

In cases where compensation is awarded in respect of a worker's death it is often found desirable in the interests of the widow and children to purchase a home for the family out of the compensation-moneys. This is frequently done, under Court authority, by the widow purchasing the property in her own name, paying the bulk of the compensation apportioned to her towards the purchase-money, and the children's shares, so far as is necessary and desirable, being advanced to the widow by way of mortgage for the purpose of enabling her to complete the purchase. The mortgage is so drafted as to provide for the widow being exempt from the payment of interest so long as she satisfactorily maintains the infant children, the mortgage becoming immediately payable should she cease to retain the property as a family home. This procedure provides an eminently satisfactory method of providing the widow with a home and at the same time ensuring that the interests of the children are adequately protected.

In the case of persons confined in mental hospitals, I have earlier in this report, when dealing with the administration of mental defectives' estates, referred to the arrangements which are made to provide such persons with additional comforts beyond those supplied in the usual hospital routine, such as tobacco, fruit, special groceries, magazines, newspapers, providing suitable clothing, and special dental and medical attention.

In cases where advisory trustees have been appointed, they are freely consulted in regard to expenditure of this nature.

SECTION 75, LIFE INSURANCE ACT, 1908.

59. Section 75 of the Life Insurance Act, 1908, as amended by section 4 of the Life Insurance Amendment Act, 1920, provides that a minor of the age of fifteen years or over may, with the consent of the Public Trustee, surrender, give a discharge for, dispose of by will, or otherwise deal with his policy, as if he were of full age. Numerous applications are made under this section, and in pursuance of the statutory duty imposed on the Public Trustee careful consideration is given to each application in order to ascertain whether the proposed dealing is in the best interests of the minor concerned. The investigations involve a considerable amount of work, but a fee of 5s. only is charged in respect of each consent given, which, though not an adequate remuneration, is considered reasonable in view of the nature of the applications.

During the year the consents granted numbered 136, made up as follows: Surrenders, 69; loans, 40; assignments, 21; reductions in amount of policy, 2; exchange for another policy, 1; payment of proceeds on maturity, 1; consents to make wills disposing of policy-moneys, 2.

UNCLAIMED LAND.

60. By virtue of Part II of the Public Trust Office Act, 1908, as amended by section 35 of the Public Trust Office Amendment Act, 1913, the Public Trustee is empowered to administer as unclaimed land the owner of which has no known agent in New Zealand, or is unknown, or cannot after due inquiry be found. Land will be administered under these provisions only upon the application of some person or body interested in its disposal, and the administration is not in general undertaken unless a useful purpose will be served thereby.

Unclaimed lands accepted for administration are vested in the Public Trustee in trust for the owners, and the Public Trustee in conducting the administration is under a duty to exercise the diligence and care which a reasonable, prudent, and careful trustee would exercise in like circumstances to protect the interests of the persons beneficially interested.

It is found that as the Dominion becomes more closely settled the number of applications is declining, but cases still arise, and there are yet under administration lands accepted during previous years.

Experience shows that it is generally in the best interests of the owners to sell the lands, as the lack of funds, the inability of the Public Trustee to exploit by labour and expenditure of capital, the restricted areas and the difficulty of leasing are constant factors and make a sale imperative.