thousands of black workers unemployed. They eked out a living, either by leaving town, prospecting at the old river diggings, setting up a shop or stall in town, or becoming a debris washer, sorting through the earth excavated but not sorted by previous mining companies. 'Distress on the Diamond Fields' became a popular theme in the local press, at meetings of the Kimberley and Beaconsfield Councils, even in the chamber of the Cape Colony House of Assembly.

The De Beers monopoly was not secure either. Rhodes and his company remained vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the world diamond market, and between 1888 and 1895 they struggled, in Worger's words, to 'complete the monopoly'. They would achieve it vertically, through arrangements with distributors and sellers in a combination, and horizontally, by buying out or otherwise preventing competition with another new company or mine. Vertical integration was by no means complete in 1891. De Beers' need to hold down labour costs raised tensions at the mines, as white contractors sought to get more for less from black workers. Racial conflict, sometimes violent, broke out in the underground tunnels of the working mines. Then the worst dreams of the monopolists came true. A new mine was discovered late in 1890 on the farm of J. J. Wessels, and the news was leaked to the *Diamonds Fields Advertiser* in January 1891. Twice, in February and April 1891, white settlers 'rushed' the farm and declared the new Wesselton mine a public digging that could, by being open to all willing claimants, end distress on the diamond fields.

Rhodes, De Beers, and the De Beers shareholders were faced with the collapse of the amalgamation they had expended so much money to build. White settlers, on the other hand, grew increasingly radical between February and July of 1891. For many of them, the opening of Wesselton to the public became only the first battle in a wider war against Rhodes and his company. The Knights of Labour, based on the famous American movement of the same name, was founded in April, amid the excitement of the second rush, as the representative of this radicalized layer of settlers. Their fate would become bound up with the blast on 9 July. Rumours

²*Ibid.*

³William Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds: Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867–1895* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 279.

⁴Robert Vicat Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871–1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

blamed them for it. Their leading figures would appear at the trial of the De Beers bombing as defendants, and as key witnesses for the prosecution *and* the defence. In the end, one non-lethal explosion and its consequences framed the whole short history of the Knights of Labour of South Africa.

That history is itself a part of the wider transformation of southern Africa in the late nineteenth century, as the development of diamonds, then gold, turned a series of backwater British colonies, Dutch republics, and black African tribes and kingdoms into a focal point for the world economy. The early exploitation of gold reserves on the Witwatersrand depended in part on the capital of mine magnates on the diamond fields and their foreign financiers. They imported from Kimberley to Johannesburg many of what became the characteristic practices of the South African gold industry, from the compounding of black workers to the strict racial division of labour and the amalgamation of the mines in fewer hands. At this early stage the glitter of gold still depended to some extent on the digging of diamonds.⁵ The history of modern South Africa begins here, even before the federation of the various colonies and republics into a single state, with its white mine-owning plutocrats, its racial segregation, its fratricidal battles between British and Boer, and the development of all the processes that later congealed as apartheid. The Knights of Labour struggled unsuccessfully for an alternative to that future, and that struggle hinged in part on the application of dynamite to the De Beers central office.

This article is about the events that led up to the 9 July explosion, the trial that followed, and the aftermath of the trial. It is the story of a strange period in the history of the diamond fields, during which the trajectory of that history was not yet fully set: when the power of De Beers over the region, let alone the world diamond market, was not yet secure, and settlers on the fields still believed they could create another kind of diamond industry—one that would prioritize the wider community and not its shareholders. It is about the agitation by these settlers, which reached a crescendo in June and July 1891 and even caused the Cape Colony parliament, headed by none other than Cecil Rhodes as premier, to call a select committee to investigate distress around Kimberley. That agitation ultimately failed, as did its last great expression, the Knights of Labour; and part of its failure was the application of dynamite to De Beers' brickwork. This article, then, is about the role that one minor explosion could play in an entire struggle, which by its failure helped set the trajectory for the history of the diamond fields, the Cape Colony, and ultimately the history of southern Africa.

It forms part of a forthcoming study of the South African Knights, which examines in greater detail than possible here the attempts by many white residents of Kimberley to turn back the clock of the diamond industry to a time before the great De Beers amalgamation of the mines. The Knights arose as the representative movement of white men and women forced from their claims or their jobs, first by the rise of mining companies in the late 1870s, and then by the De Beers monopoly in 1888. This assortment of what scholars label with that necessary but imprecise term, 'poor whites', included former miners, workers, and overseers, white-collar professionals made redundant by the amalgamation, and merchants, large and small, punished in their profit lines by the depressed conditions that followed the amalgamation.⁶ South African Knights failed, and the 9 July bombing was an important part of their failure.

This article also has wider implications for the global history of the Knights of Labor/Labour.⁷ The Knights appeared in many countries in Europe and Australasia in the late 1880s, after the

⁵Jade Davenport is only the most recent scholar to analyse interconnections between the diamond and gold industries, from their financing to labour practices and even the individual capitalists involved (*Digging Deep: A History of Mining in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2014)).

⁶For the landmark collection of work on 'poor whites', published at the point when the breakdown of apartheid had again raised it as a major contemporary issue, see Robert Morrell, ed., *White but Poor: Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa 1880–1940* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992).

⁷Spelling is a vexed issue with the movement. Following contemporary records, this article will use the American spelling when referring to the American Knights and British spelling when referring to the South African Knights.

American parent organization grew to nearly a million members and briefly caused American employers and the two-party political system to tremble at their foundations. These successes earned the movement a worldwide reputation that its organizers, and in some cases local enthusiasts in other parts of the world without any connection to the American movement, turned into a global movement that probably numbered more than a hundred thousand members outside North America. Workers in parts of Europe and Australasia found in the Knights a flexible and congenial vehicle for their own local struggles. South Africa became, in 1891, the site of the last major outpost to appear outside their North American home. Historians have never devoted serious attention to the Knights there, yet their battle with Cecil Rhodes and De Beers was the among the last hurrahs of a movement through which passed millions of workers on four continents in the preceding two decades.⁸ This article is part of the recovery of that battle, and the wider South African movement, from scholarly neglect. It is also part of what Marcel van der Linden described as the wider ‘transnationalization’ of American labour history—of the underexamined contribution of American workers to wider international history.⁹

The bomb and its consequences further connect the histories of Kimberley and the Knights on another axis. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Murray Kemp writes, ‘a wave of terrorism was unleashed upon the globe’.¹⁰ Tsars, presidents, and scores of government officials across the world fell to the bullets and bombs of men inspired by the need for political change and, indeed, the assassination of an Austrian archduke set in train the First World War. The history of the American Knights of Labor was conditioned by its association with one such landmark act of political violence, the Haymarket Affair. When police moved in to shut down an anarchist protest at Chicago’s Haymarket on the night of 4 May 1886, persons unknown threw a bomb into their ranks. The blast and the ensuing exchange of gunfire left at least eight people dead, and many more injured. Eight anarchists were charged and convicted for the bombing. Four were hanged, one died by suicide, and three were jailed and later pardoned. Haymarket set off America’s first great Red Scare, and its principal victims were the Knights of Labor, already under severe attack by employers and their allies in government.¹¹ Terence Powderly, General Master Workman (President) of the Knights, controversially and unsuccessfully tried to dissociate his movement from the anarchists.¹²

The bombing of the De Beers offices in Kimberley was a minor event by comparison. No one died. No one was executed for it. But the Haymarket Affair became the frame through which South Africans understood their own episode of political violence. Enemies of the Knights in Kimberley tied them to the events of five years earlier in Chicago. South African Knights consulted by letter with Powderly and followed the same course of action on the diamond fields that their General Master Workman had earlier pursued in the United States. This article is not only a comparison between two uses of politicized dynamite, but a discussion of how one

⁸For an overview of that international history, see Robert Weir, *Knights Down Under: The Knights of Labour in New Zealand* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009); Steven Parfitt, ‘The First-and-a-half International: The Knights of Labor and the History of International Labour Organization in the Nineteenth Century’, *Labour History Review* 80, no. 2 (2015): 135–67.

⁹Marcel van der Linden, ‘Transnationalizing American Labor History’, *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999): 965–75.

¹⁰Michael Kemp, *Bombs, Bullets and Bread: The Politics of Anarchist Terrorism Worldwide, 1866–1926* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2018), 1.

