

69. Amongst the diversified assets controlled by the Office may be cited plantation and trading interests in some of the South Sea islands. During the year it was necessary to arrange for a departmental officer to visit Tonga and elsewhere in connection with certain of these interests. It is well known that the fortunes which have followed the plantation industry in recent years have been fluctuating, and that the conditions surrounding it have been very uncertain, thus adding to the difficulties of management and administration. Owing to the distance from New Zealand and the infrequent communication, negotiations by correspondence are badly hampered; moreover, direct personal contact is highly useful in matters of this kind. I am pleased to say that the visit was productive of very beneficial results, and that the business in hand was brought to a successful issue.

DESTITUTE PERSONS ACT, 1910.

70. The duties devolving on the Public Trustee under this Act were fully explained in my report of last year. The Public Trustee is frequently called upon to act in the various capacities detailed by the Act, and throughout the year has discharged this public service which the organization and facilities of the Office enable him to undertake to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. During the year a number of cases were reported for action by the Public Trustee.

CLAIMS UNDER WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT, 1922.

71. Claims under the Workers' Compensation Act constitute an important part of the Office work, and the Public Trustee's interest in these matters may arise under any of the following circumstances:—

- (1) Where he is an employer within the meaning of the Act liable to pay compensation:
- (2) Where he is the representative of a deceased employer similarly liable:
- (3) Where he is the representative of a deceased worker:
- (4) Where he is the statutory administrator under the Mental Defectives Act, 1911, of a mental patient's estate and the condition of the patient is the result of causes which create a valid claim for compensation:
- (5) Where he is the custodian of compensation-moneys payable to a person who is under the age of twenty-one years, or who is of unsound mind, or who is subject to any other legal disability:
- (6) Where he is the statutory custodian of compensation-moneys payable in respect of the death of a worker.

The Public Trustee is concerned mainly with claims arising out of the death of a worker, who is defined by the Act as "any person who has entered into or works under a contract of service or apprenticeship with an employer, whether by way of manual labour, clerical work, or otherwise, and whether remunerated by wages, salary, or otherwise; but does not include any person employed otherwise than by way of manual labour, whose remuneration exceeds £400 a year." In regard to each estate administered by the Public Trustee inquiry is made whether death was caused directly or indirectly by an accident. As it frequently happens that the immediate cause of death has been a disease or some physical defect, which, however, may have been accelerated by an accident, appropriate inquiries are made to cover this possibility.

72. A feature of the law in regard to workers' compensation which is not generally known is the provision which has been made between New Zealand and other countries for reciprocity in the matter of claims under the Workers' Compensation Act. While the Act provides that dependants of deceased workers may not claim compensation unless they are domiciled or resident in New Zealand, authority is given to the Governor-General in Council by section 59 of the statute, in any case in which he is satisfied that by the laws of any other country within the dominions of the Crown compensation for accidents is payable to relatives of a deceased worker notwithstanding that they are resident in New Zealand, to declare by Order in Council that relatives resident in that country shall have the