

*Mr. Arnold:* That is quite correct, not only in connection with the Police Department, but all departments. If a complaint were made to me about a constable, in all probability—it would depend upon what the case was—I should come down and see the Inspector, but I would not write to him. If I had to put my name to paper I should go to the Minister. The same thing applies if I were to write to the General Manager of Railways, and in all probability I should receive a communication from the Minister telling me the communication should pass through him. That will explain why the file contains these letters from members of Parliament.

*The Commissioner:* Then, Mr. Dinnie, if you received a letter from Mr. Arnold forwarding complaints from certain of his constituents you would lay them before the Minister?

*Mr. Dinnie:* I would cause inquiry to be made, and give the result to the Minister. In cases of complaint by the public they should come to me, and I would see that it was properly investigated.

*The Commissioner:* I have repeatedly made complaint to an Inspector, and would not think of troubling you if satisfied of the way they were disposed of.

*Mr. Dinnie:* But I am anxious to know what is going on.

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TUESDAY, 13TH JULY, 1909.

WILLIAM WALKER, ex Police Constable, examined on oath. (No. 11.)

*Witness:* I was at one time in the Police Force of New Zealand. I joined in February, 1878, in Dunedin. I joined as a constable and left as a constable. I was stationed in MacLaggan Street for three months, then in King Street for three months, at Port Chalmers six months, and was then in charge of Oamaru Gaol for two years; transferred to Ngapara in charge of that station, and remained there eighteen months; transferred back to Oamaru, not at my own request; transferred from there to North-east Valley, where I remained twelve years; transferred from there to Riverton, where I remained seven years; transferred to Invercargill, where I remained twelve or fifteen months, leaving the service on pension in 1903. I desire to make the following statement: In placing this statement before the Commission I am afraid it will not be of much weight, as anything that I can state is hearsay from the police all over the Dominion. My own injuries that I received I leave out: they are too old, and those that did me the injury could have no chance of reply. In regard to political and private interference, this is a sore grievance with all members of the police, and from what I have heard from members of the Force it is freely used, especially in Wellington and Auckland; but how to prove one case I know not. I know the men have got to think that if they have not got the political "pull" on the Commissioner they will not get on, but be passed over in promotion by those that have. The removal of that impression from the minds of the members, and thereby making the men contented and more careful of their employment, should be taken in hand at once. I take it that this is the object of this inquiry, and, as you have invited suggestions for the improvement of the Force, I, with some knowledge of this political or private "pull" and its pernicious influence, offer mine. I would suggest that at once the office of Police Commissioner be removed from under the control or influence of the Minister of Justice, or whatever Minister it is under, and be placed under the control of one strong man. I know of two men who would fill that office with satisfaction to the public, and in whom the police have every confidence, and this confidence is much required at the present time. The two men I refer to are Mr. J. W. Poynton, Wellington, and Inspector Mitchell, Invercargill. Failing these two get back the old Commissioner, Tunbridge. Give the Commissioner full control, and let him be responsible to Parliament only, not to the Government in office, no matter of what party. With either of these men in charge this political and private influence used by members of Parliament and others would be at an end. I want it to be clearly understood that I have not one word to say against the present Commissioner. I have heard his men speak of him as a kindly gentleman, but I am afraid their trust in him is gone. And why? His Minister has done it. By making this alteration, the New Zealand Police Force would be ruled the same way as the Royal Irish Constabulary; and I know I do not require to say anything to the Commissioner about that Force—the model for all Police Forces. As I said, this is all hearsay, but it has been gained in various conversations with members of the Police Force and others in various parts of the Dominion. I hope you may find it of use. In regard to the pay of the Force, I say with every confidence and a practical knowledge of what I say that the members of the Force are not sufficiently remunerated for their services—especially the married men—to enable them to live in any comfort, and put by something for old age. These men must give their whole time to their duties: they are practically employed the whole twenty-four hours, and eight of those at as fatiguing work as need be. I should like to point out that the cost of living has nearly doubled within the last fifteen years. The married constables are compelled to live near the central station, where the rents are always higher than in the suburbs, the excuse being that they can hear the fire-bell. I think the pay of married men should be raised at least 1s. per day at once. In regard to fire-alarms, I think that constables in their beds, and especially married constables, should not be compelled to attend fire-alarms unless in cases of serious fires, and should be allowed to live where they choose, and, if compelled to live near the central station, houses fit to live in should be erected for them. In regard to concessions, I think when a constable goes on leave he should be supplied with a free railway pass for himself and his wife if he has one. It was in years gone by, and for various reasons it should be renewed. Constables cannot make a tour of inspection and a holiday fit into one another. In regard to constables doing duty near their friends, I think