

1881.

VICTORIA.

POLICE COMMISSION.—CHARGES AGAINST MEMBERS
OF THE POLICE FORCE.

ADDITIONAL RETURN to an Order of the *Legislative Assembly*,
Dated 22nd November 1881, for—

COPIES of any Communications the Chief Secretary may have received from the Members of the Police
with regard to the charges against them in the Report of the Police Commission.

(*Sir Charles MacMahon.*)

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 24th December 1881.

By Authority:

JOHN FERRES, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

No. 1.

Victoria Police (47),
North-Eastern Police District, Wangaratta Station, 15th December 1881.

REPORT OF SERGEANT STEELE RELATIVE TO RECOMMENDATION OF POLICE COMMISSION.

I have the honor to report, for the information of the Acting-C.C. of Police, that, from an article which appeared in the *Age* newspaper of the 5th instant, falling back upon evidence given by Constables Arthur and Phillips as justification for the recommendation made by the Police Commission in reference to me, I now deem it my duty to place before the head of the Department a few remarks, showing the injustice done me at the hands of the Commission.

So far as I am personally concerned, I always entertained hopes that the Government would not carry out the recommendation on the grounds on which it was based, as I respectfully submit I acted strictly in accordance with the discipline of the service; and from the imperative nature of the orders received from Mr. Sadleir, I had no discretionary power left me but simply to carry out my instructions.

From the article above referred to, I now find that an attempt is likely to be made, in support of the recommendation, to use the evidence of the two constables already mentioned, which does not have a particle of truth on the face of it.

Further, that the men who gave the evidence were actuated in doing so through malice, because I accused them of cowardice in running away from Edward Kelly at Glenrowan.

I may state that at the time this false testimony was being given against me, I was attending to my duties at Wangaratta, and never afforded an opportunity of cross-examining them, or calling a witness to rebut their statements.

On meeting a member of the Police Commission at Wangaratta, I strongly protested against the injustice of such proceedings, provided the Commission intended placing any faith in what they had said, as such a procedure was not in accordance with British law and justice; and further informed him that "I had several witnesses that could repudiate the statements of Constables Arthur and Phillips," some of which were actually lying beside them, others between the two constables and myself, yet not one of them saw or heard what these men allege to have seen and heard.

He directed me "to forward him the names of the witnesses, and what they were in a position to prove, and he would have them called." I did so; but not one of them has been examined with the exception of Mr. Marsden, whom I chanced to have called during the time the Commission were at Wangaratta.

As an instance of the jealousy which existed towards me by the first party of police from Benalla, I would quote one case that came to my knowledge. A few days after Mr. Marsden's evidence appeared in print I received a letter from the Secretary of the Commission calling upon me for specific answers to six allegations of a most shameful nature, purporting to be made by Senior-constable Kelly, against Mr. Marsden and myself (evidently with a view of throwing doubt on the latter's evidence), at the same time informing me "that the matter might hereafter form the subject of an enquiry upon oath." I replied to these and received an answer to the following effect. "The charges resolve themselves into idle gossip, undeserving of notice and appear wholly unfounded."

From the foregoing circumstances and the fact that a large portion of the community believe that there are some grounds for the statements of the two constables, more particularly as their evidence is uncontradicted, I would respectfully request that my remarks be submitted to the Honorable the Chief Secretary in the earnest hope that he may think fit to grant me an opportunity of proving my innocence and exposing the persons who have so cowardly conspired to do me injury.

(Signed) A. L. M. STEELE,
Sergt. 1179.

The A.C.C. of Police Melbourne.

Minutes on foregoing communication.

Forwarded to the Acting-Chief Commissioner of Police.

I trust I am not out of place in saying here that Sergeant Steele is a most valuable member of the force, whose antecedents render it most improbable that he acted in the manner he is accused at Glenrowan.

(Sd.) W. B. MONTFORT,
Inspr. 15/12/81.
(Sd.) H. M. CHOMLEY,
A. C. C. P. 19/12/81.

Submitted to the Honorable the Chief Secretary.

No. 2.

THE MEMORIAL OF THE UNDERSIGNED RESIDENTS IN AND AROUND THE TOWN OF WANGARATTA.

