

135. *Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones.*] What is your position?—Record Clerk.

136. *Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] Do the vouchers and all these things come in through you?—Yes; every file and document that comes into the office.

137. Then, if these came in while you were away Mr. Baker would see to them?—Yes.

FRANK JENNINGS examined. (No. 20.)

138. *Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones.*] What is your position in the Department?—I hardly know.

139. What is the work you have to do?—My work varies from day to day. I am shifted about from one job to another.

140. Do you have the despatching of letters?—I had the despatching of them during three different periods.

141. Do you recognise the date on this letter addressed to Captain Clark—21st March of this year [Letter handed to witness]?—Yes; I was in the office at the time, but not in the despatch office.

142. At that time were your duties, among others, those of despatching letters?—No.

143. Do you recognise that letter?—I recognise it, but it was not copied by me.

144. After it was copied who would deal with the letter?—In the ordinary course of events it should be put into an envelope and despatched.

145. *The Chairman.*] How do you recognise that it was copied by any one?—In addition to the letter-book number there is a consecutive number; the first letter despatched in January, say, is numbered 1, and the next 2, and so on. This letter is B 514.

146. *Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones.*] It came within your time?—No; I was not despatching then.

147. Do you recognise that letter as having been dealt with by you?—No; it was never dealt with by me. I will explain the circumstances. I was on a holiday at Christmas-time and early in January. I had been Despatch Clerk for eighteen months up to that time.

148. Up to Christmas of last year?—Yes; and on my return from my holiday, by order of Major Smith, I was not allowed to resume my duties as Despatch Clerk; consequently this letter would not come under my cognisance as being despatched.

149. Have you carried out the duties of despatching since last Christmas?—Yes.

150. When did you start again?—In reorganizing the office Major Smith put another clerk in as Despatch Clerk, but after a couple of months he vacated his position.

151. Do I understand that this man was put on after you left at Christmas-time and was kept on for two months?—No; after I came back from holiday leave at Christmas-time I had an assistant in the despatch office, who is now out of the office.

152. Were you still Despatch Clerk after you came back at Christmas-time?—No; my duties as Despatch Clerk were blocked when I resumed duty.

153. What period expired from the time you ceased carrying out the duties of Despatch Clerk—about Christmas-time—until you took up despatching correspondence again?—I was on casual duty from my return after my holiday up to the 1st July.

154. Within that time you had nothing to do with the despatching?—At this particular time I had nothing to do with the despatch office. The particular letter in question was written on the 21st March. I can recognise the writing of the number B 514 in the book. It was despatched by Mr. Digan, who is now in business in Wanganui. He was the one who copied the letter.

155. The writing of the number—B 514—indicates the identification of the person who copied it?—Quite so.

156. Would the person who copied it despatch the letter?—From a *prima facie* point of view this letter was despatched by Mr. Digan.

157. You have never seen that letter before?—I could not give a definite answer to that, but I can emphatically state that, in view of the date of the letter and this number B 514 in Mr. Digan's writing marked on it, it has never passed through my hands.

158. *Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] In whose writing is that entry in the book on the 21st March?—That is Mr. Rockstrow's writing.

159. Would he be the Despatch Clerk?

*Colonel Chaytor*: No; he enters the letter and then it is sent out into the outer office to be copied and posted.

*Witness*: There was an alteration made in the mode of despatching the correspondence.

160. *Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] What was the alteration?—Up to the month of December, when I went on my holiday, I and an assistant received the letters and copied them, and when a letter was copied by my assistant and handed over to me I entered it and made a *précis* of the contents in the outward despatch-book. That method of despatching correspondence was dispensed with by order of Major Smith after my holiday. The letters were copied by my assistant, passed over to me, and I entered and numbered them, and made a *précis* of the contents of each, and put each one in an envelope and despatched it. That system ceased in January.

161. *Mr. Hardy.*] Do you know the reason why the alteration was made?—I may have my ideas of it, but that would be entirely a matter of office organization on the part of Major Smith.

*Colonel Chaytor*: In this case instructions were issued that for "B" duties—my duties—a record-book was to be kept showing only those duties. This book here is the record-book for the portion of the office-work which I performed—division B. The letters are entered in that, and are sent out to the clerk, who does the copying for the whole office, and sends the letters out.

162. *Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon* (to witness).] Are all the letters put in the one letter-book?—The "B" letters are. There is a letter-book for each branch. This book is the copy-book for "B" letters.

163. The one officer does the copying?—Yes.

164. And that register is the record as to what has been done?—Yes; and this is the letter-book.