

1905.

NEW ZEALAND.

MINISTERS AND TELEGRAMS:

STATEMENT BY THE HON. SIR JOHN HALL RELATIVE TO THE "MEMO." SYSTEM.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Mr. J. Allen by Leave.

(Press Association.)

Christchurch, 7th August.

SIR JOHN HALL writes as follows to the *Press* :—

"In your parliamentary report of a few days ago Sir Joseph Ward is reported to have stated that during the Hall Ministry Ministers used the telegraph 'memo.' system for domestic messages, and that this was confirmed by the present head of the Post and Telegraph Department. Mr. Seddon further stated that if I had had time to consult my late colleagues in the Ministry of 1879 my remarks on the above subject would have been different, and that it was evident from the statement of the head of the Department that my colleagues had used the 'memo.' system as alleged. Both Ministers courteously accepted my assurance that I had not myself made such use of the telegraph.

"While this is satisfactory to myself, I cannot allow the statement as to my colleagues to remain unanswered. Only two of them are now alive and in New Zealand—viz., the Hon. Mr. Bryce and Mr. Walter Johnston. Acting on Mr. Seddon's suggestion, I have telegraphed to both of these gentlemen, and subjoin their answers. Mr. Bryce states, 'In our time "memo." telegrams were intended for confidential communications between Ministers, or for public business. The domestic use of them, I should think, never occurred to any of us.' Mr. Johnston states, 'I am quite confident that I did not use the "memo." system for private domestic messages. Will be glad that you should say so.' I am writing to the Hon. Mr. Oliver, who is now in London, and have no doubt as to what his answer will be. The rest of my old colleagues are, unfortunately, beyond my reach.

"The present head of the Post and Telegraph Department, Mr. Gray, would not, I am sure, wilfully make an incorrect statement. But during the whole of my administration the management and control of the telegraph was in the hands of the late Dr. Lemon, and I do not see how Mr. Gray can have known what messages were sent over the wires. There was no leakage in those days. I trust the above will satisfy Ministers that they have been misinformed."

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