

the "Niagara" expected to-morrow morning. Public reception postponed by wireless from the Premier. What steps *re* dealing with the "Niagara's" case do you require? Oct. 11th."

On the 12th October this telegram was sent by the Health Department, Wellington, to Dr. Hughes, Health Department, Auckland:—

Health Department, Auckland.—"Niagara" arriving to-morrow noon. Notified Spanish influenza on board increasing. Over a hundred crew down. Urgently requires hospital accommodation for cases. Administer inhalation of two parts zinc-sulphate to all on board before disembarking. Instruct those disembarking to report to Health authorities in home towns for further treatment.—HEALTH.

This telegram was marked "Seen.—G. W. R. 11/10/18."

On Saturday morning, 12th October, before the ship came alongside, the Minister cleared the wires and sent the following message "Take precedence":—

Health, Auckland.—Before Port Officer clears "Niagara" see no communication with the ship is permitted. He is to report to me through you and await instructions—(1.) Number of deaths, if any, on ship since leaving Vancouver, and if from influenza. (2.) Whether disease is not pure influenza, presenting same indications as that which has prevailed in Dominion for some time past.—G. W. RUSSELL.

Dr. Hughes says that while the gangway was being put down he received the above telegram.

Having despatched this telegram the Minister rang up His Excellency the Governor-General, whom he had previously notified of the conditions on the "Niagara" as regards disease, and informed him that influenza was not notifiable as a dangerous infectious disease, and that consequently we could not quarantine the ship on account of having influenza on board, but if the reports received made it desirable that influenza should be made a quarantinable disease he would request His Excellency to immediately sign a Proclamation, and the ship would go into quarantine. His Excellency, the Minister states, was good enough to say that while he himself would regret, if it became necessary in the public interest it would have to be done.

Subsequently the Minister of Public Health sent the following telegram to the Right Hon. Mr. Massey and the Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward, who were passengers by the "Niagara":—

Regret there should be any delay in your landing. Union Company reports 100 crew down, and hospital accommodation required for 25 severe cases. Cables report 250 deaths at Cape Town and 466 in Kimberley from influenza on Wednesday. In view of these facts and the deaths from influenza on one of our troopships it is considered necessary to ascertain if any deaths on your ship, and whether disease is pure influenza, such as has been prevalent in New Zealand for some time past. I sincerely hope answers will be satisfactory and that there will be no delay.

We take this opportunity of stating that there is no ground for suggesting that either of these Ministers interfered directly or indirectly in the decision of the visiting doctors, or otherwise in the matter.

In reply to the Minister's "Urgent take precedence" telegram Dr. Hughes wired as follows:—

On "Niagara" one death last night, broncho-pneumonia after influenza. Disease purely simple influenza. Only two passengers for New Zealand with it on board. Reply Dr. Hughes, care "Niagara."

And the following also "Take precedence" message was sent by the Minister:—

Dr. Hughes, care "Niagara."—Ship may be cleared.

The account of the circumstances in which he sent his final telegram are thus described in evidence.

The "Niagara" was moored, and the Port Health Officer and Dr. Hughes proceeded on board and met the doctors who were on board, Dr. Mackenzie and Dr. Barnett. The ship's doctor, Dr. Latchmore, had not been well, and was laid up, and Drs. Mackenzie and Barnett were really in charge. The patients on the ship were in various conditions, and the Port Health Officer and Dr. Mackenzie proceeded after a time to go over the vessel and to see all of them. Dr. Mackenzie undertook to take the Port Health Officer round those he was treating as patients. Dr. Hughes continues,—