

necessity for which was dictated by the public danger. But, except as taken away by the War Regulations Act for that express purpose, the right of free speech still remains, I submit, in this Dominion, and before this Commission it is safeguarded by statute—unless, indeed, that statute has been undermined by some secret power of the Imperial Government, as it has been suggested the express provisions of the Post and Telegraph Act had been. As soon as the distribution of that pamphlet started, the police, in the person of a Superintendent and two constables, raided the offices of the publishers, seized copies of the pamphlet, and insisted upon the publishers disclosing the names of the persons ordering the publication. Now, it would be very interesting to know by what authority the police acted. I understand they acted by some regulation under the War Regulations Act, but I know of no authority for their doing that. The matter had no connection with the war. Any person has the right to criticize the political acts of any person or any Church, and that is all that pamphlet does. But in spite of that, tremendous pressure was brought to bear on the Government to prosecute the authors and publishers of that pamphlet. The Catholic Federation—which, by the way, is one and the same Catholic Federation which exists all over America, linked up with the Catholic Federations all over the world, because the Church of Rome is universal—the Catholic Federation all over New Zealand began to pass resolutions and send them to the Government endeavouring to bring pressure to bear to prosecute the publishers. The Hon. Mr. Herdman, the Attorney-General, who in his public acts has always shown a happy mixture of firmness, moderation, and sound good sense, absolutely refused to prosecute, and he told the authors of this pamphlet in so many words they had a perfect right to issue that pamphlet, and that by so doing they had not infringed any war regulation or any law whatever. That was in the early part of this year, 1917. Orders for that pamphlet began to come to the authors' address, to box 912. Orders were continually being sent in. From the time, however, that the Attorney-General refused to prosecute the authors a military censorship was established over that box. From that time on, although the Government had officially decided through the Attorney-General that there was no ground whatever for prosecution, and that the persons responsible for that pamphlet had a perfect legal right to publish it abroad, the Post Office, or the Military Censor—I do not care one jot which, because in either case it was equally unjust and oppressive—started to intercept orders for that pamphlet, and those orders, some of them have not been delivered to this day—one or two, I understand, actually with money-orders in them. Now, the association which I represent, which is composed entirely of loyal citizens, want to know by what right and by whose orders they are treated as disloyal and pro-German, and their correspondence held up, when they had the assurance of the Government they were doing no wrong and could send that pamphlet out. If we cannot get to know that in this inquiry this result will inevitably follow: the public will be so convinced there is something wrong about this matter that agitation will never cease until it gets to the bottom of this matter, and somehow or somewhere the public will find out the real reason; and I submit that that Government which will endeavour to shelter itself behind what I say is the hollow excuse of State secrecy in a connection like this, so much the worse for it. I submit it is absurd to suppose that the New Zealand Government could not permit and compel the furnishing of this information if it chose. If not, this Dominion is not self-governing. If not, the Constitution Act is a sham and a farce, and Parliament has been assuming functions it does not possess. Of course, the Government must have power over its own Post Office and the censorship. Not only were orders for that pamphlet held up in the Post Office, but other correspondence addressed to that box was also held up. When the Committee of Vigilance which was using the box found that the letters were being intercepted they decided to test the matter, and they thereupon wrote four letters addressed to the Committee of Vigilance, which were posted by Mr. Howard Elliott himself to box 912 on the 16th April last, none of them dealing with any war subject at all. One of those letters was delivered and the other three held up by the Post Office or the Military Censor—we have never got them to this day. The three held up all dealt with questions connected with the Roman Catholic Church, but not one of them dealt in the slightest or remotest degree with military matters. Is it any wonder, I submit, that under these circumstances and on these facts the committee should conclude that the military censorship had been established over their correspondence in the interests of the Roman Catholic Church, because that could be the only interest in which the letters were held up? The letters dealt entirely and only with the Roman Catholic Church—nothing to do with any other matter at all. The matter does not rest there, however. I hope to be able to establish—not, indeed, by my witnesses, but when the Post Office witnesses come into the business I hope to be able to establish to the complete satisfaction of this Commission that in the month of March last a written order was placed in the order-book lying in the General Post-office at Auckland to this effect: "Literature distributed by the Committee of Vigilance, Post-office box 912, is to be submitted to censorship. The literature may probably be identified by a request on the cover to return letters, &c., if unclaimed, to box 912, Auckland; or may bear the words 'Committee of Vigilance.'" And to that order some one in the office has added a footnote, "Please see that all correspondence posted at Auckland or detected in transit is submitted to the Postal Censor." Then, again, early in July the Protestant Political Association resolved to have a meeting to inaugurate their association, and in order to hold that meeting they advertised in the daily Press. The advertisements appeared in the early part of July. After those advertisements appeared and had been made public further instructions were given on the 6th July—written orders placed in the order-book in the General Post-office—to hold back all correspondence for box 912. That is to say, that they must have known in the Post-office that correspondence was going to flow to this box 912 to endeavour to make the meeting a success by distributing tickets. The meeting was advertised to be held on the 11th July, and on the 6th July an order was placed in the book to hold back correspondence. We want to know who placed those orders there and by whose authority it was done, and we also want to know the motive behind the person who gave the original orders for it to be carried