

The clearest conception of the circumstances under which these incidents arose, is obtained, I think, not from the epitomes given by counsel in their addresses, but from the statements in their own language of the police officers in control, of what they had to do and how they organized their task. I therefore set out extracts from the evidence they gave.

Sergeant Taylor, Chief Sergeant of Police at Taumarunui, was sent on Friday morning to Ohakune to take charge of police activities in connection with the expedition to the plane and the recovery of the bodies. He says, "On arrival at Ohakune at about 1 o'clock arrangements for parties to be got together had been started, and about 1.30 a force of about one hundred men left Ohakune for Horopito, and reached what is known as Cowern's Mill at about 2 p.m. This body consisted of police, Army signallers, Army personnel, and a large number of volunteers. At Cowern's Mill the transport was left, and from there they proceeded to Cascade Plateau, which was made a forward camp. To reach it they had to go four to five miles along a tramway track, then about the same distance through bush, crossing the Sulphur Stream about half a dozen times. This plateau is not a clearing on the mountain-side, but a large space is clear with overgrown scrub or dead scrub all over the place. They arrived there about 5.30. The last party arrived about 8.30. Sergeant Carlyon and his party of police arrived about nightfall and further Army personnel and Forestry people arrived about the same time. Although food had been dropped by plane, food was in somewhat short supply. The party of one hundred or more men spent the night in the open and in rain with two blankets apiece and no shelter. It rained all night. Food for breakfast did not arrive before the first party set out. At 5.30 there was no sign of a plane, but the guides set out before the sun got on the snow. About eighty men set out without breakfast. I remained at the plateau with certain other men with a reserve of Forestry, Army, and police. Before the men set out I addressed them. I told them that some of them were experienced trampers and would probably reach the plane before the police, but they were to touch nothing until the arrival of the police party. The Inspector of Aircraft Accidents, Wing Commander Kean, accompanied this party. I had been asked by Wing Commander Kean to give instructions to the party to touch nothing when they reached the plane. I made reference as to the way in which information might be given to the party, told them all to give information to me. A Mr. Christie, of the *Taranaki Daily News*, had volunteered his services, and I sent him up with the advance party. A radio transmitting-set was sent with the party. At Ohakune there was an Army Signals Corps with a van for the equipment. They had a van at Cowern's Mill so that the party at the plane had a transmitting-set, at the plateau there was a receiving and transmitting equipment, and again at Karioi Airfield. At 9.30 I received word that the party had reached the plane. That was by radio. A number of the party dropped out for various reasons and returned to the plateau, about forty of them. Conditions were too hard for them. Most of these men who returned without getting to the plane went on to Horopito. At 11 o'clock by radio I received a message from the plane that the first body was on the way down. Shortly after this, between 11.15 and 11.30, I saw the party of pressmen arrive—about ten, both reporters and photographers—I knew most of them. One or two were dressed quite O.K. for the mountain. I told them they could go no farther forward. They would remain in camp and get what information they liked there. I told them all I knew at that time. I could not let them go forward. Our own parties were returning and there was only the one track down from that particular route. It was a bad time. They were not equipped, I had no guide to send with them, and for their own safety and our convenience I kept them where they were. Apart from that they had the run of the camp as far as I was concerned. I think they had food there. These ten reporters remained at the plateau about three hours, I would say; maybe longer. I was engaged at the camp; bodies coming in had to be identified as quickly as possible. While the pressmen were still there the bodies started to arrive, the first at about a quarter to twelve. That was the body of the child.