¹¹Classic texts on Haymarket include Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); James Green, *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement, and the Bombing that Divided Gilded Age America* (New York: Pantheon, 2006). These scholars all argued that the Haymarket defendants were in fact the victims of a miscarriage of justice. More recently, Timothy Messer-Kruse has suggested that that Haymarket anarchists may well have been guilty (*The Trial of the Haymarket Anarchists: Terrorism and Justice in the Gilded Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); *The Haymarket Conspiracy: Transatlantic Anarchist Networks* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012)). Some of the responses to Messer-Kruse’s work on Haymarket include Richard Schneirov, ‘Still Not Guilty’, *Labor* 9, no. 3 (2012): 29–33; Bryan D. Palmer, ‘CSI Labor History: Haymarket and the Forensics of Forgetting’, *Labor* 3, no. 1 (2006): 25–36.

¹²For a sympathetic view of Powderly and his predicament over Haymarket, see Craig Phelan, *Grand Master Workman: Terence Powderly and the Knights of Labor* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000).

episode—Haymarket—was appropriated by contending sides in a fierce political struggle on the other side of the world in southern Africa. Parallels between the two events, as we will see, extended to the context of agitation and upheaval in which the explosions happened, the movement—the Knights of Labor—at the heart of that agitation, the contentious nature of the trial, and the similar means by which Knights in both countries tried to extricate themselves, unsuccessfully, from the consequences of the explosions.

There is, of course, only so much we can do with the sources available. Most of the men (unlike the American Knights, the South African version remained male-only) involved in this story left barely a trace in the historical record beyond their involvement in the events described here. The Knights were, as they perhaps intended, a shadowy movement who prized their anonymity as a defence against retaliation by De Beers. Most of the available evidence on the bombing and the people (potentially) involved comes from the two local newspapers, the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* and the *Kimberley Independent*. The *Independent*, as we will see, remained at almost all times loyal to De Beers. The *Advertiser* proved prepared for a time to treat the incipient rebellion against that company with some sympathy, but even that evaporated after the explosion. The other major source is a select committee called in June 1891 by the Cape Colony parliament to investigate distress on the diamond fields. The printed transcripts of the committee's hearings provide an invaluable picture of social conditions on the fields at the time of the bombing, and the wild rumours and fears that attended the Knights of Labour in their early days.¹³

These sources are not overstocked with all the information we might wish for. They do, however, provide enough of a window into the events described below to draw provisional conclusions about what happened and what almost certainly did not happen. Through these events, we better understand the dynamics that governed the South African history of the Knights of Labour, and the effect of one minor explosion on the struggle to rein in the De Beers diamond monopoly. We also add new layers to the rich legacy of the Haymarket Affair, and to one of its least-known contemporary echoes on the other side of the world. This is the promise of global and transnational approaches to history: that by drawing appropriate connections between processes and events in different parts of the world, or by examining them as part of the same processes and events, we garner insights unseen through a narrow national lens. By connecting two explosions that are separated by an ocean and half a decade we also place the histories of mining, political violence, and labour movements in wider and deeper context.

The bomb

The road that led to the explosion of 9 July ran through a region close to open rebellion. Rhodes and his interests seemed on shaky ground, and the 'De Beers' monopoly', as William Worger writes, 'had come under severe attack by the middle of 1891'.¹⁴ The attackers combined men of property with men without work. This was a social coalition that included most white men that had in some way seen their interests threatened by the monopoly position of De Beers. Many white overseers and mine officials had been made redundant when several large mining companies were merged into one. Merchants used to selling to a larger population of white and black miners and other residents found that the whites, many newly impoverished, could now only afford a fraction of what they previously bought. Black miners imprisoned in the compounds had their needs catered to exclusively by wholesalers close to De Beers, leaving the merchants of Kimberley and Beaconsfield out in the cold. Even some major property owners found that the

¹³Evidence before the Select Committee on Trade and Business in Griqualand West', in *Government Publications Relating to the Cape of Good Hope, to 1910. Group I, Votes and Proceedings of the House of Assembly and Annexures (Including Select Committee Reports)*, British Library, London.

¹⁴Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds*, 279.

De Beers monopoly, by inducing a collapse in the local economy and an exodus of white residents, reduced the value of their portfolios and the rents they could charge.

This broad coalition pitted most of white Kimberley and Beaconsfield against the company, and gave rise, over time, to the Knights of Labour as the vehicle for their revolt. Tensions steadily grew. By June and July, the air was alive with the anticipation of violence, from Rhodes and the government against the would-be rebels on one side, and from those rebels on the other. As James Rose Innes, attorney general for the Cape Colony in the government headed by Cecil Rhodes, remembered:

Local feeling ran very high, and the Cape police were warned from Kimberley that a plot was being hatched to assassinate the Prime Minister. Certain suspects from Kimberley were shadowed, and a detective was enrolled on the Groote Schuur staff. All this of course without the knowledge of Rhodes.¹⁵

This was the explosive context, and the trajectory of struggle, that was interrupted by the application of dynamite to the company's central office in Kimberley.

The opening act of this putative rebellion began on 6 February 1891. A small advance guard set out from Kimberley and Beaconsfield under cover of darkness and occupied the site of the Wesselton Mine at 3 a.m. Hundreds more joined them at daylight. They included, as the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* reported, 'so called financial and mining magnates from the Diamond Market, Managers of Companies, engine drivers, overseers, clerks, agents, collectors, accountants, storekeepers, mechanics of various grades, and men of no grade at all except the lowest'.¹⁶

This was the coalition of losers in the De Beers amalgamation made flesh. To them were added that wider category described by contemporaries and historians as 'poor whites'. These were men and women of European descent, including many Boers as well as British and other more recent immigrants, struggling at the best of times to eke out a living. In the late nineteenth century they became a social problem for white elites, precisely because they seemed to undermine the racial order by their poverty, and because the fear always remained that they might at some point unite with poor blacks against their social betters. As Bill Freund put it, 'the ultimate nightmare of the ruling class was a class movement that would transcend the race line and unify the poor and oppressed, white and black, a nightmare that both Rhodes and [Afrikaner politician Jan] Smuts expressed at times'.¹⁷ The spectre of poor whites joining up with poor black Africans against white colonial elites never materialized, but it nonetheless haunted the imagination of mine owners and colonial administrators well into the twentieth century. The Wesselton Rush certainly demonstrated that poor whites could destabilize the rule of Rhodes and his allies, even without transcending racial lines. The rushers, and then the Knights, certainly never admitted black Africans as members or even contemplated doing so. They wanted a diamond fields made safe for white men and women to work small claims on the mines with the assistance of low-paid black labour.

So far as we can tell, the rushers included white men and women from across the British Empire, from continental Europe and North America, including British, Irish, Germans, Australians, and a kaleidoscope of other nationalities. Later, parties from the Transvaal and elsewhere in southern Africa would arrive on site to add to their numbers. The high turnover of white people on the fields, coming to make their fortune and leaving when the promised riches never panned out, had in recent years become a deficit. Individuals and families fled depressed trade and high unemployment in search of opportunities elsewhere. Between 1887 and 1891, for

¹⁵James Rose Innes, *Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), 92.

¹⁶The Wesselton Diamond Mine "Rushed", *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 7 February 1891.

¹⁷Bill Freund, 'The Poor Whites: A Social Force and a Social Problem in South African History', in *White But Poor*, xvii.

example, the white population of Beaconsfield dropped from 20,000 to 11,000.¹⁸ Now the flow temporarily reversed, and Kimberley's white population began to creep up again.

Once arrived on the mine, each man, and some women, fanned out to peg off their claims. News of the rush burned away the pessimism that had clung to the region after the amalgamation of the mines. As the *Advertiser* explained in a burst of purple prose:

The news spread all over the Diamond Fields that the mine had been 'rushed', and the remaining inhabitants who can talk dogmatically of 'the early days' began to have visions and to dream dreams (though widely wakeful all the time) of another turn of the wheel, fortune smiling, champagne flowing, bank drafts melting like snow from a steep brae side, and a general outburst from Cornucopia's endless stores.¹⁹

The rushers formed a new organization, the Wesselton Claimholders Association, to protect their claims and petition the government to declare Wesselton a public digging. Wessels and his leasee, Henry Ward, asked the courts to remove the rushers from his farm. The court agreed with the owners, and this first rush ended with the rushers defeated, abandoning their claims.

The optimism unleashed by the rush was not so easily dissipated. Rather than abandon hopes of opening the Wesselton Mine, the rushers received support from unlikely quarters. Many local merchants hoped that the opening of a new mine, and the restoration of people and wages lost after the De Beers amalgamation, would revive commerce in the town. Their representatives on the Kimberley Chamber of Commerce urged the government to provide employment on the fields by opening Wesselton. Landowners such as E. H. Jones, Mayor of Kimberley, realized that their property values depended on local prosperity. Jones called for the government to force the owners of all the diamond mines to work their holdings, or allow others to do so in their stead. Even the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* began to demand that the government end the local depression, lest Kimberley become little more than a series of mines and compounds and a handful of local stores.²⁰ (They were not so successful with the *Kimberley Independent*, which denounced the rush as an attack on private property rights.)²¹ To this unusual coalition the rushers could add some local clergy, especially the Anglican Reverend A. P. Bulmer and the Dutch Reformed Church Reverend A. P. Kriel, along with the Debris Washers Association and other local associations representing the poor whites and smaller shopkeepers. At its height, just about everyone on the diamond fields not directly employed by De Beers was involved in some way with the action and agitation against the company.

