

Steer, chief reporter, "*Wanganui Chronicle*," arrived at Ohakune Police-station at 3 o'clock on Friday and left for Cowern's Mill shortly afterwards. He says any experiences he spoke of were those at Cowern's Mill as he did not go up the mountain and was not equipped for hiking. Apparently he left Cowern's Mill, and when preparing to return there on Saturday morning found it was necessary to get a permit to go to Cowern's Mill. He said, "Constable Phillips, at Ohakune, said, 'I'm sorry you can't go there this morning. The military have pickets up. He inferred that some morbid sight-seers, including women, had attempted to go there, and some sort of control was necessary.'" He got a permit at about 11 and went on to Cowern's Mill. There he met Traffic Inspector J. H. B. Semple, whom he knew very well. He gave him a friendly tip, as he put it, not to go near the radio van and also said, "Tell any of your chaps not to start the engines of their cars because these radio sets in the mountain had been up there twenty-four hours or more, the batteries are getting a bit run down, and there was interference with cars moving around the yard." He said he hoped that within a short time men would come down from the mountain and they could get first-hand stories of conditions, but while waiting approached an Army officer and asked if he could have some information for publication on the part played by the Army in organizing and assisting ground operations. I said to him, "You people appear to be doing a very good job of work," and I suggested they should be given some credit for that. However, they said they could not speak to the press, the only Army officer who could give information was the Commanding Officer, Colonel Pleasants, who at that time was not at Cowern's Mill. Our main task was to get news from the mountain. About a quarter to four he met a party of about six men. One said to me, "We got to the plane at 9.15," and I said it was tough going. What he said I can't remember. No further conversation because an Army officer came up and said, "Stop, that is prohibited." He said no interviews were to be given in the yard. The man who was asked to give information did not look like a soldier. I was particularly careful not to approach Army, Navy, or Air Force personnel. The Army officer I since recognize as Captain Slade-Jones. He said his instructions were those received from his Commanding Officer by some high authority. I couldn't swear that he mentioned Mr. Nash by name. I've always thought at the time he said Mr. Nash. In the report I wrote of the incident that night I referred to the Prime Minister or his Department. Although I can't remember actually, he did say from some one high up. Mr. Nash was the highest possible authority I could think of. I heard Mr. Hetherington seeking to ascertain from an Army officer his authority to prevent us interviewing civilians. He got no direct reply. Constable Roscoe was standing by. He was in plain clothes. There was at that time reference made to instructions received *re* interviewing returning search parties. Two men who said they had been operating a radio officially, not just amateurs listening in, told a group of pressmen, of whom I was one, that a message had been received that no restrictions were to be placed on reporters."

In conclusion, Mr. Steer claimed that there was a form of censorship exercised at Cowern's Mill, and, as far as the press was concerned, he could see no reason for it. Mr. Cleary, in cross-examination, asked this witness what were the facts on which he said censorship was imposed. His answer was, "I was prevented for the best part of two hours from doing the work which my paper sent me there to do. Next question was, "Prevented by whom, in what way, on how many occasions from doing what work?" Answer was, "By Army officer, who told us emphatically that no interviews were permitted in that yard, and that yard used in the general sense then embraced a fairly large paddock." He said he was quite satisfied with that answer and didn't want to add to it.

*Whitfield*: This senior reporter, *New Zealand Herald*, arrived at Cowern's Mill after 9 o'clock on Saturday morning and was told he could not enter without a permit from Ohakune. He saw Colonel Pleasants, who would not waive the necessity of obtaining a permit, but insisted he should return to Ohakune to obtain one, a journey