

son had been asked about the matter, and had said that he made no inquiry of the Censor. I have had the shorthand notes of Mr. Williamson's evidence looked at, and it does not appear that there is a record of Mr. Williamson having answered a question by giving a reply in the terms quoted by Mr. Ostler. In any case, Mr. Williamson desires the opportunity of saying that if he did ask the Censor any question at all about the matter it was in the most casual way, and not in the prosecution of any inquiries. I am sure my learned friend Mr. Ostler will agree that Mr. Williamson would not do anything which it was not within his right and duty to do, and that he was not attempting to seek any information from the Censor with the view of upholding his other officers.

*Mr. Ostler:* I would like to say I would be very sorry to accuse Mr. Williamson of any breach of good faith. I believe that in some of his actions he has been mistaken, but I am quite certain nothing was further from his mind than any breach of good faith. I would like to make that clear.

Mr. GRAY'S Closing Address.

*Mr. Gray:* May it please your Worship, I do not think it is either necessary or expedient that I should occupy much of your Worship's time in attempting to review all the evidence, or to discuss the evidence which has been heard by you so recently, and which you will have the opportunity of considering at greater length from the notes taken by the shorthand-writer. I desire, however, on the part of the Post-office, to draw attention to a few specific matters which I think it is necessary I should emphasize.

I would first remind your Worship that this inquiry has originated from statements made by the Rev. Mr. Elliott on the public platform at the Town Hall in Auckland on the 11th July, and that according to the Press reports, which were read by persons throughout the Dominion, including the Post-office officials, he made general charges of corruption against the Post-office, and stated, without giving any details, that an attempt had been made to stifle his meeting, that letters had been improperly detained, that envelopes had been opened and the contents abstracted and the envelopes delivered empty; and he made in general terms charges of corruption and misconduct on the part of the Post-office and the officers who work in it. He also alluded to the censorship, which he suggested was established in the interests of the Roman Catholic Church. Now, Mr. Elliott was immediately asked by the Post-office officials to give particulars of his complaints, so that due inquiry might be made. It has been made very apparent here that he neglected and finally refused to supply the ordinary particulars which would have enabled the Post-office to make the usual and proper inquiries. In point of fact, he never gave those particulars; and it was not until we came into Court here, after the inquiry had begun, that we were supplied with the names and addresses of the persons who he said had received envelopes empty, or had not received them at all, or whose letters had been detained and delayed. In the interests of the public and of the Post-office the Government decided to have proper inquiry made into the charges, vague and unspecific though they were, with the result that this Commission was set up to make thorough and impartial inquiry. At length, after the setting-up of the Commission, charges were formulated by Mr. Elliott's legal advisers, though, as I said, details and particulars were withheld until after the inquiry had begun. It is hardly necessary to observe that the Department was thus placed at the greatest possible disadvantage in inquiring into the truth of what this gentleman had so recklessly stated in public.

The charges as formulated by my friend Mr. Ostler in his letter to the Prime Minister of the 4th August were three in number. I propose to read them. [Charges read.] Now, sir, pursuant to our pressing inquiries, the particulars given to us and also given in the course of this inquiry have been reduced to this: that of 2,500 envelopes posted, nine persons received theirs empty; that two persons—the number was eventually increased to five. but in respect of those five no evidence was given about two of them—did not receive their envelopes at all; and that some forty clergymen who ought to have received their invitations and intimations on Saturday did not receive them until Monday, or, as to two or three of these forty, they are said not to have received them until Tuesday morning. Now, that seriously is the net result of what this gentleman has said. Compare these figures with the language adopted by him in his public utterances, and with the grossly inflated statements he made not only in public, but in the charges as formulated by his advisers to the Prime Minister! The Press, with the exception of the newspaper published in Auckland—I think it is called the *Free Press*—which contained a full account of Mr. Elliott's address in the Town Hall, and which he says is a fair report—a correct report—speaks of him saying that he has a "mass" of letters, and that "there never has been such an exhibition of the corruption that exists in connection with our Postal service as this meeting has revealed. I want to say that the contents of envelopes that were posted containing invitations to attend this meeting were abstracted. Those envelopes all passed through the hands of men who paid particular attention to them": and so on. Now, as I say, compare the details given in the course of this inquiry with statements of that character, and also compare these details with the language he has adopted throughout, including the statement made by him to one of his witnesses that that witness was one of thousands who did not receive their invitations!

*Mr. Ostler:* He did not say that.

*Mr. Gray:* Mr. Woodruffe, I think, is the gentleman's name.

*Mr. Ostler:* "One of the thousand." He did not say he was one of thousands.

*Mr. Gray:* "Thousands who did not receive tickets," the expression was. Whatever the expression, it was intended to convey the idea to that gentleman that there had been a suppression of a very large number of post letters. Now, sir, I desire to say here that the question of late delivery to clergymen has been accounted for by the fact that the letters were held up by the