Settlers rushed Wesselton again in late April. This second rush was altogether larger, more determined, rhetorically sharper than the first. Several thousand white settlers marched to Wesselton in procession, led by a marching band and with carriages provided for the diamond-washing machines and the women. A process of radicalization between the first and second rushes created what David McArthur of the Wesselton Claimholders' Association described as a 'division' between those rushers prepared to accept the rulings of courts and governments and those willing, at least in words, to resist the law and the Cape Colony government. McArthur and his 'moderate' Association were superseded by in the second rush by a Diggers' Committee, led by James Henry Wilson. A native Londoner, Wilson claimed to have spent time as a young man in the Cornish mines. He had arrived on the fields in 1873, working by turns as a claimholder, miner, and contractor for several mining companies before the amalgamation.²² After then he worked for several months as a debris washer, becoming President of the Debris Washers' Association, and

¹⁸'The Trade and Labour of the Industry: Public Meeting in Beaconsfield', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 20 June 1891.

¹⁹'The Wesselton Diamond Mine "Rushed"', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 7 February 1891.

²⁰'If not Remonstrance – Then Warning', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 20 June 1891.

²¹See, for instance, 'The Wesselton Mine', *Kimberley Independent*, 6 May 1891.

²²J. H. Wilson, 13 July 1891, 'Evidence before the Select Committee on Trade and Business in Griqualand West', 251.

was unemployed at the time of the rush.²³ He now turned his zeal to the fight for Wesselton. On day one of the second rush, Wilson ‘measured off his claims, stuck his pick into it and defied anyone to arrest him’.²⁴ He later had his newborn daughter baptized on a diamond sorting table at the mine as Weselton Susanna Wilson.²⁵ As the second rush progressed, the gulf deepened between De Beers and its opponents.

Wilson also helped found the open Diggers’ Committee’s secret counterpart, the Knights of Labour of South Africa, at a meeting at the Burns Hotel in Kimberley on the first evening of the rush. The Knights wanted more than Wesselton. They aimed to break the De Beers monopoly and unseat Rhodes as premier of the colony. One correspondent for the *Lantern* gained initiation into their temples in November, and even then he marvelled at ‘the large number of prominent men, merchants, clergymen, professional men, officials and others who have joined it’.²⁶ Only De Beers’ employees remained beyond their grasp; their jobs and housing depended on loyalty to their employer, which the Knights never severed. By June, the Knights nevertheless won the allegiance of many other white settlers in Kimberley and Beaconsfield.

They recognized the broad base of their coalition by making their first public act a boycott of Asian businesses, to protect white shopkeepers from unwanted competition. Anti-Asian racism was by this point the default setting of white settlers across the British imperial space. In southern Africa it was in fact less virulent in 1891 than the dominant strains in Australia and New Zealand, or indeed Canada and the United States. There, laws discriminating against Asians, especially the Chinese, and racial pogroms against Chinese communities, became commonplace in the late nineteenth century. American Knights of Labor had contributed their share towards it. They lobbied for what became the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. In the mid-1880s, at the apogee of their influence, Knights in the western American states led a series of actions to clear out the Chinese from their communities. In September 1885, at Rock Springs, Wyoming, their anger turned deadly as they murdered at least twenty-eight Chinese and burned dozens of Chinese homes in a famous massacre. Murder was not the norm, but neither was it unknown in the racially heated atmosphere of the time.²⁷

The Wesselton rushers did not necessarily seek to emulate the miners at Rock Springs, but the strong stand that American Knights took against competition from Chinese immigrants, at work or in commerce, influenced their decision to name their own movement after the American one. ‘Through their influence the Chinese were no longer able to enter America’, George Walters, one of the co-founders of the Knights and a former law agent in Cape Town who had lived in Kimberley for ‘a considerable time’, told rushers on the Wesselton. ‘While here in Kimberley’, he added, ‘Chinese were actually pegging out claims on the Wesselton Mine, and Natal was being overrun with the refuse of India’.²⁸ Seeing the Chinese as unassimilable, and not fit to be allies in the struggle against De Beers, the Knights and the wider constituency of rushers refused to consider recruiting them as members. Instead, their anti-Asian stand would encourage white shopkeepers and merchants, wavering perhaps between their dislike and fear of the company, to side with them on the grounds of racial solidarity. Rapid victories against a weaker racial enemy would strengthen their hand against their powerful corporate adversary. Judging by the membership unearthed by the man from the *Lantern*, that strategy proved successful, though their

²³*Ibid.*, 253.

²⁴‘The Wesselton Mine Agitation’, *Eastern Province Herald*, 24 April 1891.

²⁵‘Opening of Wesselton Mine: The Proceedings on Saturday’, *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 2 May 1891.

²⁶‘Knights of Labour of South Africa’, *The Lantern*, 5 December 1891.

²⁷The classic work on this subject remains Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971). Joseph Gerteis has more recently looked at the racial exclusion of Chinese immigrants (and the partial inclusion of African Americans) by American Knights and the Populist movements (*Class and the Color Line: Interracial Class Coalition in the Knights of Labor and the Populist Movement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007)).

²⁸‘The New Secret Society’, *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 2 May 1891.

boycott of Chinese businesses did not. De Beers had never faced such a united front against their domination of the diamond fields.²⁹

Rhodes and his friends were not willing to concede an inch to their opponents, and they fought back with all the considerable weapons at their disposal. The rushers were defeated again in court, and legally forced to leave Wesseltown. Wilson insisted they would 'stick to the mine and tolerate no force', and boasted that 'he had 500 stand of arms buried, and a large number of men at his back if he required them', but a small army of constables and troopers removed the rushers without violence. He and several other rushers were prosecuted for trespass.³⁰ De Beers and the London and South African Exploration Company then denied the debris washers access to the mining areas situated near the Kimberley, Dutoitspan, and Bultfontein Mines.³¹ Now on the defensive, the rushers and their friends convened daily meetings, and the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* ran a daily campaign detailing distress on the fields. As the tempo of agitation stepped up, the colonial parliament finally stepped in.

Sir Thomas Upington, a former premier, successfully moved for a select committee to address the economic depression in Kimberley and Beaconsfield. The *Advertiser* responded by daily publishing 'More Facts for Sir Thomas Upington', drowning parliamentarians in fresh data. The Kimberley Borough Council, Chamber of Commerce, and Citizens' Association joined with the Wesseltown Claimholders Association to gather testimony and pay for witnesses to travel to Cape Town and give evidence to the committee. The Knights seem to have selected and paid for James Wilson to do likewise. 'Agitation conducted on vigorous, yet reasonable, lines, has succeeded in attaining one important end, namely, the appointment of a Select Committee', the *Advertiser* concluded. 'It rests with the community to justify that agitation by placing such unchallengeable facts before the Committee as will eventuate in substantial measures for relief.'³²

Yet Rhodes and his allies made sure that its conclusions would not hurt De Beers. Seven of its nine members supported the government. When David McArthur of the Claimholders' Association appeared as its first witness on 29 June, it became clear that Rhodes' allies on the select committee had less interest in discovering the causes of distress on the fields than in the identities and aims of its leading agitators. The Knights of Labour came in for special scrutiny. Almost every witness was asked what they knew about the Knights, and testimony did not disappoint. George Armstrong, a prospector working for J. J. Wessels, associated the organization with threatening letters headed by the skull and crossbones.³³ J. S. Cowie, acting mayor of Beaconsfield, denied any connections with the Knights, but claimed he had heard that they would 'obtain their rights' by 'illegal means, and if necessary, by blood, from what I hear'.³⁴

Cowie spoke on 8 July. By that time, threats of violence against De Beers, even the government, had become commonplace. James Rose Innes was not the only one to remember the rumours of plots to kill Rhodes or take some other act to force the government's hand on the Wesseltown Mine. George Walters, a friend of James Wilson and co-founder of the South African Knights, recalled in 1892 that 'there were a lot of desperate men gathered together from all parts of South Africa, and much strong language was used'. One man, he added, 'wished to send an infernal machine to Mr Rhodes, and asked . . . to give him 10s to buy chemicals'.³⁵ The Knights had become the unquestioned champion for this discontent, purportedly representing 1,500–1,600 settlers. Given that the April 1891 census listed 18,620 white residents in Kimberley and Beaconsfield, that figure

²⁹'Dynamitards in the United States', *Kimberley Independent*, 11 July 1891; 'The Asiatic Plague', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 18 July 1891.