To the Honorable the Chief Secretary.

RESPECTFULLY SHOWS:—

That your memorialists have read with astonishment and regret the recommendation of the Royal Commission upon the Police Force that Sergeant Steele be reduced to the ranks.

That your memorialists all are residents of long standing, and are personally acquainted with the details of Sergeant Steele's career in charge of police for the Wangaratta sub-district, and are at a loss to discover any fair grounds for the recommendation aforesaid.

That, in the opinion of your memorialists, Sergeant Steele's services during the Kelly pursuit, and his prominent share in the capture of the leader of the gang alive, so far from entailing unmerited disgrace and reprobation demanded commendation and advancement.

That the Commission base their recommendation upon the fact of Sergeant Steele proceeding (in obedience to orders received) to Rats' Castle instead of deviating to Warboy's Ranges in answer to a mere rumor; whereas your memorialists respectfully submit that, had Sergeant Steele disobeyed his orders received to proceed direct to Rats' Castle, he would have left himself open to censure and probable dismissal. The more so as Sergeant Steele could not possibly anticipate that a senior officer's operations would fall through for want of prosecution.

That were it true, which your memorialists respectfully deny, that Sergeant Steele was guilty of one act of negligence, omission, or of misconstruction of orders, your memorialists beg to point to Sergeant Steele's past services in other parts of the North-Eastern district, the zeal and activity displayed by him in the detection and repression of crime, which marked him as an intelligent and indefatigable officer worthy of the highest consideration.

That your memorialists are not led away in this matter by personal feelings of attachment to Sergeant Steele, but respectfully approach you upon public grounds alone, and influenced by Sergeant Steele's public career and official acts only.

Your memorialists therefore respectfully urge upon you, Honorable Sir, to pause before giving effect to a recommendation which practically deprives the police force of one of its most efficient members and inflicts an undeserved punishment, and request that you will cause a special inquiry into Sergeant Steele's conduct in connection with the pursuit and capture of the Kelly gang, when we feel assured that the recommendation of the Commission will be found to be based on very insufficient, if any grounds.

We remain,

Honorable Sir,

Your most obedient humble servants.

[Here follow 310 signatures.]

Wangaratta, 26th October 1881.

No. 3.

To the Honorable the Chief Secretary.

29/10/81.

We, the undersigned residents in Yackandandah and neighbourhood, among whom Sergeant Steele served for a number of years, and by whom he was generally recognised as an energetic and efficient officer, hereby respectfully petition you to appoint a special Board to inquire into the conduct and actions of that officer in the pursuit and capture of the Kelly gang. We feel confident that the finding and recommendation of the Police Inquiry Commission, as regards Sergeant Steele, are the result of a misconception of facts, and that a fresh inquiry would throw a different light on the matter, especially as the gravest charge against Sergeant Steele is that he adhered too closely to the instructions of his superior officer.

[Here follow 23 signatures.—Forwarded by (signed) P. B. WALLACE.]

No. 4.

To the Honorable the Chief Secretary of Victoria.

THE MEMORIAL OF THE UNDERSIGNED RESIDENTS OF CHILTERN HUMBLY SHOWETH:

That your petitioners have heard with regret of the recommendation of the Police Commissioners to reduce Sergeant Steele, lately stationed at Wangaratta, to the lowest position in the police force.

Your petitioners, knowing that this officer is one of the most useful and energetic men in the force, would respectfully ask that you would cause his conduct to be made the subject of a special inquiry by a Board appointed by yourself, when your petitioners feel confident that such inquiry will result in Sergeant Steele being allowed to retain his present position.

And your memorialists will ever pray, &c.

[Here follow 12 signatures.]

No. 5.

PUBLIC MEETING *RE* SERGEANT STEELE.

[Reprinted from *The Ovens and Murray Advertiser* of Saturday, October 29 1881.]

