

Frank Jay Dunleavy: An Australian Agitator on the Klondike in 1898

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In the spring of 1898 a canvas city crowded the shore of Lake Bennett on the headwater of the Yukon River. Its citizens eagerly awaited the going out of the ice, anxious to launch their boats to begin the 800 kilometre river journey to the Klondike Goldfield. The Klondike Gold Rush of 1898, bringing some 30,000 men and women into this remote corner of Canada, would then have truly begun.¹

The Australians and New Zealanders stood apart from the general run of gold seekers as most were experienced gold miners.² They came with high expectations as to how a goldfield ought to be managed, especially so in a country with a government based on the same traditions and principles as those to be found back home.

It was an expectation that had been heightened following the unsettling experience of passing through American-controlled Alaskan coastal territory, where confidence trickery as well as armed robbery and even murder took place with little official interference. On the trail to the Canadian border, summary rough justice had been administered by ad-hoc miners' committees.³ More than one Australasian had cheered on sighting the Union Jack fluttering over the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) border post at the Chilkoot summit; a return to familiar ways was anticipated.

One of those Australians waiting for the ice to go out was 33-year-old Frank Jay Dunleavy.⁴ Dunleavy would find no gold on the Klondike. The Klondike though would find a place for his unique skills in bringing angry men together to seek a peaceful resolution to their grievances.

Frank Dunleavy's part in cooling tempers is largely overlooked by Klondike historians. One David Morrison, to give him some credit, misleadingly identifies him as a 'former South African miner' while failing to mention that he was Australian.⁵ This paper will tell the story of Frank Jay Dunleavy, who he was and how he came to be on the Klondike – and what he did in the four months he was there.

'a rolling stone'

Family legend has it that Frank always took his gold pan with him on his travels, perhaps on account of his childhood experience of fending for himself. He was born in 1865 on the Blackwood goldfield in Victoria, the youngest brother of John (1855-1913) and Nathaniel, or Nat, (1857-1910). Their mother Jane Dunleavy died in 1869, followed by father Anthony in 1876, by which time eleven-year old Frank, according to Mrs Clark, the settlement's storekeeper, had long been used to a daily routine of fossicking out 'a little gold' to get his breakfast.⁶ A family story places Frank and brother Nat for a time in

a boarding school run by strict Jesuits, from whom they escaped ‘to join the camel trains transporting goods across the Australian outback’. Whatever may be the facts of his childhood, the truth is that it was one that fostered a self-reliant and adventurous spirit.

Figure 1: *Frank Jay Dunleavy*
La Paz, Bolivia, ca 1907-1912



Source: Courtesy Gweneth A. Dunleavy.

Like many prospectors, Frank Dunleavy had also been a shearer. Robert Little, likewise waiting for the ice to go out, knew Frank from his own shearing days and bestowed on him the accolade of being an ‘old-time Western Queensland shearer’.⁷ Dunleavy had once been an active supporter of unionised shearing.⁸ While not a union official as such, he had often acted as the shearers’ union representative in sheds, collecting union fees and taking the lead in settling disputes with employers. But in early 1891, after 12 years shearing, he split from an increasingly confrontational union movement in favour of campaigning for ‘cooperative unionism’, which sought a ‘freedom of contract’ arrangement allowing for negotiations between the individual shearer and the pastoralist. He favoured finding workplace solutions through negotiation rather than by force through

strike action. Dunleavy went so far as to attempt to create a new style industrial organisation for shearers, a ‘Co-operative Employment Association’.

Promoting this radical approach to industrial relations offered Dunleavy opportunities to hone his public speaking skills, often before hostile audiences.⁹ His newspaper interviews and published letters reveal him as an articulate communicator with an awareness of the importance of the press in shaping public opinion. But his position was not popular with the existing union movement, and Frank Dunleavy soon found himself labelled a ‘renegade’ and a marked man. His attempt to establish an alternative to the existing union movement failed and his own career as a shearer was effectively ended.

The experience of this unsuccessful chapter in Frank Dunleavy’s life would prove invaluable on the Klondike, where he would become a key spokesman seeking redress for the grievances of the many who arrived to find not gold but frustration. As both a prospector and a labour organiser Dunleavy understood not only the workings of a properly managed goldfield but also how to organise people to stand up for their rights. He would, in the words of Robert Little, take on the Canadian Government ‘without stint and without mercy’ in the summer of 1898.¹⁰

Around 1892, Dunleavy left Australia to roam further afield. His family tell of Frank working his way as a deck hand on freighters around the Pacific and Asia. His entry

in *Who's Who in the Rubber World* (1914) refers vaguely to 'mining and contracting' in Africa, as well as 'trading and planting in the South Sea Islands to 1894'.¹¹

Dunleavy's wanderings took him to Hawaii, where his successful application in October 1894 for permanent residency in the Republic of Hawaii, as it was then, suggests he may have intended to remain there for a time. A few weeks later, on the afternoon of 22 November, he married Martha Mitchell in Honolulu's St Andrew's Cathedral.¹² The marriage licence had only been granted a few hours earlier the same day. The newspaper account of their wedding described Martha, a Canadian, as a resident of Honolulu for several years who was 'held in high esteem by her acquaintances'. She was an established Honolulu businesswoman, proprietor of a 'fashionable dressmaking' enterprise.¹³ Dunleavy family stories remember her as a resourceful and independent woman, quite the equal of Frank Dunleavy. The groom was summed up as 'a worthy young man who will make Honolulu his home'. However, while Frank's intentions in marrying Miss Mitchell may have been 'worthy', they did not include making Honolulu his home, and he returned unaccompanied to Sydney in January 1895. It was though perhaps not a case of desertion on his part, but more one of a mutually agreed indefinite separation. Martha remained in Honolulu running her business under her married name and waiting the birth of their child. Henry Jay Dunleavy was born on 26 June 1895.

Meanwhile, Frank Dunleavy was off until 1896,¹⁴ 'mining and exploring in Africa¹⁵ and Madagascar'.¹⁶ Sometime in 1897 he returned to Australia and met up with brother Nat on the Kalgoorlie-Boulder goldfield,¹⁷ by then, news of the Klondike discovery filled the newspapers and, like thousands of others across the globe, Frank and Nat decided to go.

'Ho for Klondike!'

The Dunleavy brothers set off together, travelling to Canada from Fremantle on the *Cape Otway*, which after collecting passengers *en-route*, departed Sydney on 5 March, arriving in Vancouver on 10 April 1898.¹⁸

On board the *Cape Otway*, the Dunleavy brothers met up with an old friend, George McCullough.¹⁹ As it was considered advisable not to 'go through to the Klondike single handed', the three friends formed a team with two other Australians on board.

