

receiving radio telephone, a condition that persisted until a temporary telephone-line was fully installed late on Sunday. Mr. Wall apparently asked him for news. He does not remember the exact words of his answer, but imagines it was something like this: "Sorry, old man, I have been instructed by Air Department that I cannot give the press any information." If he remembered rightly, he enlarged on this by saying that if Wall contacted the Information Section of the Air Department he would be given all the latest information. On that afternoon he also had a telephone call from a reporter. It was quite late, almost evening, but he does not recollect who the reporter was, to whom he gave a like reply in no uncertain terms when he said he wanted information. This reporter asked him if it was worthwhile his driving through to Taumarunui to see him and was told it was wasting time and that the airfield was out of bounds. He says that he remained on duty till about 2 o'clock the following morning. After that telephone call he says he had no further calls from press reporters. In cross-examination, when he was asked whether he had any instructions at any time from the Prime Minister's Department that he was either not to give information to the press or to withhold that information until Mr. Nash was personally advised, he said the only instruction he had was, as he had already mentioned, that which came direct from Squadron Leader Robbins, and that indeed he had no further instructions of any kind save those in regard to supplying of food by air. Asked whether he told a reporter at about 4 o'clock on Friday afternoon he must get his information from the Publicity Section of the Prime Minister's Department, he answered "No," and to emphasize this answer said that until he was called to give evidence he did not know there was a Publicity Section of the Prime Minister's Department. To the question, "If Mr. Wall swears that you said, 'If you want any information you can get it from Publicity Section of Prime Minister's Department; I hope you understand the position. I have to take my orders,'" he answered, "I don't know the exact wording of what I said, but I did not refer to Publicity Department." To the question, "Might you have told him to get it from the Prime Minister's Department?", his answer was, "I think I referred him either to the Air Department or the Prime Minister's Department." To the question, "If you mentioned the Prime Minister's Department to him as a source of possible information, did you have some instruction that the Prime Minister's Department would release information to the press?", his answer was, "No, I had no instructions to that effect." To the question, "What caused you to mention the Prime Minister's Department as a possible source of information?", he answered, "The information I had given to Robbins was going to be relayed to the Prime Minister's Department. That was the text of the message he gave me. That was the text of the instructions he gave me." To the question, "Did you understand from conversation with Squadron Leader Robbins that all information was to be sent to the Prime Minister's Department through Air Department?", the answer was, "That is more or less the impression I gained." He went on: "I would like to enlarge on that. It was obvious to me that next-of-kin are primary consideration in such disasters, and it was obvious the Prime Minister's Department were going to handle all telegrams notifying next-of-kin. That is Air Force procedure, so I presumed the same thing applied here." To the question, "From your discussion with Robbins, wasn't it clear that such information as the press would require was to come through the Prime Minister's Department?", the answer was, "Not entirely. I appreciated that primarily it would be for the next-of-kin, and once they had been notified I presumed general news to all simultaneously through either Air Department or Prime Minister's Department." To the question, "Until there was that release through Air or Prime Minister's Department was news to be withheld?" the answer was, "I would give no news whatsoever." In reply to Mr. Stevenson, counsel for the press, and the question as to whether he would pass on his instruction from Robbins to Horopito or to the mountain, he answered, "I do not think so. It was a personal request from Squadron Leader Robbins to myself." To a further question, "Are you sure you did not pass it on?" he answered, "I can say practically certainly that I did not pass it forward."