

Victoria Chief of Police Is Examined by the Royal Commission on Liquor Traffic

Henry William Sheppard, Victoria Superintendent of Police Questioned by Commissioner Wellington J. Dowler

Q: Do you find the people as a whole, sober and law-abiding people?- Yes, compared with almost any part of the world. I have been all over the world nearly, and I think this is one of the quietest places I have ever been in.

Q: You have here quite a seafaring population? – Yes, when the sealing fleet comes in we have quite a few.

Q: Then you have here quite a large Chinese population? – Yes.

Q: So far as they are concerned, are they sober? – Yes, I do not think in our whole history we have had more than three Chinamen arrested for being drunk.

Q: You have, of course, people brought up frequently for drunkenness? – Yes.

Q: Are they sent to jail? – Yes, they serve a term.

Q: How long is the term? It ranges from ten days to two months.

Q: From your experience with such people, do you think the present system of sending these men to prison for short terms is better than sending them for long periods to inebriate institutions with a view to their reformation? – I think the latter would be the better way.

Q: They have lost all control of themselves? – Yes, they appear to have done so.

Q: Taking your knowledge of the people, and living amongst them, and taking those who use intoxicating drinks as beverages, would the number of those who drink to excess be large or small? – It would not be very large.

Q: Would it only be a small percentage of the whole? – Yes.

Q: Then of that small percentage, some drink to excess more than others? – Yes.

Q: Have you considered at all the advisability of enacting a general prohibitory law? – Yes, and I do not think it would be advisable.

Q: If enacted, could it be enforced, taking this country as it is? – I do not think it is needed.

Q: Do you think it could be enforced if passed? – Yes.

Q: And the authorities would be able to prevent liquor being brought in? – No doubt, smuggling would go on. In this island you could smuggle almost anything.