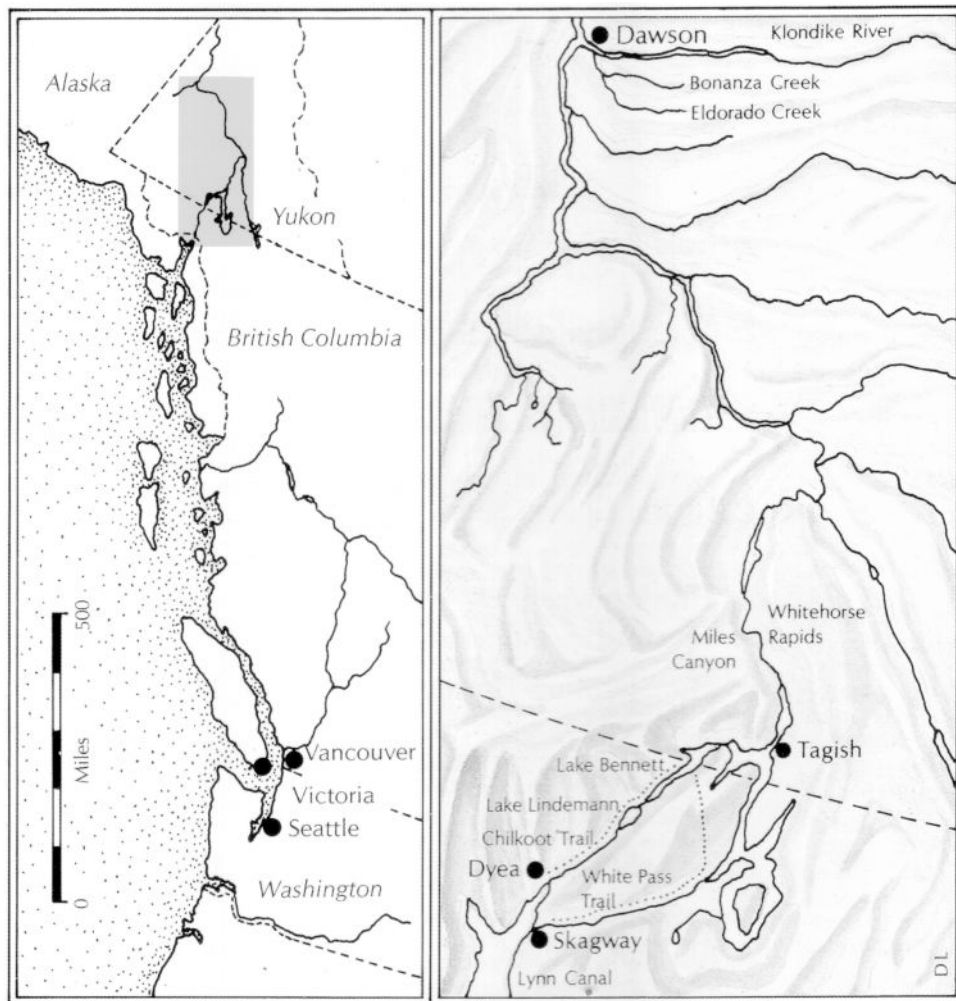
The journey of the Dunleavy team from Australia to Lake Bennett was typical of most Australasian Klondikers in 1898. They joined their fellow passengers in sightseeing Honolulu, with very likely a personal visit by Frank to see Martha and, for the first time, his son. In Vancouver the team purchased their supplies for the Klondike and then travelled by coastal steamer to Dyea on the Alaskan Coast. They joined the human chain climbing the *Golden Stairs* to the summit of the Chilkoot Pass, and then made their way down to Lake Bennett. It was there in late May, that Frank 'decided to pull out from the group and [literally] paddle his own canoe'. McCullough felt there was 'a little jealousy' between the strong-willed brothers.

Frank took his share of the team's supplies and acquired a canoe for his solo journey down the Yukon River, then in full spring flow with rapids and rogue currents. Only a handful risked making this challenging journey without companions, and to do so alone offers an insight into Frank's character.

George McCullough in his memoir offered this assessment of Dunleavy's character: 'Frank was a man of the world, a rolling stone, very intelligent and trustworthy'.²⁰ This is a fair account, consistent with impressions that can be garnered from other sources. Dunleavy was also an experienced organiser with communication skills to match. He was fiercely independent in thought and action, perhaps to the point of being a loner. Above all, Dunleavy had confidence in his abilities, be it canoeing down the Yukon River or taking on corrupt officials.

On 3 June 1898, Frank Dunleavy pushed his heavily laden canoe into Lake Bennett, hoisted his sail, and set off for Dawson City and the Klondike.

Figure 2: Map showing approaches to the Klondike and isolation of the Yukon.



Source: Pierre Berton, *The Klondike Quest: a photographic Essay 1897-1899*, The Boston Mills Press: Erin, Ontario, Canada, 1997, p. 6.

'The first instance of corruption I saw in the Country'

Dunleavy's first brush with authority came a few days later at the Tagish police post. He described what happened in a letter written from Dawson City on 2 July to his wife Martha in Honolulu, who offered it for newspaper publication.²¹ We are fortunate that she did so, as this is the only known private letter written by Dunleavy recounting his Klondike experience. The letter provides an insight into what put Dunleavy on the pathway of becoming an 'agitator'.

Here I had to ... pull in at the [Tagish] Custom House and have my invoice of goods²² inspected by police. As there were about 2000 boats waiting for the same purpose, it was a difficult thing to get hold of a policeman, and in fact they would not inspect the boats as they came in rotation but the man who tipped them the largest sum of money could have his boat inspected at once, the result being that a complete system of black mail was established by the police. And competition increased. The price of bribing the police rose till it was as high as ten dollars.

This was the first instance of corruption I saw in the country and I have seen it ever since. The whole system of government here which is martial law is reeking with corruption, bribery and black mail, and there is fresh evidence of it every day, and in every department.

There were other incidents not mentioned in his letter. He claimed two NWMP officers were extracting fees for themselves for a piloting service through Miles Canyon and Whitehorse Rapids. Further downstream, one of them was also endangering life by firing shots across the bows of passing boats to force them ashore for compulsory inspections for contraband alcohol.²³

‘The whole system of government here ...’

