

that they did not receive the information of the finding as soon as the Acting Prime Minister, it was surely no cause for serious resentment. I think the attitude taken by the editor of the *Evening Post*, Mr. Smith, who gave evidence mainly to acquaint the Commission with the press view, justifies that view. Mr. Smith agreed that it was right to withhold news of the finding till the next-of-kin were communicated with. He thought, however, the press should have been informed of the fact of the finding and trusted not to publish till time was given for the news to first reach the next-of-kin. So the question of his opinion was one of manner or method rather than of right or duty, which is more the question for this Commission.

The messages received and the time of their receipt are logged as follows :—

- Hours.
 0840 Message from C47 ZAQ : Have sighted what might be aircraft wreckage on S.W. slopes Ruapehu. Request permission to land Ohakea for binoculars.
 1005 From Auster 1703 : I have sighted the wreckage of an aircraft on the S.W. slopes of Ruapehu about 1,000 ft. from summit.
 1010 From ZAQ through Lyall Bay at 1005 : Object previously sighted by us confirmed as crashed Lockheed. Exact location 39° 15 S., 175° 32 E.
 1010 From Auster 1703 through Ohakea : Located wreckage on S.W. slopes Ruapehu 500–1,000 ft. below summit.

The receipt of the message at 1005 that the object previously sighted at 0840 was confirmed as the crashed Lockheed put an end to the main purpose of Air Control's operations. The plane was found. Their next normal duty was to report the finding to the various authorities controlling air navigation and the authorities that would have charge of ground operations—namely, the police and the Official Investigator of Air Accidents. The following log-book entries show the messages sent :—

- Hours.
 1016 Notified Director of Civil Aviation of finding, who will notify the Minister.
 1017 Notified Director of Operations of above.
 1018 Notified Deputy Director of Civil Aviation of above.
 1022 Notified the Air Secretary of above.
 1021 Advised Superintendent of Police of finding and location.
 1024 Advised Ohakune police : gave them position of aircraft, and advised them of 1021 entry.
 1030 Mr. Robertson, Minister's Department, rang and was given the following statement : R.N.Z.A.F. Dakota discovered likely wreckage at 0840. As a result an R.N.Z.A.F. Auster was despatched to make a closer inspection and confirmed aircraft wreckage on western slopes of Ruapehu 700 ft. from summit. No sign of movement seen. Ohakune police informed at 1024 hours who are organizing a ground search party. Wellington police also informed.
 1048 Wing Commander Kean called from Karioi and was advised of all details to date. (Wing Commander Kean was Official Investigator of Accident, an appointment independent of the Air Department.)
 1100 Information Section, Prime Minister's Department, rang and were given all details to date.
 1104 Contacted Flying Officer Horton at Karioi by radio telephone. Requested details. He advises—
 (1) There is no sign of life.
 (2) The aircraft is completely wrecked.
 (3) The only recognizable portion of the aircraft is the compound tail unit.
 (4) The aircraft is not burnt out.
 1110 Advised Mr. Robertson of the above details, also advised him that we would advise him of further details as they come to hand.
 1122 Superintendent of Police rang and requested details of search. Advised him search arrangements were fully in hand by Ohakune police. Suggested that he contact Ohakune police and give them necessary authority to proceed.

The Acting Prime Minister made his statement to the House at approximately 1045.

In the course of his evidence the Director of Civil Aviation, Mr. Esmond Allen Gibson, said that so many ill-founded reports of sighting the lost plane came into the Department that he had to give instructions that only authenticated information was to be given out to the press, and I have already indicated that in my judgment his undoubted right to exercise his discretion in this matter was justifiably exercised in not giving information of the contents of the 0840 message till it was confirmed by the