

Further log entries show—

At 5 minutes past 10 a message from Auster 1703 was logged: "I have sighted the wreckage of an aeroplane on the S.W. slopes of Ruapehu about 1,000 ft. from the summit," and at 10.10 from ZAQ through Lyall Bay at 10.5, "Object previously sighted by us confirmed as crashed Lockheed. Exact location 39° 15 S. 175° 32 E.", and finally, at 10.10, from Auster 1703 through Ohakea, "Located wreckage on the S.W. slopes Ruapehu 500–1,000 ft. below summit."

I think the evidence of Mr. Guiney, a reporter on the *Dominion* newspaper, gives a fair sample of what Wellington reporters did and expected while they were in Wellington. He said: "I was assigned the duty of getting the information in connection with the missing Kaka. I was told to see if I could find out on Saturday night all that I could about the missing airliner. My habit was to go to Air Search Control room at 7.30 or 8 o'clock in the evening, and wait till they finished for the day, when they were free to see me. I sought to avoid disturbing them at their busy time. The first three nights I had no difficulty in getting information. Everybody was most helpful. On the Tuesday, however, I received certain statements from the Air Control room as to what had happened that day. I went along at about 8 o'clock and met an officer outside. He said, 'We are not giving information from here any longer. You will have to see the Director of Civil Aviation.' This was corrected by another officer, who said that Mr. Duke had been set up as Public Relations Officer. Mr Duke, however, I discovered, had gone home for the night. After some time Mr. Hayman agreed to see me. I waited for about another three-quarters of an hour, after which Mr. Hayman came out and I asked him what the new set-up was exactly, and he said that the office had been visited by the Acting Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence that morning. He seemed most reluctant to give me any detailed news. I asked him particularly if anything had been seen during the day of objects which might possibly be an aircraft. He said it had been discussed by authorities during the morning (the handing-out of news to the papers), and it had been decided that no news of what might be wreckage—he then corrected himself and said the word 'wreckage' was not to be used—was to be given to the press. When I asked him why, he said it had been decided that it was not in the public interest to give this information as it raised false hopes in the minds of relatives of the missing people. I asked him particularly if Mr. Nash or Mr. Jones had made this decision, and he declined to answer it directly, but said the heads of the organization. He indicated the sort of news, in his opinion, it was proper for newspapers to publish. When I asked him what were the plans for the following day's search, he said, 'The search will be continued at pressure in accordance with facts discovered by search aircraft in operations to-day.' I said that was a completely useless thing from newspaper point of view. I talked to him for quite some time (about half an hour) more or less stating our case and what we wanted, and eventually he gave me a little more information. There was no other person or institution to which I could have gone for information as to what was being done. My paper was trying to keep the public supplied from day to day as to what was being done to find the plane. I thought it was also in the interest of Air Department to let the public know what was being done."

Mr. Guiney subsequently went to Ohakune and got to the plateau as part of a Forestry party, and apparently, according to his own statement, did not run into the difficulties some of the others did.

In my judgement, "Air Control" must be free in the circumstances of a search to exercise its discretion as to whether or not or when messages received from searching planes, that obviously need investigation and confirmation, should be passed on to the press. In this particular instance the message received from the aircraft specially asked for leave to land and obtain binoculars to make further investigation. It is plain in a search of this nature many hares can be chased and false trails examined, and the evidence shows this was the case. I think on reflection it will be agreed that the feelings of next-of-kin may be unnecessarily harried by publication of messages indicating possible location,