Dunleavy’s description of the government being one of ‘martial law’ was likely brought on by these encounters with the NWMP. He would find on his arrival in Dawson City, however, that the reality of the territory’s administration was more one of a blend of corruption and dysfunction. Prior to the arrival of the NWMP in 1894, there had been no effective official Canadian presence in the Yukon. Following the Klondike discovery in August 1896, the Canadian government began, if slowly, to cobble together a rudimentary administration to handle the anticipated influx of gold seekers.²⁴ A ‘Dominion Agent’, Thomas Fawcett, arrived in June 1897 to take over administrative duties from the police, and the following year the Yukon was formed into its own territory, separate from the vast North-West Territories.

By the time the 1898 Rush reached Dawson City, a new territorial administration – untried and under-resourced - was finally in place. The Yukon Territory was governed through a commissioner appointed by, and answerable to, the federal Canadian government in faraway Ottawa. His role was to administer the laws and regulations as set out by Ottawa with little leeway to modify them to suit the local situation. The commissioner and his bureaucracy were in reality little more than agents of the federal government.

For the Australians, the Yukon political scene would have evoked memories of the situation in the Australian colonies fifty years earlier, in the days of their fathers and grandfathers. By the 1890s in both Australia and New Zealand a political culture had evolved that was inclusive of miners and their concerns, even shaped by those concerns. Back home, lines of communication between miners and politicians were accessible and open. Not so in the Yukon in the summer of 1898. The Australasians, as with all non-Canadians, were voiceless, without political influence. Even Canadians present on the Klondike had no effective influence other than through their federal parliamentary

representatives, far away back home. Isolation was made even more complete with no telegraph connection to the *Outside* until 1901.

The senior government official at the time of Dunleavy's arrival in Dawson was Yukon Commissioner James Walsh (1840-1905), a retired Mountie, who had arrived only days before the flotilla reached Dawson City.²⁵ Walsh had little previous experience as a public administrator but he came with some heroic fame. It was Walsh who had dealt successfully with Sitting Bull in 1876, following the Sioux's withdrawal into Canada after the massacre of General Custer's force at Little Big Horn. In the Yukon though he proved to be an indifferent administrator, an attitude that allowed for inefficiency, corruption and resulting dissatisfaction.

The core of that inefficiency and corruption was largely to be found in that part of the administration under Thomas Fawcett, the previously appointed 'Dominion Agent'. He stayed on under Commissioner Walsh as the territory's Gold Commissioner but was simply not up to the challenges of this position.²⁶ Even so, he lacked the resources to handle the scale of the work required. Ottawa's objective was maximum revenue from the gold mined for minimal administrative expense. Lacking adequate supervision from Fawcett, a corrupt clique of clerks soon took control of the claim registration process, engendering a systemic problem of corruption and incompetence with the overall management of the goldfield. Fawcett was also responsible for the implementation of mining laws that were not well received by the Rush arriving on the Klondike. The basic problem was that the Canadian federal government lacked experience in managing a goldfield and had failed to anticipate the scale of the Klondike Rush of 1898.

'the shadow of truth'

In contrast to the character weaknesses of both Walsh and Fawcett, the senior law enforcement officer of the territory, Superintendent Sam Steele (1849-1919) of the North-West Mounted Police, was as tough and resolute as his name suggests.²⁷ If Dunleavy's charge of 'martial law' might be laid on anyone it would have been on Sam Steele. The isolation of his command enabled Steele to create and enforce whatever regulations he considered necessary to maintain law, order and public safety in the territory, with or without Ottawa's approval.

When he reached Dawson City, Dunleavy took his allegations of police misconduct to Commissioner Walsh. Walsh referred Dunleavy's written complaint to Steele, who was still up river supervising the incoming tide of Klondike hopefuls. Steele undertook a personal investigation in late July. In his annual report for 1898, dated January 1899, Steele wrote that he 'found not the slightest shadow of truth in his [Dunleavy's] statement' concerning bribe taking.²⁸ Similarly, the complaint of illicit pilot fees was 'proved to my satisfaction ... absolutely false'. The accusation of forcing boats ashore with warning shots was likewise dismissed.

Steele appears, on the surface at least, to have gone by the book in investigating these matters of internal discipline in his force. In his report, Steele dismissed Frank Dunleavy as a 'professional agitator from Australia'. Steele wrote this character assessment after the departure of Dunleavy – and long after his summer's work as a 'professional agitator'.

Both Steele's personal diary and his official report offer no specific mention of any other allegation of police corruption in 1898 being investigated, with Dunleavy the sole complainant so named. It says much about Dunleavy's determination and strength of character to have pressed Walsh to act on his allegation.

Where then lies the truth of Dunleavy's allegations of bribe taking? The inconvenient truth for Steele may have lain within the 'shadow' of his own making. Steele was likely prepared to tolerate such misbehaviour by his underpaid and overworked force for the sake of maintaining morale and keeping his force intact, a concern repeatedly made in his annual report. No matter Steele's official denial, there is ample unofficial evidence that bribe taking did happen. The account of James Kearnan, a respected South Australian miner, for example, was quite explicit about his experience at Tagish, as recounted in a newspaper interview on his return home.

There were exactly 1800 boats lying there [at Tagish] waiting to be passed by the police, and there was only one way of getting through, and that was by handing the policeman a couple of dollars. Here one makes the acquaintance of the system in vogue on the Yukon, of tipping the police, and without a man does this he may just as well turn back. The extortion practised by this body is so abominable that unless one has been unfortunate enough to experience it he will hardly conceive it possible that such a state of things can exist in a British colony.²⁹

'Burdens imposed on the miners'

In his letter to Martha, Dunleavy wrote that he arrived in Dawson City 'about' the 16th of June, and immediately headed off, pack on his back, to try his luck on the goldfield.³⁰ But what he found offered little opportunity either through good luck or hard work. He wrote 'all the country, good and bad is pegged out' for 70 miles around Dawson. From what he had seen of the unpegged country further out there were few prospects for success, especially given 'the burdens imposed on the miners'. His conclusion was that Klondike was a huge 'swindle'.

That the Klondike had been *boomed* was also the assessment of most of the newly arrived prospectors.³¹ In numbers growing daily, they could be seen in their thousands wandering aimlessly along the 'bog up to one's knees' that were Dawson's main streets. With its 'corrupt officials' and 'harassment of prospectors', the place was in Dunleavy's opinion 'only fit for a convict population'. His advice was to leave, and 'pass on to American territory where a man can at least have freedom if no gold'. And, this was his intention, as he informed Martha, when writing, 'I think I will leave for American territory soon'.

