

1944
NEW ZEALAND

POSTAL CENSORSHIP COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF THE)

(MR. H. E. COMBS, CHAIRMAN)

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives

ORDER OF REFERENCE

Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives

SATURDAY, THE 25TH DAY OF MARCH, 1944

Ordered, "That a Select Committee be appointed, consisting of ten members, to inquire into and report upon the allegations made by members of the House in regard to the operations of the postal censorship: the Committee to consist of Mr. Bowden, Rev. Clyde Carr, Mr. Coleman, Mr. Combs, Mr. Doidge, Mr. Lowry, Mr. McCombs, Mr. Oram, Mr. Sheat, and the Mover."—(Right Hon. Mr. FRASER.)

REPORT

By direction of the Postal Censorship Committee, which was set up by order of the House "to inquire into and report upon the allegations made by members of the House in regard to the operations of the postal censorship," I have the honour to present the following report:—

1. From the evidence given before the Committee it seems that there was some misunderstanding in the minds of members of the House as to the division of authority between postal censorship, press censorship, and military censorship. The Committee, by the Order of Reference, was concerned only with postal censorship of private letters. With respect to some of the complaints under this heading the Committee did not receive conclusive evidence, and in respect of others adequate explanations were forthcoming, while in other cases it was admitted that Censors had exceeded their duty.

2. The postal censorship organization in New Zealand consists of a Controller of Censorship, a Chief Postal Censor, Supervisors of Censors, and Censors. In all, there are some two hundred and fifty Censors engaged in the censorship of letters. In matters of policy the postal censorship is under the direction of the Censorship Board.

The Committee obtained copies of the relevant written instructions issued to Censors, which were as follows:—

Dominion of New Zealand

General Post Office, Wellington C.1,
5th December, 1939.

Confidential.

P. & T. 24/2(2)

Memorandum for—

The Postal Censor,
Wellington C.1.

POSTAL CENSORSHIP: CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT'S POLICY

DIFFICULTY may be experienced at times in deciding to what extent criticism of Government policy is permitted in censored correspondence. In this respect each case is to be considered on its merits. The Controller of Censorship has laid down that generally most of the views expressed in letters which have so far come under notice are merely personal views. Where, however, these views are likely to mislead, are exaggerated, or are likely to damage the reputation of the country the portions should be excised.

A different political opinion is of no moment if it is not likely to be damaging to the country's standing, and what might be passed in domestic exchanges might be open to objection if addressed to business firms overseas.

It is appreciated that Censors have cases which are difficult to decide. They can only use a wise discretion, submitting to this Office any letter about which they are uncertain.

(Sgd.) — Chief Postal Censor.