

458. Whether they are on private service or not?—If they are on private service the money should be paid at the time. *Mr. Maginnity.*

459. But if not?—If not they send them as Government telegrams.

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460. That has not been the rule in the Post Office?—No, it has not.

461. *Mr. Saunders.*] You stated in your evidence lately that the telegram sent to Mr. Ingles, which came to light accidentally, was the only telegram which had been paid for and withdrawn since?—The only one I am aware of.

462. You do not speak positively?—There may possibly be another, but it has not been withdrawn through me.

463. You mean that is the only one that you know of?—Yes, that is the only one I know of.

464. *Mr. Montgomery.*] I see here is a memorandum handed in respecting the money for certain telegrams, which a telegraphist has asked another telegraphist to collect?—That is from the counter-clerk at Grahamstown, asking Auckland to collect some money due. "Mr. Sheehan went away early; please collect from him £1 18s. 4d. due to this office." If that £1 18s. 4d. was not paid at the end of the week, it would increase that officer's balance, unless he paid it out of his own pocket.

465. If there were six telegrams sent marked "Private wire" on the same day, and five of them were charged to Mr. Sheehan, but one not charged, and that one appeared in the copies here, would you consider that was the fault of the Telegraph Office?—No; I do not recognize the instruction "Private wire" at all. If the telegraphist sent it as a Government telegram, I think the responsibility would rest with the sender. The ordinary recognized rule is that the money is to be paid at the time of presentation. That has been our only guide.

466. *The Chairman.*] But how would you account for the circumstance of six or seven telegrams all being marked "Private," and one of them being missed?—That would be an oversight on the part of the counter-clerk coding them. Would you permit me to make a suggestion to the Committee before I leave, namely, that, in reporting, they will make some suggestion to the House about the production of Government telegrams in future.

467. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne.*] You say the operator sends a telegram as a public telegram if sent by a person who happens to be a Minister or by a franking officer?—He sends it as a Government telegram.

468. Suppose I send a telegram signed with my name by a messenger with one shilling, and the messenger does not deliver the shilling, would the operator send that as a Government telegram, though it was private matter?—Yes, he would send it as a Government telegram if you were a Minister. There is a regulation to be issued on the subject now.

469. Do you mean that he would send it as a Government telegram though I had sent one shilling by a messenger?—In the first place, all telegrams are supposed to be presented at the office.

470. *Mr. Montgomery.*] If it were marked "Colonial Secretary" or "Treasurer," would that get over the difficulty?—Yes; and we make provision now in the regulations that they are to be marked with the official designation of the franking officer.

Mr. H. D. JOHNSON sworn and examined.

*Mr. Johnson.*

472. *The Chairman.*] You have been Private Secretary to Mr. Sheehan?—I have.

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473. Has he been in the habit of sending his telegrams through you?—He has.

474. And what has been the rule with regard to payment?—Payment has been made either daily or periodically for private wires. Sometimes payment was not made on the actual day, but the account was sent in by the Telegraph Department and paid. The wires were marked either "Government" or "private," as the case might be.

475. Was that in Wellington only?—Everywhere.

476. You accompanied Mr. Sheehan when he was away from Wellington?—Yes; I joined him shortly before he started north. Mr. Moss was his Private Secretary, and when he became ill I was drafted from the office to take his place.

477. You say it was the invariable rule that the private telegrams account was sent in every two or three days?—They sent in the account generally next morning. If in travelling we omitted to pay through pressure of business, they forwarded the account on to the next place.

478. You were an amanuensis?—Myself and Mr. Berry.

479. *Mr. Turnbull.*] Did you take the telegrams to the office?—They were generally sent by a messenger.

480. Did you ever have any question about what a private wire was?—Never.

481. It was understood they were paid for by Mr. Sheehan?—Yes.

482. *Mr. Pitt.*] Do I understand that the words "private wire" were put on them?—All that Mr. Sheehan was to pay for were so marked.

483. If "private wire" were not on them he intended they should be sent as public telegrams?—Yes. After Mr. Sheehan had dictated the telegrams to Mr. Berry, who was the shorthand writer, Mr. Sheehan never saw them. It was left to us to send them on as private or public, as the case might be. We signed his name.

484. *Mr. Bowen.*] Was that taken at the telegraph office without any question?—Yes.

485. *Mr. Wakefield.*] How long have you been in the public service?—Since last June.

486. In what capacity?—As clerk and interpreter.

487. You had never been in the public service before?—Never.

488. And you became Private Secretary?—Simply on account of the illness of Mr. Moss.

489. *Mr. Bowen.*] I understand you to say that sometimes you signed, and sometimes another person?—Yes; Mr. Berry.

490. Were there two who were at the same time signing his name?—Mr. Berry and myself.

491. The Telegraph Department would take either of your signatures?—Yes.

492. And ask no questions. Any one else might have gone and signed his name, and they would have taken it?—They were enclosed in a Government envelope.