After a couple of weeks on the Klondike, and having had the opportunity to compare his experiences with others wandering the muddy streets of Dawson, Frank Dunleavy developed a good understanding of the miners' grievances. We can imagine him approaching groups of dejected miners, striking up conversation and making note of what they had to say. There were many grievances to be aired, some by way of irritation with petty bribery, while others struck at the very heart of why men had trekked thousands of miles to this distant outpost. Dunleavy came to know the men in the crowd, understand

their temperament and the limits of their patience, and he, in turn, came to be known by them.

There was dissatisfaction with mining regulations generally, not least the imposition of a hefty royalty on gold recovered, and the government policy of reserving a number of claims above and below the initial discovery claim for government sale.³² It angered the Australasians, in particular, as to how a claim might be staked and then left unworked with the intention to sell it rather than work it. This was not the way things were done back home where the law required a claim to be steadily worked. There was also a different arrangement concerning cutting timber for mine works, a right that came with your claim registration in Australasia. In the Yukon, timber getting required buying a separate licence.

The proven creeks were fully staked and had been so since 1896 and 1897. But even if you did manage to stake a claim on another creek, what then? Having staked your claim and rushed back to Dawson to register it, and possibly having bribed your way into the claims office – via the door reserved for bribed entry - you were then likely to encounter problems at the counter. David McGregor, an experienced Australian prospector, provided a colourful assessment in a letter.

It would take too long to write of all the corrupt practices in the Government offices - how men, after pegging a piece of ground which if thought by the [claim registration] official to be of some value, have to give up a quarter and often a three-quarter interest to the official as a bribe to have it recorded. If the pegger refuses to bribe the official, the latter will say that it is in dispute, that it has been recorded, thus throwing the original pegger off the trail ... [and] records for him[self] from the other man's description of the ground. There are lots of other schemes for robbery that one would scarcely credit. It is certain if they were told by anyone in an Australian mining camp the teller would be called a liar without a second thought.³³

Even collecting your mail at the post office was a challenge. Steele's Mounties had charge of Dawson's post office, as they did for many public services in the city. To quote Dunleavy's Queensland shearing mate, Robert Little, whose complaint can be found repeated in dozens of letters, 'At the post office people used to line up for nearly a mile waiting for their letters; and the only way to ensure quick delivery was to bribe the policeman on duty to bring out letters after hours'.³⁴ But even so, Robert Little spoke positively about the police, describing them as 'courteous' and 'efficient', and like many Australasians acknowledged that they made the place safe – unlike Alaska.

'Trusting for your cooperation'

Frank Dunleavy had promised Martha that he intended to leave 'soon'. Actually, before he even posted the letter, he had already decided to stay and take on the fight for the fair treatment of the Klondike's miners.

Dunleavy found a ready ally in Gene Allen, the American proprietor of the *Klondike Nugget*, Dawson's first newspaper. The *Nugget* would steadfastly lend Dunleavy its support, give voice to his concerns and promote his activities. Dunleavy knew the value of having the press on side.

Dunleavy's goal was not to supplant Canadian sovereignty over the Yukon with that of America, or to replace government administration of the goldfield with American-style 'miners' committees'. He sought to achieve reform in the government's treatment of miners through negotiation, not by confrontation. There is a continuity in this approach with his earlier, if unsuccessful, endeavours on behalf of Queensland shearers. The Klondike presented a very different workplace, but the earlier lessons learned might be applied to advantage.

Dunleavy began his campaign with an 'Open Letter', addressed 'To the Miners and Prospectors of the N.W.T'³⁵, published on 2 July in the *Klondike Nugget*.³⁶ Its opening lines began:

Allow me to remind everyone interested in the welfare of the territory the urgent necessity of cooperating for the purpose of securing a more liberal government and more just and equitable mining laws than at present. This can only be accomplished by the people appealing to the legislature at Ottawa

Dunleavy continued with a lengthy list of what needed reform, clearly attempting to pack in as many of the grievances as possible from those he had heard over the past fortnight. To do so would draw the widest possible support. His action plan was revealed in the letter's final paragraphs with his call for the miners to take the first steps in organising themselves.

There are many other grievances which require abolishing and the only means of doing so is for the miners to combine solid and have a central body in the shape of a committee to transact its business and organize the movement so that it can proceed on constitutional lines until it lands at Ottawa with the necessary papers stating what is wanted and backed up by everyone

I take the opportunity of informing the miners that a provisional committee will be established in a few days when a definite plan of campaign will be placed before the miner, with the object of carrying out the above project; *but remember it is only by the united support of all that anything can be achieved.* [emphasis added]

Trusting for your cooperation.

Dunleavy's letter was written in language that was both conciliatory and loyal. There was no call for rebellion against authority, only a call for the miners to unite in 'cooperation' to prepare their case for presentation directly to Ottawa, bypassing Walsh and Fawcett. Dunleavy, in his final words in the letter, 'I am a British subject', set out his right of freedom of speech in a British dominion. Dunleavy included a copy of the *Klondike Nugget* carrying his 'Open Letter' in with his letter to Martha. Frank was obviously not leaving 'soon'.

Stars and Stripes

Two days after the publication of Dunleavy's 'Open Letter', a tumultuous reminder was given as to the tenuous hold of the Canadian government over the Klondike, and indeed the Yukon itself. July 4th, America's Independence Day, was celebrated in Dawson City with a patriotic fervour that would have done justice to any American city. The *Stars and*

Stripes flew from Dawson's many American-owned businesses; homemade cannon fired blasting powder salutes. The Americans were a dominant presence on the Klondike, something perfectly understood by all parties.³⁷ Equally understood was that Canada's control over this isolated, and wealthy, territory was shaky.

If the growing discontent among the miners should spill over into a violent confrontation, the consequence could see intervention by the American government in defence of their citizens, and subsequent annexation of Canadian territory to Alaska. The Canadian government recognised the risk to Canadian sovereignty, as evident in the presence of Steele's NWMP force, numbering about 300 whose armaments included Maxim guns. A further pre-emptive measure was the despatch of a military contingent of 203 men, the Yukon Field Force.³⁸ However, in July 1898 the Force was still struggling to reach its destination via a near impassable 'All-Canadian' route through northern British Columbia. The Americans controlled all passable access to the Yukon, their military strength far surpassed that of Canada, and America was in an expansionist mood. Such was the reality of Canada's sovereignty over the Yukon. Steele's Mounties would have observed handbills advertising a mass meeting being passed around the crowd on Independence Day.