One of the most enthusiastic meetings ever held in Wangaratta took place in St. George's Hall last Wednesday evening, to protest against the recommendation of the Police Commission that Sergeant Steele be reduced to the ranks. The Mayor, who had convened the meeting, in compliance with a numerous and influentially signed requisition, occupied the chair, and there were from 150 to 200 persons present. The most perfect unanimity prevailed throughout the proceedings, and the several movers and seconders of the resolutions were warmly received; the various points made by the speakers, either in praise of Sergeant Steele or in condemnation of the finding of the Commission, being greeted with loud and prolonged cheering. The whole tone of the meeting was of such a character as to leave not the slightest doubt of the appreciation of the services of Sergeant Steele by the community amongst whom he has resided so long and under such trying circumstances, nor of their indignation at the absurdly unjust manner in which the Commission proposed that he should be dealt with. One person only, who probably had very sufficient reasons for not regarding Sergeant Steele with particular favor, and who also seemed in a condition to

require the gallant Sergeant's services, occasionally interrupted the proceedings with expressions of dissent, but even he was courteously invited on to the platform by the Mayor to express his views—an invitation which he did not accept. No one could have been more astonished than Sergeant Steele himself, had he been present, at the popularity with which the indignation of the public had invested him.

The MAYOR, who was loudly cheered on taking the chair, apologised for having been somewhat detained beyond the appointed time at a council meeting. Having read the requisition and advertisement convening the meeting, he said he was not exactly aware what was proposed to be done that evening; but this he must say, that he felt the greatest sympathy with Sergeant Steele in this matter. (Applause.) It would be a gross injustice if the recommendation of the Commission with regard to that officer was acted on, and he had no doubt that meeting would have a good effect towards preventing it. (Cheers.)

