

698. Did you ever see the original letters or any copy of them?—No.

699. Have you been approached by any Press representatives, in order to get this information, prior to the 4th April?—No; by no one.

FRANK HYDE, Private Secretary Hon Colonial Treasurer, sworn.

On Wednesday, the 4th April, 1894, between 10 and 11 a.m., Mr. Ward called me in, and handed me a letter from Colonel Fox to the Hon. Mr. Seddon, and instructed me to enclose it in an envelope and send it along to Sir Patrick Buckley at once. I went to my desk and, after finishing a short urgent telegram which I had been writing, a matter of only a few minutes, I gave the letter to Redmond, the Hon. Mr. Ward's messenger, telling him that it was important that he should give it into Sir Patrick Buckley's own hands, if he could; he left, and returned within two or three minutes, and informed me that he had done so. In the evening, Mr. Ward rang me up on the telephone at my house, and asked me if I had seen the *Evening Post* of that evening, and if I had noticed that what purported to be a summary of the letter he had handed me in the morning had been published? I said Yes; and he asked me what I did with the letter. I replied that I had sent it along to Sir Patrick Buckley immediately after he had given it to me, and that no one could have possibly seen it in the meantime. I did not take a draft or copy of it, nor was I authorised to do so.

HUGH POLLEN, Under-Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Department, sworn and examined.

700. *The Commissioner.*]—Will you kindly tell the Commission if you know anything in connection with the letter from Colonel Fox to the Premier, or about its various wanderings?—I cannot tell you a word about it, unfortunately. I did not know, except from the newspapers, that there was such a letter in existence. I did not know it was going to be published, and, in fact, I did not hear a word about it until it was published.

701. What was the first you knew of Colonel Fox's resignation?—The report from Auckland, in the papers, that he had resigned or intended to resign.

702. What was the next you heard of it?—Only what appeared in the papers. I knew nothing about it officially or privately. I took no interest in the matter, not being a Defence man.

703. Do you remember the date of Sir Patrick Buckley's return to Wellington?—Early in April. I can easily find out the date by referring to the books.

704. Do you remember the publication of that paragraph in the *Post*, purporting to give reasons for Colonel Fox's resignation, and making certain statements in regard to the Premier's action, and his treatment at the hands of the Premier?—Yes, I remember seeing it in the paper.

705. Do you remember, about the morning of that date, if Sir Patrick Buckley returned from Napier to his office?—I really could not remember that. I would have to look up my diary.

706. What is the number of his room?—No. 19.

706A. And who occupies No. 20?—Mr. Govett.

707. Is Sir Patrick's room between yours and Mr. Govett's?—Yes.

708. Is the door locked, or merely closed, when he is absent from Wellington. I mean his own door leading direct to the passage?—Not as a rule.

709. What are done with the letters that are addressed to him?—His messenger takes care of them. He generally leaves some directions about them: as to whether they are to be sent on, and so on.

710. Are official letters ever left on his table unopened?—Yes; for an hour or two perhaps, until they could be sent away or dealt with in some way.

711. Do you usually open official letters addressed to the Colonial Secretary?—If I have reason to think they are official, as distinguished from memoranda between Ministers. I can generally distinguish by the handwriting, or the frank.

712. If a letter was marked "Confidential," and addressed to the Colonial Secretary, what would you do?—It would be laid aside until he came back.

713. Would you open it?—No, not unless I had reason to think it was something which I, as Under-Secretary, should see.

714. You mean as Under-Secretary of the Colonial Secretary's Department?—Yes.

715. If you saw that it was franked by a Minister's Private Secretary?—I would not open it unless I had some instructions about it.

716. Do you remember the receipt of a letter addressed to Sir Patrick Buckley, and franked by Mr. Andrews, about that date?—No, I cannot remember a single letter about that date franked by Mr. Andrews.

717. Were you approached by any representatives of Wellington newspapers relative to the arrival or receipt of Colonel Fox's letters from Auckland?—No; they would not think of coming to me.

718. Who would they be likely to go to?—The Defence Office, in the first place, I should say.

719. If the letter was addressed to Sir Patrick Buckley by the Premier, from Auckland, marked "Confidential," and franked by Mr. Andrews, and the newspaper men knew they were addressed to Sir Patrick Buckley, do you think they would come to you for information?—It is difficult to say.

720. Did they go to you for information?—No; I have not the faintest recollection of being asked by any reporters as to whether there was any news about that.

721. Did you know such letters had arrived?—No.

722. Did you ever see a copy, or a draft, or the originals of such letters?—No.

723. Did you ever authorise any of your officers to give any such letters to any one if they did arrive?—No.

724. Did you know anything at all about them?—Nothing whatever. I did not see the letter until I saw it in the *Evening Post*.