Cheechakos and Sourdoughs

The advertised mass meeting of miners took place on the evening of Wednesday, 9 July, in front of the N.A.T.&T. Co's store.³⁹ An estimated 3,000 turned out to learn what was being proposed to resolve their grievances.⁴⁰ A list of resolutions for specific reforms to mining regulations were presented to the crowd, who were described as 'laboring under a suppressed excitement'. All the resolutions were adopted unanimously by a show of hands. The case put at the meeting was to seek reform through negotiation with the authorities, along the lines Dunleavy had argued. However, it was not Dunleavy who drew up the resolutions and presented them to the assembled miners. The *Klondike Nugget's* report identifies the committee and the speakers as being 'old-time miners', *sourdoughs*, most of whom were members of the 'Yukon Order of Pioneers' (Y.O.O.P.).

The Y.O.O.P. had previously proven itself as a trustworthy alternative to Alaskan-style miners' committees in representing the mining community. In 1894 at Fortymile Creek goldfield, NWMP Superintendent Constantine had replaced the self-regulated authority of the miners' committee there with that of the Crown, but in such a manner as to win the approval of the majority of the miners.⁴¹ That committee soon reconstituted itself as a fraternal society, the *Yukon Order of Pioneers*. Much the same thing happened on the Klondike itself in 1897, when the government surveyor, William Ogilvie (1846-1912), meticulously resurveyed and then officially registered the 1896 Bonanza and Eldorado claims - at the request of a miners' committee closely associated with the Y.O.O.P.⁴² It was not without significance that the Y.O.O.P. had come forth offering leadership to the incoming dissatisfied miners. Dunleavy understood this significance.

But where does Dunleavy fit in with the Y.O.O.P. and its campaign for Klondike reforms? Dunleavy was a newcomer, a *cheechako*, and thus unqualified for membership.⁴³ He was not among those named in the *Nugget* as being on the committee which had drawn up the meeting's resolutions. Neither was he meant to be of one of the

speakers, but at the very end of the meeting, he leapt forth, and without any invitation, brazenly proposed a vote of thanks to the meeting's chairman. In doing so, many in the crowd would have gone away thinking this meeting was connected with Dunleavy's 'Open Letter', but that seems not to have been the case. This was the Y.O.O.P.'s meeting called by their committee, not by Dunleavy's ad-hoc 'provisional committee'. The meeting of 9 July was *not* Dunleavy's meeting! The challenge for Dunleavy was to gain a place with the Y.O.O.P.'s better positioned initiative.

Figure 3: *Miners gathered for a mass meeting, Dawson City, 1898.*



Source: University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Eric A. Hegg Photograph Collection [Hegg 2268]

The Y.O.O.P.'s 'Miners' Committee', however, may have required further convincing as to the value of having Dunleavy on their side. Dunleavy would provide the necessary convincing with his own mass meeting the following week.⁴⁴ On 13 July, 3,000 men gathered as before, with Dunleavy introduced as the key speaker.⁴⁵ In his speech, Dunleavy abandoned the measured tones of his 'Open Letter' and fired a veritable broadside of accusations and complaints, whipping up the angry dissatisfaction of the crowd. He compared life on the Klondike to that in 'the penal colonies of Australia'. He then stepped back, 'amid much applause', and opened the meeting to his audience, who not surprisingly vented their frustrations. Dunleavy's reason for calling this meeting was that he claimed that the earlier meeting failed to give 'the men present an opportunity to air their grievances'. The opportunity now allowed was sufficiently vociferous to attract the attention of the Mounties who ordered the meeting to stop and the crowd disperse. 'Things looked threatening for a while', reported the *Nugget*, but sufficient calm returned to allow the meeting to end peaceably.

The rise and fall of Dunleavy's 'Miners' Association'

Shortly after his raucous July meeting, Frank Dunleavy was invited by the Y.O.O.P. meeting's committee to join their ranks.⁴⁶ Dunleavy had proven that he was both a skilled speaker and a capable organiser, emerging in the space of a few weeks as a recognised spokesman for thousands of dissatisfied miners. Given the near riot at his meeting, it might also have been thought risky to leave Dunleavy on his own. Once within their ranks, Dunleavy successfully pressed, or more likely badgered, the committee into agreeing to support his idea for the establishment of a permanent organisation, a miners' association, to represent the needs to the government of all miners, both *sourdough* and *cheechako*. On 11 August, a mass meeting was held, where it was unanimously agreed on a motion seconded by Dunleavy that such an association, to be known as 'The Miners' Association of the Yukon Territory', be established.⁴⁷ Dunleavy was 'unanimously and enthusiastically' elected as the proposed association's unpaid 'organizer' tasked with recruiting members. Credibility of the association to represent the miners would depend ultimately on membership numbers.

Over the next fortnight, Dunleavy worked assiduously, walking the Klondike's creeks and gulches, drumming up membership among the miners. His efforts proved to be in vain. On 29 August, a meeting held at the Presbyterian Church to begin the process of constituting the association was attended by 24 of just 61 subscribed members.⁴⁸ A further meeting the following week formally established the association, with the adoption of a constitution and by-laws and the election of officers, with Dunleavy continuing as 'organizer'.⁴⁹ But the miners still continued to show their reluctance in joining the association, with membership by early September having grown to only 70, far less than the 2,000 Dunleavy had hoped for.⁵⁰ Through July and August, and even into early September, the miners had turned out in their thousands to cheer Dunleavy and his proposals for putting things right, but now they offered only promises and excuses when it came to joining the association. *The Miners' Association of the Yukon Territory* may never have had more than a few hundred financial members at the height of its existence.

Dunleavy's miners' association, and his earlier 'agitation' generally, had some support from among the Australian and New Zealand miners on the Klondike. For example, his meeting of 13 July had been chaired by Joe Knight Smith, a well-known Sydney publican.⁵¹ An incomplete association membership list in late September, with 131 members, shows 11 of them as identifiable Australasians, some of them well known figures.⁵² The overall impression is that Dunleavy did not rely particularly on his fellow diggers for either support or numbers, but, as was his character, struck out alone on this venture.⁵³

Why had the association failed to attract mass support? Some miners said the annual membership fee of \$10 was too high, but the introduction of a semi-annual fee of \$5.00 appears to have made little difference. A more likely reason for low membership might be that by autumn of 1898 most of those who arrived that summer had either left or were preparing to do so before the freeze up. Dunleavy himself intended to push on, a decision made before the disappointing membership enrolment was known. As for those choosing to winter on the Klondike, they may have preferred to put their trust in other reform initiatives or had simply resigned themselves to a pragmatic acceptance of the situation.⁵⁴

If the association had been in place in early July, when feelings were running hot, the roll up may have been more enthusiastic. In politics, timing is everything.

