

unfilled: that is shown by the fact, quite apart from our evidence, that by the Post Office Regulations, as I understand, if an empty envelope is posted it is the duty of the sorter—who, as your Worship knows, becomes extremely expert at his work—to mark it with the words “Received, no contents,” to initial it, and to get it initialled by another Post officer. So far as I know this was not done in a single instance in the whole two thousand, thus showing that when they went through the sorter’s hands they were filled. Now, we are able to prove that a number of them were delivered empty—how many of them we naturally are not in a position to prove. We can prove sufficient, however, to show that something was wrong, and amply sufficient to justify the charges made. Two witnesses never received their envelopes at all; nine received theirs empty. In two instances two postmen on different rounds stated to two respective witnesses, whom we will produce, that a number had been delivered empty on their respective rounds. In one of the nine cases a daughter of the addressee went to the post-office and asked for an explanation; the answer she got was that they did not know how it occurred, but they instructed her to post it back in an envelope to box 912. She did this, enclosing a note. We never got that letter—that letter has never been received. In one of the nine cases the addressee went to the post-office to inquire the meaning, and the officer at the post-office took the envelope, wrote on it “Received, no contents,” and handed it back—quite an unlawful act, quite wrong: how could that officer know that it was received without the contents?

*Mr. Gray:* Was the Chief Postmaster informed of that?

*Mr. Ostler:* I do not know.

*Mr. Gray:* We are beginning now, sir, to get particulars of these delinquencies.

*Mr. Ostler:* Another went to Devonport. He was informed they could not understand it, but they had a lot of that sort there. In one of the cases the Rev. Howard Elliott filled the envelope, remarking on the name of the addressee. In addition, there were a number of tickets posted on the 10th July for the meeting on the 11th July. In one case we can show the ticket was not delivered; in one case it was delivered on the 12th—too late for the meeting. And I can also show that persons posted letters applying for seats which were never delivered—two, perhaps three, cases. Now, what is the explanation of this state of things? I would be the first to admit that if this charge stood by itself, without anything else, it is just possible it could be explained by carelessness and laxity on the part of some one in the post-office, and had not been due to design—although, seeing the amount of laxity, it is difficult to believe that; but in view of the other charges I am satisfied that my clients are entitled to assume it was rather the result of design than mere negligence. I do not know whether I am right in this; I am going to ask whether I can get the information. We know that the number of Catholics in New Zealand is about one-seventh, or 14 per cent., of the whole population. I know Archbishop Brodie at Christchurch, speaking before you, stated there were about 150,000 Catholics in New Zealand. If that is so, it is really one-eighth of the total population; but we will give them credit for the larger number, about one-seventh, or 14 per cent. I understand it to be so, and I am going to ask the Post Office to furnish a return that the proportion of Catholics in the Post-office at Auckland is at least double that, or 33 per cent.

*His Worship:* Do they keep a record of the religions of officers? I do not think so.

*Mr. Gray:* Certainly not. Mr. Morris is here, and will tell you he keeps no record.

*His Worship:* I should think not. I have several clerks, and I should not think of asking the religion of any one of them.

*Mr. Ostler:* I understand a return has been moved for in Parliament to be laid on the table of the House: whether that is to be complied with I do not know.

*Mr. Gray:* Not as far as the Post Office is concerned. They have no means of furnishing it.

*Mr. Ostler:* On the 6th July, just when these letters were going through the Post-office, express orders were given in the order-book to prevent them.

*Mr. Gray:* I have not admitted that express orders were given then. I am not familiar with that. There was, as I said the other day, a general instruction.

*Mr. Ostler:* Each bore that stamp “Return to box 912.” In view of these facts, and the way in which the committee was previously treated, what other conclusion could any fair-minded man come to but that there was something wrong and something done by design in stopping their correspondence going through? What has made my clients so especially bitter and determined to go to any length to get the true facts is the fact that day by day—or, at any rate, week by week—they see matter going through the post, from the Catholic Church, of most disloyal and seditious utterances which no attempt is being made in the Post Office to suppress as far as I know—at any rate, no attempt to prosecute. Only the other day attention was drawn in Parliament to a most disloyal utterance of the Bishop of Limerick.

*Mr. Gray:* The Post Office exercises no censorship.

*Mr. Ostler:* Here is the fact: they stopped the letters of the Protestant Association, and they allow the letters and printed matter of Catholics to go through, notwithstanding that they contain disloyal utterances, which, if they had been made by any one not of that religion, would, I submit, entitle the makers to at least twelve months’ imprisonment under the Attorney-General’s famous War Regulations. There are many men here in Auckland who have obtained twelve months’ imprisonment for making far less disloyal utterances than many in the Catholic Press the last month I could point to. I know one the other day in the Catholic Press (*Tablet*), a statement by Archbishop Mannix against conscription: “He has been denounced, too, and in very unmeasured terms, because he had the audacity and temerity to state that murder was murder, which is the same if it was committed in Dublin or in Belgium. The Press of Melbourne had rung out in words of condemnation, and they had not heard the end of it yet. But murder was murder, no matter where it was committed, and they could not blot out the bloody stain by simply covering