

38. On what grounds?—The envelopes being so thick.

39. And the contents were thick too, were they not?—Yes.

40. Is there not a considerable difference between one of those envelopes empty and one filled with a double sheet? Those were the contents—pretty thick. Is there not a considerable difference between one filled entirely and an empty envelope such as you have in front of you?—Not a great deal of difference. When sorting you would never notice the difference—if you were sorting them pretty fast.

41. Do you know of instances where so many letters have been passed under similar circumstances in the Post-office?—Empty? No.

42. *Mr. Gray.*] Do you think it remarkable that out of 2,500 circulars like this nine or ten should have been so passed by the sorters empty?—I should not think it remarkable at all.

WILLIAM MCCULLOUGH, Senior Letter-sorter, Auckland, examined.

1. *Mr. Gray.*] What is your name?—William McCullough.

2. What is your position?—Senior sorter in the letter-carriers' department in the Auckland Post-office.

3. How long have you been a sorter?—Sixteen years.

4. You were not on duty on the mornings of the 3rd and 5th July, were you?—Not until 7 a.m.

5. When you went on duty at 7 o'clock was all the mail-matter then clear?—Yes.

6. All clear in anticipation of the southern mail?—Yes.

7. It is perhaps hardly necessary to ask you now, but in view of your experience as a sorter, is it reasonable or unreasonable to pass an occasional empty envelope out of a very large number of envelopes supposed to contain circular matter?—Quite reasonable a few would pass.

8. Have the sorters, in point of fact, time to examine every letter in detail to see if it is empty or full?—We do not.

9. Have you seen that envelope before—that envelope addressed to Mr. Hannan? Woods, the letter-carrier, it was who took back this envelope for some instructions: do you remember the occasion?—I do not.

10. *Mr. Ostler.*] Woods, you say, did not bring that letter to you for instructions?—I do not remember.

11. You would have remembered it, I suppose, if he had?—Yes.

FREDERICK JAMES ABERCROMBIE, Clerk in Charge of Letter-carriers, Auckland, examined.

1. *Mr. Gray.*] What is your name?—Frederick James Abercrombie.

2. What are you?—Clerk in Charge of Letter-carriers.

3. Were you on duty on the morning of the 3rd July? Do you remember what time you went on duty? There is the time-book?—At 7.10.

4. By that time was all the mail-matter cleared in anticipation?—Yes; everything that had come in up to the time of the Trunk mail, which arrived a minute or two after.

5. Would the letter-carriers' sorters be careful to have all the matter cleared, knowing that an English mail was coming in?—Yes.

6. There was a big English mail, was there not?—Yes, two hundred bags, soldiers' and English.

7. And that would reach the Post-office before 7 o'clock?—Yes, about 7.

8. Would you say the carriers' sorters would be busy that morning?—They would.

9. Would there be any time to interfere with the contents of letters even if they had so desired?—I do not think so.

10. One carrier has told us that on his round there would be about three hundred letters on an average for one delivery?—Can I have his name?

*Mr. Ostler.* It was Webb.

*Witness.* Yes; he would have fully that.

11. *Mr. Gray.*] Do some have more than that?—That is about the average for most of them, I think. That particular morning they would have more.

12. On account of the English mail coming in?—Yes.

13. With a large number of letters like that, would it be an unreasonable thing for a carrier to miss noticing that a circular such as this had nothing in the envelope?—It all depends. An odd one or two might easily pass on a busy morning such as that.

14. How many walks are there?—Seventy-three walks.

15. We have been told that for the early morning sortings of the 3rd and 5th July there were about 2,500 circulars posted in addition to ordinary mail-matter. Would it be an unreasonable thing if nine or ten of those circulars were passed by letter-carriers in seventy-three walks?—I do not think so.

*Mr. Ostler.* They were not all posted together.

*Mr. Gray.* No; on the two mornings.

*Witness.* As far as I understand, no carrier has delivered more than one without contents.

16. *Mr. Gray.*] But even if nine or ten cases occurred, would that be an unreasonable thing, having regard to all the circumstances?—I do not think so, having regard to the stiff paper of the envelopes. On an ordinary morning a carrier might detect it: one or two did: Gribble detected it.

17. On a busy morning they might be excused for not detecting it?—Yes.

18. *Mr. Ostler.*] Are the letter-carriers supposed to know the contents of circulars contained in envelopes?—No.