

468. Therefore the charge was brought against this man six days after the letters were put through?—There was no charge, Mr. Ostler.

469. Whatever it is?—We simply asked him to explain how he came to pass them.

470. You read an explanation by this man, and he said he only first heard of it six days after they went through?—Yes.

471. Do you not think that was rather rough—to wait six days before being called to explain?—I acknowledge it might have been a little earlier.

472. How long did Mr. Comrie have to wait?—Mr. Comrie has not been asked.

473. Why not? Waiting for sufficient time for him to forget?—Not necessarily.

474. It is some time since it was the 7th August?—Yes.

475. Is that a usual practice—to test your sorters?—Not in regard to passing without contents; but in this case there was a difference of opinion between officers as to whether letters without contents could be easily passed. It was a method to find out whether the opinion was correct or not.

476. Would you mind letting me see the explanation of Linton. “These letters which were posted without contents were passed by Mr. Linton on the primary case. Why were they not endorsed?—P. S. Harwood, 6/8/17.” All Mr. Linton’s were put through on the 1st August—that is five days afterwards [remainder of paper read]. He might have said seven days, because it was the 7th August when it was sent on to him. What does that mean—“primary case”? is that the frame at which he works?—Exactly.

477. Have you means of checking the cases of sorters?—Yes.

478. You check it in their presence?—Not necessarily in their presence.

479. He says, “Unless my case was checked in my presence I refuse to take the responsibility.” Was he justified in saying that?—To a certain extent he was.

480. *Mr. Gray.*] You are aware it has been alleged that envelopes have been passed through without contents. Did you direct that these envelopes addressed to these persons should be put through solely for the purpose of finding out whether officers could pass empty envelopes without noticing them?—That was the sole reason.

Mr. Ostler: I do not want to suggest it was improper——

481. *Mr. Gray.*] You had no other reason than to ascertain whether the thing could be proved honestly, so to speak?—No.

482. My learned friend has asked you a number of questions about orders in the order-book, alleged offences by persons in your employ, and this posting of letters, which seem to indicate that some information has been derived from inside your office. Has any officer any authority to communicate any information as to the working of the office without your instructions?—No.

483. Is not every officer under a bond—a vow—of secrecy not to disclose any information?—According to the regulations he is.

484. Does not every officer upon being employed in the service make that declaration?—Yes.

485. And is he not required to subscribe to some form of declaration to the effect I mentioned?—That is so.

486. Then if any officer has communicated to my learned friend or to Mr. Elliott any information as to the working of the office such as I have indicated he has committed a breach of his oath?—

Mr. Ostler: What oath?

Mr. Gray: You called it an oath. “Before any person can be employed in the Department, either temporarily or permanently, declarations must be made according to the prescribed form. . . . Declaration by Post officer: I, A. B., do solemnly and sincerely declare that I will be true and faithful in the execution of the trust committed to my charge, and that I will not willingly or knowingly open, detain, return, or delay, or cause to suffer to be opened, detained, returned, or delayed, any postal packet which comes into my hands, power, or custody, by reason of my employment in the Postal service, except with the consent of the person to whom such postal packet is directed, or in such cases as are or may be provided for by the Post and Telegraph Act, 1908, or by any rules or regulations to be made in pursuance thereof. And I do further declare that I will not intentionally read the contents of any postal packet which I may lawfully open, except so far as may be necessary for the purpose of ascertaining the name and address of the writer or sender, or for any other lawful purpose; and I will not divulge to any person whatever, except so far as lawfully required, any of the contents of any such postal packet which may come to my knowledge in course of opening and examining the same for any such purpose as aforesaid, or any information which may come to my knowledge with respect to the business of the Post Office Savings-bank. And I make this solemn declaration under the provisions of the Post and Telegraph Act, 1908.”

Mr. Ostler: That refers to letters—the opening of letters.

487. *Mr. Gray.*] Do you consider that an officer is true and faithful to the trust committed to his charge if he supplies information to outsiders as to the working of the office?—No.

488. There is a somewhat similar declaration, I believe, for Telegraph officers as to secrecy?—Yes.

489. You have been asked some questions about the censorship: (To the Commissioner.) Having regard to the questions which your Worship permitted my friend to put as to whether or not there existed a censorship of any Roman Catholic organization in Auckland or of any Roman Catholic newspaper or organization, I propose, sir, to ask the witness whether he as Chief Postmaster knows whether there is any censorship applied to any Roman Catholic holding any official position in Auckland. I do not know, sir—I have no means of knowing—what the truth is; but I propose to ask him that.