

(No. 18.)



1877.

SESSION III.

T A S M A N I A.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

POLICE CENTRALIZATION.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Return to an Order of the House of Assembly, 3rd May, 1877. (Mr. Henry.)

Laid upon the Table by the Colonial Secretary, and ordered by the House to be printed, July 17, 1877.



CIRCULAR.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hobart Town, 7th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to inform you that the question of the Centralization of the Police having engaged the attention of the Government, they are convinced that the time has arrived when an alteration in the existing system is imperatively demanded.

It is the intention of the Government to submit to Parliament a Scheme sufficiently comprehensive to meet the difficulties experienced in the working of the present system, as, in consequence of the division of authority and responsibility since the establishment of Municipalities in this Colony, the ends of justice have, in some cases, been defeated.

The Government propose to introduce a measure which, while vesting the Central authority in the hands of the Executive Government, with primary control over, and distribution of, all members of the Police Force, will leave the detailed arrangements as at present with those most conversant with local wants; viz.—the Wardens and Councillors of the various Municipalities.

The Government are of opinion that the Police Force will be rendered more efficient if Constables are enabled to act, should the necessity arise, in any other Municipality than the one to which they may be specially attached.

In framing a Bill to carry out these proposed measures the Government do not intend to interfere with existing Municipal appointments, but as death or resignations take place, all vacancies, after the passing of the Act, will be filled by the Executive.

I shall feel obliged if you will, at your earliest convenience, afford the Government the benefit of any suggestions it may be in your power, and that of the Councillors of the Municipality, to offer, in order to give practical effect to the wishes of the Executive.

Relying upon your cordial co-operation in this matter,

I have, &c.

(Signed) THOS. REIBEY.

The Worshipful the Warden.

[Sent to Nineteen Wardens, and Mayors of Hobart Town and Launceston.]

Council Chambers, Oatlands, 12th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular, dated the 7th instant, referring to the contemplated Centralization of the Police of this Colony.

Your communication shall be laid before the Councillors of this Municipality, with a view to elicit suggestions by them for the use of the Government.

I have, &c.

(Signed) JOHN ROWLAND ROE, *Warden.*

*The Hon. the Colonial Secretary,
Hobart Town.*

Council Chamber, Campbell Town, 13th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge receipt of your circular of the 7th instant; and, in reply, beg to state that the same will be laid before this Municipal Council at its next meeting.

I have, &c.

(Signed) JAMES GIBSON, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Town Clerk's Office, Launceston, Tasmania, 13th April, 1877.

SIR,

I AM directed by His Worship the Mayor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th instant, referring to the Centralization of the Police, and to inform you that it will receive due consideration.

I have, &c.

(Signed) C. W. ROCHER, *Town Clerk.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Municipal Chambers, Sorell, 14th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular of the 7th instant, intimating that it is the intention of the Government to introduce "a measure which, while vesting the central authority in the hands of the Executive Government, with primary control over and distribution of all members of the Police Force, will leave the detailed arrangements, as at present, with those most conversant with local works—the Wardens and Councillors of the various Municipalities."

As you have desired that I will, at my earliest convenience, afford the Government the benefit of any suggestions it may be in my power and that of the Councillors to offer, in order to give practical effect to the wishes of the Executive, I have this day submitted your circular to the Council of Sorell, who regard the proposed measure as one which, if passed into law, will divest Municipalities throughout the Colony of the power of appointing and controlling the Police, and simply leave to them the "detailed arrangements" for taxing the rate-payers, paying the constables, and carrying out the orders of the Executive, duties which could be easily performed without the assistance of Municipal Councils.

The Municipal Council of Sorell are of opinion that such a measure as that foreshadowed in your circular will neither remedy existing defects in the present system of Police government, nor prevent "the ends of justice, in some cases, from being defeated;" and they very respectfully suggest that so grave a question as that of Police reform should be remitted, as have been questions of less importance, with beneficial results, to the consideration of a Royal Commission (empowered to take the evidence of gentlemen of intelligence, independence, and experience), and report thereon to His Excellency the Governor before overturning by hasty legislation part of a system of local self-government so long sought for by the people, and welcomed as a boon when established by law in 1865.

