

54/258 Resident Commissioner Ballarat 28 No 1854

Communicating information of the intended movements of the agitators at Ballarat

Ballarat

November 27th/54 55/J14458

Sir,

I have the honor to forward for the information of the Government that I have had an interview with Mr. Smith the Catholic Priest who with a strict injunction not to make use of his name, declares that we are in a most dangerous position that measures had been arranged as to make us the aggressors in which case it was determined to make a general assault on the Camp, he says the people are better organised than we imagine, that 1000 rifles can be brought to one spot & that on one occasion when an intention had been formed of attacking the camp 900 had been assembled, he afterwards assured Mr Furnell the Sub Inspector of Police who has known him for the last two years that he could tell much more but feared to do so, that things were in a dreadful state and much more so than we could possibly have any idea of, the only people not mixed up in it he says are the English amongst the agitators he says are men of most determined character & they are resolved to put down the Government at all cost, he has written to his Bishop for instructions

What appears to me more ominous than anything else is the great difficulty of getting any information. I have been trying to make use of money according to your instructions but have not been able, and to all appearance the digging population is as quiet and well disposed as ever.

The Police from the various outstations are drilled in the clerks & tentkeepers formed into a band and every precaution taken that lays in our power and as to being attacked I firmly believe in that event every man will do his duty at the same time I shall take no aggressive measures as we are too weak to take our arms off the camp.

I have the honor to refer again to that paragraph in my last letter referring to the means which in my opinion ought to be employed, if law and order are to exert on the Gold Fields and I still believe that nothing but crushing the agitators movement can do it – should such a measure be intended a large force would be required.

The licences are to be burnt, and any man being arrested afterwards is to be the signal for an attack.

It is impossible to get any information through to the Police as they are too well known consequently I cannot say if this information is correct but from the portion of the information I imagine it must be

Whatever His Excellency may decide as to reinforcements I have one urgent request to make which is that Captain Thomas or some officer of known capability be sent up without delay as I do not place confidence in the present Officer. I beg to state that my reasons are only from general observation, but at the same time others have the same feeling.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your most obedient servant

Robt. Rede.

As I was folding this despatch Mr. Comm. Amos has sent in to say the mob have taken his horse out of the stable they are trying to get a cavalry corp