

being shown for the wants of his wife and family. Your Commissioners are of opinion that the Public Trustee should, in every case where he has to control the estate of a lunatic, make provision for the requirements of the wife and family before disbursing any moneys for the lunatic's maintenance at the asylum. The evidence also reveals the fact that considerable hardship has often been experienced by patients discharged from lunatic asylums without means, their estates having been exhausted during their treatment in the asylum. In all such cases some pecuniary assistance should be given to the patients when leaving.

The Public Trustee has not acted with due consideration in reference to the re-leasing of certain Native reserves on the West Coast of the Middle Island. Some of the lessors, after offering fair rentals, have been compelled by the Public Trustee—without the consent of his Board—to submit to arbitration, and, as a result, have been saddled with considerable legal costs, which were incurred in consequence of unnecessary arbitration. In a recent instance the expenses amounted to several times more than the sum in dispute.

Your Commissioners are of opinion that the Public Trust Office should be managed by a Public Trustee and a Deputy Trustee, with powers almost co-equal, and that they should be men of large commercial and financial experience. The Trustees should have the assistance of an advising Board composed of two commercial men possessing special knowledge. It would be desirable that one of the Trustees and the advising Board should meet twice each week, in order to facilitate the despatch of important business.

If the Public Trustee assisted by a Deputy Trustee were carrying on the management of the Public Trust Office, it would be advisable that one of these officers should travel frequently through the Colony, with the object of acquiring information that would be of value in the interests of the Public Trust Office, and of overlooking the working of its many agencies, besides inspecting and judging of the values of any properties held as securities and about which there might be uneasiness. Your Commissioners have learned that a feeling of dissatisfaction has existed in parts of the Colony among those who had desired to communicate personally with the Public Trustee, and who were unable to make the journey to Wellington for that purpose.

On the question of the conversion of local agencies into distinct branch offices of the Public Trust, your Commissioners advise that, for some time to come, no change in that direction should be made; and certainly not until the administration at the Head Office has been placed on a sound and satisfactory basis, and until the income of the Public Trust Office will allow of adequate salaries being paid to the officers appointed to manage and conduct the business of a branch office.

Your Commissioners deem it their duty to point out the great inconvenience that exists owing to the want of sufficient office and strong-room accommodation at the Head Office. They recommend that no unnecessary delay should take place in providing ample office-room, with every necessary convenience for conducting with facility the business of the Public Trust Office. The real necessity for extensive fire-proof strong-room accommodation in such an institution as the Public Trust Office, for the safe keeping of securities, deeds, and other important documents, cannot be questioned; and it is due alike to the clients and to the management that adequate provision should be made for the proper carrying-on of the important business of so valuable a department of the State.

Your Commissioners have been unable to fully investigate the papers and accounts connected with all the estates at the Head Office, nor have they been able to visit any branch or agency of the Public Trust Office, for the reason that your Excellency's Ministers, throughout the term of the investigation, have deemed it advisable to confine the labours of your Commissioners within too limited a space of time, apparently not realising the heavy nature of the task, nor the laborious work involved by its many difficult and technical intricacies. The investigation, consequently, has not been so thorough as your Commissioners would have desired.

W. J. M. LARNACH,
Chairman.

A. LOUGHREY.

T. KENNEDY MACDONALD.