The Municipal Council of Sorell are conscious that the present system, as twelve years' experience of its working has proved, has its defects, but they are defects which can be remedied by an amendment of the existing law, and are as nothing when compared with the defects, and something worse than defects, which existed under the system in operation when the Police of the Colony were under the absolute control of the Central Government.

If, however, it be the intention of the present Ministry to push forward such a measure as that indicated in your circular of the 7th instant during the approaching session of Parliament, the Municipal Council of Sorell beg leave to offer the following suggestions which, if adopted, are, in their opinion, calculated to remedy the chief defects in the present system:—

1. That, in addition to the powers which, under "The Police Regulation Act," the Executive Government already possess, such extended control over the Municipal Police of the Colony be given as will ensure the Forces of the various Municipalities working in concert with each other, and with the Territorial Force whenever their united action may be required.

2. That the appointment, dismissal, and local control of the members of the Municipal Police Force remain, as at present, vested in the hands of the Municipal Councils of the Colony.

3. That a more efficient system of inspection be adopted, with the necessary appliances for carrying it out, so that it may not, as at present, be merely nominal and superficial, but real and advantageous.

4. That the numerical strength of the Police Force in the various Municipalities be regulated by the Executive Government.

5. That a uniform Police Rate, not exceeding ninepence in the pound, be levied throughout the Colony; and that in Municipalities where the rate so levied is in excess of the necessary Police expenditure, the overplus be remitted to the Government,—and that in Municipalities where the rate is insufficient to defray the necessary Police expenditure, the deficiency be paid by the Government.

I have, &c.

(Signed) J. A. GUNN, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Hobart Town.

Council Chamber, New Norfolk, 16th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 7th instant, which was laid before the Municipal Council at its meeting on the 13th instant, and I am requested to inform you the Council are of opinion that since the establishment of this Municipality the working of the Police has been efficient and satisfactory, and they are therefore unable to offer any suggestions for its improvement, with this exception; viz., that the Government in cases of pressing emergency should have the power to avail themselves of the services of the Police.

I have, &c.

(Signed) W. A. B. JAMIESON, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Council Chambers, Deloraine, 17th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to inform you that your circular of the 7th instant, inviting suggestions from myself and Councillors of this Municipality respecting the proposed measures for the centralization of the Police, was duly laid before a Special Meeting of the Council yesterday, the whole of the Councillors being present.

The following Resolution was carried unanimously:—Resolved—“That, as the Government have not supplied the Municipal Council with a copy of the Draft Bill, they are unable to offer any suggestions respecting the proposed measure. At present this Council is decidedly opposed to centralization.”

I have, &c.

(Signed) HENRY DOUGLAS, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Municipal Council Chamber, Richmond, 18th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th instant, with reference to the question of the proposed Centralization of the Police Force of the Colony.

At a Meeting of the Council of this Municipality yesterday the same was laid before it, when it was resolved that it be taken into consideration at the next meeting of that body.

I have, &c.

(Signed) WINSTON C. SIMMONS, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Hobart Town.

*Municipality of Spring Bay,
Council Chambers, Triabunna, 18th April, 1877.*

SIR,

IN reply to your circular of the 7th instant, *in re* “The Centralization of the Police,” I have the honor to inform you that the Municipal Council of Spring Bay having met this day, and taken your circular into consideration, the following Resolution was passed:—“That the circular be received and acknowledged, but this Council not being in favour of ‘Centralization of the Police,’ can give no opinion for the guidance of the Government.”

I have, &c.

(Signed) FREDERICK MACE, *Warden.*

*The Hon. T. REIBEY, Esq.,
Colonial Secretary, Hobart Town.*

Council Chambers, Evandale, 20th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the circular from your Office, dated 7th inst., referring to Centralization of the Police, and to state that I brought the same under the notice of the Council at its meeting on the 17th instant, when the following motion was proposed and carried unanimously, viz.:—“That before giving a decided opinion on the matter of the Centralization of the Police Force of the Colony, it is desirable that more information thereon be in possession of the Council; but that at present the feeling of the Council is decidedly adverse to it.”

I have, &c.

(Signed) R. H. DOUGLAS, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Hobart.

Municipal Chambers, Ross, 20th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular dated 7th April, 1877, relative to the Centralization of the Police.

I have now the honor to inform you that at a special meeting of the Council of this Municipality, held on the 17th instant, to consider the same, it was resolved to defer any further consideration of the matter until better informed respecting the proposed alterations.

