

has been administered by the Public Trustee, and there still remains in his hands approximately £3,500. By legislation passed last session it was provided that moneys in the Coal-mining Accident Fund not required for the purposes of the Kaitangata Relief Fund might be applied for the relief of widows, orphans, and dependants of miners who may have heretofore lost or may hereafter lose their lives in coal-mining accidents in New Zealand. It was further provided by amending legislation that payments under the amendment should be made by the Public Trustee at the direction of the Minister of Mines, who should cause to be made such inquiry as he shall think fit before directing any such payment.

Huntly Relief Fund.

In 1914 occurred the Huntly Coal-mine disaster, when a fund amounting to £9,828 14s. 1d. was raised by public subscription for the benefit of the widows and orphans of the victims. The administration of this sum was placed in the hands of the Public Trustee, and in terms of section 4 of the Public Trust Office Amendment Act, 1912, a scheme of trust was drawn up by the representatives of the subscribers and the Public Trustee, and submitted to the Court for its approval. This scheme provided for payment of 15s. per week to every widow through the disaster, and 5s. per week for every child until the age of fourteen years who lost its father, or 7s. 6d. where it has lost both its parents. In addition, provision was made for the dependants of deceased miners other than widows and children. Of the original sum there still remains in the Public Trustee's hands £2,500, which is being disbursed in accordance with the scheme of trust.

Mayor of Wellington's Patriotic Fund.

At the conclusion of the Boer War the Mayor of Wellington asked the Public Trustee to accept the unexpended balance of his Patriotic Fund raised for the relief of distress caused by the war in South Africa. This balance amounted to £2,188 2s. 8d., which was disbursed by way of allowances to the beneficiaries until exhausted in 1909.

Nelson Almshouses.

In 1882 the trustees of the late Adeline Renwick arranged with the Public Trustee to accept the trusteeship of a sum of £2,000 which the testatrix directed should be utilized for purchasing a piece of land in Nelson and erecting thereon six two-roomed almshouses, the use of which was to be granted rent-free to that number of deserving poor in the City of Nelson. In that year the Public Trustee acquired half an acre at the corner of Wellington and Examiner Streets, and at a cost of £1,128 erected six dwellings in accordance with the directions of the benefactress. In 1883 the cottages were completed, and since that date have been maintained and controlled by the Public Trustee. The cottages have been occupied during the whole of that time by poor people, and are eagerly sought after by sick and indigent persons, from whom the Mayor of Nelson and the Public Trustee select occupants as vacancies occur. The unexpended balance of the fund is used for the payment of outgoings on the cottages and in providing small monthly allowances to the occupants.

BUILDINGS AND ACCOMMODATION.

When the Public Trust Office was established it was such a small concern that the matter of suitably housing it was an easy one. As the volume of business rapidly increased, the question became more acute.

Wellington.

When the Office commenced operations on the 2nd January, 1873, it occupied offices situated on the ground floor of the Government Buildings, the original accommodation comprising a suite of three and later four rooms there. Here it carried on its business both under the first Public Trustee (Mr. Jonas Woodward) and the next one (Mr. R. C. Hamerton) until 1880. By this time the work had so increased that the accommodation afforded by this suite was totally inadequate. As a result of the representations of the Public Trustee, a move was made from the Government Buildings to the Mutual Life Buildings at the corner of Featherston and Brandon Streets, then known as the Old Post Office Buildings. Here operations were carried on until 1886, when the rapid increase in the business necessitated larger accommodation, and a move was made to the National Mutual Life Association Buildings in Customhouse Quay, where the operations of the Department were continued until 1894, when, on the completion of the Government Life Insurance Buildings, more commodious offices were obtained. Here again Mr. J. K. Warburton, who was then Public Trustee, was faced with the problem of providing for the accommodation of the staff, owing to the rapid growth of the activities of the Office, and in 1897 he pointed out in his annual report to Parliament that, whilst he had concentrated the staff as far as possible, it was still necessary to locate the public office on a different floor from that occupied by the major portion of the staff, resulting in considerable difficulty in maintaining that supervision of the office which he considered desirable. The Government, in view of the position which had arisen, authorized in 1900 the acquisition of two sections in the Thorndon Reclamation, fronting Lambton Quay and Stout Street, at a cost of £3,635 8s. 4d., and authorized the erection thereon of a five-story building of brick and Tonga Bay granite. This work, however, was not immediately put in hand, and in 1905 the Public Trustee further urged the necessity for proceeding with the work without delay, owing to the position of the accommodation in the Government Life Buildings having by that time become desperate, necessitating as it did the leasing of additional rooms in St. George's Building, Brandon Street, and also in the old Municipal Council Chambers, the whole of this extra accommodation being some distance from the main premises.