

Controller of Censorship, Wellington C. 1,
5th February, 1940.

Confidential.

Cen. 5.

Memorandum for—

The Chief Postal Censor,
Postal Division,
General Post Office,
Wellington C. 1.

CENSORSHIP OF CORRESPONDENCE

You will see in the *Dominion* of Saturday, 3rd instant, that complaint is made that matter of strictly political criticism has been, allegedly, cut from letters to England. Today's *Dominion* contains my report to the Government, and it appears necessary to draw the immediate attention of all Postal Censors to the fact that legitimate criticism of the Government is not a matter for censorship. The British regulation defines for elimination from letters matter which would come under the rule "Political—containing matter inimical to national interests, especially propaganda." Note should be taken that "national interests" is not to be confused with "party interests," and criticism of the Government from the point of view of the opponents of the Government should not be eliminated so long as it does not affect *the interests of the nation*. On the other hand, two references which have come under my personal notice are quite rightly damaging to the nation—one a reference to "corrupt Government" and the other to "trickery Government" and "trickery land." These are definitely damaging to New Zealand and are quoted to assist Censors in their work. Even if they have been used "loosely," they are dangerously destructive to British interests.

Censors have a difficult and monotonous task. The elimination from correspondence of anything which might endanger our shipping or our Armed Forces is, of course, a paramount duty, and if this excision means, where letters are written on both sides of the paper, the suppression of other news, it is likely to cause annoyance, but is unavoidable.

Censors are enjoined to avoid permitting their personal opinions to intrude into their work. The Censor must always act impersonally and remember that every person has the right in New Zealand to express his own opinion on political matters. It is only when in doing so the writer suggests misbehaviour in administration that action is necessary in the nation's interests.

So that a check may be taken on what officers are doing in this matter, senior officers should direct that for a while all letters which apparently contain objectionable matter should be marked in pencil by Censors and referred for decision to the senior Censor on duty.

In conclusion, it may be said that New-Zealanders are not likely to take kindly to censorship, and complaints are likely to come in thick and strong—some no doubt justifiably and some as an indication of annoyance. So far the work has been well done, but perhaps some Censors have been a little hard in their "cutting" of matters criticizing the Government.

(Sgd.) G. MACNAMARA, Controller of Censorship.

Dominion of New Zealand

General Post Office, Wellington C. 1,
8th February, 1940.

P. & T. 24/2(2).

Confidential.

Memorandum for—

The Postal Censor,
Wellington C. 1.

CENSORSHIP OF CORRESPONDENCE: POLITICAL CRITICISM

ATTACHED is a copy of a memorandum from the Controller of Censorship on the above-mentioned subject, together with copy of extracts from the *Dominion* newspaper to which reference is made.

The contents of the attached correspondence is to be noted by all Censors under your control, and the requirement outlined in paragraph 4 of the Controller's memorandum brought into effect forthwith.

The instructions contained in my memorandum P. & T. 24/2(2) of the 5th December last are cancelled, except for the provision that in cases of doubt this Office is to be referred to for instructions.

Please acknowledge receipt of this memorandum.

Encl.

(Sgd.) — Chief Postal Censor.

It was found in practice that the early instructions, which were founded on the British regulations, were, on occasion, so widely interpreted that the Controller issued the more clearly defined instructions dated 5th February, 1940.

3. The Committee finds—

- (a) That there was no evidence to show any serious departure from these instructions; and
- (b) That no instructions had been given by the Board of Censorship authorizing the excision of political comments from letters opened by any Censor.

4. The following comments are made in respect of some of the individual allegations which came before the Committee and were within its Order of Reference:—

- (a) A censored air-mail letter was posted up in the Officers' Club in Cairo with its uncensored duplicate (which was sent by surface mail) alongside. The excision made in the air-mail letter seemed senseless to the officers who saw the letters.
- (b) A letter from a resident in Waipawa addressed to his son in the Navy was censored. The son was able to piece together the meaning of the excised part, which was political but of no real moment.