

had been telephoned on to Cowern's Mill by Constable Phillips before he had seen me. I appointed a sentry on the gate with instructions to admit no one who had not a pass provided by the Ohakune police. I remained at Cowern's Mill for some time until approximately 10.30 to 11. Our radio van was then in use. It was operated by Lieutenant Childs. I had occasion to ask two men who had told me they were pressmen to move away from the van. They had previously asked him if there would be any information released from there. I told them no, but what information came down from the mountain was being passed direct to the Air Force at Karioi and moved on to Air Traffic Control. They inquired if it was going to Wellington for issue from the Prime Minister's Department. I replied that I knew nothing of it, I was only concerned with passing it to Air Traffic Control. Again they approached when I was near the radio van and stood listening. I went up to them and said, "I'm sorry, but I am afraid I must ask you to leave the area." They questioned my authority to say so, and I informed them that I had been given authority to control the area as I understood from the Prime Minister's Department. If they went to Ohakune the police would decide whether or not they should come into the area and would give them passes to do so. They expressed surprise that the police could overrule the Army, but I pointed out that I was merely acting in that area for the police. They stated they would go to Ohakune, ring Wellington, and get it fixed. I told them the Ohakune police were issuing the authority to come into the area. They left. This incident took place about 9.30. I later learned when I returned in the afternoon—I was handed a message, which I now have, that pressmen could use Ohakune track. It was delivered to Captain Slade-Jones some time in the morning after I left. I have that message. It reads: "From Constable Auld. Will you contact Colonel Pleasants and advise him that he and his Department has advised that the reporters are to be permitted to use Horopito Track. They have been issued with passes by police at Ohakune." From the time I was there till I left again at approximately 7 p.m. I think I saw some twenty or thirty men return. There were a number of pressmen round the mill, a very large number; I would say there were fifteen or twenty. To my knowledge there was no restriction placed on their interviewing men coming down the track. They were asked not to interview soldiers; otherwise there was no restriction. Either myself or Captain Slade-Jones had asked them not to interview soldiers. Captain Slade-Jones had been instructed to do so. One reporter asked if he could see copies of messages which had been radiod from the plane. My reply to that was, "No, that information is confidential until it reaches Air Traffic Control." I was not aware of any instruction that could be construed as requiring information to be withheld from the press. The decision to withhold information which was passed about the crash through our wireless link was mine. I considered it was information which would affect a Court of inquiry and therefore should not be discussed or used by any one until that had taken place. Likewise the request that Army personnel be not interviewed was given by me in pursuance of regulations which state Army personnel will not give interviews to the press. Save for the fact I was prepared to disclose contents of messages passing through our military radio van, and save for request that the press not interview Army personnel, there was no restriction that I was aware of placed on the press at Cowern's Mill. Nothing came from any authority within my knowledge requiring any restriction to be placed upon them. The original decision to control the area was for reasons of keeping order and preventing people bringing harm to themselves by going up the mountain. That was my sole reason. My reason in keeping wireless messages passing through our military van confidential was that I conceived that to be ordinary military practice.

Captain Slade-Jones said that he was present when an incident took place near the army wireless van somewhere about the middle of the day which involved Constable Roscoe. He heard voices raised in front of the wireless van and looked round to see what it was all about. Constable Roscoe told him he had had a slight altercation with a pressman and he had threatened to arrest him and if there was any more of the same