

Mr. Maginnity.
19th Nov., 1879.

177. Are there any regulations in the department by which you are enabled to raise the question as to a Minister's telegram whether the telegram is a public or private one—that is to say, if a telegram is presented as public which you consider to be private, is there any rule by which you decide?—I think only upon one occasion was there ever a question raised as to a telegram sent by a Minister. We have rules in the department in reference to telegrams sent by Under Secretaries and subordinate officers on Government service, but which apparently contain private matter. I can only remember one case where a question as to a Minister's telegram has arisen. That was in the case of a message sent by the Hon. Colonel Whitmore.

178. You questioned that at the time of its being sent?—It was sent, and then the officer in charge applied to Colonel Whitmore for the value of it.

179. Was it paid?—No. When spoken to, Colonel Whitmore maintained that it was a Government telegram.

180. *Mr. Bowen.*] Was the matter referred to the Commissioner of Telegraphs?—No. It was passed by the General Manager.

181. You are not aware of any other instance in which the department raised the question on a Government telegram to ascertain whether it was public or private?—I am not.

182. *Mr. Turnbull.*] Are the operators allowed to use the telegraph to send messages to each other?—After office hours they are permitted to do so, providing they do not make use of any information that has passed through their hands. They can telegraph to each other private messages. For instance, supposing a fire were to occur in Blenheim after the office had closed to the public there, an operator at that place might send the information to an operator in Wellington.

183. Is there a general order as to readdressing ministerial telegrams?—Instructions were given in February, 1877.

184. But they would not be generally known?—No. I will read them: "Wellington, 22nd February, 1877.—Officers in Charge, all stations.—In the event of an ordinary telegram reaching your station addressed to a Minister which requires readdressing to some other station, you must make it a 'G.T.' instead of 'O.T. Collect.' Thus, should an ordinary telegram be sent to Hon. Major Atkinson, Dunedin, and it be found on inquiry that he is at Wellington, you will please recode it as a 'G.T.,' and send on. Acknowledge.—C. LEMON, General Manager."

185. What is the custom if a person sent a private message—what would the custom be if it was marked to be charged?—The telegram would be held at the receiving office till asked for, unless the person to whom it was addressed had left instructions that telegrams were to be sent to him.

186. *The Chairman.*] There are no accounts kept with Ministers for telegrams?—No accounts are kept.

187. In the case of this one by the Hon. Mr. Sheehan, marked "Private wire," why was not application made for the money?—I have a telegram from the Officer in Charge at Napier on the subject. I will read a telegram I sent to him and his answer: "Wellington, 17th November, 1879.—Mr. Stringer, Napier.—Urgent, take precedence.—On the 19th August last Mr. Sheehan sent a telegram from N.A., addressed G. V. Shannon, which was sent as a G.T., being coded G.T., and entered on your G.T. abstract, although 'private wire' was written in instructions. Please say if Mr. Sheehan kept any account with your counter-clerk, or made any arrangement with him as to what messages should be paid for, and what should be sent as G.T.'s, or any arrangement as to payment for messages. Can you say for certain that this particular telegram was not paid for at the time of presentation or subsequently? Reply sharp and fully. Number of message is forty-eight.—A. T. MAGINNITY." "Napier, 17th November, 1879.—Assistant Secretary.—*Re* Mr. Sheehan's message to G. V. Shannon on 19th August, the message was sent from here as G.T. No arrangements were made with the counter-clerk as to what should be sent as G.T.'s. The message was not paid for at the time of presentation or subsequently. His telegrams were usually presented by an orderly under cover.—STRINGER, Napier.—Two o'clock." It was the act of the clerk taking the message. If a packet of telegrams were lying before him to deal with, he would not notice these instructions, and if he did he probably would not understand them. He would not know what "private wire" meant.

188. The intention of the sender was that the telegram should be sent on as a private message?—I think that was the Hon. Mr. Sheehan's intention.

189. In that case the custom is to apply next morning to the Minister for the money?—That is not the usual custom. It is done here in Wellington during the session. A Minister may present a message, and may not have any change in his pocket, then payment is left over till next morning, or it may even stand for a day or two.

190. Do you know the money value of these telegrams? Have you added it up?—I have not added it up. It would not amount to a very great deal.

191. You could, if necessary, calculate the amount to a penny, I suppose?—Yes.

192. Could you give an approximation now?—About £18.

193. What would the value have been if the messages had been sent as Press telegrams?—About half the money.

194. That would have been £9?—Yes.

195. *Mr. Turnbull.*] Has there been, to your knowledge, any request to produce telegrams—not in reference to Ministers simply, but any request?

Witness: By the public?

Mr. Turnbull: Yes.

Witness: Oh, yes.

196. What is the custom in that case?—The custom is that we produce a telegram if we receive the sanction in writing of the sender or the receiver.

197. You would require to be told the subject of the contents of the telegram?—Yes; it could not be done without that.

198. And you only produce a telegram on the authority of the sender or receiver?—In certain cases otherwise, on the order of the solicitor for either party for instance. Except in such a case as