³⁰'The Wesseltown Mine Trespass', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 13 June 1891.

³¹Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds*, 267–71.

³²'The Select Committee', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 4 July 1891.

³³George Armstrong, 30 June 1891, 'Evidence before the Select Committee on Trade and Business in Griqualand West', 29.

³⁴J. S. Cowie, 8 July 1891, 'Evidence before the Select Committee on Trade and Business in Griqualand West', 180–81.

³⁵'The Dynamite Outrage at De Beers Offices', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 14 May 1892; 'The De Beers Explosion', *Kimberley Independent*, 5 March 1892.

included nearly 10 per cent of the total white population, excluding sympathizers not yet members.³⁶ At this precise point, with rebellion institutionalized and De Beers vulnerable, the dynamite went off in central Kimberley.

Opponents of the agitation of the previous six months now went on the attack, armed with recent American history. ‘The worst features of American outrage have found their way into Kimberley’, thundered the *Independent*.³⁷ At the colonial parliament, Barney Barnato asked if the government ‘was aware that a society called the Knights of Labour had recently been established in Kimberley, and whether, seeing that a similar organisation had been the cause of much bloodshed in the United States of America, the Government would take steps to suppress the organisation at Kimberley?’³⁸ The first parallels between Haymarket and the De Beers bomb were thus drawn mere days after the event. The appearance of James Henry Wilson before the select committee on 13 July did nothing to dispel them. In an extreme example of ‘taking the Fifth’, Wilson refused to answer any questions pertaining to the Knights. Membership, aims, information about advertisements taken out by the movement in local papers, all were swatted away, with Wilson telling Barnato that he would ‘point blank refuse’ to give the Committee any information about the Knights.³⁹ The mystery surrounding the movement only deepened, and rumours about their—and his—involvement in the explosion continued to grow.

The Knights were forced to retreat from the moral high ground against De Beers to defend their movement from associations with violence. This was no Haymarket, they argued, and in any case, the Knights had nothing to do with that. Writing in the *Independent*, ‘Americus’ insisted that American Knights operated ‘strictly upon legal and constitutional lines . . . They have never been charged with advocating dynamite or force or resorting to illegal measures to attain their end’. The same was true of the Kimberley version. ‘A couple of men now in Kimberley Hospital, and not a few poor families can speak with gratitude of what the Knights of Labour are doing in Kimberley’, he wrote.⁴⁰ W. J. Barlow, announcing himself for the first time in public as grand master of the movement, also rejected ‘the cruel insinuations made in some quarters, that the Knights of Labour are in some way connected with the dynamite outrage’. Just because some madman planted a bomb, he argued, ‘it is crueling unjust on the strength of mere street gossip to lay the blame at the doors of hundreds of men, who are earnestly endeavouring by every honourable means to ameliorate the condition of the poor and distressed’.⁴¹

At this point in late 1891, parallels with Haymarket extended only so far. The explosion at Chicago in 1886 set off a red scare that conflated the Knights with wanton violence and justified the violent campaign by employers, their hired private detectives, and police, to root out the Knights from the major industries of the country. No such hysteria followed the De Beers bombing. The Knights cooperated with the Kimberley Detective Department, and their membership seems to have remained stable throughout the rest of 1891. Yet there was a sense in which the hopes and agitation of the past year had been quelled by the introduction of violence. The *Diamond Fields Advertiser* backed away from the agitation, as did the moderate wing of the rushers. The coalition that had coalesced around the Knights in June and July remained, but with its momentum curbed.

Fresh defeats followed. Evidence and reports from the select committee were presented to the House on the penultimate day of the parliamentary session, and not even debated on the floor. With government relief unavailing, De Beers announced in December that they had bought the

³⁶*Results of a Census of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, as of the Night of Sunday, the 5th April, 1891* (Cape Town: WA Richards & Sons, 1892), 24–5.

³⁷Editorial, *Kimberley Independent*, 10 July 1891.

³⁸*Debates in the Cape Colony House of Assembly* (Cape Town: Government Printer, 1891), 210.

³⁹James Wilson, 13 July 1891, ‘Evidence before the Select Committee on Trade and Business in Griqualand West’, 255. The Treasurer-General was John X. Merriman, future Prime Minister of South Africa and at this time an ally of Rhodes.

⁴⁰‘Dynamitards in the United States’, *Kimberley Independent*, 11 July 1891.

⁴¹‘The Knights of Labour’, *Kimberley Independent*, 11 July 1891.

Wesselton Mine, renamed the 'Premier Mine' after Rhodes. 'The idea of competition on the diamond fields', as Stefan Kanfer writes, 'effectively expired'.⁴² The exodus from Beaconsfield and Kimberley, halted and even briefly reversed by the excitement over Wesselton, resumed. Among those fleeing from Kimberley was James Wilson, who joined many other unemployed men on the fields, including his old friend George Walter, at the old river diggings at Klipdam. Now in debt, Wilson seems to have turned to the bottle as an escape from his financial predicament, and from the rumours that connected him with the explosion.

As the agitation between February and July subsided on the diamond fields in August and afterwards, the Kimberley Detective Department searched for the person or persons responsible for the explosion. De Beers and the government each offered £500 for any information leading to an arrest. Local detectives, and De Beers themselves, drew on the web of informants they used to ferret out illegal diamond buying, and to keep tabs on local opposition to the company as well. William Cuthbert, a Cape trooper, was sent undercover to Klipdam to monitor Wilson and some of the other ex-rushers. Six months passed with no public progress on the case. Then, on 11 February 1892, Cuthbert arrested Wilson at Klipdam. Several days later, John Kelly, owner of the Melbourne Arms Hotel and a minor figure in the Knights of Labour, was arrested in Kimberley.

The explosion had slowly fallen out of the news. Now it returned to the front page. The *Kimberley Independent* repeated its warnings from the previous July:

The arrest of the most prominent of the Wesselton agitators on the charge of being concerned in the attempt to blow up the De Beers offices contains a very useful warning to hot-headed people who allow themselves to be led astray by wild and inconsiderate counsels.⁴³

The rushers and the Knights of Labour would go on trial with Wilson and Kelly. After a pretrial hearing in March, Wilson and Kelly were denied bail and remained behind bars until the trial began in May. There, they would see the fruits of a police investigation which, the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* predicted, would prove 'worthy of the most striking annals of astute patience and research recorded in any part of the world'.⁴⁴

The trial

The trial of James Henry Wilson and John Kelly began on Wednesday, 11 May 1892. Seldom had there been such a high-profile case in the history of Kimberley, and the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, which printed a near-verbatim report of the trial, reported the courtroom as 'densely crowded, a number of ladies being accommodated with seats'. Robert Solomon, one of the judges in the trespass case against Wilson in 1891, appeared as acting chief prosecutor, and one Mr Guerin, lawyer for Wilson and other rushers in that case, appeared for the defence. The indictment charged Wilson, listed as a miner, and Kelly, listed as a canteen-keeper, with plotting to 'wrongfully, unlawfully, and maliciously' light dynamite against the offices of the De Beers Consolidated Mines. Both pled not guilty. After long deliberations about the number of challenges to potential jurors available to the prosecution and defence, Solomon and Guerin then set down those challenges. They took so long that, as Judge Hopley remarked, 'there seemed to be an objectionable lot of jurymen'. A jury was finally empanelled, and Solomon, in the words of the *Advertiser*, began the proceedings with 'a stirring speech for the Crown'.⁴⁵

⁴²Stefan Kanfer, *The Last Empire: De Beers, Diamonds and the World* (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1993), 112.

⁴³'A Warning', *Kimberley Independent*, 12 February 1892.

⁴⁴Quoted in 'A Warning', *Kimberley Independent*, 12 February 1892.

⁴⁵'The Dynamite Outrage at the De Beers Offices', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 14 May 1892.

