

followed by messages reporting that the hopes raised were unfortunately not realized. The Director took this view, and his general direction that such messages should not be released till confirmation was received was, in my opinion, sensible and proper.

The claim that tradition entitles reporters to have retailed to them all messages, irrespective of their ultimate value as clues to the location of a missing plane, cannot, I think, be seriously entertained. A clear view of the steps taken in the extensive search organized by Air Control can be obtained from the entries in the Search and Rescue Log Book. Some four hundred hours were spent in flying, mostly in bad flying weather, over a wide stretch of rough country. The columns of the newspaper from Saturday, the 23rd October, to the 29th, when the search ended, seem to show a liberal hand-out of information relative to the search. Air Control's task was to organize and direct the necessary features of an extensive search in, for the most part, bad flying weather, and fulfillment of that task took priority over the work of sorting the news to be handed out. From the newspapers it seems the public were given very full news of the progress of the search. No evidence was given of any general public complaint that sufficient information was not forthcoming. In my opinion, all relevant information about the search was given to the press voluntarily and without undue delay, and it seems that the facilities given to the press by Air Department enabled the press, without any great trouble or expense, to sufficiently report the progress of the search to the public.

After the plane was found the organization and direction of search parties and ground operations passed to the police, who invoked the aid of the military Forces stationed in the district where the plane was found, and the permanent Air Accidents Investigation Officer. This officer's work is not subject to the control of the Director of Civil Aviation. He alone controls and is responsible for the investigation into causes of accidents.

Certain communications, however, that passed between the Director of Civil Aviation and the Commissioner of Police, relating to publication of the news of the finding of the plane, and the fate of passengers and crew, must be weighed and considered. The Director of Civil Aviation, who had requested the Minister of Defence and the Acting Prime Minister to visit the Air Department, to see the cramped conditions in which Air Control was functioning, and consider the advisability of relieving the control centre of the task of handling communications to the press, said that, in the course of consultation on these matters, it was agreed that when the wreckage was located, he, the Director of Civil Aviation, would ensure that National Airways Corporation was given an opportunity of informing the next-of-kin before the information was broadcast over the air. The Acting Prime Minister's Office was to be similarly advised. The Director gave instructions that these requirements should be met, but gave no instructions that the news should be withheld from the press. He said in his opinion approximately fifteen minutes would have been sufficient time for National Airways Corporation to notify the next-of-kin if proper arrangements were made for air-flash messages to the nearest telephone-exchange. That the Acting Prime Minister should at the same time be notified of the finding he regarded as a secondary object, but a request which I assume he undoubtedly thought should be complied with. The Director was subjected to a long cross-examination concerning the exact words used and his interpretation of the arrangement that news was to be withheld till the Corporation had time to communicate with next-of-kin. He said that he understood the arrangement (come to in the Air Control room when the two Ministers, Air Control, Civil Aviation, and National Airways Corporation officers were present) was intended to ensure that the news should not be broadcast to the public before communication of the finding could be given to the next-of-kin, and did not mean the news should be withheld from the press. While from other evidence I think the question of news regarding the bodies found was referred to, it appears that the question of immediate communication to the press with a request to withhold publication till the next-of-kin were informed was not raised, and in the circumstances was of little importance. Even if the press was disappointed somewhat