

With regard to fire insurance, and to the following return of the fire insurances on the 31st March, 1893, on account of properties placed in the Public Trust Office, it should be explained that, though the insurance policies may be in the name of the Public Trustee, the insurance office is not as a rule of his selection. When a property placed in the office is found to be insured it is the practice to continue the insurance with the office by which the relative policy may have been issued. And as to insurance of property which may be mortgaged to the Public Trustee, though the usual covenant is to insure in his name, the choice of the insurance company is left, subject to his approval, to the mortgagor. The mortgagor, however, is not permitted to change the insurance office, or reduce the amount of the insurance, without the Public Trustee's consent, which it is the general rule to withhold in cases where the change of office would not secure any advantage in low rates of premium or of security, or the reduction would be imprudent. The inquiry has occasionally been made, to which a perusal of this return may give rise, whether the Public Trust Office could not itself profitably undertake the risk of insuring against fire the properties which must be insured in the name of the Public Trustee.

A RETURN of the FIRE INSURANCES on the 31st March, 1893, on PROPERTIES placed in the  
PUBLIC TRUST OFFICE.

Name of Office.	Amount of Premiums.	Amount of Insurance.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Alliance .. .. .	34 17 11	2,607 10 0
Commercial Union .. .. .	117 2 5	10,975 0 0
Economic .. .. .	3 7 6	450 0 0
Guardian .. .. .	0 18 0	110 0 0
Imperial .. .. .	24 17 6	2,325 0 0
Liverpool, London, and Globe .. .. .	56 18 10	5,855 0 0
London and Lancashire .. .. .	22 3 9	2,540 0 0
National Insurance Company .. .. .	80 19 10	7,695 0 0
New Zealand Insurance Company .. .. .	205 15 0	22,520 0 0
North British .. .. .	13 16 0	1,450 0 0
Northern .. .. .	34 10 6	2,970 0 0
North German .. .. .	4 16 6	590 0 0
Norwich Union .. .. .	31 15 1	2,350 0 0
Phoenix Insurance .. .. .	64 15 7	4,360 0 0
Royal Insurance .. .. .	40 18 3	4,900 0 0
South British .. .. .	153 15 5	15,581 5 0
Standard Insurance .. .. .	90 2 4	10,123 15 0
Sun Insurance .. .. .	50 6 11	5,485 0 0
United Insurance .. .. .	2 17 8	887 10 0
Victoria Insurance .. .. .	51 9 5	5,190 0 0
Union .. .. .	7 0 3	950 0 0
Manchester .. .. .	5 5 0	600 0 0
Total .. .. .	£1,098 9 8	£110,515 0 0

Of the measures which specially affect particular properties, the most important which has been submitted to the Legislature for many years is "The West Coast Settlement Reserves Act, 1892." This Act, which is designed to put an end to the long-standing difficulties and disputes between the Native owners and the lessees of the reserves, sanctions what has been well described as an equitable compromise of the claims of the two parties. The Act may be stated generally to authorise the Public Trustee, at his discretion, to lease the reserves in areas not exceeding 640 acres, and to grant, on certain conditions, a renewal of the present leases to the extent of the same area by means of perpetual leases renewable on a fresh valuation every twenty-one years of the land without the improvements. The conditions of the renewal of existing leases provide that the lessees should pay or give security for the value of the improvements which belong to the Natives.

Before the passing of the Act, the position of these reserves was for many years one of anxiety, expense, and dissatisfaction to both the settlers and the Native owners, as well as to the colony. The Native owners, who generally have land in abundance for their own use and occupation, are not to resume possession of the lands comprised in the leases. These lands will continue to be leased for the purpose of providing for the Natives an income and direct profit to assist them to live in comfort on the lands reserved for their own residence and occupation, as well as an indirect profit from the increasing value which the satisfactory settlement of their idle and superfluous lands must give to their whole property. In all other respects the Act is understood to carry out the wishes of the Natives, and the administration has certainly secured from them a confidence that their rights and interests will be protected. It is expected that the bush-lands, which could not formerly be leased on terms satisfactory to the Natives, will now all be taken up readily, under conditions which, in securing to the lessees the value of their improvements, will produce in rent what could not have been paid under conditions that the improvements should go to the Native owners of the lands.

The Act came into operation on the 1st November 1892, and on the previous day the regulations were gazetted which were necessary to give effect to the provisions of section 8, under which the lessees of reserves holding under both confirmed leases and leases granted by the Public Trustee might apply for new leases. The only objection raised by the lessees to the regulations made under the Act was to the provision which, in the form of lease, required that the insurance should be in the name of the lessor. This objection, however, appears to have been satisfactorily met by the explanation that any insurance money which might become payable would have to be applied to the restoration of the insured property.