

Mr. Read.
13th Aug., 1878.

172. Was there not a case here recently in which a boy committed burglary?—Yes, there were two or three boys committed for burglary. They got into a church and stole some money.
173. Were they not practised criminals?—No, Sir. Their parents are hard-working people, living in town. These boys got out in the evening and mixed with bad company.
174. Larrikins?—Yes. The older ones got the small boys to get through a window and commit the offence.
175. *Mr. Wakefield.*] It was a very fair beginning.
176. *Mr. Fox.*] Do I understand Mr. Read to say that there is no organized criminal class in Wellington?—What I mean to say is, that there is no criminal class such as that to be found in the Seven Dials or St. Giles's, London.
177. Or Melbourne?—I know nothing about Melbourne; but in the other places there are men living there by a really organized system of crime, such as burglars, coiners, &c.; but there is nothing of that sort in Wellington. Sometimes we have a notorious thief, and there is now a man named Shine in the gaol, from Auckland, who is a very notorious burglar. As soon as he left Wanganui he came down to Wellington, and is now doing ten years for a robbery under arms. He may be one of a number who might belong to a criminal class, but he does not belong to Wellington.
178. Is there no systematic attempt at reformation of prisoners?—I do not know of any.
179. Is there no Prisoners' Aid Society here?—No, Sir.
180. From what you say, I presume it is not wanted, so far as getting employment for prisoners is concerned?—It certainly is not needed here.
181. In the case of females, Mr. Read?—Well, the only females we have, as a rule, are abandoned prostitutes, lost to all sense of feeling and everything else. Some of them have been prostitutes, to my knowledge, for the last ten years.
182. Are they imprisoned for drunkenness?—Some for drunken and disorderly conduct. We have one young woman in the gaol now undergoing two years' imprisonment for destroying her illegitimate child. She, singularly enough, is a married woman. She has her husband to go to, and he is willing to take her back when her term is completed.
183. Is she separated from the prostitutes?—Yes. We have three buildings for females; in one compartment are placed those who are waiting for trial; in another, those who are sent to gaol for the first time; and in the third are placed the abandoned outcasts.
184. Have they no communication with each other?—No Sir.
185. Have the gaol buildings of Wellington been built upon a systematic plan? No, Sir. As occasion arises for enlargement, additions are made to them.
186. As they best can?—As they best can. The original design, if carried out, would have been a very good one; but it has not been carried out, and consequently new additions have continually to be made.
187. Is there any provision for economy of supervision, enabling a warder to see a large number of the prisoners at one time?—No, there are two or three wards, and a warder must be placed in each of them. One officer can see the whole of the men in the exercising yards, and outside of the gaol. The wards are so constructed that they cannot very well see in more than one, and we have to station a man in each ward. I think it is better than a great many gaols, as one man can keep proper surveillance over a number of prisoners.
188. Of what material is the gaol?—It is of brick, wood, stone, and corrugated iron.
189. What is the largest number of prisoners in one cell?—In the large cells there are four at the present time.
190. How many cubic feet of space are there in the cells?—I cannot tell you, but the cells are sufficiently large for four prisoners.
191. Questions will be sent to you, and then you can give detailed answers to the questions as to measurement. What is the size of the smallest cell you have?—The smallest are those you saw when at the gaol; they are very small, measuring only 8 feet by 6.
192. You have three prisoners in them?—Not now; as a rule we only put one in each, unless we are very full. At the present time the accommodation in the Wellington Gaol is much better than it has been.
193. Is there larger accommodation?—Yes.
194. Do you find the number of prisoners increasing in Wellington?—No, Sir; that is a remarkable fact. In spite of the increase in population last year we had a decrease of eighty-nine prisoners as compared with the preceding year.
195. That, I presume, is because there is plenty of labour, and men can find plenty to do?—Yes, Sir.
196. There is a great demand for labour now, is there not?—Yes. It is difficult to get a man, but it is not difficult to get a job.
197. *The Chairman.*] Are your contracts for food supplies made by tender?—Yes, Sir.
198. Do you deal with one or several contractors?—One contractor supplies all the food.
199. And does he get supplies from different sub-contractors?—No, Sir. We call for the meat separately; everything else is supplied by the grocer.
200. Then the whole of the supplies are not received from one contractor?—No, Sir.
201. A grocer does not sell bread?—In Wellington a great many grocers do sell bread.
202. Are the supplies good generally?—Yes, Sir.
203. What system of inspection of supplies is there?—The chief officer takes the supplies every day as they come in to the gaol, and I order them myself every morning. If they are not good the officer who receives them reports the matter to me, and I inform the contractor of it; but that is seldom necessary, as when a mistake occurs the prisoners are ever ready to make complaint. For instance, if the bread is a little sour they will say, "Would you look at this, Sir?" When that is done I attend to it.
204. *Mr. Wakefield.*] Does it often happen that you have complaints?—Not very often, Sir.