Mr. ALEXANDER TONE, J.P., then came forward, amidst a fresh burst of applause, and said he felt sure that every one present, as well as himself, had realized only with extreme regret the necessity of calling that meeting, viz., to consider the recommendation of the Police Commission in relation to the conduct of Sergeant Steele during the Kelly pursuit. He did not stand before that meeting as the private friend of Sergeant Steele, but simply as a man who desired to see justice done to a public officer who had done his duty. (Great cheering.) They must not allow their personal feelings to sway them in this matter; but they were bound to stand by a man who had behaved with the spirit and courage displayed by Sergeant Steele, when so poor a recompense was proposed for his services. (Applause.) The recommendation of the Commission was that Sergeant Steele should be reduced to the ranks. For what? (Hear, hear.) He was ordered by Superintendent Sadleir to proceed to Rats' Castle, on reliable information that the outlaws were there. However, before he started from Benalla on that expedition, he heard that there was a rumor at Wangaratta that four men, suspected to be the gang, had passed under the railway bridge there, in the direction of the Warby Ranges, on the previous morning. On this, he did exactly what he was bound in duty to do, and sent word of the information to Mr. Sadleir. That officer, on consideration, said to Steele, "In that case, you can halt the train for a time at Wangaratta, while you make inquiries; and if you think there is anything in it, send word to Inspector Brooke Smith, who is in charge of a party at Wangaratta, to follow up the tracks." On arriving at Wangaratta station, Sergeant Steele found Constable Twomey, who told him the particulars of the rumor; and Sergeant Steele, believing that the men seen might really be the Kellys, literally obeyed his instructions, as he was bound to do, and sent word by Twomey to Mr. Brooke Smith that by Superintendent Sadleir's orders he, Mr. Brooke Smith, was to start upon the tracks at daylight next morning. Sergeant Steele then proceeded to fulfil his own orders, and for doing this he was virtually branded by the Commission with cowardice. (Disapprobation) Now, did any man who knew Sergeant Steele, think him amenable to such a charge as that? (Cries of "No; certainly not.") Would any man in the colony who had heard of his conduct all through the pursuit, and especially of his behaviour at Glenrowan, listen for one moment to such an accusation? Mr. Carrington, one of the reporters present at the fight, had informed him (the speaker) that Sergeant Steele was the only man on the ground who, when Kelly came down among them, boldly stood out in the open and attacked him. (Cheers.) But let them suppose, for argument sake that, acting on the Wangaratta rumor, Sergeant Steele had diverged from his route and gone to the Warby Ranges, and that the Kellys subsequently turned up at Rats' Castle, he would simply have been dismissed, and he would have richly deserved that punishment. (Applause, and expressions of assent.) When the Police Commission had come up to Glenrowan, one of them, whom it was not necessary to name, said, in answer to a question, that Sergeant Steele was certain to come out of the inquiry all right, and that he would be recommended for promotion. He could understand the recommendation of the Commission if the member who had expressed himself had protested against the finding in relation to Sergeant Steele, but no; the recommendation was signed by all present, and this gentleman's name was amongst the signatures. If this was promotion, then it was promotion downwards. (Applause.) He was not there as the champion of Sergeant Steele. He was perfectly well aware that Sergeant Steele had enemies, as every man had who did his duty, more especially a police officer. (Hear, hear.) A constable who did his duty must of necessity offend some one, and, as a matter of course, Sergeant Steele had not pleased every one. But, however that might be, their business there that night was to assist in getting him the simple justice which he deserved. (Great cheering.) It had, as they all know, been stated that Sergeant Steele had been shooting indiscriminately at Glenrowan; but they could prove beyond all doubt, if the opportunity were given them, that that statement was utterly false. (Hear, hear.) Sergeant Steele himself was the first to admit that he wounded young Reardon; but it was then scarcely daylight, and he had not fired until he had challenged Reardon and ordered him to put up his hands, not once, nor twice, but three times. As the lad continued to advance through the lines, Steele did fire, and, however unfortunate that might be, it was not Sergeant Steele's fault. Then again, as to his firing at Mrs. Reardon with a child in her arms, it was somewhat remarkable that not a word was heard of such an atrocity until after the lapse of twelve months. Mrs. Jones had actually written a letter before the inquiry was held, in which she stated that the bullet-hole in Mrs. Reardon's shawl was caused by a ball during the general firing, and while Mrs. Reardon was lying on a bunk in the house. But who believed such a story, or would any man but a demon fire at a woman with a child in her arms? (Applause.) Speaking of Sergeant Steele's past career, they had all heard of that murderous scoundrel Frank Neville, who was sentenced to death for killing a man at Yackandandah, and was now undergoing a life sentence. There never was a more violent or bloodthirsty villain, and yet, whether he had a knife in his hand or was armed with a bludgeon, Sergeant Steele, who was inferentially charged with cowardice, never hesitated to tackle him and overcome him. (Great cheering.) He, the speaker, had gone to Benalla to see some gentlemen there in reference to this matter. He had also written to Oxley and Chiltern to take part in this movement. But it was the province, as well as the duty, of the people of Wangaratta, where Sergeant Steele had so long resided, to take first action in the matter. (Prolonged cheering.) He therefore begged to propose the first resolution, as follows:—"That this meeting views with astonishment and regret the recommendation of the Police Commission that Sergeant Steele be reduced to the ranks."

Mr. KETT had great pleasure in seconding the resolution, inasmuch as he knew the whole of the facts of the case. Mr. Brooke Smith was actually stationed in the town when it was reported that the Kellys passed through, and yet he took no action, as he did not believe in the rumor; and yet, while he was recommended for £100 a year superannuation, Sergeant Steele was rewarded by reduction. That was

praise for one, and disgrace for the other. (Hear, hear.) Had the Commission stopped at Wangaratta, they could easily have learned the real facts of the case. (Hear, hear.)

The motion was then put, and carried unanimously, and with much applause.

