

The wealth in this district, due possibly to closer settlement, is evenly distributed, and there are no very large estates. The effect of this is that there is a larger percentage of estates per population, but the estates are smaller in value. With a new building and decentralization the business will grow out of all recognition, and the reduction in cost of administration, in labour, and in stationery once the new system is running properly will be considerable. At the present time the volume of work lies in correspondence, and if accounts are kept here and estates distributed the beneficial effect would soon be felt. Apart from this I consider the majority of estates could be administered in half the time and with more satisfaction to the clients.

A better class of client is now being attracted to the Office, and a good barometer of future business is the class of testator who comes in to make his will. A large number of wealthy testators' wills have been obtained during the last few months.

#### NELSON.

The value of the new estates reported during the year ending the 31st March last shows an increase of £34,738 over the previous year's figures.

The proposed movement for extending local administration to some of the smaller Branches will mean more expeditious dealings in administration.

The public have congratulated the Office on this new feature of administration, which is considered to be a forward step making for the future development of the Office. When this is fully established it will give the greatest satisfaction to clients of the Office.

Important office alterations have been made, and on the ground floor there is one large main office accommodating the Administration Clerks under supervision of the Chief Clerk.

The general public have been most favourably impressed with the arrangement.

There are very valuable Native reserves at Nelson, Riwaka, and Motueka. In the latter is some of the very best orchard land in New Zealand. Very considerable development has been made in the orchard industry, which is being run on scientific lines. There is a considerable work involved with the renewal of leases, registrations of assignments, and mortgages, attending to proper subdivisions, and collection of rents.

#### SITES, BUILDINGS, AND PREMISES.

During the year an office-site has been acquired at Hamilton.

Action is being taken to acquire a site at Gisborne.

The lease of the site at Dunedin on which the Office premises are erected has been renewed for a period of twenty-one years.

#### HEAD OFFICE PREMISES.

It was stated in last year's report that additional premises had been acquired at the intersection of Stout and Ballance Streets immediately adjacent to the main Public Trust building, and that the ground floor had been occupied by the Local Deputy Public Trustee and his staff.

During the present year the remaining two floors have come into occupation by the Office.

A portion of the first floor has been allotted to the Soldiers Division, and two large rooms have been set aside for the typistes.

The second floor has been used for the accommodation of the Record staff and the storage of the records.

The acquisition of the new building has enabled—

- (a.) The Intestacy Division to be transferred from leased premises to the main building;
- (b.) The ground floor of the main building to be used for the accommodation of the accounting staff, which has been withdrawn from the various Divisions and consolidated under the direct control of the Chief Accountant.