Even with its low membership, the *Miners' Association of the Yukon Territory* continued to enjoy the support of the *Klondike Nugget*, which unfailingly regarded it as the representative voice of the miners. The Australian-owned *Klondyke Miner*, established in September, likewise reported favourably on the association's activities.⁵⁵ A measure of official recognition came with granting of a block of land on Church Street for the building of a 'Miners' Institute'.⁵⁶

Of more significance was the two hour 'conference' on 8th September between William Ogilvie and representatives of the association, but not including Dunleavy.⁵⁷ This was the same Ogilvie who had gained the respect of the miners in 1897, and had now returned, only days earlier, to replace the despised Walsh as Yukon Commissioner. Although there was little Ogilvie could do to change mining laws on the spot, he would over coming months work to achieve such changes, taking into account the concerns of Klondike miners. That meeting, with the presentation of an 'address of welcome and statement of miners' grievances', helped open the way for an ongoing constructive dialogue with the mining community. Ogilvie, who would have recognised the Y.O.O.P. involvement, welcomed the input of the association, but the association struggled to respond.

The association was drifting away from its original purpose of representing the concerns of miners.⁵⁸ To the despair of its mining members, the business community dominated the association and its executive.⁵⁹ Their concerns were focussed elsewhere, including a push for Dawson's incorporation with an elected council. Resulting internal tensions steadily sapped the will and strength of the association. Mention of the association gradually disappeared from the newspapers and it may well have ceased to exist by mid-1899, at least in the form intended by Dunleavy.⁶⁰

At the association's meeting in October 1898, Frank Dunleavy was awarded life membership 'in recognition of his service in founding the association'.⁶¹ By then, Frank Dunleavy had left the Klondike.

'Mr Dunleavy's Kicks'

Frank Dunleavy had arrived in Vancouver by early October. Undoubtedly disappointed with his attempt to establish a miners' association, Dunleavy still intended to carry on lobbying for fair treatment of the Klondike's miners. His plan was to make the issues known to the public through newspaper interviews and public lectures 'in every big town' while travelling across Canada to Ottawa, where he would present the miners' case directly to government ministers.⁶²

However, Dunleavy soon found that the *Outside* did not always share the concerns of the Klondike miners. His criticism of Canada's administration of the Klondike was viewed by some as echoing what were regarded as unwarranted slights being published in the American press. What Dunleavy had to say was not what the Canadian public and press wanted to hear. In the Vancouver press, Dunleavy even encountered outright hostility, with an editorial in the *Vancouver Daily News* dismissing his 'grossly misleading declarations' and recommending his departure from 'our shores'.⁶³ His

advertised lecture in Vancouver saw only 15 people, including the doorkeeper, turning up at the Oddfellows Hall.⁶⁴ The attending journalist from *The Province*, although he thought Dunleavy a 'gifted lecturer', assessed Dunleavy's claims pejoratively, as being just those of a 'kicker', and recommended he join a football club. The absence of newspaper reports on other lectures suggests this may have been the only public lecture Dunleavy delivered on his trip to Ottawa.

When Dunleavy was interviewed by a journalist, he offered a cogent and informed case as to the need for reforms,⁶⁵ In particular, his interview with Montreal's *Gazette* set out the list of grievances in convincing detail.⁶⁶ The newspaper noted that Dunleavy had come as a representative of the 'Miners' Association' to press Clifford Sifton, the Minister for the Interior, to initiate a parliamentary enquiry into the administration of the Klondike. The interviewing journalist, impressed with Dunleavy's knowledge and passion, wrote, 'If Mr Sifton is in search of some responsible person who will make definite charges, Mr Dunleavy is his man'.

Alas, not long after this interview Frank Jay Dunleavy disappears from view. The *Vancouver Daily World*, in early December 1898, dismissed Dunleavy's apparent failure to submit to Ottawa 'any evidence of wrong doing' as doing a 'funk'.⁶⁷ To 'funk' at this critical moment seems inconsistent with the man's character and his apparent determination to put matters right. But, to date, no trace of Frank Dunleavy's whereabouts can be found after mid-October 1898 until he reappears in the Philippines in June 1903, having arrived there sometime in 1899.⁶⁸ Whatever might have been the reason, the Klondike chapter in Dunleavy's life was over.

'Professional agitator'?

Frank Dunleavy's miners' association failed to come up to his expectations, and he never achieved finding his seat at the conference table to negotiate a better deal for the miners, either in Dawson or Ottawa. But, the Klondike may have taken a different path without his presence.

The summer of 1898 passed without a miners uprising on the Klondike. Their anger was certainly deeply felt, but there was no Klondike Eureka, not even a respectable riot. In part at least, this was because their grievances were given a coherent voice through the leadership of men like Frank Dunleavy, who channelled unrest into peaceful protest in those critical months of July and August. No cause was given the Americans to attempt any incursion to defend the interests of their citizens. No blood was shed; peace held that summer.

Superintendent Sam Steele may have thought Dunleavy was nothing more than a 'professional agitator', but he failed to appreciate that Dunleavy was on his side, doing his part in maintaining law and order, if though also concerned with achieving justice for the miners. The summer of 1898 could have turned out differently if Frank Jay Dunleavy had been a different kind of agitator. Perhaps

Epilogue

Martha Dunleavy's patience was exhausted with the peripatetic ways of young Henry's father. With Frank on Mindanao Island, she began proceedings in Honolulu seeking a

divorce, which were nearing fulfillment by July 1899.⁶⁹ The divorce did not take place and the family reunited on Mindanao, where Frank had ‘discovered’ rubber as the next big thing. The family relocated to the United States in 1906, with Frank becoming a citizen and rubber now the focus of interest. He soon returned to his wandering ways, managing rubber plantations in the Bolivian Amazon for a time. It was there in 1908 he had an encounter with Butch Cassidy, who robbed him at gunpoint of a clean shirt. Martha was not pleased by the loss of the shirt, an especially nice one that she had made for Frank. Frank Jay Dunleavy died on 28 February 1924 in Pasadena, California.⁷⁰

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

¹ For a general history of the Klondike Gold Rush, refer to Pierre Berton, *Klondike The Last Great Gold Rush 1896-98*, Anchor Canada, 1972, 472 pp.

² Robin McLachlan, ‘Not a Motley Throng: Australians on the Klondike, 1898’, *History* (Magazine of the Royal Australian Historical Society), March 2020, pp. 2-4.

³ Berton, *Klondike*, pp. 254-257.

⁴ Biographical information for Frank Jay Dunleavy and members of his and his wife’s family, including digital copies of some documents, can be accessed via the ancestry.com.au website on the ‘Frank Jay Dunleavy’ public tree posted by ‘KlondikeDiggers’. Additional family history information, including some documents, was provided in private email correspondence (2018) with Frank Dunleavy’s great granddaughter, Gweneth A. Dunleavy, Louisville, Kentucky, USA. To minimise endnotes some biographical details are not referenced individually and can be assumed to be sourced through the above.

