

SESSION II.
1921.
NEW ZEALAND.

ENEMY PROPERTY IN NEW ZEALAND

(REPORT ON) BY THE PUBLIC TRUSTEE AS CUSTODIAN OF ENEMY PROPERTY AND AS
CONTROLLER OF THE NEW ZEALAND CLEARING OFFICE.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

TO THE HON. THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL.

ALMOST immediately on the outbreak of the war in 1914 it became necessary for the Government to take some steps to regulate the control of property in the Dominion belonging to persons residing within enemy States. After consideration it was decided that the Public Trustee of the Dominion was the officer most fitted to carry out the duties.

At the beginning the functions imposed on the Public Trustee were not very extensive, but as the war continued and the area of operations widened and the number of belligerents increased the importance of the duties became more marked.

Throughout the war the Public Trustee acted in various capacities under the War Regulations in dealing with property of alien enemies, on whom restrictions were imposed by the War Regulations. On the conclusion of peace further duties were imposed on him in regard to the carrying-out of the provisions of the Peace Treaties relating to the settlement of debts arising from pre-war contracts between British nationals residing in New Zealand and German nationals residing in Germany, and in connection with the liquidation of enemy assets in New Zealand.

Although a considerable amount of work remains to be done before the duties of the Public Trustee as Custodian of Enemy Property and Controller of the New Zealand Clearing Office are completed, it is considered that the time has arrived when an attempt should be made to place on record a connected account of the effect of the war legislation in the Dominion, and the nature of the duties performed by the Public Trustee under the direction of various statutes and War Regulations.

The following report will indicate generally the scope of the duties performed by the Public Trustee in the capacities named, and will afford some idea of the volume of the work entailed in connection with these duties.

The report will be found to deal with the following general matters:—

- (a.) The general development of the policy of the Government in regard to enemy property in New Zealand:
- (b.) The general policy adopted towards enemy subjects in New Zealand:
- (c.) The legal position *re* the settlement of debts owing by or to ex-enemy nationals:
- (d.) The final disposal of enemy property in New Zealand.

Subjoined is a memorandum from the Solicitor-General in regard to the matters dealt with in the report:—

Memorandum by Solicitor-General.

The Public Trustee.

Solicitor-General's Office, Wellington, 20th September, 1921.

I HAVE considered your exhaustive report on the above subject. It deals clearly and comprehensively with the responsible duties imposed on and discharged by you (during and since the war) both as Custodian of Enemy Property and as Controller of the New Zealand Clearing Office established under the New Zealand Treaty of Peace Order, 1920.

In my opinion it is manifest from the terms of the report (1) that the procedure adopted by you before peace was concluded was in accordance with the Acts and regulations then in force, and (2) that your later proceedings have been duly taken under and in conformity with the provisions of the Treaty of Peace embodied in the Treaty of Peace Order, 1920.

W. C. MACGREGOR, Solicitor-General.