

up on the telephone asking the question, 'Is it correct that these men had no authority to travel, and did they ask for same?' These questions I judged were fair questions, and answered them accordingly, 'that no authority had been given or asked for,' as shown by separate files. It is not correct that interview after interview was granted, a two-minute telephone interview already explained is all I know of the newspaper matter, reference to the newspaper officials can settle same." Colonel Robin, in concluding his comments, said, "I submit that Captain Knyvett's letter is very insubordinate, and does not tend to the impression that this officer understands discipline. This is further shown by his insistence to forward the letter to the Minister despite the warning conveyed by the O.C. District." Every officer had a right to do what Colonel Robin did, and no breach of regulation was involved in it at all. He would be very sorry if it were supposed that this sort of thing was not allowed.

A Volunteer Arrest.

As for the arrest of Captain Knyvett, of which so much had been made, it was well to explain that it was done under instructions by Colonel Tuson on the ground of gross insubordination. As a matter of fact, it was very different to an ordinary arrest, and every Volunteer officer knew that he was liable to Volunteer arrest, without the power of which no service would be of the slightest consequence. Colonel Tuson gave directions for it without reference to the Government or anybody else, and in that he was perfectly right. The setting-up of the Board of Inquiry was done by the Government altogether, and he wanted to make it clear that Colonel Robin had nothing to do with it either directly or indirectly. It was done because the Auckland O.C. advised that it was a difficult matter for him to deal with. As to the exception which had been taken to the constitution of the Board, he pointed out that in England all military inquiries were held by Government servants, while the third officer who had been referred to as being of foreign birth was Captain Sandtmann, who had been a naturalised subject for about sixteen years. He was also known as a most impartial man, and it was much to be regretted that this aspect of the matter should have been introduced.

A member of the deputation joined in the regrets, saying that this aspect had never been referred to in Auckland.

The Wrong Man blamed.

The Prime Minister, referring to the charges made against Colonel Robin, said that if Captain Knyvett knew of anything wrong he should have made it known in the proper way, and it would have been investigated. But if it was possible for one officer to make a general reflection upon another in the way that Captain Knyvett had done it would be just as well to have no Defence Department at all. Discipline could not possibly be maintained if such a thing were allowed to pass without taking action. Captain Knyvett could have laid his charges in a proper manner, but from the very first and all along he had been blaming the wrong man.

Who ordered Dismissal.

A statement had been made that according to the Court Captain Knyvett was acquitted. But the duty of the Board was perfectly clear. It was simply to report, as it actually did, to the Adjutant-General, Colonel Tuson, who, on 29th December, in writing to him (Sir Joseph) as Minister of Defence, and forwarding a copy of the proceedings, stated his opinion that the charges had been proved against Captain Knyvett. Colonel Tuson added that Captain Knyvett had been proved guilty of an act of gross insubordination in sending his letter to the Minister, and therefore recommended his dismissal. This recommendation and report was laid before Cabinet, which, after the fullest consideration, felt that it would not be justified in passing over a recommendation by the officer specially appointed to deal with the discipline of the Volunteers. It was therefore sent on to the Governor as Commander-in-Chief, who in due course ordered Captain Knyvett's dismissal.

About the Evidence.

"May I ask," said Mr. Wilford, "whether the evidence placed before Colonel Tuson was the evidence upon which he made his recommendation?"

"Yes," rejoined the Prime Minister, amid a chorus of "That is the crux of the whole question," from the members of the deputation.

"Now, I am going to make an important point," said Mr. Wilford, who drew attention to the fact that, on their own admission, the members of the Board had not taken any notes of evidence during the first day's inquiry.

The Prime Minister said he had gone through the whole of the evidence before him, and thought it was a fair outline of what occurred.

Mr. Wilford urged that unless he had the whole of the evidence before him he could not arrive at a just conclusion. Neither the Prime Minister nor Colonel Tuson had ever seen all the evidence in this case. A reporter privately engaged to take a full report on behalf of Captain Knyvett had got twenty-three pages of type-written evidence before the Court started to take notes at all. It simply meant that the Prime Minister and Colonel Tuson had never seen those twenty-three first pages, so that it followed their decision must have been arrived at on an incomplete record of the proceedings.

"That is a very important point indeed," said the Prime Minister, "for the evidence sent on to Wellington is the evidence upon which we have acted."

"This is the feeling in Auckland," remarked Mr. Leyland, "that you have not got the hang of it yet."