

and therefore, if it was on public service, I had no notice of the fact. That wire is marked "Urgent," but all my public telegrams were marked "O.P.S. only." This one is not so marked, and when it is delivered to me after receipt I am not called upon to pay for it.

Mr. Maginnity: Would you ask Mr. Sheehan if he knows that Colonel Whitmore made a practice of marking his telegrams "O.P.S. only."

Mr. Sheehan: I could not say. There is nothing on the telegram to indicate to me that it was sent on public service. Then the telegram of the 2nd September is also marked "Urgent and private." It is not marked on Government service. It is from Colonel Whitmore to me. There are two telegrams of the 15th August from Mr. Stout to myself.

515. *The Chairman*.] I do not exactly see what is the point you wish to bring out.

Mr. Sheehan: I do not know that I have made myself clear, but the point is this: Amongst the wires which are placed in the list as having been sent by Colonel Whitmore and other persons to me are these, and I am referring to the marks to show whether they were public telegrams or are marked "Private." The practice is, when a telegram is sent to a Minister, to mark it "Collect," and if he finds it is a public wire he marks it "O.P.S. only." I wish to see whether these telegrams have been so marked.

516. That does not affect the question of payment or non-payment.

Mr. Sheehan: Of course, I could not give evidence in the case of telegrams transmitted to me. In the case of Mr. King the telegrams were received by the clerk, and it might be so in other cases. [Telegram of 15th, and receipt produced.] This is a copy of a wire from me, on the 13th August, to Mr. Stout, and the Committee will see from the terms of it that he had previously wired me, "Will forward you information required early to-morrow." He had previously wired asking for information relative to land purchases, and I replied, "Will forward you information required early to-morrow." He telegraphed to me on the 15th, "Meeting, Monday night; information not received." This is not marked as a "Government wire."

Mr. Maginnity: It is marked "O.P.S.O."

Mr. Sheehan: Not in the original by Mr. Stout. He had no authority to telegraph on public service. I telegraphed in reply to that four or five sheets of a telegram which I paid.

517. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne*.] Is that "O.P.S.O." on the original put on at Wellington?—Yes, on the original.

518. When it was presented?—Yes.

Mr. Sheehan: Mr. Stout had no authority to frank, and I submit I am entitled to the benefit of the fact that the office chose to receive them.

519. *Mr. Bowen*.] Would you, as an operator or clerk, receive from Mr. Stout, when he was not a Minister, a telegram marked "O.P.S.O."?—I think it is a case where the clerk would take upon himself the responsibility of sending it. It appears to me to be in the same handwriting.

Mr. Sheehan: I would point out to the Committee that Mr. Stout's telegram to me, to which this one is a reply, and that one which I paid, were in no sense of the word electioneering telegrams; one was a request for certain information, when he had ceased for three or four months to hold office, and I gave him strictly official information. I do not think it can be looked upon as an electioneering telegram. This being a private telegram, paid for by me, it would not be marked "G.T.," and therefore that and the number 1003 is by the office, not by me. I used no number. I am satisfied, if the Committee is satisfied, that there was no authority from me to frank, nor was I aware that it was sent as a franked wire. There is a telegram from A. McDonald to me on the 15th. When I was giving evidence the other day I thought it was from McDonald of the East Coast, and I have subsequently found that it was from McDonald of Palmerston. I cannot put my hand on the message, but I presume the Committee will permit me to assume that it was a private wire.

Mr. Maginnity: It is coded as a Government telegram.

Mr. Sheehan: Perhaps Mr. Maginnity could look up 840, to see whether it is a private wire. This original is not marked "O.P.S.O.," and even if it were he would not be entitled to frank.

520. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne*.] Mr. Maginnity, could a person send a private wire to a person marked "Collect"?—Yes, he could.

521. Then does a Minister, if he finds it to be a public telegram mark it "O.P.S.O."?—Yes.

Mr. Sheehan: I had a telegram sent to me when I was in office, which was an application for employment, and gave testimonials, and I had to pay 5s. 9d. for it.

Mr. Maginnity: If the Minister refuses to pay for it he can collect from the sender, but if the Minister likes to make it a public telegram he can do so.

Mr. Sheehan: I would point out that more than half this telegram refers to public business. Mr. McDonald had been in Wellington for the purpose of getting a Native Land Court at Awahuri, and he wanted Judge Young to sit, inasmuch as it was a case of subdivision, and the other Judges declined to sit. I should just like to ask Mr. Maginnity if he can explain, as one of these telegrams marked private wire is just as much public business, how several wires so marked are paid for, while this one is sent as a "G.T.," and so marked.

Mr. Maginnity: It would be impossible for me to answer the question, because I can only answer according to the evidence before me, but several messages marked private wire have been sent as Government telegrams. I read a message from the officer at Napier upon one particular telegram.

Mr. Sheehan: That is, the 19th August?

Mr. Maginnity: Yes.

Mr. Sheehan: To Mr. G. V. Shannon, from Napier?—Yes.

Mr. Maginnity: I had better perhaps read the telegram. [Telegram read.]

Mr. Maginnity
and
Mr. Sheehan.
28th Nov., 1879.