

65. It is doubtful, however, whether a person sentenced under the Crimes Act to terms of imprisonment on more than one charge, the sentences to be cumulative, each sentence being less than three years, but the aggregate of the sentences amounting to three years or more, is a convict within the meaning of the Prisons Act, and in order to remove this doubt it has been suggested that an amendment to the Prisons Act be passed. There can be little doubt that the Legislature intended that in such cases the prisoners' estates should be protected by the appointment of an administrator, but upon the wording of the Act as it stands it is possible that there is no provision for the appointment of such statutory administrator. It will be realized that in cases such as this, where the aggregate of the sentences is more than three years, it is just as important to have provision made for the safeguard of the prisoner's estate as it is in those cases which undoubtedly come within the meaning of the Act.

During the year under review the administration of convicts' estates has proceeded smoothly, and there are no important developments to record.

AGENCIES.

66. The Public Trustee is empowered to act as attorney or agent, and valuable services are rendered in this regard. Persons resident in New Zealand who by reason of age, ill health, or lack of business experience, and persons who by reason of absence from the Dominion, find it necessary to appoint an attorney very frequently avail themselves of the services of the Public Trustee, and agency work is one of the classes of business which have shown a marked increase in recent years. It is gratifying to record also that beneficiaries in estates very often appoint the Public Trustee as attorney to act for them in connection with the work entailed in the management of property descending upon them.

RESEALING.

67. An indication of the growth of knowledge overseas in regard to the Office is afforded by the increasing number of requests which are received from executors, trustees, and administrators in foreign countries for the Public Trustee's services in respect to the administration on their behalf of assets situated in the Dominion. Officials who perform functions similar to those of the Public Trustee in the various parts of the Empire make a practice of employing the Public Trustee to undertake such work. The organization of the Office makes for speedy handling of the work entailed in these matters, which is much appreciated by foreign executors and trustees, and it is anticipated that this class of business will show a steady increase in years to come.

ADMINISTRATION OF ASSETS ABROAD.

68. The assets of estates reported to the Public Trustee for administration cover the whole range of property interests and have their situation in all parts of the world. During the years that the Office has been conducting the administration of estates it has been necessary to deal with assets in almost every civilized community. The wide experience gained by the Office in the course of years is nowhere more valuable than in those cases where assets situated abroad require administration, as it enables prompt settlement to be arrived at in regard to problems arising out of the questions of domicile, the form and nature of documents required to enable administration to be obtained abroad, the incidence of death and succession duties and other charges in foreign jurisdictions, and the modes of transmission of cash and securities.

To deal with assets situated overseas it is frequently necessary to obtain administration in the country where the assets are situated, and for this purpose the Public Trustee appoints a suitable delegate in the jurisdiction concerned to act as his representative for the purpose of the administration duties required there.

In administration within the British Empire the Public Trustee usually employs those State officials in the various countries whose functions are similar to his own. Whenever any special circumstances exist for the employment of a private legal firm (*e.g.*, by reason of its previous connection with the estate concerned) the work is entrusted to it.