

Five former inmates came to see me, and made statements as to some or all of the charges enumerated above. There seems strong *prima facie* evidence that the first three charges are not without foundation, the charge of cruel treatment being made, however, with especial reference to one, or at the most two, of the Brothers in charge. It is possible that there has been laxness in regard to keeping proper official records of inmates' earnings.

With regard to the most serious charges, No. 9 above, I could find no foundation but hearsay. What was spoken of to me as evidence could not by itself be admitted as such.

With regard to the wages of service inmates, I may say that at my direction at the beginning of this year an officer of this department spent a week at Nelson going through the wages accounts, and that in consequence new books have been opened; and if these are audited at regular intervals, as I propose, by one of our officers, it will be impossible in future for such irregularities to occur as may have occurred in the past.

I have had conversation on the matters referred to in this report with our Visiting Officer, Mr. Thompson, who paid a visit to the institution when in the district some months ago. His conclusions agree generally with my own; but I may add that he informs me that the Brothers gave him to understand that they inflicted no punishments except slight strokes on the hand, and, when questioned particularly as to solitary confinement, replied that they did not use that form of punishment. This statement is at variance with the admission now made by them.

In conclusion, my own view is that the general public uneasiness in Nelson regarding the institution cannot be allayed, or the exact truth as to some of the charges be ascertained, without holding a full inquiry; such an inquiry would also be in the true interests of the institution itself. A purely departmental inquiry might be the means of arriving at most of the facts, but would scarcely satisfy local public opinion.

It is not for me to suggest the exact form an inquiry should take.

Hon. W. C. Walker.

GEORGE HOGGEN.

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