

sort of abuse he would put that threat into action. During Saturday I was asked by pressmen for information. I replied that as pressmen they should know that nobody in uniform is allowed to grant interviews to the press any more than we are allowed to write to the press. I gave no instructions that the pressmen were not to interview civilians.

If he told a pressman that he had instructions from Colonel Pleasants—that is, instructions that pressmen were not to go up the track, and he had these instructions from higher up, those words would not have any relation as to whether or not pressmen would be allowed to go forward from the yard. During the day I was asked by Lieutenant Childs (the operator of the radio in the van) to keep people away from the wireless van, several times. He placed no restrictions on pressmen interviewing any one but servicemen. I received instructions from no one to place restrictions on pressmen at all. He received no instructions from the Air Headquarters regarding release of information from the mountain.

According to Senior Sergeant Taylor, the last of the bodies reached the plateau late on Saturday afternoon. The message that no restrictions were to be placed in the way of press reporters came through shortly after 6 p.m.

Counsel for the press, Mr. Stevenson, admitted that an instruction to withhold news concerning the state of the bodies and their identification should be withheld till after next-of-kin had been communicated with was proper. Mr. Smith, editor of the *Evening Post*, admitted that till the next-of-kin were notified the news should be withheld, but thought a request to the press to withhold it would have been sufficient. Mr. Smith admitted that there might have been too many reporters sent up. The Army authorities say that their instructions as conveyed to inquirers that information could not be given out applied to Service personnel only. The police officials say they had no direct instructions at all to withhold information from press. Sergeant Taylor gave his reasons, which I consider wise, for preventing other than searchers going up the track from the plateau. The period during which the movements of reporters were in any way restricted was the period during which bodies were being brought into the plateau and being identified. No civilian volunteer of the search parties who went to the plane was called to say that he desired to give information to the press or any one else. The Acting Prime Minister, on being communicated with by Mr. Munro, editor of the *New Zealand Herald*, on being informed, I assume, that Mr. Munro was told that reporters were being obstructed in obtaining news, immediately apparently told the police to order that reporters were not to be obstructed.

Counsel for the reporters, Mr. Leicester, attempted to raise the level of what are somewhat petty complaints to the ground of a fight for the constitutional and traditional rights of the press. I think the evidence must have fallen far short of his expectations. It is true some of the reporters seemed to think they were entrusted with the cause of freedom of the press, but, while subject to certain restrictions which are well known, the press has the right to publish any news that comes into their possession and comment on all matters of public interest. The press or its employees have no more right to demand news than any member of the public has. Conversely, the press has no right to demand that any other person shall withhold news. Mr. Smith, of the *Evening Post*, whose opinion must be respected, said that the right to publish news demanded as a corollary the right to get news.

Substantially the complaints relate to alleged restraint placed upon civilians, against divulging information, forbidding the use of the track from the plateau and denial of entry to Cower's Mill and the holding of interviews there. No estimate was given, I think, of the number of Service personnel and volunteers who went to the plane. Colonel Pleasants said he thought there were some sixty Service personnel working on the mountain-side and there may have been as many civilian volunteers. It was agreed