preferential claims. Other sums can only be paid from this fund after specific authority has been obtained in each case. It is hoped by this means that much of the irritation caused by past delays in payment of this class of claim will in future be obviated.

I need scarcely point out that the Civil Service, Treasury, and other cognate regulations, as well as all instructions printed and otherwise hitherto issued for the guidance of the agents of this office, apply fully to your new office, except as may be modified herein.

As a Civil servant, your whole official time and energy must be devoted to the service of this office, nor will you be permitted to receive any remuneration from any of the public in connection with your official duties in any manner whatsoever. The office-hours are from 9 to 5, less one hour, during which the office may be closed for luncheon—viz., from 1 to 2. I need not dilate upon the necessity for a strict observance of this rule in the interest of public convenience.

You will take occasion, when in the neighbourhood of property mortgaged to the office, to make due inspection, and report the result to me.

You will ascertain and keep a record of the newspapers and publications in which the standing advertisement of the office at present appears, and in the November of each year you will recommend the periodicals in which such advertisement should appear during the following year, suggesting the matter which from your local knowledge you consider should be prominently emphasized. This duty will involve an accurate acquaintance with newspapers, &c., published in your district, together with the approximate circulation of each.

When pressed for the return of deeds (being forwarded to be executed by the Public Trustee, or requiring action by the Board) be good enough to bear in mind that the meetings of that body take place on Wednesdays only, and advise solicitors and others interested accordingly.

You will send out due notices of interest and rent accruing due, and of fire insurances requiring renewal, the forwarding of which as regards your district will be discontinued by this office as from this date.

It is of course quite impossible where duties are so varied to particularise minutely. Where definite instructions have not been given either to your predecessor or herein you will seek direction from me.

In conclusion, I would impress upon you the paramount necessity of bending all your energies in the best interests of the individual estates which may come under your local management, and to the furtherance of the advancement and well-being of the important office which you will represent in your new district. In case the Royal Commission about to inquire into the working of the Public Trust Office should recommend any alteration in the appointment or duties of agents it must be understood that I reserve the right to cancel or amend this appointment, or to reinstate you in your former office.

I have, &c.,
R. C. Hamerton,
Public Trustee.

J. J. M. Hamilton, Esq., Wellington.

The district agencies which might at an early date be established are as follows: 1. Otago, comprising the present agencies of Dunedin and Oamaru, but excluding Clyde and Queenstown, which, on account of want of railway-communication, could not conveniently be worked from Dunedin. It will be noticed on reference to the attached statement that the average remuneration of the agents at Dunedin and Oamaru for the past three years has been £198 and £39 respectively. Now, the establishment of a district agency would involve an approximate expenditure as follows: Salary, £250; commission, say, £70; office, £40; cadet, £30; railway-ticket, £25; and contingencies, £35: or, a total of about £450. Hence the proposed establishment would involve an additional charge on the Expenses Account amounting to £213; but I am of opinion that the increased opportunities of meeting the clients of the office and the public generally, the frequent visits to the country districts rendered necessary by inspection of properties, superintendence of realisations, &c., would speedily recoup the additional outlay involved. With respect to Greymouth and Hokitika, the annual remuneration has been £189 and £43, or a total of £232. If it is assumed that the establishment would cost approximately the same as before, £450, it will be seen that there will be a loss here of £218. The average income of the agents at Napier, Wairoa, and Woodville for the past three years has been £31, £2, and £4 respectively. On the foregoing assumption of annual cost of the district agent's establishment the immediate loss would be £413. The agents at Palmerston North, Wanganui, Patea, and New Plymouth have been paid an average remuneration of £57, £35, £44, and £28, or a total of £164; hence, on the same assumption, the loss would be £286. But, although the present loss would be undoubted, I am strongly of opinion that the scheme suggested, if worked by capable men, would shortly add very largely to the business of the office, and convert the initial loss into a surplus in each case. It may, however, be asked, If but one resident representative of the office is to exist, instead of three or four as at present, how is business to be carried on at the places dispossessed of their agents? I reply, that sub-agents would still exist, and I will endeavour to describe the *modus operandi* under the proposed system—it is the system now in vogue in the department of the Curator of Estates of Deceased Persons in Melbourne, an official whose jurisdiction extends over the whole Colony of Victoria, and yet he has no agent appointed as such, in the same sense as are the agents of the Public Trustee here. For the sake of example, I will suppose the death of an intestate at Ashburton: the police telegraph to the district agent, Christchurch, that they have taken possession, say, of a grocer's shop, and ask instructions. The district agent at once proceeds to Ashburton, and he himself, assisted by an auctioneer, takes an inventory, and makes full inquiries into the case, the credit and indebtedness of deceased. A decision is arrived at as to the disposal of the business. If it be determined to call for tenders, they will, of course, be addressed to him at Christchurch, and the highest may or may not be accepted. If it be determined to sell by auction, the auctioneer who assisted with the inventory is then constituted agent for that estate, and the understanding is that he attends to all matters relating to that estate, inquiring into and certifying as to claims, and, indeed, performing all the duties of agent so far as that estate is concerned, short of the disbursement of money or the incurring of any expense not previously authorised. District agents, for their own sakes, would naturally employ the most reliable men in the various centres of population; but, being able by their railway-tickets to travel rapidly, their duty would impel them by personal inspection and superintendence to insure that the administration was being properly carried out. In the very small cases, such as the sale of a swag or box belonging to a person deceased without other property, the police would then, as now, be largely relied upon, as also in the outlying districts where the district agent could not without great expense make a personal visit. Great stress is laid upon the ability of the district agent to move rapidly and frequently about his district, and the opportunities afforded of conversing with all sorts and conditions of men, of distributing the printed information