

out. Then, if it was the Military Censor, we shall never cease our agitation until we get a proper explanation—if not before this tribunal, then in some other way. But the Military Censor, or whoever arrogates to himself the authority to hold up correspondence addressed to this box, is not consistent in his actions. On Sunday night last four more letters exactly similar in tone and subject to the three held up were posted addressed to box 912. They all came through. Now, why? Have the orders been changed since because of the charges made?

*Mr. Gray:* I can safely say No.

*Mr. Ostler:* Very well. If it was right to hold up the first it was also right to hold up the second lot. If it was right to send on the second lot it must have been wrong to hold up the first. They are not consistent. That is all we propose to say about the facts of the first charge.

I then go on to the facts of the second charge—that is to say, the charge of holding up the correspondence of some forty-odd Nonconformist clergymen in this city, which prevented them giving notice of the meeting from the pulpit on the 8th July. Some forty-odd letters were addressed to Protestant clergymen in the city and suburbs, and were posted on Friday night, at about 11.20 p.m., at the Dominion Road post-office. They contained tickets for a public meeting to be held on the 11th July, and a request to the addressees to notify their congregations from the pulpit. They were posted on the Friday night in order to ensure that they should reach their destinations before the Sunday. We have most of the envelopes which were posted, and they all bear the post-mark of the General Post-office at Auckland, and the time 5 a.m., 7th July, which was Saturday, thus showing that they all reached the General Post-office and were forwarded in time for delivery on Saturday morning. In ordinary course of post those letters should have all been delivered on Saturday morning in time for Sunday. They were properly stamped, 1½d. each; they were properly sealed; they were ordinary-looking letters. None of them were held up as being overweight. They all bore on the outside a superscription, "If unclaimed within seven days please return to box 912, Auckland." Now, sir, I think there were forty-three, or forty-four to be exact. Only one was delivered on Saturday morning out of the lot, although they all reached the Post-office, as shown by the post-mark, in ample time for delivery. Two were never delivered at all; the ministers concerned have not got them to this day. All the others were delivered after Sunday, too late for the main purpose for which they were posted—some on Monday, some even as late as Tuesday. In addition, all the envelopes we have bear a piece of stamp paper on the back [specimen handed in]. It was certainly not there when they were posted; it seems to show they have been opened or tampered with in course of post.

*Mr. Gray:* You have not submitted any of these to the Postmaster, have you?

*Mr. Ostler:* I do not know just now; I will find out for you. I would just say that not one of these envelopes which we possess bears the mark "Passed by the Military Censor," or is marked at all to show it has been subject to censorship or passed through his hands. So that, in addition to the order that we know of—that we hope to be able to prove—which was put in the order-book, indeed, the very day that these were posted—to hold up the correspondence—if it was done by the Military Censor, he not only did it but he omitted to show he had done it. That is to say, the Military Censor apparently has power to hold up correspondence, open it, not to make any mark on it, but to pass it on, for any reason he likes. Now, I understand, indeed, that the facts I have stated are not denied by my friend. Could you help me, Mr. Gray, at this stage by saying whether you will deny the fact that they were held back in the Post-office?

*Mr. Gray:* I will not deny that the letters which came into the Post-office on Friday night or Saturday morning were, pursuant to instructions already referred to here, handed to the Censor. What he did with them I cannot say.

*Mr. Ostler:* Probably that admission of my friend will save the calling of fifty witnesses.

*His Worship:* I am glad to hear it.

*Mr. Ostler:* So am I. If my friend is prepared to admit the fact that these letters reached the General Post-office by 5 o'clock on Saturday morning and yet were not delivered until, some on Monday, some on Tuesday—

*Mr. Gray:* I quite admit that.

*Mr. Ostler:* If these facts are admitted or proved—I do not care which—what inference could possibly have been drawn by any fair-minded man who knew the facts, and who knew at that time nothing of what was happening inside the Post-office, except the inference drawn by the Rev. Howard Elliott, that the letters were improperly detained and tampered with in the course of post? And unless the Censor is able to give a pretty good explanation why he interfered or tampered with letters not dealing with the war at all, it is the inference which will be drawn far and wide by the public.

I now come to charge No. 3 (No. 1 in the letter to the Prime Minister), which I propose to deal with last. There were 2,000-odd envelopes posted by the association which I represent, some on Monday, 2nd July, and some on Wednesday, 4th July, all at the Dominion Road post-office. Each envelope contained a printed circular, and also a card of application for tickets [copies put in]. They were all in the same-sized envelopes and the same quality envelope; some, however, were blue, some white, the reason being that they ordered two or three thousand from the stationer and he was not able to supply them all of white, and he had to give a thousand in blue. The circulars were all the same size; they were all folded in the same way, and when folded they fitted the envelopes tightly, as you will see by that example—that is to say, so tightly that it would be practically impossible for them to fall out accidentally. The flaps of the envelopes were not gummed down, but they were turned inside the envelopes and overlapped the circular and the card inside. All were stamped as that sample before your Worship is stamped, with one-penny stamps. The stamping was done last, after the envelopes were filled, and the minds of the persons who stamped them were specially directed to seeing that the envelopes were filled first. I can show that none of those envelopes were posted