I may state that only five of the Councillors were present at the "special meeting," two being out of the Colony.

I have, &c.

(Signed) JAMES WESTBROOK, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Hobart Town.

Council Chambers, Westbury, 20th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular of the 7th instant, having reference to a proposed scheme for the Centralization of the Police.

Upon the receipt of that circular I convened a special meeting of the Council, which meeting took place yesterday; and after the matter had been fully discussed, I was instructed to forward to you the following resolution, which was unanimously passed, the whole of the Council being present:—"That, in the opinion of this Council, it is not desirable or necessary that the control, or any portion of the control, of the Police of this District be vested in the Central Government, excepting such as exists under the Acts at present in force."

I have, &c.

(Signed) DANIEL BURKE, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Hobart Town.

Council Chambers, Swansea, 21st April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to inform you that at a meeting of the Municipal Council, held on the 17th instant, I laid upon the table your circular on the question of the Centralization of the Police, and the following resolution was passed:—"Resolved, "That this meeting do not approve of the contemplated alterations."

I would venture to express my individual opinion that a thorough Centralization of the Police should be effected, and the whole be placed on the same footing as the Territorial Police; all control, pay, distribution, &c., vested in the hands of the Executive Government, not allowing the Municipalities to have any power in the management or direction of the Police beyond that which they may possess as Justices of the Peace. It is very undesirable to have two systems of Police government, as they are sure to clash and rather to act in opposition than in support of each other; and it is also unjust to the poorer districts who have to pay the full tax of ninepence for Police alone, whereas the more wealthy only pay from fivepence to eightpence both for Police and Municipal: the Police tax should be equally distributed and all pay alike. I do not know of any other British colony having two systems of Police government. The Police is the only protection we have, and the present system is like having an army under separate military regulations, discipline, or control, and under two forms of Government, viz., Monarchal and Republican.

Trusting I may not have trespassed too much,

I have, &c.

(Signed) EDWARD CARR SHAW, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Hobart Town.

Bellerive Council Chambers, 26th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular of the 7th instant, intimating that the question of the Centralization of the Police having engaged the attention of the Government, they are convinced that the time has arrived when an alteration in the existing system is imperatively demanded, and that it is their intention to submit to Parliament a scheme sufficiently comprehensive to meet the difficulties experienced in the working of the present system, as in consequence of the division of authority and responsibility since the establishment of Municipalities in this Colony the

ends of justice have in some cases been defeated. Also that the Government propose to introduce a measure which, while vesting the central authority in the hands of the Executive Government, with primary control over and distribution of all members of the Police, will leave the detailed arrangements as at present with those most conversant with local wants; and finally, that the Government are of opinion that the Police Force will be rendered more efficient if constables are enabled to act, should necessity arise, in any other Municipality than the one to which they may be specially attached. In reply I have the honor to state—that the Municipal Council have now had the control and management of the Police Force in this Municipality for more than sixteen years, and in view of the result, I beg respectfully to dissent from your expression of opinion that the time has arrived when an alteration in the existing system is imperatively demanded. On the contrary, I would venture to draw your attention to the fact that during the whole of that period the perpetrators of crime in the district have been almost invariably detected, and to the present general tranquillity of the Municipality as a proof of the efficiency of our Police Force, and of the satisfactory working of the existing system, at least in the Municipality of Clarence. So far as my experience and observation extend I am not aware of any case in which the ends of justice have been defeated in consequence of a division of authority.

I would submit that any measure having for its object the vesting of central authority in the hands of the Executive Government, with primary control over and distribution of all members of the Police Force, and leaving the detailed arrangements as at present with the respective Municipal Councils, must necessarily entail such a division of authority and responsibility as would inevitably lead to confusion and misunderstanding, and seriously militate against the efficiency and proper management of the Force.

I would venture to submit, that under the existing regulations constables are enabled to act, should the necessity arise, in any other municipality than the one to which they may be specially attached, (see 29 Vict. No. 9, sect. 22, and form of oath in the schedule to that Act). I may further state, that the greatest unanimity and good feeling have hitherto existed and still exists between the Police Force of this and that of each of the adjoining Municipalities. It has sometimes happened that an officer has been called upon to act in another municipality than the one to which he has been attached, and on every occasion all possible information and assistance have been readily given.

