

12. How many altogether engaged in handling correspondence?—Close on two hundred.
13. What is the practice of your office with reference to complaints of non-delivery or detention of letters?—The practice is to get as full particulars as possible, and then institute the inquiry with the minimum of delay.
14. Do you desire to have particulars of complaints furnished to you as early as possible after the happening of the event?—Yes.
15. It is prejudicial, you think, to proper investigation being made if particulars are withheld or delayed?—Undoubtedly.
16. Why?—In considering complaints a fair amount depends on memory, for the reason that letters are not recorded, and if those complaints are made early the memories of the officers who are dealing with letters which may have been the subject of complaint are very much fresher than if the charges are delayed.
17. That would apply more particularly to letter-carriers?—Undoubtedly.
18. What quantity of mail-matter is handled in your office at Auckland?—A return which has been prepared for a period of twelve months—
19. *Mr Ostler.*] Prepared for this case?—Not necessarily; it is taken from the returns which are made out annually. It shows that, in the Auckland District, 26,849,017 letters were dealt with.
20. *Mr. Gray.*] Take the case of the Auckland Chief Post-office?—In the case of the Auckland Chief Post-office alone there were 12,338,911 letters dealt with; 2,976,662 book packets; 1,389,167 newspapers dealt with in the Chief Post-office.
21. That is an average of over one million letters a month, exclusive of book-packets and newspapers?—Exactly.
22. For what year is that?—For the year 1916–17; it includes part of 1916 and part of 1917.
23. Up to the end of what month?—I should say, up to the end of March.
24. Your Chief Clerk would be able to speak more particularly?—Yes.
25. During that period what number of complaints have you had: have you any record?—Yes; this report shows that the inquiries for missing letters—and parcels, which I did not mention before—were 1,486.
26. Are you speaking of Auckland or the whole district?—The whole district. The percentage of inquiries to the number of articles dealt with is 0·0004.
27. For the whole district?—Yes.
28. A very small percentage, of course?—Exceedingly small.
29. Now, speaking of your staff generally, are you able to say from the extent of your knowledge of them during the period of sixteen months whether they are capable or the contrary?—I should say, on the whole, they are a capable staff.
30. Have you ever had any occasion to investigate serious neglect of duty?—Not to my recollection.
31. Let us pass on to this particular matter. Do you remember a recent communication over the telephone from the Rev. Mr. Elliott—early in July?—I do.
32. Did he ring you up?—He did.
33. When?—I understand that he rang me up before I got home at night to my private home—I was told so when I reached there; and he rang me up afterwards—at 7 o'clock Thursday night, the 5th July.
34. Did he make a complaint? What did he say?—He made a complaint.
35. Perhaps you will give us the conversation from your recollection of it?—May I refer to a paper?
36. Is that a note you made at the time?—No.
37. Are you able to give a general outline of the conversation?—Yes. Mr. Elliott, in ringing me up, apologized for troubling me at that hour—which, however, did not matter—and said that matters were very serious, that there had been some envelopes delivered without contents.
38. Envelopes from whom—from his association or from himself?—I would not be quite sure whether he mentioned his association or simply said from himself. I agreed that the matter was serious, and put the usual questions to him with the object of endeavouring to find out when they were posted, to whom posted, and all the other particulars. I asked Mr. Elliott also to provide me with a list of the addresses—names of addressees—and, if he had any further posting, to delay it and post the following night, so as to give time for making arrangements for checking the posting going through. He agreed to both requests—that the list should be given to me, and also that the posting should be held up.
39. Did the list arrive?—The list did not arrive.
40. Have you seen it yet?—I have never seen it.
41. The list not having arrived, did you take any action?—Yes; I waited the next day, after going down to the office, for two or three hours, I should say, and then rang up Mr. Elliott and told him that the list had not arrived, that it was required, and asked him to see that it was furnished. He faithfully promised me that it would be down not later than 2 p.m. that day. I made special arrangements that when the list came to hand, if it came to the clerks' room or the Assistant Postmaster, it should come to me at once.
42. You have never had the list yet?—No.
- Mr. Ostler:* Your counsel has had it.
43. *Mr. Gray.*] I have had it since this inquiry was opened. Have you, Mr. Williamson, with the information that has been supplied to you since this inquiry opened, endeavoured to ascertain what was the cause of delay, or alleged delay, in delivery of these letters?—To a very limited extent, because the particulars had not been furnished, of course.