

385. Would you not know if an officer there extracted the contents of a letter and the inquiry was still proceeding?—Yes. Auckland South Central is really the official name for the office.

386. Has not a man in that office been suspended recently?—Not to my knowledge.

387. Would you deny that that is accurate?—I do.

388. Is it not a fact that the Catholic Federation's letter-box is absolutely free from censorship?—I do not know that it is under censorship.

389. I may take that as an admission that it is not, I think?—I think so.

390. Is it not a fact that there is no single Catholic priest or organization whose letters are under censorship? [Applause.]

*Mr. Gray* objected to the question, and His Worship disallowed it.

*Mr. Ostler*: I would like to point out that the question is a relevant one, because we have to inquire in this inquiry whether this censorship is in the interests of the Roman Catholic Church, and it is relevant because, whereas these loyal Protestant bodies are censored, no Roman Catholic priests or bodies in Auckland are censored.

*His Worship* disallowed the question, but after the adjournment allowed it to be put.

Inquiry resumed, 2.15 p.m.

*His Worship*: Before the adjournment I disallowed a question which at the time I did not think was relevant or should be answered. During the adjournment I have reconsidered the matter, and I have come to a different conclusion. I admit that I was wrong, and you were justified in asking the question, *Mr. Ostler*. I have re-read the Commission: "And whereas a further charge has been made by the said Reverend 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." You will have to limit the question; you will consider that. I think it is quite within the scope of the inquiry that he should answer shortly, and without reference to names or anything of that sort, whether any censorship has been established over boxes or persons connected with the Roman Catholic Church.

[*His Worship* further remarked, alluding to the applause of the public, that his mistake was contributed to by this disturbance, which was most unseemly and quite out of place in judicial proceedings, and that he was accustomed to perfect quiet and peace in Court, and that if the commotion were renewed he would reluctantly have to order the room to be cleared, leaving it to the reporters to place the facts before the public. He was not concerned with what they thought regarding the personnel of the Commission. He felt everybody present had preconceived ideas on the subject of the inquiry. Such demonstrations were most disturbing.]

*Mr. Ostler*: I would like to thank your Worship for the consideration given to the matter. I hope your Worship will not blame me for the applause. I hope every one who sympathises with the points I am to bring out will refrain from applauding.

Cross-examination of *Mr. Williamson*, Chief Postmaster, continued:—

391. *Mr. Ostler*.] Did I understand you to say that you took no steps whatever to find out from the letter-sorters whether they had let these envelopes through empty?—No, you did not understand me so.

392. What did you say on that point?—Inquiry was made of the letter-carriers.

393. Not the letter-carriers—I am talking about the sorters?—The night clerks? Inquiry was made of the night clerks whether they had seen any envelopes going through without contents.

394. What was their reply?—The reply was, they had not noticed any.

395. Was that inquiry made by you verbally, or was it made in the form of a written order to them to report?—It was made verbally.

396. There was no written instruction to them?—No written request.

397. Was that all the steps you took to find out whether they had possibly made a mistake?—Practically, yes.

398. Why do you say "Practically, yes"?—I may say they were, of course, closely questioned to give me the facts of all the circumstances surrounding the case.

399. Did it occur to you to put some empty letters through the post to see whether they would pass them?—It did.

400. Did you do it?—Yes.

401. You did? I thought you told us you took no steps beyond inquiring from them to ascertain whether they would be likely to pass these letters. That is something new?—The empty envelopes were put through to see whether they would pass such empty envelopes without bringing them under notice.

402. That is to say, to adopt the words of my friend *Mr. Gray*, you set a trap for them?—Not necessarily.

403. How many empty envelopes did you put through the post?—It probably would be half a dozen.

404. Were they detected or were they not?—They were not detected.

405. Can you produce those envelopes here?—Yes.

406. Who has them—I would like to see them?—[Witness explained that his bag with the envelopes was on the way up from the post-office.]

407. I will go on to something else at the present time. What has become of Miss Smith's letter posted back to box 912, containing an empty envelope, and not received—do you know?—For the moment I cannot recall the case.

408. Miss Smith has sworn to posting a letter to box 912 containing an empty envelope and a note, which was never received: do you know whether that was held up in the post-office?—It was not as far as I know.