The case against Wilson and Kelly rested on the testimony and credibility of a handful of witnesses. The explosion happened at 10:40 p.m. Wilson, though not Kelly, attended a meeting of the Knights of Labour at the Burns Hotel that finished at about 10:10. He was later seen returning to the Burns Hotel at about 10:55. Neither the prosecution nor the defence questioned these facts: arguments centred on the intervening time. Several witnesses saw Wilson and Kelly coming to and then coming from Market Street just before and just after the blast. Henry Makein claimed to see them walking towards the Market Square between 10:20 and 10:30, then saw them, from his perch at Giloi's Bar, 'coming as if from Market Street' four or five minutes after the blast. George Giloi, owner of the bar, and William Chisholm, Makein's drinking companion, also saw Wilson and Kelly just after the blast. According to Chisholm, 'Wilson and Kelly were different from the rest of the crowd in the direction they came', meaning that they were fleeing from rather than rushing to the blast. When Chisholm asked Wilson where the explosion occurred, Wilson suggested it might be the Kimberley Mine. Gill Dixon, a cab driver, claimed to see Wilson and Kelly walking up Jones Street away from the De Beers offices after the explosion. Dixon followed them, asking what had happened, and Wilson repeatedly changed the subject to his upcoming appearance before the Upington select committee, his sick child, or some other subject. Dixon claimed that Wilson's conduct made him suspicious.⁴⁶

These witnesses—all members of the Knights of Labour except for Dixon—placed Wilson and Kelly near to the scene of the crime just before and after it happened. The prosecution's two star witnesses went one better, and placed them in the direct vicinity of the De Beers offices, even in the act of lighting the fuse. Charles Knight, a debris washer, had just walked a lady home from a night at the skating rink when he noticed two men seated under the verandah of Woods & Co. store on Market Street, opposite the offices. Knight recognized Wilson, with a dark parcel under his arm, and later picked out Kelly from a police lineup as the other man. August Staplefeldt, a baker who went into partnership with Wilson and George Walters at Klipdam, was happening to be walking down Market Street at 10:40 when he saw a man by the De Beers offices, 'and thought it was Wilson'. As he recalled it, Wilson was wearing a false beard. The man then

looked around, went towards the window in the corner nearest the Market Square and lit a fuse. He lit the fuse with a cigar and ran away. He bent down and with the fuse in his hand was able to reach it with the lighted cigar. He then ran towards the Market Square.

Staplefeldt himself then ran away to avoid the blast.⁴⁷

The Kimberley Detective Department went to extraordinary lengths to see if Knight and Staplefeldt could have seen the accused. After one experiment, Detective Lorimer concluded that, 'from the position stated by Staplefeldt to have been taken up by Wilson, the former could not have seen the latter standing six feet away'.⁴⁸ The next experiment descended into vaudeville. A row of troopers each lit cigars, and then paraded one by one before the offices to see if Lorimer could identify them at the place Wilson was supposed to have stood. This time he could identify them. Based on these scientific methods, the detectives concluded that it was possible for Staplefeldt and Knight to have seen Wilson as they claimed. Armed with those results, Acting Prosecutor Solomon argued in his opening address that these witnesses provided 'strong evidence indeed that the two prisoners were together that night, at the time of the explosion, in the neighbourhood of the De Beers offices, and, shortly after, they were seen together in Giloi's bar'.⁴⁹

Solomon also produced men claiming that Wilson told them before the bombing that he planned to do it, and after the bombing that he was responsible. Staplefeldt insisted that

⁴⁶'The Dynamite Outrage at the De Beers Offices', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 14 May 1892.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸'The Dynamite Outrage at the De Beers Offices', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 12 March 1892.

⁴⁹'The Dynamite Outrage at the De Beers Offices', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 14 May 1892.

Wilson told him before 9 July that he intended to blow up the offices, and that afterwards, while he never directly admitted guilt for the bomb, 'Wilson wanted to go to America, and before he went he said he wanted to blow up more places'.⁵⁰ More damaging to Wilson's and Kelly's case was George Walters, co-founder with Wilson of the Knights of Labour. According to him, Wilson began to talk about dynamite and murdering Rhodes as the Wesselton agitation grew fiercer: 'He said that if Rhodes were blown up, the Government might come to terms in reference to the Wesselton Mine'. After 9 July, when Walters suggested to Wilson that he did it, Wilson supposedly said 'thank God there's only one besides yourself knows about it'. Later, especially when drunk or angry, Wilson revealed to Walters how he did it. After one business dispute, according to Walters, Wilson 'said he would shoot me and dynamite the office, as he had enough stuff left over from the De Beers job'.⁵¹

The policemen responsible for arresting Wilson and Kelly also argued that the two men acted suspiciously and changed their stories in the period during and after their arrest. William Cuthbert, the Cape trooper who arrested Wilson at Klipdam, claimed that the defendant first told him he was at home packing for Cape Town when the explosion occurred; the next day, en route to Barkly, he admitted going down to the offices to see what had happened before returning to finish packing. Detective Lorimer, when arresting Kelly, claimed that he initially told him he never saw Wilson on the night of the blast, and only learned what had happened the next day. After reading Kelly the charges in a private room, Kelly asked his wife whether 'I ever blew up any place with dynamite', to which she said 'no, you were at home all that night', even though neither Lorimer nor Kelly told her which night was in question. It may seem obvious to us that the only possible place blown up with dynamite belonged to De Beers, but Lorimer took Kelly's wife's comment as an indirect admission of guilt.⁵²

The prosecution could thus claim to have placed Wilson and Kelly at the crime scene, to have witnesses placing them at the offices and lighting the fuse, and to have recorded confessions by the two prisoners to detectives and friends afterwards. Solomon further argued in his closing address that 'it was not necessary for him to prove that Wilson and Kelly actually lit the fuse which caused the explosion. If they were satisfied the prisoners were acting in concert with people who did light that fuse, they were as much guilty as the one who did it'. This was, in other words, very close to the conspiracy charge with which the eight anarchists were found guilty of the Haymarket Affair. And though Solomon was not willing to blame the Knights of Labour as an organization for the explosion, he had this to say about Wilson and Kelly's place within it:

The objects of that Association might be perfectly legitimate, as far as he knew, and, until evidence was brought to the direct contrary, he was ready to believe that the Association had no desire whatever to carry on their operations except by constitutional and legal methods. But he had to say this, that, unfortunately, whenever there was an Association carrying on an agitation, even although that organisation had a very righteous cause, there was bound to be associated with it persons who kicked over the traces, and tried to bring about objects that might be perfectly legitimate, not by constitutional and legal methods, but by crime and dynamite.⁵³

The Knights entertained a dangerous and violent fringe, with Wilson and Kelly in its vanguard. The picture painted by Solomon was not likely to benefit the defendants or the movement to which they belonged.

As at Haymarket, the words of the defendants came back to haunt them. Prosecutors in Chicago had tapped into a wave of panic that crested in the weeks after the bombing on 4 May

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

1886. According to a local journalist, Brand Whitlock, Haymarket produced ‘one of the strangest frenzies of fear that ever distracted a whole community’.⁵⁴ Reports and rumours of plots proliferated in Chicago. The anarchists accused at Haymarket were certainly no pacifists, and there is evidence that some of them planned an armed showdown with police after officers killed strikers in deadly clashes outside the McCormick Reaper Works on 3 May. This is the conspiracy that Timothy Messer-Kruse believes did exist, and which the prosecution used to convict the eight men.⁵⁵ The defendants, after all, had themselves written and spoken of their love for dynamite. They published poems to its powers for liberation. As in later political trials, prosecutors spent long days in the courtroom quoting these statements back to the court, especially when it proved difficult to establish a direct conspiracy between the defendants at trial or pin down the identity of the bombthrower. They instead attempted to prove, as Avrich writes, that ‘the bombthrower, whoever he was, had been impelled to commit his act by the inflammatory writings and speeches of the defendants’.⁵⁶ Jurors were inclined to believe them.

In the Wilson and Kelly case, the prosecution could draw on a deep well of strong words used against De Beers by many men on the diamond fields, especially Wilson. As Solomon remarked in his opening address:

At that time there was a strong feeling, as he had remarked, against the Company whose offices were destroyed. He would show that the prisoner Wilson at all events used most violent language against the Chairman [Rhodes]. He said that the only way to right the country was to blow up the Company and the Chairman of the Company.⁵⁷

Wilson had certainly let his mouth run away from him during the Wesselton rush. Not only had he told his fellow rushers that he would rather die than give up his claims on the mine, he had threatened detectives on Wesselton with the prospect of armed resistance. If Walters or Staplefeldt can be believed, he openly discussed using explosives against the prime minister, and later against his business partners when they fell out. His indiscretion now put him in the frame for the bombing. The prosecution’s case rested in large part on the observable fact that Wilson had in previous months discussed and advocated violence, and by his prior conduct he was capable of violence.

