

APPENDIX No. 6.

[Extract from the *New Zealand Times*, Wellington, of 20th January, 1910.]

REPORT OF DEPUTATION WHICH WAITED ON THE RIGHT HON. PRIME MINISTER, 19TH JANUARY, 1910. YESTERDAY a deputation of Auckland citizens visited Wellington and had a lengthy interview regarding "the Knyvett" case with Sir Joseph Ward as Minister of Defence. The interview lasted for two hours and a half, the whole matter being exhaustively gone into. As a result of his attention being drawn to what was said to be an important aspect, Sir Joseph Ward has promised to refer the case back to the Board of Inquiry which investigated the charges against Captain Knyvett at Auckland recently, asking it to supply a full report in the light of the new development.

The deputation, which consisted of Messrs. J. S. Dickson (chairman of the Knyvett Defence Committee), O. Nicholson, Gerald Peacocke, and W. B. Leyland, urged that the Government's decision to dismiss Captain Knyvett must have been come to upon an incomplete report of the evidence given during the inquiry, and showed that the board set up had taken no notes at all during the first day's proceedings. Sir Joseph admitted that the point was a most important one and well worthy of careful investigation.

The Court satisfied.

In introducing the deputation Mr. T. M. Wilford, M.P., stressed the point that the Court had expressed itself satisfied with the statements made by Captain Knyvett during both the first and second days' hearing in reply to the charges then proceeded with. He had been told that the evidence his witnesses had given was quite sufficient to establish the truth of his statements, so that there was no need for him to call further evidence. Mr. Wilford contended that after the Court had so intimated that it was satisfied, Captain Knyvett was justified in believing that he had substantiated his defence and in assuming that he had exonerated himself. The Court's intimation was given before the whole of Captain Knyvett's witnesses had been called, and a man had surely no right to be dealt with under such circumstances.

The points made by the various other speakers were very fairly summarised in the article appearing in the *New Zealand Times* yesterday morning. It was also contended that the whole conduct of the case was so irregular, incomplete, and altogether unsatisfactory that they were justified in asking that the proceedings should be quashed and a new inquiry held. They did not ask the Prime Minister to reverse the previous decision in any way, but simply to consider the legitimacy of investigating again a case that had only been very imperfectly gone into so far. Auckland citizens had cast a certain amount of blame upon Colonel Robin in connection with the matter, that being done on account of the newspaper articles appearing in Wellington under his name. The interview he had given on the 1st November was really the cause of the whole trouble. If they had done him any wrong they would be only too pleased to rectify it.

No feeling against Captain Knyvett.

After expressing his pleasure at the opportunity of going fully into the matter, Sir Joseph Ward said that he was quite satisfied, as the result of a very careful investigation, that nobody connected with the Defence Department had the slightest feeling of any possible kind against Captain Knyvett. He was, moreover, of opinion that Captain Knyvett, who was reported by both Colonel Tuson and Colonel Robin to be a keen and capable officer, had in the control of his company been in some respects absolutely disregardful of the ordinary Volunteer regulations. Disrespect of these regulations was bound sooner or later to get an officer into serious trouble. He did not know of anything more grossly unfair done to one officer (Colonel Robin) with a view of exculpating another officer than what had transpired in connection with this case. He would show from the official records that from the moment that Colonel Robin became directly or indirectly concerned from the personal standpoint, owing to Captain Knyvett's reflections upon him, he did not interfere with, suggest to, or influence any one connected with the matter. He would also show from the same sources that the whole proceedings of which Captain Knyvett and his friends had been informing the people of Auckland as being moved by Colonel Robin were in reality carried out by an Imperial officer, Colonel Tuson. He was very sorry to have to say that the commencement of Captain Knyvett's hostility to Colonel Robin was not with this particular trouble, but went back much further. While anxious to see that justice was done to Captain Knyvett, he would be absolutely and utterly ashamed of the position he held if he (Sir Joseph) were to allow any officer in Colonel Robin's position to be unfairly charged in order to try to justify another man's action. A great deal of the charges of inefficiency, want of tact, &c., was largely due to personal animus against him as Chief of General Staff.

The Beginning of it.

Sir Joseph placed the beginning of the trouble between the two officers in April last, when Captain Knyvett applied for promotion to the rank of major. The application was carefully gone into, and the result was that the Adjutant-General, Colonel Tuson, reported that under the regulations it could not be granted. On receipt of this information in Auckland a statement was published that Captain Knyvett "had been made to suffer from a sheer technicality and was refused promotion, although qualified, because he had not had seven years' commissioned service