In conclusion I desire to state, that in my opinion any faults in Police management in the various Municipalities are chiefly attributable to a want of proper supervision on the part of those in authority, and not to any inherent defects in the system itself. The tendency of the proposed scheme of centralization would, in my judgment, be to increase instead of diminish those faults, inasmuch as it is difficult to suppose that executive supervision carried on at a distance and under the manifold disadvantages arising from a limited knowledge of local circumstances can be as effective as that of resident Municipal authorities, who are daily brought into contact with the practical efficiency of the force, and who must, of necessity, be in a better position to direct, control, and to provide a remedy for any existing abuses.

I have, &c.

(Signed) HENRY LAMB, *Warden.*

The Honorable THOMAS REIBEY, *Colonial Secretary,*
Hobart Town.

Green Ponds, 27th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular of the 7th April instant, respecting centralizing the Police, and asking for such suggestions upon the same as myself or the Councillors of this Municipality may have to offer.

In reply, I beg to inform you that I laid the same before the Council at its last meeting, when it was resolved that I should ask you to be good enough to cause a copy of the Bill which the Government propose bringing before Parliament to be forwarded to me, and the Council will then be prepared to take the matter into its consideration.

I have, &c.

(Signed) THOS. GORRINGE, *Warden.*

The Honorable the Colonial Secretary, Hobart Town.

Council Chambers, Bothwell, 30th April, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to inform you, that your circular of the 7th April instant, relative to the Centralization of the Police Force, was laid before a full meeting of the Bothwell Municipal Council, on Saturday last, the 28th April, when the following resolution was passed in regard thereto, namely—

“Resolved unanimously, That this Council, having taken into its consideration the Colonial Secretary’s circular of the 7th April instant, is of opinion that before attempting to offer any suggestions thereon it is desirable the Council should have the Government draft Bill before it.”

“Resolved, That application be made to the Government for a copy of the same; and further that the Warden do write to the Colonial Secretary enclosing a copy of the foregoing resolution, and at same time request the favour of an explanation as to the exact construction to be put on paragraph four of the circular.”

I have, &c.

(Signed) N. P. ALLISON, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Council Chambers, Hamilton, 1st May, 1877.

SIR,

WITH reference to your circular of the 7th ultimo, wherein you request that I and the Councillors of this Municipality should afford you any suggestions in our power with regard to a proposed scheme for the Centralization of the Police, I have the honor to forward the following extract of the minutes of a meeting of the Hamilton Municipal Council, held in the Council Chambers, Hamilton, on Monday, the 30th ultimo, viz. :—

“A circular, dated the 7th ultimo, from the Honorable the Colonial Secretary, relative to the Centralization of the Police, was read. Moved by Councillor Walker, and seconded by Councillor Dixon, ‘That the circular having only been received by the Warden since the last meeting and laid before the Council this day, its consideration be deferred till next meeting.’ Carried unanimously.”

I have, &c.

(Signed) JOHN KING, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Council Chambers, Fingal, 3rd May, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular dated the 7th ultimo, informing me “that the question of Centralization of the Police having engaged the attention of the Government, they are convinced that the time has arrived when an alteration in the existing system is imperatively demanded;” and submitting to me the outline of the scheme the Government intend to submit to Parliament to carry out that object. In reply I have to inform you that I submitted the circular referred to to the meeting of the Municipal Council held yesterday, when the following resolution was carried :—

“That this Municipal Council, while admitting that certain alterations are required in ‘The Rural Municipalities Act,’ and ‘The Police Regulation Act,’ to further the ends of justice, decidedly object to the proposed scheme for the Centralization of the Police, as sketched in the circular from the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, dated 7th April, 1877.”

I have, &c.

(Signed) ROBERT CARTER, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Council Clerk’s Office, Longford, 4th May, 1877.

SIR,

I AM directed by the Warden of this Municipality to forward you a resolution passed at a meeting of the Council on the 3rd May instant, in answer to your circular, 7th April, 1877, respecting the Centralization of the Police :—

“That this Council, having considered the Honorable the Colonial Secretary’s circular of the 7th April, 1877, is of opinion that as the principle of local management has been encouraged by the Government and has worked well, tending to economy and efficiency, relieving the Central Government of much responsibility, regards the contemplated movement to centralize the Police as of a

retrograde character. That this Council, being convinced from past experience that the Police can be better managed by the Municipality than by the Central Government, with greater economy and efficiency to the ratepayers, regards the proposition to centralize the Police, and thereby take all control out of the power of the Municipal Council, as most objectionable and inexpedient; at the same time this Council considers that some slight modification might be advantageously effected."