Mr. WM. ORR then came forward, amid loud cheers, to propose the second resolution, as follows:—
 “That the services of Sergeant Steele, rendered by him during the Kelly pursuit, and his subsequent conduct at the capture at Glenrowan, deserve commendation and promotion.” He believed that all present would endorse the resolution, not only those present, but nine-tenths of the inhabitants of the colony and throughout Australia; because public opinion had marked out Sergeant Steele for his conduct at Glenrowan as second in rank only to that of one other actor in that tragedy. (Mr. Orr was understood to refer to Mr. Curnow.) Sergeant Steele was an old officer in the force of twenty-five years’ standing, during eleven of which he had been in charge at Yackandandah. While there he had made himself the terror of horse and cattle stealers, and also of some of the worst and most violent characters in the district. In Wangaratta he had followed up and captured the Baumgartens, who had for years been acting as receivers of stolen horses, and he was, as avowed by themselves, the most dangerous enemy of the Kellys. (Hear, hear.) At the Wombat, while the gang held Mr. McIntyre prisoner, waiting to complete the murders they had already committed, Ned Kelly told that constable that they had marked down Sergeant Steele and Constable Flood for vengeance, and that they would roast the former whenever they caught him. That gave them a very fair estimate of Kelly’s opinion of Sergeant Steele. They dreaded him on account of his vigilance and determination, and because he kept them constantly on foot by persistently scouring the ranges. As far as his conduct at Glenrowan went, they might learn from their respected fellow-townsmen, Mr. Marsden, that when Ned Kelly advanced on the police, in the morning, Sergeant Steele went boldly into the open ground, faced the outlaw deliberately, received his fire, returned it with both barrels, and brought him down. (Great cheering.) Not only that, but Kelly had kept his last shot for Sergeant Steele, and when that officer, with undaunted bravery, closed with him, Kelly, turned to and the pistol went off in the struggle; the ball actually passed within a few inches of Steele’s head. (Prolonged cheers.) He, the speaker, was present in the room at Glenrowan when Kelly was placed on a bench wounded and almost unconscious. When his senses returned he used these words in the speaker’s hearing (omitting some expressions not fit for publicity), to a friend who was condoling with him, “I should have shot the dogs in their barracks” But what next did he say? This, “My ammunition was gone; I had only one shot remaining, and I intended that for that — wretch Steele.” From the evidence of Mr. Marsden and several other eye-witnesses of the encounter, Steele, above all others engaged in the fight that day, was *the* man who should be promoted instead of being disgraced. (Applause.) But why was he disgraced? Simply because he had strictly followed out the instructions he had received from his superior officer, Superintendent Sadleir. When the rumor reached Benalla that the outlaws were supposed to have passed through Wangaratta, Mr. Sadleir’s orders to Sergeant Steele were to make enquiries at Wangaratta, and if he saw any grounds for the report, to send word to Inspector Brooke Smith to follow up the tracks at daylight, and he (Steele was then to proceed on his route to Rats’ Castle. He obeyed these orders and left his superior officer at Wangaratta to run down the trail. Now Mr. Smith was a personal friend of his; but, for all that, he must say, however reluctantly, that if anyone was to blame; it was that officer. (Hear, hear.) But the Commission asserted that Sergeant Steele should have deliberately disobeyed his orders in pursuit of what was, after all, only a vague rumor. He (the speaker) did not believe it at the time, as he did not believe the Kellys would have the audacity to pass through the town as described. In fact no reasonable man believed it at that period. If Sergeant Steele had acted otherwise than he did, he would simply have been supplanting his superior officer at Wangaratta. But let them take it for granted that the matter was left to his discretion: Well, when a man comes to two paths and has to take one, he will, of course, make his choice, like a man of sense, taking all things into consideration. That was exactly what Sergeant Steele had done. But for this single act, extending over a period of five minutes, Sergeant Steele is branded with degradation. (Applause.) The verdict of the Commission ought to be stigmatised by the whole community as one of the most unjust and iniquitous acts ever attempted in this country. (Tremendous cheering.)

Mr. SLOAN, who was also well received, said, in seconding the motion, that he had carefully followed the proceedings of the Commission, as reported in the press; but when he came to the recommendation with respect to Sergeant Steele, he could not even imagine any grounds for it. Sergeant Steele had carried out his instructions to the very letter, and he could not have done otherwise. They all knew the facts; and, in view of them, the recommendation was staggering to anyone’s common sense. (Hear, hear.)

The motion was also carried with acclamation.

