

## SOURCE 7

**Memorandum concerning the treatment of conscientious objectors, July 1916**

**(PRO ref: HO 45/10882)**

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### **HOW TO USE THIS SOURCE TO HELP YOU ANSWER THE BIG QUESTION :**

Look carefully at this source and consider what it tells you about why conscription was introduced and how people were affected by it. You should consider:

### **ASK YOURSELF:**

- What is the main concern in this source??
- Prison governors were being told to act cautiously in this source. What words or phrases tell you this?
- What is the general attitude towards conscientious objectors in this letter?
- On the basis of this source, would you say they were well or badly treated?

# SOURCE 7

CONFIDENTIAL.

19th July, 1917.

Memorandum to all Local Prisons.

(to be retained)

Several cases having occurred recently where Conscientious Objectors under sentence by Court Martial have persistently refused to work and have thus rendered themselves subject to repeated punishment, dietary and other, the Commissioners think it advisable that when the punishment ordered by the Governor is ineffective, and seems likely to remain so, he should report the case at an early stage to the Visiting Committee under Rule 82.

Rules do not contemplate that Governors should, by continuing punishments at short intervals, virtually exceed the powers conferred on Visiting Committees by Rule 83.

Further, the award of punishments in these cases must be carefully regulated by Medical opinion.

It has been found that though here and there a man of good physique is to be seen amongst Conscientious Objectors yet the majority are below the average, and an appreciable amount of mental defect has also been observed. It is necessary, therefore, that in dealing with these prisoners much circumspection should be observed, their attitude of mind with regard to all rules and authority, their egotism, the persistence with which some of them refuse to conform to prison discipline, e.g. refusal to work which brings them into repeated conflict with authority with consequent punishment, makes it highly important that Medical Officers should rigidly exercise the safeguard provided by Rule 87 against harm accruing from too frequent punishment.

J. WINN.

Secretary.