

TERENCE O'BRIEN, Inspector, examined on oath. (No. 16.)

*Witness:* I am Inspector of Police in charge of the Dunedin district. I entered the Force in the month of October, 1874, as a constable. I was appointed sergeant in 1877, and in the month of March, 1881, I was appointed detective. I continued in that branch of the service, finishing up as Chief Detective in 1899. I then became Sub-Inspector, and at the end of 1900 I was appointed Inspector. I have been in charge of the Dunedin district about seven years and three months.

1. *The Commissioner.*] Do you wish to make any general statement before I ask a few questions?—I think I am only voicing the feelings of the Force throughout the Dominion when I say that each and every one of them has full confidence in the Minister of Justice who is now the head of the Department. I think, if matters are fairly and impartially presented to him, any cause for dissatisfaction that may now exist amongst the members of the service will soon disappear. I desire further to state that I have neither directly nor indirectly communicated with Mr. Arnold, Mr. Taylor, or any other member of Parliament respecting matters in connection with the Police Department recently mentioned in Parliament. I think that little explanation necessary, as some of the remarks I am about to make will be on the same lines as some of those referred to by Mr. Arnold. In the first place, I think it only fair to the present Commissioner of Police to tell him that there is a general impression amounting to a feeling of unrest prevailing amongst the members of the Force—I might say from the extreme north to the extreme south—that he has stationed in each centre some member of the service who is known as a useful man, that man's chief function being to convey to the Commissioner through some channel or another the names of members of the Force who speak in praise or in dispraise of him. I know nothing of such appointments myself. I do not say there is one word of truth in it, but I think it is only fair to the Commissioner that he should have an opportunity of denying it on oath.

2. *Mr. Dinnie.*] You have heard it, you say. You know nothing of it yourself?—No. If there should be anything in that opinion, all I can say is that I am afraid some of the constables stationed in my district have not been speaking very favourably of the Commissioner. For some reason or another, there is little or no promotion amongst the constables stationed in the district, nor has there been for some years. I have recommended constables whom I thought would be efficient, honourable men—men deserving of advancement in the service—and to my surprise those men have not been promoted. There may, of course, be very good reasons for that: it is for the Commission to say.

3. I shall get those names from you subsequently, of course?—Yes. I think also it is desirable, in the interests of the service, that the Commissioner should take more notice and give more effect to the recommendation of his District Inspectors. I have made other recommendations which, to my surprise, have not been acted upon. I contend that the Inspector in charge of a district has the best opportunities of knowing the requirements of that district. He is continually amongst the people; he is conversant with them, meets them both in town and country, and he knows their wants. He also knows the men who are stationed under him. He knows their capabilities; he knows the stations they are fit for and the stations they are not fit for. Those are advantages that the Commissioner does not possess. Therefore, if the opinion or recommendation of the Inspector is worth anything at all, when he makes a recommendation some weight should be given to it. I contend that transfers in the Inspector's own district should be absolutely made when the Inspector recommends them; and in the matter of recommending constables or appointing constables to no-license districts I think the Inspector in charge of the district should have his absolute choice. The Inspector knows what his men are capable of doing, knows what class of offence they are most likely to be keen in detecting, knows where they are likely to give satisfaction to the residents and where they are not. In the matter of recruiting constables, I think it would be far better if Inspectors in charge of districts were allowed to enrol a good man when they see the opportunity without asking that man to go to Wellington and present himself there for enrolment. In the days of the Provincial Councils each provincial district had a separate Force of its own, having either an Inspector or a Superintendent at the head of affairs in each of those districts. To my mind, in those days, when each Inspector or Superintendent, as the case may be, enrolled his own men, they had a better class of constables and sergeants than we have now. I have lived long enough in the service to realise that a clean-handed, pure-minded, and efficient Police Force is one of the most valuable institutions that any civilised country can possess; and if we are going to have such a Force in this Dominion I think it is highly necessary that we should offer more inducements to the better class of young men to join the service than we are doing at present. I consider the pay of the constable joining the service is at present too low. He should, I think, commence at no less than 8s. a day, and, instead of his increment of 6d. a day every four years, I think that increment should come about every three years. Again, in the matter of house-allowance, which now stands at 7s. a week, I consider that is far too little for a constable who has to perform duty in a city and reside there. I think his remuneration in the way of house-allowance should be at least 10s. 6d. a week, and that he should have added to the free list of uniform which he is now receiving one pair of boots per annum. At present no boots are supplied with the uniform. I think the sergeants stationed in cities should have equal advances in pay, and that their house-allowance should be increased to 14s. a week. I believe the time has arrived when the Chief Detective at each centre should attain the rank of Sub-Inspector. That would not, I think, entail any increase in pay, as in all probability the Chief Detective now receives as much as a Sub-Inspector, who may be appointed from the general Police Force; and I think the Chief Detective, when he attains to the rank of Sub-Inspector, should receive the same house-allowance as the Sub-Inspectors are receiving at present. Detectives serving under the Chief Detective should, I think, after a certain number of years, attain to the rank of sergeant-detective, and then junior detectives might be styled detectives only; the plain-clothes