Yet that prosecution case was weaker than it appeared. There was little evidence produced against John Kelly, who seemed throughout the trial to have been tacked on to the case as an afterthought. All that the prosecution could prove was that he was seen with Wilson in the time soon before the bombing, and seen again with him some minutes afterwards. August Staplefeldt, the one man claiming to have seen the act being done, did not even mention a second man. Kelly had never advocated violence in public; unlike Wilson, the prosecution could not lift inflammatory statements by him from the *Advertiser* or *Independent*. No witnesses suggested that Kelly boasted of carrying out the blast: observers instead remarked on his simple-mindedness. At the pretrial hearing, and then at the trial itself, defence counsel moved for the case against Kelly to be dropped for lack of evidence. The judge denied both motions.⁵⁸ He remained on trial, but the case against him eroded further when Susan Bergstrom, a woman staying with the Kelly family, testified that he was at home at the time of the explosion.⁵⁹

The case against Wilson also rested on tenuous ground. Under cross-examination from Guerin, it emerged that virtually all the prosecution witnesses had powerful motives to make up evidence

⁵⁴Quoted in Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, 199.

⁵⁵See especially Messer-Kruse, *The Haymarket Conspiracy*, chap. 1.

⁵⁶Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, 275.

⁵⁷‘The Dynamite Outrage at De Beers Offices,’ *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 14 May 1892.

⁵⁸‘The Dynamite Outrage at De Beers Offices,’ *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 12 March 1892; ‘The Dynamite Outrage at De Beers Offices,’ *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 14 May 1892.

⁵⁹‘The Dynamite Outrage at De Beers Offices,’ *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 14 May 1892.

about him. Most had grudges against Wilson or simply wanted the reward money. George Walters and August Staplefeldt were business partners gone wrong. Wilson had Henry Makein drummed out of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, a popular fraternal order, for unspecified reasons. Guerin brought forward William Diebel, a butcher and prominent Knight, who testified that he left the Knights of Labour meeting with Wilson and that they went for a drink together, where they saw Makein before the explosion—a fact that escaped Makein's later recollection. When President of the Debris Washers Association Wilson had denied Charles Knight a licence to wash debris because they were reserved for married men. Knight, unemployed since the bombing, had been given a long-term job by De Beers to stay in town for the trial, and one ex-miner, Henry Austin, testified that Knight wished aloud to him that he knew the perpetrator of the bombing so he could collect the £1,000 reward.⁶⁰

The hand of De Beers was evident in other ways. Gill Dixon was a self-confessed informant for the company, and transcripts of the trial record 'great laughter' when he explained on the stand that 'I was engaged by the De Beers Company at the time of the explosion—finding out anything I could about anything that was going on'. Dixon's claim that Wilson and Kelly acted suspiciously after the bombing rested on Wilson's stated political views, as he told the court:

I know that Wilson has taken a prominent part in the Knights of Labour. It was partly on that account that I was suspicious of him. Before that night he had talked to me of revolutions. He spoke occasionally about Socialism and that kind of thing.⁶¹

Here was a faint echo of the red-baiting that proved so effective in 1886 in Chicago, from a spy on the De Beers payroll.

August Staplefeldt, the one witness to see the defendants in the act of the crime, proved the most unreliable of all. Guerin produced another German immigrant, Max Schintler, who claimed that Staplefeldt told him on 10 July that the explosion nearly shook him out of bed. The jury were left to decide which man was telling the truth. Worse for the prosecution, the same George Walters whose testimony had proved so damaging to Wilson was even more scathing about his fellow witness. Walters said that he, like Schintler, had been told by Staplefeldt that he was in bed when the explosion happened. Walters added that the German simply made up his story about seeing the two men lighting the fuse to collect the reward money. In Klipdam, Walters recalled, he had mentioned the £1,000 to Staplefeldt and said that

anyone might commit perjury by saying he gave Wilson the dynamite, or saw him do the job. It would be very simple for anyone to give the information. 'Yes', he said, 'By Gott', £1,000! 20,000 marks! It is a small fortune. A person might go to America or Germany with it. I suggested to Staplefeldt the use of the cigar to light the fuse.⁶²

Staplefeldt retorted that Walters probably had something to do with the bombing! The former business partner of Wilson and Walters emerged from the trial as less than an ideal witness.⁶³

If the witnesses were not simply making up evidence to settle grudges or to cash out, Guerin argued, they suffered from poor memory or a case of mistaken identity. Knight could not know whether the shadowy men he saw under the verandah were Wilson and Kelly, and the tests conducted by the detectives with cigars and fuses 'was not evidence of a serious nature and must not be relied on'. Makein failed to remember meeting Wilson twenty minutes before the explosion; Chisholm had no way of knowing in which direction Wilson and Kelly were walking, as when he

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²'The Dynamite Outrage at De Beers Offices', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 12 March 1892.

⁶³'The Dynamite Outrage at De Beers Offices', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 14 May 1892.

saw them they were standing still. The supposed confessions uttered by Wilson to Walters, Staplefeldt and others were either jokes, nonsense lubricated with alcohol, or were those, Guerin claimed, of 'a blustering demagogue—a man who was fond of blowing his own trumpet—one who would be proud of having it attributed to him the perpetrator of anything of this kind'.⁶⁴

Wilson and Kelly both testified in their own defence. This was later adjudged by at least one lawyer present to have been a mistake; yet as Guerin pointed out in his closing address, they had been 'subjected to strong cross-examination' but neither 'had been shaken in his evidence'. Kelly reiterated his story that he was at home at the time of the explosion, that he went out to see what had happened and saw Wilson along the way. After a drink at Giloi's bar he went out again and lost Wilson in the crowd. Wilson's testimony agreed with Kelly's. He claimed that he went for a drink with William Diebel before the explosion, then went home to pack, came out again when the explosion happened and met Kelly on the way. Then he returned to the Burns Hotel to pick up a walking stick he had left there, talked with Carl, the proprietor of the Burns, about his testimony to the Uppington select committee, and left early the next morning for Cape Town. Wilson denied confessing a role in the bombing to Walters, Staplefeldt, or anyone else.⁶⁵

Wilson instead claimed that the bomb, causing as it did only light and temporary damage to the offices, was in fact the work of *agents provocateurs* and was designed to discredit the Knights and the agitation surrounding them. According to him, 'Walters told me "De Beers had done it themselves". Hundreds of people said so and believed it, and I also believe and have said it.'⁶⁶ This theory was not tested in court, nor was there any evidence brought forward to prove it. It did, however, provide another parallel with the Haymarket case. That event occurred during the golden age of spies, private detectives, and *agents provocateurs* in American labour history.⁶⁷ Many Americans then, and some historians since, were convinced that spies or informants of one sort or another either threw the Haymarket bomb or encouraged others to throw it as a means of discrediting organized labour and the campaign around the eight-hour working day.⁶⁸ Without the means to prove it with documentary evidence it remains speculation. All that we can say is that in both cases the theory can be made to fit the available facts, and that spies and informants were as rife in Kimberley as they were in Chicago.

Parallels aside, the two trials were certainly distinguished from each other by their length. The Haymarket trial lasted two months; the trial of Wilson and Kelly, two days. On 12 May, after Solomon and Guerin summed up their arguments, Judge Hopley made a long speech not recorded in the transcript. Then the jury retired to consider their verdict. They did not take long to find both defendants guilty, with the jury foreman 'strongly recommend[ing] Kelly to the mercy of the Court, as the Jury are unanimously of opinion that he was only a tool of the prisoner Wilson'. Hopley moved straight to sentencing. While willing to admit that the defendants almost certainly meant the explosion as a demonstration, and not as a danger to human life, the judge nevertheless insisted that 'it is a very serious crime indeed, because when persons wish to regenerate the world, and bring about reforms, it is so easy nowadays for them to employ diabolical means to do so, if they are so disposed'. He gave Wilson three years hard labour. In recognition of the jury's recommendations regarding Kelly, Hopley gave him a lesser sentence of eighteen months. As the trial ended, and 'the enormous crowd dispersed', consequences began to flow for the Knights of Labour and all those involved in the agitation against De Beers.⁶⁹

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷See, for instance, Robert Goldstein, *Political Repression in Modern America from 1870 to the Present* (Boston: GK Hall, 1978); R. P. Weiss, 'Private Detective Agencies and Labor Discipline in the United States, 1855–1946', *The Historical Journal* 29, no. 1 (1986): 87–107.

⁶⁸For extended discussion of the legacy of Haymarket, see Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, 274–300.

⁶⁹'The Dynamite Outrage at De Beers Offices', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 14 May 1892.

Powderly's Fork

When bombs and gunfire erupted in Chicago's Haymarket in 1886, Terence Powderly and the leaders of the American Knights of Labor faced a dilemma. They could denounce the violence but defend the men accused, and be associated with presumed anarchist terror. Or they could make it clear that their movement had nothing to do with the accused, and would happily see the anarchists hanged if found guilty of the crime. That would put them at odds with many in the Knights and the wider labour movement who suspected that the accused men were either innocent or not proved guilty. Neither option was easy or free from risk. We might term this choice between two bad options as Powderly's Fork. In public, Powderly denounced the accused men and blasted other 'snivelling anarchists'.⁷⁰ Unlike Samuel Gompers, the conservative president of the American Federation of Labor, he refused to call for the commutation of the death sentences handed out to five of them. In private, the General Master Workman wrote friends that he held some sympathy for the accused men and harboured doubts about their guilt.

