

a gratuity-scale, marked D, for those under sentence of hard labour, whilst the scale for those undergoing penal servitude will be found on classification-paper marked A.

The present system of granting remissions on hard-labour or simple-imprisonment sentences of four months and upwards is I am convinced a great error, and tends only to lessen the severity of the sentences, making them neither deterrent nor preventive. I cannot find that remissions are granted on such sentences either at Home or in any of the colonies, except in New Zealand; and I trust you will see fit to recommend to His Excellency the Governor the advisability of abolishing them, except in the case of penal-servitude sentences.

The prison diets in this colony are I consider too liberal, and I find that prisoners as a rule leave prison heavier in weight than they were on reception. This I need hardly point out is not calculated to make our prisons places to be dreaded; but at the same time I am of opinion that it would not be prudent to alter any of the existing diet scales without first assembling a board of medical officers, well informed on the subject, to consider the matter and record their opinion.

The use of tobacco in prison I feel I cannot too firmly oppose, and I most strongly beg to urge that it be discontinued, as I know that any arguments used in support of its continuance can be outweighed by those that I and other gaol officials can advance on the other side.

"Gaolers:" This term should be abolished, and that of Superintendent or Controller substituted; and also the term "prisons" substituted for that of "gaols." The system of gaolers being powerless to punish either officers or prisoners is faulty, and places them in a false position in the sight of both officers and prisoners; and I deem it right to recommend that they be given powers to deal with certain prison offences, submitting weekly to my office a return showing full particulars of all punishments awarded by them. Of course, any serious offence would, as now, be referred to a Visiting Justice.

I enclose a scale of fines, marked C, to which all prison officers (subordinate) should be subjected, for your information and approval. It is the English scale, and I recommend it be adopted in this colony.

The gaolers on the whole appear to carry out their duties in a generally satisfactory manner, with a few exceptions; but I feel compelled to bring under your notice that some, by reason of age and infirmity, have passed their periods of efficiency and should now be directed to retire, as by retaining their services the Government are called upon to pay for efficiency that cannot be rendered; and, considering the importance of prison establishments, which will probably increase much ere long, I have no hesitation in recommending that, as vacancies occur, the Superintendents of Prisons be selected from retired naval and military officers, of whom I feel sure there are many in the colony ready and anxious to accept such appointments, and who, from their service experience of discipline, and the management of men, are well calculated to give satisfaction both to the Government and to those of whom they would have charge.

The new scale of pay for all prison officers I have already submitted for your favourable consideration, and I feel sure that should that scale be adopted the Government can procure naval and military officers who have already served their country faithfully, again ready and willing to do so in this department, whilst the advantages that would accrue from having gentlemen of such standing to preside over criminals cannot I think be over-estimated.

The subordinate officers are as a rule too old and slovenly, and in future younger, smarter, and more active men should be sought for, and greater pains taken to ascertain their antecedents than has been the custom heretofore. They should also be placed on a general roster for promotion, and so be transferred from one prison to another, and in no case should a local man be posted to his local prison.

The warders as a rule live too far from the prisons, and I am of opinion that prison labour might be profitably employed in building warder's quarters, thereby saving Government the allowance in lieu.

Gaolers and subordinate officers should be granted leave annually, the former forty-two days, and the latter fourteen days, with an extra day in lieu of the Queen's birthday; they should also have a uniformity of hours and duties at all prisons, and be under one set of standing orders for all the prisons in the colony. The prison duties being so hard and monotonous, the annual leave becomes an absolute necessity, and is calculated to give an officer fresh zeal and energy for the performance of his duties.

The matrons should not be related to any of the prison officers at their particular prisons; and as vacancies occur they should, if possible, be filled by women of superior education and standing than those who now hold the appointments.

The present system of detaining prisoners, for prison offences, after their sentences have expired, is I think most objectionable, and open to much abuse, and in my opinion no person should be, under any circumstances, kept in prison after the sentence awarded by the Judge or Magistrate has expired.

I presume it will be necessary to have a new Prisons Act brought before the House during the coming session, which would enter fully into details as to sentences, remissions, powers of gaolers, punishments, &c., and I therefore refrain from making further comments on these points at present.

It will be noticed that I have made no allusion to the Visiting Justices or their duties in this report, but I have carefully avoided doing so in consequence of the Government not having as yet issued any orders on the subject, or defined my duties and status in reference to them.

In conclusion, I beg to forward a report, marked "Confidential," on the different prisons visited, together with a recommendation that certain of them be closed.

I have, &c.,

A. HUME, Captain,

Inspector of Prisons.

The Hon. the Minister of Justice, Wellington.