

PETITIONS.

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled.

THE petition of Arthur Burrell and Frederick Henry Durbridge, of the City of Nelson, late police constables, humbly sheweth,—

1. That your petitioners respectively joined the Police Force on the 1st day of September, 1899, and on the 1st day of February, 1900.

2. That in the month of March, 1902, three charges were preferred against your petitioners respectively, and were inquired into by the Commissioner of Police; and the nature of the said charges with the findings of the said Commissioner were as follows:—

“Constable Burrell, Charge No. 1; and Constable Durbridge, Charge No. 3: Improperly taking into the single men's mess-room at the Nelson Police-station, in company with Constable Durbridge, two females named Smith and Kitching about midnight on the 18th July last.

“*Finding.*—The facts are not denied, but, as there is no suggestion that the females were other than respectable, or that they were taken into the station for an immoral or other improper purpose, the worst that can be said is that it was a very indiscreet act on the part of the constables to take them into the station at that hour of night. It should, however, be borne in mind that these constables reside on the station, which is therefore their home for the time being in addition to being the police-station. The open manner the constables went about the matter clearly shows they did not consider they were doing much wrong. The taking of females into a police-station late at night cannot, however, be tolerated, as, if it were, abuses would soon arise or improper motives would be imputed. Therefore the constables are each reprimanded, and cautioned to be more careful in future.—J. B. TUNBRIDGE, Commissioner of Police.”

“Constable Burrell, Charge No. 2: Improperly leaving his beat without just cause, and going to the Nelson Police-station about 2.30 a.m., 14th instant.

“*Finding.*—Although, strictly speaking, this charge was not proven, inasmuch as the Inspector could not say who the men were, or even if they were policemen at all, whom he saw enter and leave the station on the night in question, still the constable admits he left his beat and went to the station to get some tea. This appears to have been the practice at Nelson long before Sergeant Mackay went there (see Constable McGrath's evidence), and apparently the constable took it for granted he could do so without running the risk of punishment. I am of opinion the constable remained on the station much longer than sufficient time to get his tea, during which period his beat was left unattended, and therefore severely reprimand and caution him on this charge. The punishment would have been more severe had not the constable up to this time had a clean defaulters' sheet.—J. B. TUNBRIDGE, Commissioner of Police.”

“Constable Burrell, Charge No. 3: Improperly leaving his beat without just cause, and going to the Nelson Police-station at 12.30 a.m., 15th instant, and remaining there until 1.20 a.m.

“*Finding.*—This is a similar case to the preceding one, and occurred on the following night. Here again I am of opinion the constable remained longer than necessary to prepare and take his tea, to say nothing of him having improperly left his beat unprotected. He is fined 2s. 6d., and cautioned for this second offence.—J. B. TUNBRIDGE, Commissioner of Police.”

“Constable Durbridge, Charge No. 1: Improper conduct as a police constable in going with a number of other men to the Bush Tavern, Nelson, after closing-hours (about 11.40 p.m.) one Saturday about the end of last football season, and demanding and obtaining drink from the licensee for himself and companions.

“*Finding.*—Notwithstanding the conflict of evidence as to the time, I am of opinion it was past 11 o'clock when the party reached the Bush Tavern, and that finding the place closed, the constable, although not on duty, acted improperly in going with the others to obtain drink after the place was closed. The evidence, I consider, shows that the constable was not the person who demanded or paid for the drinks. Had the constable been on duty the matter would have been more serious. It shows to me, however, that the constable has not a proper appreciation of his position of police constable. He is reprimanded and cautioned, and will perhaps be removed to some other station, where he had better not become quite so intimate with the persons amongst whom he has to perform police duty. The punishment in this case would have been more severe had it not been the first record against him.—J. B. TUNBRIDGE, Commissioner of Police.”

“Constable Durbridge, Charge No. 2: Being asleep at Nelson Police-station at 11.45 p.m., 18th November last; again at 1.15 a.m., 19th November; again at 4.15 a.m., same date; and again at 11.45 p.m., 20th November, when he should have been on duty.

“*Finding.*—This charge rests solely on the evidence of Constable Williams, whose uncorroborated statement it would be unsafe to accept, for the reason that reports and memorandum submitted by him as original and made at the time of the various occurrences were proved to have been made at subsequent dates. Under these circumstances I acquit the constable of the charge.—J. B. TUNBRIDGE, Commissioner of Police.”

3. That, notwithstanding the findings of the said Commissioner in respect of the said charges, your petitioners, by the direction of Cabinet, were called upon to resign, and a memorandum from the said Commissioner to the Sub-Inspector in charge of the district, and a memorandum from the latter to the sergeant in charge of Nelson, of which the following are copies, were made known to your petitioners:—