

*Mr. Ostler:* Mr. Hannan has said it was delivered open. "The officer who discovers such an article must immediately bring it under the notice of a responsible officer, when the contents must be verified in the presence of each, and the authorized label affixed and endorsed 'Found open' or 'Imperfectly sealed.'"

*Mr. Gray:* That does not apply.

*Mr. Ostler:* It was my mistake.

ERNEST HERBERT TAYLOR, Letter-carriers' Sorter, Auckland, examined.

1. *Mr. Gray.*] What is your name?—Ernest Herbert Taylor.
2. You are one of the letter-carriers' sorters in the Auckland Post-office?—Yes.
3. How long have you occupied that position?—Three years permanently.
4. The time-book is there: can you say at what time you went on duty on the morning of the 3rd July?—At 5.10.
5. What other sorter was there?—Mr. William A. Abererombie.
6. Was Bush there that morning, too?—Yes.
7. Did you personally sort the letters from the tables into the various letter-carriers' walks?—I did.
8. Did you observe any envelopes such as these which were empty?—I remember sorting a lot of letters that morning. I could not say whether any were empty or not.
9. Your attention was not attracted to any empty envelopes?—No, not at all.
10. You recollect sorting a lot of circular matter with penny stamps on?—Yes.
11. Would it be possible, in sorting a large amount of mail-matter of this description, for the sorter to pass envelopes which were empty?—Yes; I think they would in a case like that.
12. Why "in a case like that"?—On the 1st of the month, and having to get the local mail through before the Main Trunk arrived.
13. Would the fact of twelve hundred letters of this kind being with the ordinary matter help to make you more busy?—Yes.
14. Would it be possible for the sorter to pass envelopes which had the flaps out?—No. I would not have passed them like that.
15. Not if you had noticed them. But in sorting a large number do you say it would not be possible to miss seeing the flaps out of circular matter?—I could not miss, I think.
16. Even though they had come up from below stamped in that way. Can you say what condition that one was in when it came upstairs?—That one was out, by the looks of it—by the appearance the flap was out.
17. What do you say about that [another specimen]?—That was in.
18. Does that indicate that the mail-room staff of sorters had passed it below?—Yes.
19. And are they better or worse at sorting than you people upstairs?—That is a hard question for me to answer. I have never worked in the mail-room, so could not say.
20. Was anything unusual done with the letters on the morning I have spoken about?—Not to my knowledge.
21. As far as you know was anything taken out of any envelope?—Nothing at all.
22. *Mr. Ostler.*] Is it not a fact that the mail-room officers are generally senior officers—men longer in the service?—No; that is not so.
23. At any rate, I suppose they would not put men on in the mail-room unless they have had some little experience sorting letters as letter-carriers, or so on?—Yes; they start them off as cadets in the mail-room.
24. Do they ever start them off in the letter-carriers' branch unless they have had some little experience?—Not in sorting.
25. Do the cadets in the mail-room do the sorting?—Not until they have had a certain amount of experience.
26. You said that on the 1st of the month you were busy: this was the 3rd of the month?—We call it the first of the month until about the 10th.
27. In the early days of the month more letters go through than towards the end?—Yes.
28. Can you remember whether it was specially busy on the morning of the 3rd July?—Yes.
29. It was?—Yes.
30. More busy than it would have been, say, on the 3rd June?—No; just an ordinary 1st of the month busy time.
31. And I understand you were able to have everything cleared up before the southern mail came in?—Yes.
32. Would you have any time to spare after clearing up and before the southern mail coming in?—On that particular morning? That I could not answer.
33. Could you answer it by reference to any time-book?—After, say, the 10th we have about ten minutes.
34. There cannot be a great lot of difference between the time taken to sort in the early days of the month and the later days?—There is this difference: after the 10th one of the two is allowed to come on duty at 6, the other at 5.
35. In both cases—whether before or after the 10th—you are nearly always able to stop before the southern mail comes in?—It must be a very special day if we cannot.
36. Do you think it likely that these letters would have gone through all the sortings that take place in the Post-office and it still not be detected that there were some empty envelopes?—I do not quite get that question.
37. There is a sorting in the mail-room, a sorting in your department, and also a letter-carriers' sorting—three sortings. Do you think it likely these letters would have gone through those three sortings without it being detected that some were empty?—I think so.