I have, &c.

(Signed) HENRY S. HUTCHINSON, *Council Clerk.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Council Chambers, Oatlands, 7th May, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to inform you that your circular of the 7th ultimo was submitted to the consideration of the Municipal Council of Oatlands on the 5th instant, and that the Resolution below was passed unanimously by the Councillors present on that day.

I have, &c.

(Signed) JOHN ROWLAND ROE, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Hobart Town.

Copy of Resolution re Centralization of the Police.

"That the Council decline to offer any suggestions until they have had an opportunity of perusing a copy of the Bill to be introduced into Parliament."

Council Chambers, Campbell Town, 7th May, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge receipt of your circular of 7th ultimo upon the question of Centralization of the Police, and in reply beg to inform you that, having called a special meeting of the Council for this day to consider the question, they have authorised me to convey to the Government that in their opinion the system at present in force has worked satisfactorily, as the Report of the Inspector of Police for the year ending 30th June, 1876, shows, as to the number of crimes reported and the number of offenders convicted; and it is very doubtful if the Police would be equally vigilant and effective if they were under a head who could only give occasional supervision as under that of those whose local knowledge must be much greater. But they are of opinion that should any emergency arise that the Police be required to be concentrated at one place that the Central Government should have the power to direct it without first requiring the consent of the Council, as at present. But they are opposed to Centralization, as it has been laid down by an eminent authority that there must be life, common action, and freedom in the little things of Municipalities in order that there may be life and common action and freedom in the greater things of a nation; as in countries where there is real political life there is a constant tendency to increase the sphere of Municipal action and duties instead of diminishing them.

I have, &c.

(Signed) JAMES GIBSON, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Town Hall, Launceston, 8th May, 1877.

SIR,

In reply to your circular of the 7th ultimo referring to the Centralization of the Police, I have the honor to inform you that the Municipal Council of Launceston deems it inadvisable to express any opinion on the question under consideration until favoured with the particulars of the scheme mentioned in the said circular.

I have, &c.

(Signed) ALFRED HARRAP, *Mayor.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Hobart Town.

Council Chambers, Richmond, 9th May, 1877.

SIR,

In reply to your circular of the 7th ultimo, having reference to the Centralization of the Police, I have the honor to inform you that I submitted the same for the consideration of the Municipal Council of this District, when the following Resolution was passed :—

Moved by Mr. Councillor Goodwin, and seconded by Mr. Councillor Brain,—“That this Council not being aware of any action on the part of the Municipal Police by which the ‘ends of justice have been defeated,’ and from the meagre information contained in the Hon. the Colonial Secretary’s circular as to the necessity for any change in the management of the Police Force, or the principle contained in the proposed Bill to give effect to the circular, are unable to offer any suggestions to the Government which would be of any practical value.” (Carried unanimously.)

I have, &c.

(Signed) WINSTON C. SIMMONS, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Council Chambers, Glenorchy, 11th June, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to acknowledge receipt of your circular letter, “*Re* the Centralization of the Police,” under date 7th April last, and to inform you that, at a Meeting of Council on the 2nd instant, I was requested to inform you that the Council had no particular suggestions to make, but thought the best course would be for the House to appoint a Committee and take evidence upon the subject.

I have, &c.

(Signed) RICHD. SHOOBRIDGE, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Council Chamber, Hamilton, 12th June, 1877.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to forward the following Extract from the Minutes of a Meeting of the Hamilton Municipal Council, held in the Council Chamber, Hamilton, on Tuesday, the 5th instant; viz.—

“The Honorable the Colonial Secretary’s letter, dated the 7th April, 1877, (relative to the Centralization of the Police, deferred from last meeting), was further considered. It was unanimously resolved that the Honorable the Colonial Secretary be requested to furnish a more definite statement of the intended measure of the Government with regard to Police management, to enable the Council to give an opinion.”

I have, &c.

(Signed) JOHN KING, *Warden.*

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.