⁵ David R. Morrison, *The Politics of the Yukon Territory, 1898-19*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1968, p. 26.

⁶ George McCullough, ‘World Trip in ’98’, *Nambucca and Bellinger News*, 26 June 1931.

⁷ ‘A Queensland Shearer at Klondyke’, *The Western Champion*, (Barcaldine, Qld), 13 June 1899.

⁸ For example, ‘Cooperative Unionism. An Interview with Mr Dunleavy’, *The Queenslander* (Brisbane), 2 May 1891; ‘Freedom of Contract’, *Queensland Times* (Ipswich), 15 May 1891; and, ‘The Non-Union Shearers’, *The Age*, 28 May 1891.

⁹ For example, ‘Free Labour’, *The Capricornian* (Rockhampton), 28 March 1891; ‘Summary of News’, *Brisbane Courier*, 27 April 1891; ‘The Labor Crisis’, *Western Star and Roma Advertiser*, 26 April 1891; ‘The Shearers’ Dispute’, *Brisbane Courier*, 29 April 1891; ‘Open-Air Meeting in Brisbane’, *The Queenslander* (Brisbane), 2 May 1891; and, ‘Dunleavy Denies’, *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 13 July 1891.

¹⁰ ‘A Queensland Shearer at Klondyke’, *The Western Champion* (Barcaldine, Qld), 13 June 1899.

¹¹ A. Staines Manders (ed.), *Who’s Who in the Rubber World*, London, 1914, p. 36.

¹² Marriage notice, *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu), 23 November 1894.

¹³ ‘New Advertisement’ column, *Honolulu Advertiser*, 22 September, 1892. Advertisements in later issues suggest an ever more successful business, with ‘Mrs Dunleavy’ presenting herself as ‘the most expert modiste’ in town’ in advertisement in the *Honolulu Advertiser*, 22 July 1897.

¹⁴ Manders, *Who’s Who*, p. 36.

¹⁵ Dunleavy’s prior experience as a gold miner in South Africa is mentioned in several newspaper reports in 1898. The details offered though are sketchy at best and at times not entirely credible. For example, in ‘A Mining Man’, *Vancouver Daily World*, 11 October 1898, the interviewing journalist wrote ‘Mr Dunleavy [sic] has had considerable mining experience in the Transvaal, where he grew up from boyhood...’.

¹⁶ George McCullough, ‘World Trip in ’98’, *Nambucca and Bellinger News*, 26 June 1931. McCullough refers to seeing Dunleavy at work on a contract to the French government purchasing potatoes in Sydney for shipping to Madagascar. He dates this encounter to shortly after the Klondike when Dunleavy was most likely not in Australia; the anecdote, then over thirty years old, may be of an encounter prior to 1898.

¹⁷ 'On the Road to Klondike', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 27 June 1898. The item is a letter from Nat Dunleavy, written 29 April from Dyea, the introduction for which describes him as 'a miner well known on the Kalgoorlie-Boulder field'.

¹⁸ The *Cape Otway* was a non-scheduled sailing specially chartered to carry Klondike-bound Australians and New Zealanders to Canada. Its voyage began in Fremantle (Perth) on 16 February, stopping to collect passengers in Albany, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney (5 March), before proceeding to Auckland (13 March), arriving in Vancouver on Easter Sunday, 10 April. With over 200 passengers heading for the Klondike, the *Cape Otway* carried the largest such group of Australasians, perhaps up to 1/4 of those who reached the Klondike. By way of examples of press reports see 'Gold and the Cold', *Victoria Daily Colonist* (Victoria, Canada), 5 April 1898; and, 'A Voyage to Klondyke', *Murchison Times*, 9 June 1898. 'Mr Dunleavy, a noted traveller' was mentioned in the *Murchison Times* article as one of the passengers of interest.

¹⁹ McCullough, 'World Trip in '98', *Nambucca and Bellinger News*, 26 June 1931, and 3, 10 & 17 July 1931. McCullough provides a serial narrative of their journey to the Klondike from Vancouver with frequent mention of Frank and Nat Dunleavy.

²⁰ McCullough, *Nambucca and Bellinger News*, 26 June 1931.

²¹ 'In the Klondike Wilds', *Evening Bulletin* (Honolulu), 23 August 1898.

²² The invoice was to prove where supplies had been purchased and if in the United States that the import duty had been paid at the Chilkoot border post. See Robin McLachlan, 'Booming the Klondike *Down Under*: The British Columbian Connection', *Journal of Australasian Mining History*, vol. 15, October 2017, pp. 150-165.

²³ Robert Stewart, *Sam Steele, Lion of the Frontier*, Double Canada Ltd, Toronto, 1979, p. 213.

²⁴ D. Morrison, *Politics 1898-1906*, ch. 2, 'The Colonization of the Yukon', and ch.3, 'The Yukon becomes a Territory'; and, Ken S. Coates and William R. Morrison, *Land of the Midnight Sun*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2005, pp. 72-74, 104-106, *et passim*.

²⁵ Roderick C. MacLeod, 'Walsh, James Morrow', *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol.13, University of Toronto/Universite Laval, Toronto, 2003.

²⁶ Berton, *Klondike*, pp. 313, 315.

²⁷ Sam Steele, *Forty Years in Canada*, Dodd Mead, New York, 1915, pp. 288-337; and, Stewart, *Sam Steele*, pp. 197-234. For a full biography see Rod MacLeod, *Sam Steele: A Biography*, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 2018, 432 pp.

²⁸ Yukon Archives (Whitehorse) mss 352.740 62 Nor 1898, *North-West Mounted Police Annual report 1899*, Photocopy Part III Yukon Territory, Report of Superintendent S.B. Steele, 10 January 1899, pp. 30-31; and, University of Alberta (Edmonton), Bruce Peel Special Collection, *Sir Samuel Steele Collection*, 'Steele Diary' (transcript), (2008.1, Box 3, folder 17), diary entry for 23 July 1898.

²⁹ 'Returned from Klondyke', *The West Australian* (Perth), 18 November 1898.

³⁰ 'In the Klondike Wilds', *Evening Bulletin* (Honolulu), 23 August 1898.

³¹ McLachlan, 'Booming the Klondike', *JAMH*, Vol. 15, October 2017, pp. 150-165.

³² Detailed critiques of the mining laws and regulations can be found in numerous letters from Australian and New Zealand miners, with those criticisms mentioned here being but a small sample. For example, 'Klondyke', *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, 6 January 1899.

