

1878.
NEW ZEALAND.

GAOLS COMMITTEE.

REPORT ON CHARGES AGAINST THE POLICE. (TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.)

Report brought up 23rd October, 1878, and ordered to be printed.

ORDER OF REFERENCE.

Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

WEDNESDAY, THE 21ST DAY OF AUGUST, 1878.

Ordered, That the charges made against the Police by the honorable member for Wellington City (Mr. Barton) be referred to the Gaols Committee for inquiry and report.—(Hon. Mr. Stout.)

R E P O R T.

THE Gaols Committee, having been instructed to inquire into and report on the charges made against the police by the honorable member for Wellington, Mr. Barton, have the honor to report, as follows :—

The Committee regret that, though desirous of obtaining all the evidence available, they have not been able, in the time at their disposal, to sift thoroughly some of the matters brought under their notice. Some of the cases complained of occurred so long ago that there has been great difficulty in getting accurate information. Charges against the police in other parts of the colony have been tendered to the Committee; but it was necessary to restrict the present inquiry to the case of the Wellington Force.

The charges against the police may be summed up as follows :—

1. Abuse of their powers, and cruelty to prisoners on arrest.
2. Neglect of duty in prosecuting offences, and arbitrary assumption of discretionary powers.
3. Favouritism and partiality in recommending and objecting to publicans' licenses, and in the general supervision of public-houses.
4. Laxity of discipline and breach of regulations.

The conclusions the Committee have arrived at are as follows :—

1. *Abuse of Powers, and Cruelty to Prisoners on arrest.*—There is no reason to believe that wanton and deliberate cruelty or injustice have been practised by the police; but the Committee have been satisfied that in two cases citizens were wrongly arrested, and that they were roughly treated. It has been proved that handcuffs are too readily used, and that handcuffed prisoners, when violent, have been repeatedly chained down to rings in the floor of the police cells to keep them quiet. An attempt has been made on the part of the police officers to justify this practice on the ground that prisoners might break down the cell doors. The practice is cruel, dangerous, and under no circumstances justifiable.

2. *Neglect of Duty in prosecuting Offenders, and arbitrary Assumption of discretionary Powers.*—There appear to be good grounds for this complaint. In two cases before the Committee no good reason has been shown by the Inspector of Police for not instituting criminal