

beyond Sea," a Premier is bound upon his honour not to falsely and basely discredit a colleague in his communications with the Crown, he being the only Minister having direct access to the Crown, I knew, and you now yourself tell me, that you had made communications to His Excellency the Administrator of a nature highly injurious to me. I had no means of counteracting the effect of your slanders and of refuting them, except by making known the nature of my answers to the slanders. And then, the printed copies of my reply were not, as you say, "distributed in a "promiscuous manner." They were sent to members of Parliament only, and not even to all of them, for there was not a sufficient number of copies for all. As to the publication of a *résumé* of my reply, that *résumé* was published as is published a *résumé* of the Queen's Speech before the delivery of the Speech from the Throne. The public knew that you had put certain statements into circulation; they knew that I had made a reply. They desired some indication of the nature of that reply. What you desired, I assume, was that there should be no public answer to your public slanders. I have already told you very plainly what I thought of the leading articles published in the Wellington *Evening Press* of the 25th and 26th March, at a time when I was absent from Wellington, the material for which was furnished by a person not unconnected with the Government; and of the leading articles published in the *New Zealand Times* of the 27th and 28th March, also published during my absence from Wellington, the material for which was furnished by you. The substance of all these articles was telegraphed to the *Christchurch Press* and the *Otago Daily Times* by the person who is editor of the *New Zealand Times*—a person who is in constant and daily communication with you. The substance of the articles in the Wellington *Evening Press* was published in influential newspapers in Australia by a person in Wellington who is the New Zealand correspondent of those newspapers. And while you were secretly slandering me in every direction you think it fitting that I should stand tongue-tied and with my hands bound. This is your view of what you consider fair and honourable. If any act of mine is construed as being in any degree disrespectful to His Excellency the Administrator, I here tender to him the fullest and most sincere apology; but I will consent to submit to no lectures from Sir Harry Atkinson upon ethical subjects or upon the rights and duties of a Cabinet Minister.

GEO. FISHER.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 3rd July, 1889.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 31st May, which has remained hitherto unanswered because my time has been fully occupied with preparing for the meeting of Parliament.

While admitting the truth of none of the many grave charges and insinuations against myself and others with which your letter abounds, I propose, nevertheless, to deal very summarily with a few of them, which may be taken, both in relevancy and truthfulness, as fairly typical of them all.

First, as to what you say about Mr. Jackman. Your statement that from the 7th March he was "in daily direct communication with the Premier" and "became almost his confidential adviser" is simply untrue. Mr. Jackman has given me no advice whatever, and has had no communication with me of any kind in connection with the Junction Brewery (Gilmer's) cases. Indeed, I have only spoken to him once in my life, and that was in Mr. Glasgow's presence, when he appealed against your action in suspending him. I may go further and say that nothing that Mr. Jackman has ever done, said, or written has in any way influenced me or any of your late colleagues in our opinions as to your official conduct.

Secondly, as to your remarks about Mr. McCarthy, You speak of him as having been practically installed as Commissioner of Customs in your absence, and as having taken upon him the part of official informer to the Government and confidential adviser to myself all through these brewery prosecutions. These assertions, which it would be charitable to call reckless, and which you make no pretence of supporting by any evidence whatever, are all untrue. Mr. McCarthy, so far as I am aware, never was in the Commissioner's office, and certainly in no sense ever had any authority there; nor did he give any advice or information to me or any other member of the Government with respect to the Junction Brewery cases. What he did was, at a chance meeting on the wharf, to offer to give me information of a general character after all the prosecutions should have been disposed of, with a view to enabling us to amend the Act and prevent similar frauds in the future; and of this promise I informed you in my telegram from Wanganui on the 5th March. This was an offer of a strictly honourable and straightforward character, and it expressly excluded the giving of information as to any of the cases then pending, or, indeed, as to any individual cases at all. Your insinuations as to my friendship with Mr. McCarthy are equally baseless. He is not, I hope, my enemy, but a man cannot be called my friend and confidential adviser, when I have not spoken to him, I believe, a dozen times in my life, and certainly not more than two or three times within the last two years.

Thirdly, your assertion that I inspired certain articles in the *Evening Press* and *New Zealand Times* is also untrue. I did not write any of the articles referred to; I did not authorise the writing of them; I did not either directly or indirectly supply either of those papers with the information upon which the articles were based.

Fourthly, you assert that your portfolio was offered in March to Mr. J. B. Whyte. This is untrue. Mr. Whyte has never had such an offer either directly or indirectly, and no one has ever been authorised to make him such an offer.

I now turn to the real matter in dispute—your conduct, as Commissioner of Customs, with regard to the brewery prosecutions. You continue to speak of them as a "trunpery" matter; and I must refer you to my letter of the 23rd April for an explanation of how, "trunpery" as they perhaps were in themselves, they nevertheless raised an issue of the gravest importance. It is surely childish on your part to insist that a Ministry would not be impeached for the mere "omission on the part of a brewer to enter fifty sacks of malt in his books." The question at issue