

differences amicably settled in our favour can have made us anxious to get rid of you. We had never thought of your resignation as possible or desirable until your action about the brewery prosecutions. In that matter, trumpery as it was in one sense, we found that you differed from us on a question of vital importance. The course which you endeavoured to take, and which in spite of all our efforts you were partially successful in taking, seemed to us dishonourable. We could not approve of a colleague's attempt in his official capacity to save a personal friend from legal punishment for very gross and obvious frauds. The difference here was not one which admitted of compromise. As honest men we could not sanction such a course, nor could we think of retaining any longer such a colleague.

I cannot close without entering a strong protest against the course you have taken with respect to this correspondence, as both unconstitutional and highly disrespectful to his Excellency the Administrator of the Government. In your letter addressed to the Administrator tendering your resignation, you inform him that you have written me the letter now under reply—which you term a document of State—and request that it may be laid before His Excellency. As you were aware, the Administrator was then absent from Wellington; yet I find that you had one hundred copies of this letter printed at the Government Printing Office on Saturday, the day before you sent it to me; that the substance of it was published as a leader in the *Evening Post* of the 8th April, before it was possible for the Administrator to see it; and that, many days before it was possible for me to confer with His Excellency upon the subject, I am aware you distributed the printed copies in a promiscuous manner, and made the contents of the letter a matter of public property and of public comment. That you should have thought it honourable thus to deal with a document still under the seal of secrecy affords a strange comment upon your conception of the rights and duties of a Cabinet Minister.

I have, &c.,

George Fisher, Esq., M.H.R., Wellington.

H. A. ATKINSON.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

29th April, 1889.

In a letter from the Hon. the Premier, dated the 23rd April, but which reached me several days later, the delay probably being attributable to my own absence from town, there is contained this statement:—

“As a matter of fact in this case, when I failed to receive your resignation, as promised, by Saturday night, I did advise His Excellency the Administrator to dismiss you on Monday morning from all your offices, and His Excellency signified his acceptance of my advice as to your dismissal. Upon receiving your resignation late on Sunday night, I recommended that your resignation should be accepted, and His Excellency was pleased to approve of the recommendation in place of the one for your dismissal.”

This statement is so extraordinary, in the face of all the authorities bearing upon the subject of dismissal, that I am constrained to believe it to be involved in error. The latest authority on the subject of dismissal says,—

“It is settled now beyond dispute that the Sovereign is not to dismiss Ministers, or a Minister, simply from personal inclination, or conviction, as until a very recent day it was the right and the habit of English monarchs to do. The Sovereign now retains, in virtue of usage having almost the force of constitutional law, the Ministers of whom the House of Commons approves.”

The Hon. the Premier alleges the cause of your acceptance of his advice to dismiss me to be the failure to receive my resignation by Saturday night. The delay in sending was the delay of my private secretary, who was furnished with my draft of the letter of resignation at one o'clock on Saturday for the purpose of copying it; but surely that delay could not be a sufficiently good cause for sanctioning my dismissal.

I hope your Excellency will not think I make too bold in asking whether you will be good enough to say whether you did agree to my dismissal, and, if so, whether you consented upon the ground of the Premier's representation of my action in connection with the brewery cases, or, as the Hon. the Premier says, in the extract from my letter above quoted, because of the failure to receive my resignation on Saturday.

I have, &c.,

His Excellency Sir James Prendergast,

GEO. FISHER.

Acting Governor for the Colony of New Zealand.

The Hon. the Premier.

In reply to your question as to the hour at which Mr. Fisher gave me the letter to write containing his resignation, I would state that it was just on one o'clock on Saturday, the 6th April. He asked me if I could get it finished that afternoon, and I replied that I would not leave it until it was finished; and I worked at the letter until 5.15, when it was completed.

I immediately went to his house with it, but he was not at home, and I left the letter there, stating that I would call again after tea. I went up again about 7.30, and drew his attention to the letter, but received no further directions. Late on the following evening (Sunday), after church, I was at his house, and he requested me to take the letter to your house and deliver it personally to you. I came straight to your house, and was not more than a few minutes on the way.

It certainly was not owing to any action on my part that the letter was not handed to you at an earlier hour.

3rd May, 1889.

AMELIUS M. SMITH.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 2nd May, 1889.

I am directed by His Excellency the Administrator of the Government to reply to your letter of the 29th ultimo addressed to him.