

35. The part-time office at Te Awamutu has been made into a full-time office under a District Manager, and the Agency at Hokitika has been converted into a District Manager office under the control of a permanent officer of the Department. Part-time offices were opened at Inglewood, Kaikohe, and Opunake under the control of District Public Trustees at New Plymouth, Whangarei, and Hawera respectively. New Agencies of the Office under the control of non-permanent Agents have been opened at Waitara and Picton.

36. *Inspections and Audit.*—Inspections of branch offices are carried out by officers thoroughly conversant with estates administration and accounting work. These inspections materially assist in attaining uniformity of practice and maintaining a satisfactory standard in dealing with the many complex problems that arise in handling the varied types of estates which come under the control of the Public Trustee.

37. During the year it was again found necessary, owing to staff shortage of experienced officers, to divert the activities of some of the Inspectors to other work, but comprehensive inspections of a number of branches, including some of the larger ones, were carried out.

38. Consequent upon the release from the Armed Forces of a considerable number of officers with varied experience and their return to duty in the Department, full surveys were made of the organization and staffing requirements at the branches inspected with the object of enabling the services of these officers being utilized to the best advantage and the rehabilitation of the officers themselves being facilitated.

39. At all branches specially selected officers continued to carry out a system of internal audit in connection with the custody and handling of cash, securities, and other valuables. A supplementary audit of the cash transactions was performed by the Government Audit Department.

LEGAL DIVISION

40. The legal staff in Head Office now includes the Office Solicitor, the Assistant Office Solicitor, and four Assistant Solicitors. There are also stationed at the District Public Trustee offices solicitors who, in general, carry out the conveyancing work arising out of the administration of local estates, prepare wills and securities for mortgages, and deal with Magistrate's Court work. An increasingly important part of their duties is to obtain the approval of the Land Sales Court, under the Servicemen's Settlement and Land Sales Act, 1943, to sales of land and leases for terms of two years and upwards.

41. Matters of difficulty involving controversial issues or matters requiring research are, however, referred to the Office Solicitor for his opinion and direction. Except where a private solicitor is employed by the direction of a testator or the beneficiaries in an intestate estate, applications to the Court for probate of wills and orders to administer intestate estates are dealt with in Head Office, as are applications for the resealing in the Dominion of foreign grants of probate or administration to enable the administration by the Public Trustee of assets situated in New Zealand, and the sealing of exemplifications of New Zealand grants where assets of an estate administered by the Public Trustee are situated overseas. Motions or petitions to the Court on other matters arising in the course of administration of estates and trusts are also prepared by the Office Solicitor and his staff at Wellington; and all wills prepared at the branches, with the exception of those of a simple nature, are perused and checked by him.

42. During the year administration was obtained in 2,731 estates. Other Court applications for leave to take necessary steps in the administration, but not authorized by the will or other trust instrument or by statute, numbered 67. In addition, 62 exemplifications of foreign probates or letters of administration and 130 exemplifications of New Zealand grants were sealed.

43. Another part of the work of the Legal Division arises from the operation of the Workers' Compensation Act, 1922, and the Deaths by Accident Compensation Act, 1908. Not only has the Office Solicitor to represent the Public Trustee in the prosecution or defence of claims under these Acts in his capacity of executor or administrator of estates, but where compensation-moneys are recovered by private executors or administrators