His public stance never satisfied the Knights' enemies and alienated many of the movement's sympathizers. 'In his universal condemnation of anarchism', writes Robert Weir, 'Powderly failed to distinguish between ideology and simple justice, making him appear mean-spirited and petty in the process'.⁷¹ Impaled on his own fork, Powderly became the leader of an Order forced into headlong retreat, which did not originate with Haymarket but was accelerated by it. When South African Knights found themselves in a similar predicament five years later, they soon felt Powderly's Fork pricking at their sides. Made aware of how American Knights had tried to extricate themselves from Haymarket, they tried to make history repeat, and found, perhaps to their surprise, that the same strategy yielded the same poor results.

The problems they faced after the trial were real and daunting. The verdict implicated the Knights of Labour directly in the De Beers bombing, and their enemies made sure that the public knew it. The Knights, claimed the *Independent*, were 'moral accomplices' in the crime.⁷² 'It is a fact the significance of which cannot be overlooked', its editors insisted on 13 May:

that both the prisoners belonged to a political association known as the 'Knights of Labour', and that nearly every witness called on their behalf belonged to the same organization. It is equally to the point that this same political organization was chiefly, if not wholly, instrumental in stirring up an agitation against the corporation whose premises were made the object of an intimidating outrage. Is it to be supposed that there is no connection between the agitation and the outrage?⁷³

Nobody denied that connection, even if they denied that leading agitators had carried it out. Nor could Knights escape the soap opera of the trial, where member testified against member and a co-founder landed in prison. They could and had dismissed rumours connecting them to the explosion immediately after it. Sentences handed down by judges after a public trial were something else.

Confronted with Powderly's Fork, they sought Powderly's advice. After exchanging correspondence with him by letter, and having read the General Master Workman's self-justifying book, *Thirty Years of Labor*, they decided to publish internal correspondence which distanced their movement from Wilson and Kelly.⁷⁴ Their new Grand Master, John Law, a debris washer, assured the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* that there was no reason for Knights to

⁷⁰Quoted in Terence Powderly, *Thirty Years of Labor* (Philadelphia: Excelsior, 1889), 554.

⁷¹Robert Weir, *Knights Unhorsed: Internal Conflict in a Gilded Age Social Movement* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 164.

⁷²'The Dynamite Outrage at De Beers Offices', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 12 May 1892; 'Editorial', *Kimberley Independent*, 13 May 1892.

⁷³'Editorial', *Kimberley Independent*, 13 May 1892.

⁷⁴Powderly, *Thirty Years of Labor*.

repudiate the crime, because acts of violence ‘are totally opposed to all the principles and tenets of our Order, as tending to defeat the very end they are intended to gain’. Contained with his letter were copies of past letters that showed that the Knights refused repeated requests by Wilson and Kelly for money to fund their defence, and prevented a local lawyer and Knight, Richard Lalor, from representing or even advising them at all. ‘The reputation of the Order with the great number of members who form it, cannot be lightly jeopardised or placed at risk’, the Knights wrote in one letter. ‘From the commencement it was public talk that this detestable offence was committed with the knowledge and sanction of this Order, and it has not been forgotten, how repeatedly Wilson himself gave cause for this by his repeated vain, empty bragging and innuendoes, as regards himself the offence.’⁷⁵

This went a step beyond the precedent set by Powderly in the United States. Wilson and Kelly remained members when the trial began, a fact that their lawyer at the pretrial hearing, C. H. Murray, pointed to as proof that the Knights did not really consider them guilty. That continued membership, Murray added, ‘has of itself operated disadvantageously to their interests in quarters from which assistance might otherwise have been offered’.⁷⁶ Yet John Law saw his movement’s disavowal of Wilson and Kelly as sanctioned by the lessons of history. ‘In thus deciding’, he explained, ‘we acted on similar lines to those adopted by the American Order of the Knights of Labour in a set of circumstances precisely parallel. . . . General Master Workman Powderly was appealed to give financial aid to defend a member of the American Order implicated in an attempt at murder, and he distinctly refused to do so.’⁷⁷ Law considered the Knights successfully deodorized from the whiff of dynamite attached to them by the *Kimberley Independent*.

His assumption relied on the further assumption that most people on the diamond fields remained satisfied that Wilson and Kelly were guilty. Whatever they thought at the time of the trial, however, prominent settlers soon raised public doubts about the verdict. In late May, the Reverend A. F. Bulmer, a leading supporter of and participant in the Wesselton rushes, outlined these doubts in a letter to the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*. ‘There are a great number of persons on these Fields’, he wrote, ‘who are strongly of opinion that the Messrs Wilson and Kelly, now lying in gaol as dynamitards, are wholly innocent of the crime, for which they are suffering, and that the verdict of the Jury, before which they were tried, was not justified by the evidence adduced’. Bulmer suggested they petition the governor to commute the sentence.⁷⁸ The embarrassment of leading Knights was compounded by a letter to the *Advertiser* from their leading lawyer, Richard Lalor, in early June. Lalor repeated comments made to him by other members of his profession. ‘It is reported on authority, which I have not yet heard contradicted’, he wrote, ‘that when the Jury retired to consider their verdict both the Judge who tried them, as well as the Advocates who, respectively, prosecuted and defended them, agreed in holding the same opinion—that there was no legal evidence to convict’. Lalor added that ‘I entirely concur’ with that opinion. He urged readers to sign Bulmer’s petition.⁷⁹

The case against Kelly proved especially open to doubt. At the end of June, his son, R. C. Kelly, wrote a long letter to the *Advertiser* urging that his father be released. ‘During a sojourn of 20 years on these Fields’, he wrote, his father had ‘never had a single imputation upon his character for honour and honesty during the whole of that period’. As for the evidence against him at trial, ‘there simply was none’. The younger Kelly claimed that ‘it is an open secret that the Jury had resolved to bring in a verdict of acquittal, both as regards my father and as regards Wilson’, until the two men took the stand: ‘then the two prisoners being both uneducated men, and one not being endowed with an abnormal degree of innocuousness, they made such a hash of their

⁷⁵Quoted in ‘The Knights of Labour: A Satisfactory Vindication’, *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 21 May 1892.

⁷⁶Quoted in *ibid.*

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸‘The Wilson and Kelly Case’, *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 28 May 1892.

⁷⁹‘Are Wilson and Kelly Guilty?’ *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 4 June 1892.

evidence that they completely prejudiced their case.⁸⁰ An anonymous acquaintance of Kelly wrote in the same paper that 'he is really innocent of the crime which he is suffering for, and I really think that his supposed friends (I mean the people whom he reckons upon as his friends) ought to leave no stone unturned to get him out of the place where he is incarcerated for a crime of which he is not guilty'.⁸¹ The Knights did not seem very constant friends, even, to quote Robert Weir's words about Powderly, 'mean-spirited'.⁸²

Impaled on Powderly's Fork, the Knights now tried to change the subject. As doubts mounted about the trial and their conduct towards the accused, they launched a rash of new campaigns to wrest back the initiative. They petitioned the commissioner of crown lands to allow debris washers to return to the mining areas. A Labour Bureau was founded to find work for unemployed white men on the fields. They rushed into print a *Manifesto of the Knights of Labour of South Africa* to give their side of the story to the public.⁸³ 'We are no monstrous and unnatural prodigy, the offspring of civil commotion, and the upheaval of abnormal events, no Association created to foment disorder and sedition', they argued.⁸⁴ But they were now trapped by the consequences of the De Beers bombing on one hand, and their response to it on the other. Settlers on the diamond fields, convinced that Wilson and Kelly deserved their sentence and that the Knights were in some way involved in the bomb, were not easily convinced otherwise by the leaders of that same movement. Those now convinced that the verdict was wrong would not place their trust in a movement that so casually threw two of its members overboard in the interests of expediency.

Momentum now swung firmly against the Knights of Labour. De Beers already owned the Wesselton Mine. The commissioner, a Rhodes ally, left the mining areas in the hands of De Beers. The Labour Bureau found work for only a handful of men in a region now gripped by chronic unemployment.⁸⁵ Their *Manifesto*, meant as the first of a series of pamphlets, remained the only issue printed. Reverses in the war with De Beers, and the adverse publicity caused by the bombing, fragmented the coalition that in 1891 connected unemployed men, debris washers, and shopkeepers with large commercial interests, propertied men, and parts of the local press. The first half of that coalition had always been unstable, composed of men eking out a precarious living washing debris, scouring the river diggings, keeping a small shop, or simply sitting idle. The Wesselton excitement kept them in place. When it failed, little kept them in Kimberley and Beaconsfield, and they abandoned the fields for Johannesburg, Rhodes' new colony in Mashonaland, or further afield.⁸⁶ Without their continued agitation, the second half of the coalition came to an accommodation to De Beers. The last great chance to defeat De Beers before it completed its monopoly now disappeared, and the Knights of Labour died a quiet death as a movement early in 1893.