³³ 'A Letter from Klondyke', *The Western Argus*, 25 January 1900

³⁴ 'A Queensland Shearer at Klondyke', *The Western Champion* (Barcaldine, Qld), 13 June 1899.

³⁵ The Yukon had only recently become a territory separate from the North West Territory (N.W.T.), but this was likely not yet fully understood on the streets in Dawson.

³⁶ 'Open Letter', *Klondike Nugget*, 2 July 1898.

³⁷ Although there are no reliable population statistics for the Yukon in 1898, the NWMP's partial census in 1898 estimated that 63% of the population were either American citizens or immigrants, with British subjects (Canadians, Australians, Britons, etc) providing 32%. While the American presence might be overestimated, as Charlene Porsild argues, the perception in 1898, both officially and by the Americans themselves, was that they outnumbered all others, including the Canadians. Charlene Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1998, pp.16-18, 201-204.

³⁸ Coates and Morrison, *Midnight Sun*, pp. 99-102.

³⁹ 'A Mass Meeting', *Klondike Nugget*, 9 July 1898.

⁴⁰ 'Unjust Legislation Condemned', *Klondike Nugget*, 12 July 1898.

⁴¹ Michael Gates, *Gold at Fortymile Creek: Early Days in the Yukon*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 1994; and, Michael Gates, *History Hunting in the Yukon*, Harbour Publishing Company, Madeira Park, BC, 2010, pp. 60-73.

⁴² Berton, *Klondike*, pp. 71-72.

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- ⁴³ In 1898, a membership requirement for Y.O.O.P. membership, as set in 1894, was to have arrived in the Yukon before 1888. See, Gates, *Fortymile Creek*, pp. 81-83.
- ⁴⁴ 'Another Mass Meeting for Dawsonites', *Klondike Nugget*, 12 July 1898. 'Mr Dunleavy is quite warm at what he has seen and heard since arriving at Dawson and his talk ought to be most interesting'.
- ⁴⁵ 'A Free Discussion Not Allowed', *Klondike Nugget*, 16 July 1898.
- ⁴⁶ Morrison, *Politics 1898-1906*, p. 26.
- ⁴⁷ 'Notice to Miners', *Klondike Nugget*, 10 August 1898; and, 'Hurrah! Hurrah! For the Miners', *Klondike Nugget*, 13 August 1898.
- ⁴⁸ 'At Last She is Launched', *Klondike Nugget*, 31 August 1898.
- ⁴⁹ 'Is Now an Organised Body', *Klondike Nugget*, 7 September 1898. This article has the full text of the constitution and the list of elected officials.
- ⁵⁰ 'An Enthusiastic Mass Meeting', *Klondike Nugget*, 3 September 1898.
- ⁵¹ 'Obnoxious Mining Law', *Victoria Daily Colonist* (Victoria, Canada), 3 August 1898.
- ⁵² 'Miner's [sic] Association Items', *Klondike Nugget*, 5 October 1898. No complete membership list has been located, and very likely no longer exists. The *Nugget* lists 131 members by name and occupation in an 'incomplete list', of those listed eleven can be recognised as Australians or New Zealanders.
- ⁵³ Dunleavy and the miners' association are rarely mentioned in the hundreds of letters sent home that were published in local newspapers. Among the few examples, 'Klondyke', *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, 6 January 1899. From a letter dated 30 September 1898, 'A miners' association has now been organised by an Australian named Dunleavy'.
- ⁵⁴ A useful survey of the different initiatives to seek reforms to mining laws and eradication of corruption is provided by Morrison, *Politics 1898-1906*, pp. 25-32.
- ⁵⁵ For example, in its first issue, 'Finally Organised', *Klondyke Miner*, 10 Sept 1898.
- ⁵⁶ 'Will Soon be under Construction', *Klondike Nugget*, 12 September 1898; and 'Opening of the Miners Institute', *Klondike Nugget*, 26 October 1898. The building was completed in late October; there is no evidence of it today.
- ⁵⁷ 'Mr Ogilvie on Interesting Matters', *Klondike Nugget*, 10 September 1898; and, 'Address of Welcome', *Klondyke Miner*, 10 September 1898.
- ⁵⁸ 'Suggestions from the Miners', *Klondike Nugget*, 28 December 1898.
- ⁵⁹ 'Committees join Hands', *Klondyke Miner*, 10 September 1898; 'Correspondence', *Klondyke Miner*, 1 & 8 October 1898.
- ⁶⁰ A search of Dawson City newspapers available after January 1899, including *Klondike Nugget*, *Yukon Sun*, and *Dawson Daily News*, failed to find any mention of the association as an active organisation after March 1899. In 1903, a new 'Yukon Miners' Association' was established, based on Bonanza Creek, the press items for which make no reference to the earlier association. 'Miners at the Forks' & 'Organization is Completed', *Dawson Daily News*, 13 & 20 February 1903.
- ⁶¹ 'Miners' Meeting', *Klondyke Miner*, 8 October 1898.
- ⁶² 'Telegraphic Briefs', *The Ottawa Citizen*, 10 October 1898; and, 'More Yukon Charges', *The Gazette* (Montreal), 19 October 1898.
- ⁶³ Editorial, *Vancouver Daily World*, 11 October 1898.
- ⁶⁴ 'A lecture by the Organiser of the Yukon Mining Association', [admission 50c and 25c], *The Province* (Vancouver), 11 October 1898; and, 'Mr Dunleavy's Kicks. A Few People Listen to the Australian Dawsonian', *The Province* (Vancouver), 14 October 1898.
- ⁶⁵ For example. 'A Mining Man Speaks of the Conditions of Klondike – Mr Dunlevy [sic] Criticises Government Methods', *Vancouver Daily World*, 11 October 1898.
- ⁶⁶ 'More Yukon Charges', *The Gazette* (Montreal), 19 October 1898.
- ⁶⁷ 'They Funk. Accusers of the Yukon Officials Decline Giving Any Evidence', *Vancouver Daily World*, 2 December 1898.
- ⁶⁸ 'Honolulu Known Man in the Philippines', *The Honolulu Advertiser*, 3 August 1903. In the article, which is a letter from Dunleavy, written 10 June 1903, he states he had then been in the Philippines for nearly five years.
- ⁶⁹ 'Divorce & Separation Court Calendar', *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu), 31 July 1899.
- ⁷⁰ 'Frank Dunleavy Dead', *Labor Call* (Melbourne), 18 December 1924. The obituary commented, 'Comrade Dunleavy was a fine example of the brainy, knowledgeable Australian who had to go abroad to make a living ...'