

267. Was that paid for?—That was paid. The next is No. 821, from J. D. Armstrong to the Hon. Mr. Sheehan; the next is No. 294, from G. Alderton to the Hon. Sir George Grey; the next is No. 32, from J. B. Fisher to the Hon. Sir George Grey; the next is No. 18, from Mr. H. R. Russell to the Hon. John Sheehan; the next is No. 223A, from J. B. Fisher to the Hon. Sir George Grey. With the exception of the two first, these were all readdressed as G.T.

Mr. Maginnity.
19th Nov., 1879.

268. *Mr. Pitt.*] What was done with the two first?—The two first were coded G.T. by error in transmission.

269. To whom did you deliver these copies?—To the Commissioner of Telegraphs.

270. Before giving them to him, did you ascertain from the different officers who first received the messages whether they had been paid for. I should have had to have gone to all stations, and looked for the originals.

271. Did you do so?—No.

272. Then you did not ascertain?—No. I may say I should have done so, but in the press of business and the hurry of search it did not occur to me to refer to the forwarding stations for the original messages.

273. *Mr. Macandrew.*] You have the statute—the Telegraph Act?—I have “The Telegraph Act, 1875.”

274. You have that in the office?—Yes.

275. You recognize that as the law upon the subject?—I do.

276. Do you consider you should act in compliance with the law, or by the order of the Minister, even when you consider his directions are in violation of the law?—I think I should act under the instructions of the Minister, even although I recognized that my act was in violation of the law, providing the Minister took the responsibility of my act.

277. *Mr. Pitt.*] Has your attention been drawn to a telegram sent by Sir George Grey to the Wairarapa. This is said to have been marked “O.P.S.O.”?—I have seen such a message.

278. Has that ever been paid for?—No.

279. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne.*] You say two telegrams were paid for, and marked by mistake “G.T.”?—Yes, in transmission.

280. At the office where sent?—Yes, or marked in error by the receiving officer.

281. That was found out by applying to the original source?—Yes.

282. I understand you recognize it to be the duty of the department to apply to the original source to see whether a telegram has been paid for or not?—I think so.

283. *Mr. Macandrew.*] I understand you to say these telegrams were selected by Mrs. Alexander entirely at her own discretion I suppose?—She made the search by my direction, and she afterwards submitted all the telegrams to me.

284. Supposing these telegrams had reference to other matters besides electioneering, they were selected all the same?—They were passed.

285. The telegram from Allen to me—has that any reference to anything besides electioneering?—I do not think so.

286. Will you look at that. I should say the bulk of that telegram had reference to a railway station?—Yes, that is so.

287. How far back can telegrams be referred to? Supposing the present Government wished to see telegrams sent by the Government before the last, could they do so?—No, not now.

288. How far back?—Two years.

289. Are all telegrams sent to Wellington from the out-offices?—All.

290. To what date?—To within about ten days.

290A. Then, in point of fact, you have got the originals of all these telegrams now in Wellington?—Yes.

291. You gave Mrs. Alexander instructions to select the telegrams. Were they all looked over?—No; only those sent from and received in Wellington.

292. Well, you could get all now that were sent and received in other districts?—All over the colony, if the Committee desires it.

293. You say these telegrams amounted to £18. Does that include all, both public and private?—No; I omitted the seven private ones.

294. I understand you to say it was usual to give credit to members of the House of Representatives and Ministers for a day or two?—The Officer in Charge did it here.

295. In reply to a question by Mr. Wakefield, you said the property in these telegrams vested in the then Government?—That is, the Government in office for the time being.

296. *Mr. Turnbull.*] Are these telegrams sent in priority to others? I mean, in that case, has any injury been done to the public business through it?—Government messages always take precedence of ordinary telegrams.

297. Then no public injury was done in sending these in priority?—I could not say.

298. *Mr. Wakefield.*] They are sent as soon as obtained?—Yes.

299. And they take precedence of everything?—Yes.

300. *Mr. Macandrew.*] As to that telegram from Allen to me. Do you not think the publication of that telegram might be seriously prejudicial to that man's interest in certain quarters?

Witness: Prejudicial to Allen himself?

Mr. Macandrew: Yes.

Witness: I cannot say. One thing I should like to ask the Committee: it is to permit the telegrams mentioned in the memorandum to be withdrawn. No doubt the department was in some degree responsible for these errors.

301. You could not express an opinion whether the publication would be injurious or not to the man's credit?—I do not think so.

302. *Mr. Pitt.*] What is the object of the department—what is its reason—for keeping telegrams two years?—I do not think there is any reason in particular. We reduced the time from five years to two years.