

REPORT

To His Excellency the Governor-General of the Dominion of New Zealand.
MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

I, the undersigned Commissioner appointed by Warrant dated the 13th day of December, 1948, have the honour to present to Your Excellency my report under the following terms of reference :—

- (1) Whether, having regard to all the conditions and circumstances surrounding the finding of the Electra aircraft and the recovery of the bodies therefrom, there was any undue or improper withholding of information from, or the imposition of any undue or improper restrictions upon press reporters in obtaining information and photographs for the purpose of publication by the newspapers they represented.
- (2) If so, by whose orders or directions was such information withheld or restrictions imposed ?
- (3) Whether arising out of the present inquiry it is expedient or practicable to lay down any general principles as to the privileges or freedom or obligations of the press in similar circumstances.

I have the honour to be,
Your Excellency's most obedient servant,

[L.S.]

HAROLD JOHNSTON, Commissioner.

Dated at Wellington, this 31st day of January, 1949.

By Warrant under the hand of His Excellency the Governor-General dated the 13th day of December, 1948, I was required to report to His Excellency not later than the 31st day of December, 1948.

By Warrant under the hand of His Excellency the Governor-General dated the 20th day of January, 1949, the time within which I was required to present my report was extended to the 31st day of January, 1949.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT ON TREATMENT OF PRESS REPRESENTATIVES: KAKA AIRCRAFT DISASTER

On Saturday, the 23rd October last, the Kaka (aircraft ZK-AGK) left Palmerston North at approximately 10 minutes past 1 for Hamilton, the next stop in her journey from Paraparaumu to Whenuapai. She carried eleven passengers and a crew of two. Her failure to arrive at Hamilton at the scheduled time gave rise to anxiety as to her safety, and she was reported missing.

The Search and Rescue Organizations of the Air Department in Wellington and Auckland were immediately brought into full operation. In Wellington operations were conducted from the Air Controller's room in Stout Street.

A stream of reports from points covering an area approximately twenty miles north of Wanganui to the coast near New Plymouth, from Kawhia Harbour across to Tauranga, and from Taupo down the Desert Road to Ohakune flowed into the Air Controller's room in Stout Street. These reports demanded the organization of search areas and the despatch of investigating aircraft. Aircraft were being despatched from Whenuapai and Ohakea to aerodromes at New Plymouth, Rukuhia, Rotorua, and Karioi. While seven officers were permanently engaged in these tasks at peak time this number would be considerably increased. To this room came all personal and telephone requests for information on the progress of the search.