

Constable Phillips at Ohakune, when he took the telephone message, made the following note :—

Telephone message : Wellington. Police Constable Nelson. Ohakune Police, Constable Phillips. Commissioner of Police has instructed Air Department any information concerning the recovery of bodies, &c., must not be given out until information has been given to the Hon. Mr. Nash and National Airways Corporation. Received at 2.10 p.m., 29/10/48. G. E. Phillips, Constable.

It was admitted that the 2.10 p.m. on Constable Phillips' note was a mistake for 3.10 p.m.

The Prime Minister's Publicity Department, it appears, was interested in collecting news as to the progress of the search and the fate of the occupants in the plane, with a view of cabling the progress of the search to the Prime Minister, who was then in London. While for this purpose it had some communications with the Air Department, this task did not involve, and could not authorize, the Publicity Department issuing instructions that the issue of news received by the Air Department should be in any way controlled or delayed. The official in charge of the Publicity Department, Mr. Williams, denied that any instruction of this nature went out from his Department. It is not likely that it would, and his evidence that after full inquiry it was established that no such instruction was sent must be accepted.

The Deputy Director of Civil Aviation, Mr. Scott, said of this message that on the Friday afternoon when the plane was discovered he received and passed on to the operations room a message to be relayed to the police. He says the message as set out accords with his recollection. He received the message by phone, but does not recollect the actual source. On referring to the words in the log, "authority of Prime Minister's Department," he said the inference is, "I received a telephone message more or less on these lines and immediately rang up the Search and Rescue Room (I will call it Operations Room) to pass the message on. I passed on the message, and while I know that I also said where the message came from, I had in fact forgotten until I saw this entry. In the last few days I have strained my recollection to see if I could carry the matter further, but am unable to do so. Until yesterday afternoon, when I first saw this entry, I had been unable to recollect from which of three sources I had received the message. I cannot tell you from whom. The message did not come from the Minister in Charge of Civil Aviation. The message did not come from the Acting Prime Minister. At the time I was satisfied with where it came from in accordance with what I passed on to my Operations Room. I had no reason to doubt the authenticity of the message and just relayed it to Operations Room. In fairness to myself, my Director, Mr. Gibson, was concerned in the search and rescue operations, and I was not. I was dealing with the administration of all the other matters in my branch, leaving him free to attend to the search matter, and, as far as this message was concerned, it can be summarized by saying I passed the message on and probably dismissed it from my mind." In cross-examination by Mr. Leicester he was asked whether he took it originally, and to that he answered "Yes." Asked whether he felt satisfied when he took it it was an authentic message from the Prime Minister's Department, he answered, "I had no reason to doubt its authenticity or origin." Questioned as to whether his impression was that by the message members of rescue parties were to be instructed not to give information to the press, he answered "No," and that to the best of his recollection the message referred only to the actual location of wreckage by the ground party and condition of the bodies.

The Superintendent of Police says that, in taking the message, he understood the result of ground operations referred to the recovery of bodies, which would be the result of ground-party operations, and that in copying the message from his notes of the telephone communication on a pad he left out the words "ground search party" and put in "recovery of bodies, &c." In cross-examination, when asked whether, in typing out the words "Prime Minister's Department have instructed Air Department" he had made a personal check with the Prime Minister's Department, he replied that he