

401. *Colonel Pitt.*] How do you make that out?—Because a man who is so unscrupulous that he will swear to anything has around him a number of persons who are like their master, and it is very well known to persons—or it is very well known to me, from what I have noticed in the Police Court—that when you have a man who is very unscrupulous no conviction can be got against him, because he will swear to anything, and his employés will swear to anything, and that the evidence is such that no Magistrate can convict him. Then, sometimes the police catch a man, who, knowing that it is the general custom to evade the law to a certain extent, has done so, and when he is brought into Court his conscience will not allow him to commit perjury, and so that man is fined. I venture to say if you look up the records of this colony as to the men who have been accused, and the men who have been convicted, you will find that the men who have been convicted are the better men, while the worst kind of hotelkeepers have been allowed to go scot-free. While you have a law that permits drink to be supplied to *bonâ fide* travellers on Sundays, or you permit drink to be supplied to lodgers and their friends, it will be impossible to convict the worst class of hotelkeeper. You may now and again secure a conviction against a man who will not perjure himself, but against the worse men you never will, hardly ever, obtain anything like convictions.

402. *The Chairman.*] You have spoken of the sale of liquor on Sundays: do you refer to the sale on Sundays as the most serious form of the breaches of the licensing law?—I do not say anything about the worst class. I do not deal as to the major sin, or crime, or whatever it may be. I am dealing with certain Acts of Parliament, which must be amended in the direction I have indicated if they are to be enforced at all. I would like, if I am permitted, to refer you to the fact that, while this Commission states that lately allegations and statements have been made, I think I am prepared to show that such statements and allegations have been made time after time during the whole time I have been in the colony. I have a report here of a meeting which appointed a deputation to wait on the Minister of Justice, when Sir Robert Stout was Premier of the colony, to deal with this very question. On the 1st March, 1886, there was a conference held in Wellington under the auspices of the New Zealand Alliance, and at that conference there were statements made quite as strong as against the police and the Magistrates touching the administration of the Licensing Act, especially in regard to Sunday trading, as anything you have had before you here. You will notice that sometimes an attempt is made to show that just recently things have been worse than they were some time ago. Now, my observation has convinced me that such is not the case. Such cases against the police as you had brought before you here were charged against the police by Mr. Harding, Sir William Fox, and other people. This was the deputation appointed to wait, in 1886, on the then Minister of Justice, and this is what Mr. Harding said on that occasion: “He (Mr. Harding) knew a place where sly-grog selling was carried on in his district. He had asked a policeman once whether the police could stop Sunday trading, and the policeman replied they virtually had instructions not to interfere.” I am simply stating this to show that what is stated to have taken place lately has been charged against the police and the Magistrates ever since we have had this kind of Licensing Act that allowed liquor to be supplied to *bonâ fide* travellers, and to hotel employés, lodgers, and their friends on Sunday; and it is to support what I said, that while you have that in the Licensing Act it will be impossible for the police to satisfactorily enforce the provisions of it. To show that things are no worse than they were before, and that no political capital, at any rate, should be made out of what is going on at present, I will quote what is said to have been said by the late Sir William Fox himself on the occasion referred to: “Sir William Fox related the story of a case in which two men had been made helplessly drunk; that was sworn to by the chief detective, and yet the hotelkeeper had not been prosecuted. It was proved that the men were made drunk, and the excuse for the one man who robbed the other was that he was so drunk that he did not know what he was doing”; so you will see that these charges have been going on, at any rate, ever since the time when that meeting was held in the City of Wellington, on the 1st March, 1886, and can have no reference to influence that has been brought to bear recently as to the conduct of the police. I am endeavouring to show that while you have conditions in the Licensing Act such as I have drawn attention to it will be impossible to enforce that Act satisfactorily, and all my testimony is to that point. Then there is another, and that touches on the efficiency of the police in dealing with crime. There are no poor men in this colony more grossly misrepresented than some of the men are who are unable to maintain or who refuse to contribute to the maintenance of their wives and families, and it seems to me that if you had this mission of which I have been speaking, and the police could be allowed to work with this mission, a great deal could be done to diminish that class of evil. Now I speak from this standpoint, because I have had to take the place of men coming out of gaol, and I have had to go and find them employment. As I understand it, when a man who has been put in gaol for failing to support his wife and family comes out he is quite as much in the same position as when he was thrown in, and he is handicapped with a gaol record against him. Sometimes after he has been out for a considerable time we can only find employment for a man, especially in the winter, where he can just support himself, and where he can provide just a few shillings.

403. Does that affect in any way the efficiency or the administration of the Police Force?—I am dealing with a matter of fact, and with the case of a man with whom the Police Force of the colony had to deal, and who wrote to me explaining his position, and fearing what was coming, while at the same time he was ready if possible to obey the law. Well, I want to show that to render the Police Force more efficient in dealing with that class of crime it is necessary for them to work with such a mission as I have explained, so that a man may have a chance to pay towards the maintenance of his wife and family.

404. That is making the police more useful, not more efficient?—If the object of the police is not only to bring a man to judgment, but to get him to maintain his wife and family, which I presume it is, and not simply to cause him so much pain or to inflict punishment on any man, I think it would be greatly increasing the efficiency of the Police Force if I could show you how