Mr. BAYNES, who was cordially greeted, proposed the third resolution, in the following terms:—
 “That the Commission having based their recommendation upon the fact that Sergeant Steele proceeded to Rats’ Castle instead of to Warby’s Ranges, where rumor set forth the Kellys had gone, this meeting affirms that had Sergeant Steele disobeyed his orders to proceed to Rats’ Castle he would have left himself open to censure, and probably dismissal.” He was not going to eulogise Sergeant Steele, or to pat him on the back; but there was a saying that if a man had no enemies, he would be likely to have no friends. They had nothing to do, however on that occasion, as to whether Sergeant Steele had enemies or not. The broad fact was before them that he was recommended to be disgraced because he had obeyed his instructions. If Sergeant Steele had done wrong, let him be punished, only let them know the reason; but he certainly could not be reduced for a reason which did not bear a moments’ examination. (Applause.)

Mr. MELDRUM, in seconding the motion, said he had been perfectly astounded when he read the recommendation of the Commission in respect to Sergeant Steele. So far from being deserving of censure, he considered that Sergeant Steele had been entitled to promotion; as, in his opinion, there was not an officer in the whole force who had been more energetic in the pursuit of the Kellys than Sergeant Steele. (Applause.)

The motion was carried unanimously.

Mr. TILT, who met with a most hearty reception, proposed the fourth and last resolution, in the following words:—“That a memorial be prepared and forwarded to our representatives in the Legislative Council for presentation to the Chief Secretary, requesting him, before carrying into effect the recommendation of the Commission, to be pleased to grant a special enquiry into the conduct of Sergeant Steele anent the pursuit and capture of the outlaws.” He said that at no period of his life had he ever addressed a public

meeting where his heart was more completely in the subject, because he felt certain that Sergeant Steele had been the recipient of one of the greatest acts of injustice ever inflicted. (Cheers.) He fully endorsed the opinion of the *Argus* with respect to the Commission's report, that it was not worth the paper it was written on. (Applause.) The resolution which had been placed in his hands asked for a very proper thing, namely, that a further inquiry be held before some tribunal where Sergeant Steele would have some chance of justice. Because they might well ask, in view of the reason on which the recommendation of the Commission was based, whether that body had been in some way influenced by motives which should have had no place in their counsels? (Hear, hear.) Where, then, was the error into which the Commission had fallen? Their charge was, in the first place, that Sergeant Steele had full discretionary power to act as he pleased; and next, that it was an ascertained fact that the Kellys had passed through Wangaratta, and gone in the direction of Warby Ranges. Now, taking these two things together, what did they convey? That Sergeant Steele, of whose indomitable courage no one in this district had the slightest doubt, had suddenly, on that particular occasion, showed the white feather. (Hear, hear.) A more unjust or cruel decision had never been arrived at. (Great Applause.) The speaker then went over the facts of the case, as previously recapitulated, and said that if any man was to be blamed for the loss of life which subsequently occurred, it was that gentleman who was to be allowed to retire on his laurels and £100 a year. But the truth was the Commission thought there must be someone sacrificed, and they fixed upon Sergeant Steele as the victim. It was their duty as Englishmen, to see that such an injury should not be perpetrated. (Cheers.) They all respected authority, but they would not submit to injustice. (Great cheering.) But let them suppose, for a moment, that Sergeant Steele, in defiance of his orders, had not gone to Rats' Castle: He would have been court-martialled in any service in the world, because he would have violated one of the first principles of military discipline. (Hear, hear.) When they regarded Sergeant Steel's conduct at Glenrowan, as shown by Mr. Marsden's evidence and that of several other incontrovertible witnesses; when they looked back upon his twenty-four years' valuable services and then thought of the manner in which the Commission proposed to reward him by degrading him, it was enough to raise the indignation of every soul in the community. (Great cheering.) The Commission had even the indecency to sneer at the action of Sergeant Steele at Glenrowan, by publicly comparing it with that of Ned Kelly, who, although wounded, had come down amongst the police. (Disapprobation.) Looking at Sergeant Steel's reduction in a pecuniary point of view, they must remember that he would lose all compensation for the years he had served as a sergeant, and be placed in the same category as an ordinary constable. What an encouragement to men to do their duty fearlessly, as Sergeant Steele had done for all these years. (Great cheering.)

