

434. On that list of yours which you have put in, of letters returned to the box, there is one marked "Mr. Howden, View Road, Dominion Road, Auckland"?—Not specially named.

435. I have in front of me a letter addressed to Mr. Howden, View Road, Dominion Road, Auckland, which is marked "Not found," and which, no doubt, is one of the fifty-seven returned to the box: do you see that?—Yes.

436. Can you tell me who marked it on the back "Not found"?—No, but I should suppose it was one of the carriers.

437. You do not know which one?—No, but it could be ascertained; his initials are there.

*Mr. Gray:* It is suggested it is improperly addressed.

438. *Mr. Ostler.*] A letter similarly addressed was delivered to the proper place. Who wrote the words "Try Houten"?—Knowing the practice, I should say that that was written on by the carrier to whom it was first sorted—the View Road carrier—to refer it to some other carrier to endeavour to effect delivery.

439. Are you aware that a letter exactly similar to that was delivered a day or two afterwards without any trouble?—May I revert to your former question? It has just occurred to me that that means that Mr. Howden was not known, and it might be Mr. Houten.

440. I just want to ask you one more question: in case you get a report from a senior officer as to some irregularity, such as sorters letting through empty envelopes, what methods do you adopt in your office to check that report?—A report from the public, do you mean?

441. A report from a senior officer, I said quite plainly—perhaps you did not understand me—as to some irregularity in the Post Office as to some member of your staff: what steps do you take when you get such a report?—

*His Worship:* You are in charge of your office—in supreme charge—and Mr. Ostler asks you what do you do with reports handed to you by a senior officer: do you hold an inquiry or take the recommendation of the senior officer?

*Witness:* I take the recommendation of the senior officer.

442. *His Worship.*] You do not hold an inquiry yourself?—Except in very exceptional cases. Of course, the whole of the evidence that has been taken is, as a rule, written down on the correspondence, and in cases which are submitted to me I have to judge from the minutes as to the merits of the case, and if necessary refer to the senior officers again if I am not satisfied.

443. *Mr. Ostler.*] Can you tell me why you did not send your Postal official to Mr. Hannan? You must have known when you made the inquiry that, besides Mrs. Stainton and Mrs. Stuart, Mr. Hannan complained.

*His Worship:* He has said he does not recollect Mr. Hannan's case being brought before him.

444. *Mr. Ostler.*] It was not brought before you by the letter-carrier?—I do not think it was. I do not remember.

445. Then, although you made inquiries amongst the letter-carriers, the case of Mr. Hannan was not reported to you?—Not specially.

446. Will you produce before this inquiry as soon as they come the letters which you put through the post in order to see whether the sorters would pass them?—[Eight letters produced.]

447. Are these the names of real persons?—No.

448. Just fictitious names?—Yes.

449. I notice that not a single one of those has the stamp postmark put by the machine: how is that?—On occasions the hand stamp is used.

450. On what occasions?—When there are only a few letters to be put through, or on days when the stamping-machine may be in full use.

451. What was the reason the hand stamp was used on those letters instead of the machine?—That I could not say.

452. Now, when were these writings put on the back: on the dates that they bear?—On the dates that they bear—that is so.

453. Well, then, these were not all posted at once—they were posted on different occasions?—Yes.

454. You apparently employed two Post officers to do this—a Mr. Rudd and a Mr. Harwood?—That is so.

455. Then there were five put through on the 1st August, were there not?—Yes.

456. And three on the 7th August?—Yes.

457. Now, not one of those letters would be subject to censorship, would it?—I think not, Mr. Ostler. No, they are fictitious addresses.

458. Why do you only think—you must know?—I was surprised at the question.

459. Is that all the letters put through for that purpose?—Yes.

460. Upon the reports of Mr. Rudd and Mr. Harwood did you take any action against the officers who were responsible for putting that through?—Action was taken to call on one of the officers for explanation.

461. What name?—Mr. Linton.

462. Were all passed by the same man?—No.

463. Three are alleged to have been passed by a man named Comrie?—Yes.

464. Five were passed by Linton?—Yes.

465. Have you called on Comrie for an explanation?—No.

466. Have you called on Linton for an explanation?—Yes.

467. Can you tell us what Mr. Linton's explanation is?—"The attached envelopes bear the date-stamp impression of the 1st August, 1917, and the request for explanation of my passing same without contents dated 6/8/17, six days after alleged oversight. Unless my case was checked in my presence I refuse to take the responsibility of passing same."