

668. Did you hear anything about the resignation during that time, or after your arrival in Auckland?—No; of course I severed my connection with the party on arrival in Auckland, as I had reached my destination.

669. Were you assisting Mr. Andrews in Auckland?—No.

670. Did you go with the Premier's party to Ruatoke?—No; I did not go with them on the Uriwera trip.

671. What was the first you knew of anything in connection with the proposed resignation of Colonel Fox?—That was in Auckland, when I received instructions from the editor of the *Star* to inquire from Mr. Seddon if there was anything in the rumour which had come from Wellington.

672. Did you interview any one?—No; another reporter took the matter up.

673. Who was the other reporter?—I am not quite certain, but I think it was Mr. James Cowen. I know a *Herald* reporter saw the Premier as well, because he told me he was going in to see him about the rumour of Colonel Fox's resignation.

674. Have you ever seen the letter?—Yes, but only this week.

675. Did you ever see the letter, or a copy of it, or a rough draft, prior to the 4th of April?—No.

676. Did you know any of its contents?—No.

677. When did you take over your present official duties?—Last Wednesday; the date was, I think, the 2nd May.

678. Where were you prior to that?—In Auckland.

679. Are you aware of anything that might tend to enlighten the Commission on the subject-matter of this inquiry at all?—No. I may say, with regard to the arrival of the letters at Helensville, I was writing up an account from my notes of the journey up north, when the Premier and his Secretary came into the room, and, as soon as they began to open the letters, I discontinued my work and went outside to have a look round the place. I know they had a great accumulation of letters, and the correspondence from Colonel Fox may have been amongst it, but I was not aware of it.

ROBERT LECKIE sworn and examined.

680. *The Commissioner.*] What are you?—Private Secretary to the Minister of Lands.

681. I have a great deal of sworn evidence before me that this book [produced] is a record of all letters leaving the Government Buildings for delivery in town by messengers. It shows that on the 4th April, 1894, a letter was sent to the *Evening Post*. It was taken out of the building by Mason, the messenger, at 10.10 a.m., and delivered. Have you any recollection of a letter addressed "*Evening Post*" passing through your hands on or about that date, or coming under your observation?—I do not think I have sent a letter to the *Evening Post* for a considerable time, neither officially nor privately. I was in Wellington at the time. I arrived here the 1st April and left again on the 20th April.

682. Do you recollect having sent any letter from the Minister of Lands to Sir Patrick Buckley about that date?—I could not swear as to that. Of course, I frequently send letters to the Colonial Secretary and Sir Patrick Buckley, but I keep no record of them.

683. Do you recollect one?—No. I may have sent letters to Sir Patrick Buckley on that date, but I could not remember.

684. Have you any recollection of sending a letter to Mr Cadman about that date?—No, I cannot remember having done so on that particular date.

685. Do you remember any letter being received in your office from Sir Patrick Buckley on that date?—Not any particular letter.

686. I mean a letter in a large envelope, marked "Confidential"?—No.

687. Did you ever see the original letters from Colonel Fox to the Premier?—No.

688. Did you ever see what purports to be a copy of them?—No; I did not see anything of them.

689. What was the first you knew of Colonel Fox's resignation?—The publication in the *Post* was the first I saw of it.

690. What was the first you knew or saw of his alleged reasons for resigning?—That was in the *Post* too, I think.

691. Apart from the publication in the *Post*, did you know anything on the subject of the reasons?—No.

692. If such a document passed through your hands to the Minister, is it likely you would see it?—Yes; I would probably see it.

693. Have you ever been approached by any newspaper representative with regard to this correspondence?—No.

694. Or had you any communication or conversation with a newspaper man in regard to the correspondence?—No; I do not think so.

695. Not prior to the 4th April?—No. I absolutely did not know there was such a document in existence until I saw it in the *Post*.

ROBERT HENRY GOVETT sworn and examined.

696. *The Commissioner.*] This book [produced] is kept in the messengers' room. It is a record of all letters sent out into the town for delivery by Government messengers. I have sworn evidence to show that on the 4th April, 1894, a letter was sent to the *Evening Post*, as entered in this book, delivered by Messenger Mason at 10.10 a.m. Have you any recollection of such a letter having passed under your notice or being in your custody?—Certainly not. I do not recollect anything about it.

697. Have you been authorised by any Cabinet Minister, or by Sir Patrick Buckley, who is your own particular chief, to give any information in connection with the Fox correspondence to any one?—No.