

1917.
NEW ZEALAND.

AUCKLAND POST-OFFICE INQUIRY.

REPORT OF COMMISSIONER; TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

Christchurch, 7th September, 1917.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

In obedience to your Commission, issued under the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1908, and dated the 25th day of July, 1917, directing me to inquire into charges publicly made by the Rev. Howard Elliott against the officers of the Post Office at Auckland, to the effect that certain circular notices posted at Auckland on or about the 6th day of July, 1917, relative to a meeting to be held at Auckland under the auspices of the Protestant Political Association, were corruptly or improperly suppressed or detained by those officers, I opened such inquiry at Auckland on Monday, the 13th day of August, 1917.

This Commission was extended on the 15th day of August, 1917, and set out that a further charge had been made by the said Rev. Howard Elliott to the effect that correspondence addressed to post-office box 912 at Auckland has at various times been corruptly or improperly suppressed or detained by the officers of the Post Office, and also that a further charge had been made by the said Rev. Howard Elliott to the effect that military censorship has improperly and in the interests of the Roman Catholic Church been established over the correspondence of the persons using the said post-office box No. 912 at Auckland; and I was thereby empowered to inquire—

- (a.) Whether correspondence addressed to post-office box No. 912 at Auckland has been corruptly or improperly suppressed or detained by the officers of the Post Office;
- (b.) On what grounds military censorship has been established over the correspondence of the persons using the said post-office box.

And by this authority it was directed and declared that nothing in the said Warrant of the 25th day of July, 1917, or in this later Warrant, should so operate or be so construed as to authorize any inquiry into the establishment, organization, authority, or practice of the system of military censorship existing in this Dominion during the present war, save so far as any such matters, being relevant to the inquiry authorized by the said Warrants, may be voluntarily and with due authority disclosed by officers of the said censorship in the course of that inquiry, and save also the inquiry hereinbefore expressly authorized as to the grounds on which such military censorship has been established over the correspondence of the persons using the post-office box aforesaid.

Throughout the inquiry Mr. Gray, K.C., appeared for the Post Office, and Mr. Ostler for the Rev. Mr. Elliott.

On Thursday, the 16th day of August, I again proceeded with the inquiry, and later a large number of witnesses on all the issues submitted to me were examined on oath.

During the course of the inquiry I sat on eight days and examined sixty-five witnesses.

It will be convenient for the purpose of my report to take the issues submitted to me in the order in which they are set out in the extended reference :—