No serious historian argues that the decline of the American Knights of Labor was produced by the Haymarket Affair. The Order already faced sustained repression from powerful employers, equipped with private armies of spies and detectives. They were divided among themselves as to what they wanted and how they wanted to get there. The Knights could have hanged the accused men themselves and still be widely blamed for the Haymarket bomb. Terence Powderly could have publicly defended them, and the many pressures bearing down on the movement would have continued. But Haymarket still placed the Knights in an impossible bind, legitimized repression against them, fractured the movement between those opposed to anarchism in every case and

⁸⁰'An Appeal to the Public for Kelly and Wilson', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 25 June 1892.

⁸¹'Another Appeal for John Kelly', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 2 July 1892.

⁸²Weir, *Knights Unhorsed*, 164.

⁸³'Opening the Mining Areas', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 26 March 1892; 'Kimberley Mining Areas', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 2 April 1892; 'Protest and Petition from the Knights of Labour', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 7 May; 'The Knights and the De Beers Co', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 28 May 1892.

⁸⁴*Manifesto of the Knights of Labour of South Africa* (Kimberley, 1892), 6.

⁸⁵See, for example, 'Work for the Workless', *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, 18 March 1893.

⁸⁶Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds*, 291–4.

those who saw the anarchists as victims of a frameup. It signalled and accelerated, though it did not cause, the decline of the American Knights. In South Africa the repression against the Knights after the De Beers office bomb was less, but its consequences perhaps proved more severe in the end. The bomb was a larger event in the history of their small movement than Haymarket was for the larger American one. South African Knights faced an enemy in Rhodes and De Beers that combined economic and political power to a degree unequalled even in the United States. They could afford even less than their American brothers and sisters to endure an event that turned momentum against them.

There were, as we have seen, wider structural reasons for the defeat of the Wesselton agitation and the decline of the South African Knights of Labour. Their coalition was precarious and flighty. The Knights would only succeed—would only survive—if they built a political movement that could win real concessions from a hostile government, and behind it a hostile company. It required victories. They never came. It required momentum. That was blown away along with some of the masonry at the De Beers offices in Kimberley. By abandoning Wilson and Kelly, the Knights then willingly lost the trust of many settlers on the diamond fields. Without that trust there was no way to maintain the solidarity needed to mount a serious challenge to Rhodes and De Beers. Not for the first time, advice from Terence Powderly made a bad situation worse. The explosion on 9 July 1891, did not by itself condemn the South African Knights to defeat. But it did make that defeat almost inevitable.

Conclusion: Parallels and connections

By 1895, De Beers Consolidated Mines had placed its monopoly on a secure footing and made of Kimberley a thoroughly company town. Black miners remained in their compounds, white miners and overseers had their own segregated community at Kenilworth. Dreams of making Kimberley a metropolis of the northern Cape had receded. Even though Rhodes would lose the premiership of the colony after the disastrous Jameson raid at the turn of 1896, his power on the diamond fields remained unquestioned.⁸⁷ The last to seriously question it were the Knights of Labour, and they had disappeared in 1893, their agitation over and unsuccessful. The Knights always faced an uphill struggle in their short active life, given the weaknesses of their social base, and the unusual power wielded by Rhodes and De Beers in their dual role as economic and political masters of the Cape Colony. But the period between 1890 and 1892 was also the last stretch of time when it was possible for anti-De Beers forces in Kimberley and Beaconsfield to prevent Rhodes from completing his monopoly, and to imagine an alternative future for the diamond fields.

The bombing of the De Beers offices on 9 July 1891 was a dramatic episode in that story of doomed resistance, with consequences that went beyond the repair of broken brickwork. The explosion happened right at the time when agitation against De Beers reached its highest and broadest extent, when the company's position seemed most vulnerable, and when the Knights approached their highest membership level, perhaps 1,000 or 2,000 people. The bombing itself did not end the agitation but dampened it, sucked momentum from it, at precisely the time when momentum was sorely needed for the anti-De Beers forces to have any chance of success. This article has made comparisons with the Haymarket Affair, and while the two events and their consequences are by no means identical, they did run in parallel. Haymarket became the great legitimisation for the violence used by American employers against organized labour. The De Beers bombing did not at first have the same tremendous effect, but the trial, with its roll call of Knights of Labour among the witnesses and defendants, tarnished the movement with violence and rendered a durable and broad anti-De Beers coalition nearly impossible.

⁸⁷Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds*, 294.

The deepest connection between Haymarket and the De Beers bomb was the one that South Africans made between them at the time. The company and its supporters pummeled the Knights as an organ of anarchist violence; the Knights tried to act exactly as American Knights, especially Powderly, had done six years earlier. They even went further than Powderly, actively cooperating with the police, refusing even private appeals by Wilson and Kelly for assistance as the trial approached, and publishing correspondence that detailed these decisions. They were impaled on the same fork as their General Master Workman, unable to convince enough people that the Knights were sufficiently opposed to violence, and able only to convince people otherwise sympathetic to the movement that they were heartless, untrustworthy, and willing to follow the tides of public opinion rather than defend their members on the grounds that they were innocent until proven guilty. That is not to oversimplify the choices available to Powderly in the United States, or to John Law and others in South Africa. There were no easy choices, and each carried costs. But people who thought that the Knights of Labour were responsible for the bomb were never likely to be convinced otherwise by the representatives of that same organization. There is a lesson here, perhaps, for leaders of organized labour asked to endorse positions on public issues out of expediency. When public opinion turns, as it often does, it looks better to seem principled and temporarily unpopular than opportunistic and, at first, less unpopular than otherwise.

We are left to consider, as scholars still do in the Haymarket case, whether Wilson and Kelly were in fact guilty of the crime for which they were convicted. The prosecution case had a certain logic to it. Agitation over Wesselton had reached such an intensity that when faced with the near certainty that the rush had failed, it was always possible that someone or some people would resort to violence, out of frustration or to demonstrate to Rhodes and De Beers that there might be consequences if the demands of the rushers remained ignored. As to whether Wilson and Kelly were the men responsible for it, the prosecution case appears less solid. Witnesses brought forward to establish their guilt proved untrustworthy, and were probably unable on a dark night to identify Wilson (Kelly, in some cases, not even mentioned at all) from a distance. Each defendant provided alibis that were corroborated by other witnesses. Historians cannot go further than the available evidence, and all conclusions are thus provisional, but as in the Haymarket case, the most reasonable verdict is that they might have done it, but the prosecution never succeeded in proving their guilt beyond reasonable doubt.

Wilson's suggestion that operatives for De Beers planted the bomb themselves, on the other hand, would appear far-fetched if we did not know that the company maintained a web of informants and spies who could easily have carried it out. Distressed residents on the fields turned to an American innovation, the Knights of Labor, as the means for their deliverance; why not De Beers turning to a favoured tool of contemporary American employers, the spy and *agent provocateur*, to discredit an agitation that threatened their interests? Of course, conclusions that end with a rhetorical question are not conclusions but speculations. In legal terms, responsibility for the explosion in Kimberley on 9 July 1891, must remain an open question.

As with the original Haymarket case, the significance of the Kimberley case lies less in the innocence or guilt of those accused than its effects on the movements and social forces connected to it. In both cases, the bomb and ensuing trial represented a victory for capital over labour. In each country, the explosion contributed to, though it did not cause, the decline of its homegrown Knights of Labour. The arc of the missile towards police in the Haymarket accelerated the repression and decline of American Knights. The detonation of the bomb in Kimberley ended up further cementing the hegemony of De Beers on the diamond fields. Both bombs led directly to dire consequences for organized labour, and rebellions against the rule of capital. We are left with further food for thought regarding the uses of political violence by radical movements, whether in the nineteenth century or today, and their uses by those in power to discredit radical movements and suck them of all momentum. The Kimberley bombing also demonstrates the wide reach in the nineteenth century of movements and means—whether anarchist or otherwise—based on the political application of dynamite. Even the southern African frontier was not immune to the

general mania for propaganda of the deed. For these reasons, South Africa's Haymarket deserves greater recognition. This example of late-nineteenth-century political violence, though small, nevertheless helped to shape South Africa's twentieth-century history—and became another, long-delayed legacy of that famous case in Chicago.

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