Mr. ELY, who, as he spoke from the body of the hall and with his back to the stage, was not perfectly audible at the reporters' table, said they were there simply as British subjects to see that fair play was done to Sergeant Steele. The Commissioners admitted that Sergeant Steele obeyed orders on that occasion to which they took exception, in regard to which they stated that he should have exercised a discretionary power. It was on the other hand contended, that he was bound, under the circumstances, to follow his instructions; but even supposing he had a discretionary power, they all knew that Sergeant Steele was no fool, and that he would have adopted the most advisable course under unexpected conditions. But if they were to believe the dictum of the Commission, Sergeant Steele must be one of the most unmitigated scoundrels that ever lived, and they backed up that opinion by the most absurd and ridiculous recommendation that was ever penned. (Hear, hear.) He did not say that Sergeant Steele had not faults like the rest of them, but if the recommendation of the Commission was carried out, he would go forth degraded, and the result of his long services would be lost. (Hear, hear.) In fact, a police officer, in the opinion of the Commission, must be a spiritualistic medium and know the minds of his superior officers as well as his own; for in this case he is blamed for not knowing that Inspector Brooke Smith would not do his duty. (Applause.) He had great pleasure in seconding the motion.

The motion was carried unanimously.

The Mayor then asked all those who desired to sign the memorial to come to the front, and it was extensively signed on the spot; the meeting in the meantime dispersing.

The following is the recommendation of the Police Commission referred to:—"That in the opinion of your Commissioners the conduct of Sergeant Steele was highly censurable in neglecting to take action when on his arrival at Wangaratta on the 4th November, 1878, received reliable information that the outlaws had been observed on the previous morning passing under the One Mile bridge at Wangaratta. There was no reason why, as he had a large body of well-armed troopers under his command, and was then actually engaged in the search for the outlaws, he should not have gone immediately in pursuit. The tracks were plainly discernible, the men observed were undoubtedly the outlaws, and had they been followed, they would most probably have been overtaken in the Warby Ranges, inasmuch as their horses and themselves were exhausted by their journey to and from the Murray. Sergeant Steele had full power to act upon his own discretion, and there can be little doubt that had he exhibited judgment and promptitude on that occasion, he would have been the means of capturing the gang, and preventing the loss of life and the enormous expenditure of money incurred subsequently in the extermination of the outlaws. Your Commissioners therefore recommend that Sergeant Steele be reduced to the ranks."

No. 6.

The Honorable the Chief Secretary.

SIR,

Myrtleford, 22/10/81.

We, the undersigned residents of the North-Eastern district, respectfully beg leave to enter our protest against the recommendation of the Police Commission, that Detective Ward be reduced one grade. Mr. Ward has been for many years connected with this district, first as constable and later as detective, and he not only earned our universal respect but proved himself a most efficient officer. We cannot agree with the opinion of the Commission that he showed any shortcoming or want of capacity during the Kelly period. We had ample opportunity of watching his conduct and always considered him efficient and

zealous. We are of opinion the recommendation of the Commission is a mistake, and that if it is carried out it will be an injustice (doubtless unintentional). We respectfully urge that it be reconsidered.

(Here follow 35 signatures.)

The undermentioned petitions, in the same terms as the foregoing, have also been forwarded to the Chief Secretary :—

Addressed from—	Forwarded by—	No. of Signatures.
Wangaratta	Hon. H. Bolton, M.P. ...	22
Beechworth	Hon. G. B. Kerferd, M.P. ...	119
Stanley... ..	" " ...	31
Bright	" " ...	42
Chiltern	" " ...	77
Yackandandah	P. B. Wallace, Esq., M.P. ...	56

No. 7.

SIR,

Flemington, 28th November 1881.

I have the honor to address you, as the late officer in command of the Queensland contingent of Native Police doing duty in the colony of Victoria, also as one of those who were examined by the Royal Commission upon the Victorian Police Force.

I hereby protest against the verdict of this said Commission so far as I am concerned, as it is not in accordance with the evidence.

The Royal Commission have never notified to me their finding, and all I know I have gathered from the daily papers.

All I require is to see justice done, as up to this time I have not received it from the Royal Commission or from the Victorian Government.

Your obedient servant,

(Sd.)

STANHOPE O'CONNOR,
Late S.-Inspector of Q. Police.