

43. Why could the Press Association be in a better position than the Press Agency, when both could have special wires by paying the same money?—The nature of the original agreement was that the Press Association wire should be open at the Bluff at times when the Australian mail was expected, with offices at Dunedin, Oamaru, Timaru, Christchurch, Wellington, Napier, and Auckland. That was all mentioned in the agreement, as far as my memory serves me. After that they wanted us to open as far as Grahamstown, with Hokitika and Greymouth also to be opened, but I told them it was not possible to do that, because at those stations there were only small staffs, and that it would require time to do it. While this was going on, the other association also came, and it was arranged that both were to be put on equal terms.

44. How then could Mr. McCullough Reed, acting for the Press Association, offer facilities to Mr. Wilkinson?—I do not know that. There was nothing about Grahamstown being included in the original agreement.

45. *Mr. McLean.*] Then, according to that, Mr. Reed made a false statement?—I could not say anything about that. Mr. Reed had no instructions from me.

46. *Mr. Feldwick.*] How do you arrange with matter that has to be left over? Do you not have some unsent at closing time every night?—Yes.

47. Good matter is often left out?—Certainly.

48. *Mr. McLean.*] If it was paid by quantity, would the large amount of rubbish now sent go through?—If it was paid for by the word, newspaper proprietors would see that their messages were condensed. I have seen a gentleman put in a message of 100 words, the whole purport of which could be compressed into ten. The rate is now so cheap that the time occupied in condensing is of more value than the cost of the message.

49. *Mr. Swanson.*] In fact, it is not worth the trouble to boil down?—No.

50. Are the wires often out of order?—Occasionally; at the beginning of the special-wire system there were several derangements. Thus, at Masterton some men were fencing, and threw their fencing wire across the telegraph lines, which made them unworkable. These and similar causes at the beginning of the year had been attributed to the department not wishing the scheme to be a success, and taking means to thwart it; whereas, actually, the officers of the department, I am convinced, did everything in their power to make the arrangement successful.

51. *Mr. Barff.*] Where many mistakes and delays occur, are they not caused, in your opinion, by there being a lot of incompetent boys in the department?—No. You must remember that telegraphy is a thing that has to be learnt, and it is best learnt young, like a young girl with the piano. You could not teach an old woman to play on the pianoforte. Through the rapid growth of the department in New Zealand, we have not enough good operators.

52. What becomes of the experts after they have learned it?—We have them now. There is a continual cry that we are losing them; but we are not losing them. We find that when an operator's salary reaches £180 or £190 a year, he does not leave us.

Dr. LEMON re-examined.

I wish to disabuse the mind of the Committee as to the term "special wire." The wire we have now is not a special wire. There was a special wire last year, when the telegrams only went one way between Wellington and Auckland. You cannot draw any comparison between what is called a special wire in New Zealand and what is really a special wire.

53. *Mr. Feldwick.*] Would the abandonment of one special wire be a gain to the department?—Decidedly so.

Mr. FELDWICK, M.H.R., sworn and examined.

I am a newspaper proprietor, and am conversant with what has taken place in connection with special wires. My paper is an evening paper. I have entered into arrangements with the *Press* at Christchurch for the use of their special wire. Under the present system a large amount of the matter telegraphed is put unused into the waste-paper basket; and much that is published, when we are pressed for time and cannot properly supervise, is very bad stuff, and would be much better left out. I have elicited by my questions to Dr. Lemon that there is a large amount that does not get through at all. I imagine that some of that would be better matter than what is actually sent. Necessarily what comes last is left, and it may be the best of the lot. On the other hand, an enormous amount is telegraphed and is actually destroyed, the labour and cost of sending it having been entailed in vain. My own opinion in regard to the matter is that it would be far better the special wires were abolished. I speak this entirely as I would speak it if, possessing the knowledge that I do possess, I were an outsider unconnected with either the Press or the Telegraph. Since the operation of the special wires the quality of the news-matter sent has greatly deteriorated, and I therefore regard the system as a great evil. There are two agencies in the colony obtaining news for the limited sum of £2,000 a piece. The result is that some papers are getting their telegraphing done in a lump extremely cheap; in one case, I believe, no more than £70 a year.

54. *Mr. McLean.*] You are connected with both associations. You know, then, from your connection that two newspapers are paying £2,000 between them?—I do not know it. I have heard it. We pay a small sum, £50 a year, to one. We do it for the honour and glory of having a special wire, We give the Association news as well.

55. You have heard Dr. Lemon's evidence, in which he states that two papers are paying £2,000 a year, as against all the other papers paying the same sum?—Yes.

56. Do you think it right to leave such an arrangement in existence one minute longer after the attention of the Government has been drawn to it? Is it not right that the whole of the newspapers of the colony should be put on one footing?—I do not think it right that two newspapers should be compelled to pay the whole of £2,000 a year.

57. What proposition would you make that general newspaper proprietors should be placed on an equal footing with the Press Association?—They should be allowed to transmit matter during the same hours as the Press Association, paying for that matter a word rate.

Dr. Lemon.

August 5, 1879.

Mr. Feldwick.

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