

on the night of 3rd April. On the morning of 4th April I reached my office here at the usual time, 9.15, and received from my messenger a large number of letters—correspondence of every kind. That would be at about the usual time he brings me my letters, about a quarter to 10. My reason for being particular about the date is somewhat important. I had not finished reading my correspondence before he brought me a large envelope—and so far as my memory serves me, it was franked by Mr. Andrews, Private Secretary to the Premier, from Auckland. That letter I put on my table, and finished reading my other correspondence before I opened it. While I was engaged in the perusal of this correspondence, Mr. Hoben, the reporter of the *Evening Post*, entered my room through Mr. Govett's room, and, so far as I can remember, the words he used were these: "You have got from the Premier that letter of Colonel Fox's." I said, "I have a lot of correspondence here, and have not come across any such letter; but you seem to know a great deal more about the correspondence than I do. What do you know about this letter?" "I know all that is in it," he said. I said, "You seem to know a good deal more than I do, because I have not yet opened any such letter. You seem to take a great interest in Colonel Fox. You seem to be constantly writing something about him. I wonder where you get your information." I did not open that letter for, I suppose, five minutes after he left my room. In the envelope I found the letters which had been referred to by the Premier in his telegram. I met Mr. Ward a few moments afterwards, and I told him that I had received those letters, and I said, "I will send them on to you." I did not let those letters out of my own hands until I had gummed them up in an envelope, and addressed them to Mr. Ward. I then sent my messenger down to Mr. Ward with them. Mr. Ward returned them to me in a very short time, gummed up again, addressed in an envelope to me. I then sent them in the same manner, gummed up again, addressed to Mr. Cadman, and, to my surprise, that evening I saw in the *Post* what purported to be almost an exact copy of one of the letters. Beyond that I know nothing more about it. Now, I would like to say this: that it would be affectation on my part to say for a moment that I am not aware of the accusations which have been made against myself personally in the *Auckland Herald*, through the representative of that paper here, and in a *Wairarapa* paper, directly accusing me of having given this information to the *Post*. I have not, directly or indirectly, given, or caused to be given, that information to any one. Beyond what I have stated I know nothing whatever about it, as to how it reached the *Post*; and I am surprised that the editor of any respectable journal, knowing that those charges have been made against me in those papers, should for one moment allow that imputation to remain, knowing well, as he does, that that information never reached them directly or indirectly from me. I would mention now that the publication, of course, caused me some surprise, and I conferred with my colleagues the next day as to what action we should take in the matter; and it was decided that we should wait the Premier's arrival. I felt that the matter must be inquired into, and, in order to make no mistake about the facts, I noted down what took place between myself and the *Post's* representative, which I have already stated. I then asked my messenger if he could remember giving me a large envelope in the morning after he had brought me the other letters; and after thinking a moment or two he said, "Yes, I remember bringing you a letter after the other letters." I then asked him where he got the letter, and he replied, as far as I can recollect, that he found it on the table outside in the corridor, where the letters are generally sorted. I asked him to recollect that fact, and other facts which he stated, because, I said, "the possibility is that you may be asked to make a statement at a later period." He said he would do so.

66. When did this conversation occur with the messenger?—The morning after the publication—the 5th April it would be.

67. The messenger is Sandbrook?—Yes.

68. I want to trace as far as possible the peregrinations of this letter. Do you think you sent the letter out of your room to the Premier's room, addressed to Mr. Seddon, with orders that it was to be left there?—I should think not. I presume you mean before the publication?

69. Yes?—No, I did not, and I will tell you why. Mr. Cadman had it in his possession on the night of the 4th April, because he telephoned to me at the Hutt—as did Mr. Ward—asking if I had read the *Post*; and Mr. Cadman, through the telephone, so far as I can remember, informed me that he had not opened the letter yet which I had sent him. When Mr. Cadman returned it to me the next day, or the day after, I gummed it up and sent it on in the usual way to the Premier. But I think that would be two days after the publication.

70. Then, on the morning of the date of publication—viz., 4th April—I understand you did not send it to the Premier's room by Sandbrook?—No, certainly not. I could not possibly have done so, because first Mr. Ward saw it, and then Mr. Cadman received it; but, as he afterwards informed me, he did not open it.

71. Then, of course, if you did not send it to the Premier's room you could not have asked Sandbrook to bring it back, as he says, to the best of his recollection, he did, in precisely the same condition as when he took it and laid it on the Premier's table. There seems to be some confusion as to dates or time?—Of course it would have been absurd for me to have done such a thing as that. It being forwarded to me for the benefit of other Ministers as well as myself, I do not see what object I could have in sending a letter to the Premier's room, which must wait there until the Premier's return, before other Ministers could have seen it. It is just possible it may have gone to the Premier through Sandbrook; but, as Mr. Ward will tell you, he received it that morning from me.

72. I want to try and form a chain to see how the thing travelled. The evidence before me at present is that Sandbrook got the letter on the morning of the date of publication, addressed to the Premier; that you sealed it up and gave it to him, telling him to leave it on the Premier's table; and it was left on the Premier's table; that five minutes afterwards you sent him back for it, and he brought it back to you intact, having found it in precisely the same spot as he had left it?—If he says so I would not like to contradict it, but I have no recollection of having taken such a