

Mr. Read.
13th Aug., 1878.

288. *Mr. Wakefield.*] What is the average number of prisoners in Wellington Gaol who are long-sentenced, say, any sentence over seven years?—I would call anything over two years a long sentence.

289. I want to get at the really long sentences, say, anything over seven years, because it would not be worth while for a man to be kept separately for only two years?

290. *The Chairman.*] The Commissioners of 1868 seem to think that over two years is the time at which they should be taken separately?—The number of prisoners at present under sentence of penal servitude in Wellington Gaol is twenty-six.

291. *Mr. Wakefield.*] But their sentences are very short in some cases, are they not?—There are twenty-six men whose sentences range from life to four years.

292. What is your total number?—Our total number this morning was sixty-six males; but of them four were debtors, one on remand, one committed for trial, and the rest were sentenced to hard labour. Their sentences range from three months up to two years.

293. *The Chairman.*] I have gathered that without a separate establishment it is impossible to make a distinction between penal servitude and hard labour. The fact is, there is none at present in the gaols; but if there was a separate establishment, as at Home, penal servitude would have a meaning?—You will find that for penal servitude it is prescribed that they should be sent to work on the roads or public works; but it is not prescribed what those sentenced to hard labour should do.

294. *Mr. Wakefield.*] In some cases there are differences between penal servitude and hard labour, as in most serious cases, such as criminal assaults on women, and a man may almost escape if sentenced to penal servitude and not to hard labour?

295. *The Chairman.*] They should provide places for penal servitude?—I do not think you could carry out penal servitude unless you have a proper establishment.

296. *Mr. Wakefield.*] Then I understand that something like a third of the prisoners in the gaol are long-sentenced?—Yes; at the present time.

297. Is that the average?—That would be about the average; there are always some coming in and others going out.

This concluded witness's examination.

WEDNESDAY 14TH AUGUST, 1878.

Mr. JONAS WOODWARD examined.

Mr. Woodward.
14th Aug., 1878.

298. *The Chairman.*] We wish to get your evidence about the gaol here, and to hear any suggestions you have to make, from your experience as a Visiting Justice, in respect of the discipline and construction of the building. In the first place, we wish to ask you if the prison is adapted to the wants of the place?—It is far too small. There is no opportunity for classification, or very little; and there are no means of keeping first offenders, and boys, and short-sentence men, say, from twenty-four to forty-eight hours, apart from the more hardened prisoners.

299. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne.*] As to first offenders?—There are no means of dividing first offenders from the others, except the women.

300. No distinction is made between penal-servitude men and ordinary hard-labour prisoners?—Yes; the penal-servitude men are kept to themselves. We are able to do that.

301. *The Chairman.*] You do keep them separate?—Yes; but not when they are at work. We keep them separate in the gaol.

302. Do you separate them in the cells?—Yes; and at meals.

303. Are they separate at meals?—Yes; they have no communication at all.

304. Is there any communication from cell to cell? Can they hear each other?—No, not at all; the penal-servitude men are kept in the right wing, and the hard-labour men are in the left side, so that they cannot communicate one with the other.

305. I should like to ask you, as to the Regulations, how far they are carried out, and what objections there are to them?—In my opinion and experience, the present Regulations are very good. So far as I know, there is no serious defect in them.

306. Does the mark system work well?—Yes, very well.

307. Is it fairly worked by the officers?—I think so. If there is any thing at all that I am disposed to find fault with, it is that there may be a little too much levity. I do not think that prisoners are allowed less than eight marks, unless they are very bad. There may be some little laxity on that side, but that is all.

308. With regard to the inspection of Visiting Justices, I presume it is a cursory inspection?—Yes.

309. In your opinion, is that inspection sufficient?—Certainly not. If the Committee will pardon me for so saying—and I have had an opportunity of observing other gaols, for I have always visited the gaols in places in which I have happened to be, as a matter of duty, for many years past—I do think that a better system of inspection by a qualified person would lead to much better results. I remember, on a particular occasion, after visiting five gaols, I only found in one of them that there was even an attempt to carry out the Regulations. When I put questions, the answer was made, "Oh, well, we do the best we can; the Regulations do not suit us; they are not suited to our circumstances." I am sure you cannot do anything effective without inspection by a proper person, who would authoritatively visit the gaols.

310. A skilled inspector?—Oh, yes. I mean a person who would be a skilled expert, and who would be able to speak with authority on prison discipline.

311. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne.*] Do you examine the prisoners in the absence of the officers of the gaol?—We always ask the prisoners if they have anything they wish to say.