4062. Upon an intestate estate that has to remain in the office you only allow 4 per cent.?—Yes.

4063. Do you think that that is a statutory provision that might well be remedied in the way of increasing the rate or investing the estate in the ordinary way and receiving 6 or 7 per cent.?—Yes, that should be done.

4064. In a memorandum to Sir Harry Atkinson, how was it you recommended the Colonial Treasurer of the day not to make any change such as had been suggested to you by the friends of the beneficiaries? Now you tell us you have altered your mind?—Well, it is this: If the law allowed investments for each intestate estate, as it does in trust estates, we should get a larger interest for the estates, but it was considered in my predecessor's time that 4 per cent. was a reasonable amount to allow on floating balances in intestate estates. I see no reason why the law should not allow the funds of intestate estates to be invested the same as trust estates.

4065. The practical meaning to this estate is this: that whereas you can at any time invest the funds of a public trust in deficiency bills at 5 per cent., you are only paying the beneficiaries 4 per cent.; you are making 1 per cent. out of the transaction?—That is so.

4066. So that upon policy moneys of £500 you are making £5 a year?—Yes, apparently.

4067. In other words, during the six years you are depriving the estate of £30, and compound interest upon that?—Yes.

4068. Does not that seem unjust?—It does appear so.

4069. It is no matter of surprise, therefore, that the Commissioners have received letters complaining of the way in which the funds are being invested?—The Commissioners will see there is a law for my guidance, and the Order in Council.

4070. *Mr. Loughrey.*] What was the total amount received under the policy?—It appears by the ledger to be £503 3s. 7d.; that is the net amount apparently.

4071. And what were the debts of the estate?—There were debts, but they had no claim on the policy.

4072. Did you pay the debts of the intestate?—Yes; there were several dividends.

4073. How much did you pay?—£6 18s. 2d.

4074. How much have you invested now remaining from the money you received under this policy?—£469 0s. 10d. appears to be the balance.

4075. Look at the papers, and at the letters to the father of the deceased, and see if that is the amount. The amount appears to be £496 5s. 5d., so that the difference between that amount and £469 0s. 10d. would be the costs of administering the estate?—Yes.

4076. Would the Public Trustee charge two guineas for the office Solicitor's opinion?—We have done so, but we do not do so now. In this case I do not know whether it is the opinion of the office Solicitor.

4077. It is the office Solicitor on the record. Do you think it is a proper charge to make, to charge for your own officer's opinion?—I do not see that there is anything improper in it.

4078. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Is it usual?—It was, but it is not usual now.

4079. *The Chairman.*] If it was proper at one time when you charged it, why is it improper now? and why do you not charge it now?—Because there was a question raised by one of the Wellington solicitors whether we were not subjecting ourselves to the Law Practitioners Act on account of receiving fees for solicitors' work.

4080. Do you consider it proper or improper?—I do not consider it improper to charge, but if it is a breach of the Law Practitioners Act, then it should not be continued.

4081. What was the total amount of office-charges in that estate?—The expense of administering was £31 14s. 10d.

4082. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Out of that £31 14s. 10d. the principal charge is the 5 per cent. on collection; then there is Solicitor's fee two guineas, and £1 5s. 1d. for office commission and postage. You say you have now reduced those charges?—We have.

4083. This is an undisturbed estate from the commencement. Is there any reason why you should not rebate those charges?—There would be no end to the rebating if we carried it back to the commencement.

4084. Is there any real reason, as a matter of fair-play, that you should not make the reduction go back to that estate, which is a live estate, seeing that considerable complaint arises about the way in which you are investing the funds? You admit that by your statutory provisions you are not investing the money in your hands as well as it might be invested because you are barred?—Yes.

4085. Therefore, is that not a reason why you should make the debits against the estate as light as possible, seeing that you are doing a statutory injustice to those estates?—Quite so.

4086. *The Chairman.*] Is it not right, then, that in respect of this estate you should rebate the charges that you have made against it in the beginning to the amount you are now charging similar estates?—As a matter of fair-play, I quite agree with you.

4087. The amount of the policy was £500?—Yes.

4088. Then there was some deficiency of £7 odd which appears there to have been paid by the office, which made the amount £510 odd, and on that you charged your commission?—Yes.

4089. When that two guineas was entered as a debit to the account of Winter, why was it not stated in the ledger that it was an amount paid to the office Solicitor?—It was not paid to the office Solicitor.

4090. You stated here distinctly, in my hearing, that that charge of two guineas was paid to the office Solicitor?—If I made such a statement I was wrong.

4091. To whom, then, was it paid?—It was credited to Expenses Account.

4092. Why was it credited to Expenses Account? Was it because it was a fee earned by the office Solicitor?—Yes.