

45. It is with the deepest regret that I have to record the death during the year of Mr. F. E. Kelly, LL.B., who had been a member of the legal staff of the Office for a period of over nineteen years, and had for the last eleven years acted as First Assistant Solicitor to the Department. Mr. Kelly, besides being an officer of the highest professional qualifications, with a specialized knowledge of trustee and administration law, was one whose personal qualities had justly made him popular with the staff and with the members of the public with whom he came in contact. He had performed the important duties of his position with distinction to himself and to the Office, and his death at a comparatively early age was keenly felt by the Executive and the staff.

OFFICE BUILDINGS.

46. The restoration of the Napier building, which was damaged during the earthquake in February, 1931, was completed during the year, and in conjunction with the repairs some additional strengthening-work which appeared desirable was carried out. The major portion of the cost of the work was covered by insurance. The building was reoccupied by the staff on the 21st January, 1932, and prior to this date the local staff was housed in temporary premises in Napier. During the emergency period immediately following the earthquake it was necessary, in view of local conditions, to transfer the main staff of the Branch to Dannevirke, but a small staff was nevertheless retained at Napier, so that the Office representation in the district was not interrupted, and the earliest arrangements were made for the return of the complete staff.

The damage sustained by the Hastings and Waipukurau buildings during the earthquake was of a minor nature only, and the work of the Branch Offices was not disturbed to any extent on that account.

The expenditure incurred during the year on other Office buildings was largely confined to maintenance work.

LEGAL DIVISION.

47. The activities of the Office involve a considerable amount of legal work, consisting principally of the preparation of wills, the preparation and perusal of documents, general legal advising, applications to the Court, and the representation of the Public Trustee in Court proceedings in which he is directly concerned or in which he is directed by the Court to represent any party.

During the year 900 probates and 210 orders to administer intestate estates were granted; 610 "elections to administer" estates where the value of the estate did not exceed £400 were filed. Other Court applications for leave to take steps necessary in the administration of the estate, but not authorized by the will or by statute, numbered 113, while in thirty-seven cases it was necessary to file a certificate under Part IV of the Administration Act electing to administer the estates concerned as insolvent. Thirty-one exemplifications of probates granted abroad were sealed to enable the administration of assets situated in New Zealand, and forty-four exemplifications of New Zealand grants were sealed and forwarded to representatives out of the Dominion to deal with assets situated in their respective countries.

As in previous years, the Legal Division has in several cases investigated the possibility of claims for compensation under the Workers' Compensation Act in respect of estates administered by the Public Trustee, and obtained orders for the apportionment of compensation which has been awarded or paid.

INSPECTIONS AND AUDIT.

48. The administration of estates and other duties devolving on the Public Trustee by various special statutes are carried out by the Branches, subject to general control by the Public Trustee. In view of the specialized nature of the work, it is essential that close supervision be exercised to ensure that the safeguards instituted are functioning in a proper manner. Periodical inspections of each Branch have therefore been made by a staff of Inspectors conversant with all branches of the Office activities. Until recently the inspection work was divided into two branches,