

advice, and it may have been right or wrong, but I submit it was given on these good grounds: First, we knew that Miss Smith's envelope had not been returned; we knew it had been posted and not received; we knew it was held up in the course of post. Secondly, the Postmaster himself, Mr. Williamson, had rushed into print within an hour or two after the time he first knew the charges had been made, and said there could not possibly be any truth at all in them, instead of, as one would expect a judicial officer to do, saying, "Well, if Mr. Elliott will supply the full particulars we will make investigation": he prejudiced the matter right away. Thirdly, Sir Joseph Ward had made a statement in the House in which he made a very angry and foolish threat that some one would be prosecuted—I do not know whether it referred to Mr. Elliott—therefore it became necessary for us to carefully preserve all our sources of proof. Fourthly, we learned that the Post Office had employed detectives to try and show that the contents of the letters had been abstracted before posting, and also employed Post Office agents to interview persons who received letters from which it was alleged the contents had been abstracted. I submit, therefore, that that justified us in withholding the information until this inquiry took place. I admit that I ought to have written to Mr. Williamson and told him what we proposed to do. I left it to Mr. Elliott, and he to me. If it was my mistake I apologize; but I still say we were justified, in view of the attitude of the Post Office, in withholding the particulars until we came to this inquiry.

Mr. Gray has tried hard to draw the red-herring of religious prejudice across the scent in this case. He went so far in his opening address as to accuse Mr. Howard Elliott of making a public attack on the Catholic religion. There is not one word to prove that—not one word. I defy him or any person in this room to produce evidence of one word said on that point by any member of the Protestant Political Association. Mr. Gray has produced Press cuttings in an endeavour to show that this propaganda has met with public disapproval. Now, I am willing to admit that the Press of this country is on the whole conducted with cleanness and impartiality, and in such a manner as to reflect credit on itself; but the Press dare not publish what the people are thinking on this point. When the Press of this country gets up against a great vested interest, the Press is either silent or neutral, and obeys the behest of that great vested interest—every one in this room knows that. For example, every one must know that the great majority of the community at the present time is firmly convinced that in the interests of efficiency and economy the hotel-bars should close at 6 o'clock until the end of the war. We know from the records of the polls that for many years the majority of the people of this country have voted prohibition. All those must be in favour of it; and we know also that many other people who never voted prohibition think that as a matter of policy and sound good sense that should be done; therefore there must be a big majority. Can any one name a paper in this country that has consistently and fearlessly advocated that reform? Not one. Why? Because the Press of this country would be up against the vested interests of the liquor traffic, that big interest that can spread its largesse in the shape of advertisements. We all know that is so. The Press of this country dare not publish the truth of what the people are thinking on this question. I beg your Worship not to be led astray by that red-herring, not to imagine that the motive of the Protestant Political Association is religious prejudice. The issue in this case is purely political, not religious in any sense.

I yield to no one in love of country and Empire. I am as anxious to see our Empire great and strong and united as any person in this room, including your Worship. So it is with every member of the association which it is my duty and privilege to represent here to-day. But our Empire will never be united and cleansed of disloyalty until we have the courage, when we see sedition rearing its ugly head, to denounce it as such. The Empire will never be united while men exist in power who are so nervous and distrustful of liberty that they think plain and true speech on political questions is mischievous because it is calculated to offend traitors. I am not going to say that every Catholic in this country is a traitor, because I do not think that is so. Many Catholics have given loyal service to the country, and many have made the supreme sacrifice. I claim for all Catholics as well as Protestants religious liberty, and I would raise my voice in defence of the liberties of Catholics as well as of Protestants. But I say most earnestly—and the same thing was said on the public platform within the past month by the Prime Minister of Australia—that there is a dark and powerful force in this country, whose political activities are inimical to the best interests of the country. I believe that this inquiry is one of the first moves in a fight which will surely be fought to a finish to curb and break that power for evil, and for that reason I am proud to have been able to take some small part in it. If I thought that plain speaking on this subject was likely to estrange a loyal section of the community I would be the first to condemn it; but no one can read that literature emanating from that section without seeing that that is not the case. I do sincerely trust that your Worship will not agree with the Solicitor-General that it is mischievous, whether in time of war or peace, to boldly challenge and fight disloyalty to the Empire, and that you will assist by your finding in this case to uphold our liberties which our fathers so dearly won, and which we have so freely bestowed on all classes and all creeds which have the inestimable benefit of the shelter of our flag.

*His Worship:* My next duty is to report to the Governor-General and forward my findings to him. The inquiry is closed.