

Mr. A. E. Glover said he hoped that much good would result from the decision of Cabinet when the true state of affairs was made known. The matter would not stop at its present stage. The people were indignant, and would only be satisfied with a Royal Commission.

Mr. F. W. Lang, in supporting the other speakers, said he was afraid nothing would do more to dampen the ardour of the people in connection with the working of the new Defence Act than the unfortunate treatment of Captain Knyvett. It was necessary, in his opinion, that the Department should court the very fullest inquiry, and see whether the charges made could be sustained.

*A Brother Officer's Complaint.*

Captain F. E. N. Gaudin said he presumed he was placing himself in possibly a peculiar position, since he was a commissioned officer on the unattached list, and it might be considered that he was committing a breach of the regulations in attending that deputation. He wanted to explain, however, in case the Minister did not know, that when Colonel Wolfe forwarded Captain Knyvett's letter to headquarters it was addressed to Colonel Tuson. A second communication was forwarded at the same time to Colonel Tuson, containing a copy of the original letter, and a request that if Colonel Tuson thought there was anything improper in the wording of the letter, the original should not be opened, but returned. Colonel Tuson sent the letter on to Colonel Robin, and Colonel Tuson a few days after issued orders for Captain Knyvett's arrest. He (Mr. Gaudin) thought Cabinet should be informed of this fact, and he trusted that it would assist in justice being done to his brother officer, Captain Knyvett.

Mr. C. H. Poole remarked that he would like to assure Ministers that no matter what was said in the South about the frenzy of the Aucklanders, the position was nevertheless a most acute one. A telegram had been sent to Sir Joseph Ward by Auckland members, asking for an inquiry into the Defence Department's administration. The reply was received that no inquiry was wanted. Was it imagined that Auckland members had signed their names to that telegram for nothing?

*Hon. G. Fowlds in reply.*

The Hon. G. Fowlds was the first Minister to reply. He said that two distinct subjects had been dealt with by members of the deputation. He was afraid that those two subjects had not been kept sufficiently apart in the public mind. The first dealt with the Knyvett case, and the second with the efficiency of the Defence Department. They were separate and distinct subjects. The first had evidently not been settled to the satisfaction of many of the people in Auckland.

Mr. Greenslade: It is most unjust.

Continuing, Mr. Fowlds said he had not had time to master all the details. Captain Knyvett's letter, however, he had read. He had to admit that he was surprised that any one who read the letter could contend that there was no evidence of insubordination. If letters of the kind were allowed to be sent with impunity to the Chief of Staff discipline would never be sustained. He would admit that the severity of the sentence imposed was open to question. The punishment was recommended by the Adjutant-General, who was an Imperial officer.

Mr. Gaudin: It was he to whom the letter was originally forwarded.

Hon. Mr. Fowlds: I cannot say anything about that. Of the details of the matter I am not fully conversant.

Mr. Parr: But should you not have known? You sat in Cabinet on this matter.

Hon. Mr. Fowlds: Yes, and for my actions I am willing to answer to members in the House and to electors in my constituency. It is an absolute impossibility for every Minister to fully master the details of every other Minister's Department. Some of the statements that have been made I do not believe to be correct. It is not possible to preserve discipline by holding indignation meetings.

Mr. Parr: Nor by imposing unjust sentences.

The Minister of Education further referred to the action of Colonel Tuson, who had recommended the punishment, and said Cabinet had acted on his recommendation.

The request that an inquiry into the administration of the Defence Department should be held he would place before the Minister of Defence, and it would no doubt later receive the consideration of Cabinet.

*Hon. Dr. Findlay on the Legal Aspect.*

The Hon. Dr. Findlay said that no one present would expect either himself or his colleague to give any pronouncement on the present stage of the Knyvett case. What merits lay in the case had been impressed upon them in the last few days. They had had an impressive mass meeting, and an impressive Press, and they would be dull indeed if they did not perceive that there was dissatisfaction. He desired to make a very short statement of the case as it stood at present. What was the law in the matter. There was a great deal of misapprehension as regarded martial law. In New Zealand there was no such thing as martial law, and it only applied to war-time and when forces were concentrated. The Defence Act excluded the application of martial law, and they had to therefore deal with the matter only as it came within the four corners of the Act. He knew that those present did not want the question to turn on narrow questions of law, nor did he want to indulge in technicalities. The Court of Inquiry sat under sections 54 and 107 of the Act. Insubordination and bringing charges against his superior officer were the indictments Mr. Knyvett had to answer. Those who had read the evidence knew what an able defence the officer concerned had made. Mr. Knyvett knew what the charges were that he had to meet.

Mr. Gaudin: Were those charges not dropped?