

To assist in dealing with shares, stocks, and debentures, a Financial Adviser to the Office was appointed some years ago. His services are freely availed of, and his expert knowledge and long experience prove of great value to the Office and its clients in the realization of shares. The trend of the market is carefully observed, and the interests of those who have entrusted their affairs to the Public Trustee are safeguarded in every possible way.

There is no doubt that heavy losses are suffered by many individuals through unsuccessful speculation and through the failure of joint-stock concerns in times of financial stress. The hawking of shares in concerns doomed to failure is a source of loss not so much amongst the experienced investors as amongst ordinary householders, who have little knowledge of these matters. It is interesting to note that in the English Companies Act, 1928, there is a unique provision prohibiting this practice of share-hawking, and laying down with clearness the conditions which must be complied with in making an offer of shares to any member of the public. It is worthy of note that in a large number of estates which are reported for administration are included in the assets various shareholdings which are saleable only at a heavy discount, or more often are absolutely worthless.

Every shareholding in which the Public Trustee is interested is regularly reviewed, and the financial position of every company in which shares are held is carefully surveyed. Fluctuations of the share-market receive close study, and everything possible is done to prevent estates under administration suffering loss through depreciation in share investments.

54. During the past year there have been no violent fluctuations on the market. As a result of the successful season experienced by our primary producers, there has been a considerable increase in the amount of money available for investment. Many individuals with large credits have shown a disposition to lock up their funds in fixed deposits, but others have turned their attention to the stock exchange, and there has been a healthy demand for all recognized securities. The number of investors shows an increase, and more people of small means are looking to the exchange to find investments for their surplus funds. The chief attraction which such investments possess for them is the fact that they are regarded as comparatively sound and at the same time offer prospects of capital appreciation.

During the period under review the prices of shares in many concerns have shown an increase, partly due to the profits arising from successful trading operations, and partly due to the increase in the amount of money available for investment. As a result of the improved market the Public Trustee has been able to dispose of various holdings whilst prices were favourable.

CLAIMS AGAINST ESTATES.

55. The first concern of an executor or administrator is to see that all assets of a deceased person are placed under proper protection. He must also take steps to ascertain the extent and nature of the liabilities of the estate, and difficulty is often experienced in connection with the claims made. A common cause of difficulty and heartburning is where claims are made by the members of a family against the estate of their father in respect of services rendered during their father's lifetime. For example, in the working of a farm it is often found that no business arrangement has ever been made between father and sons providing for the proper remuneration of the latter. Contrary to what was expected, the father often dies without making a will, and the disposition of his estate, which he probably intended to make by will with the object of adjusting the interests of the children, particularly in the direction of recognizing the special services rendered by any of them, is never made. The result is that the children are by law all equally entitled, and injustice is done to those who have given their services without proper reward. Claims are made against the personal representative, who, in most cases, is bound, however reluctantly, to reject them. Cases such as this are of very common occurrence in the administration of estates which come under the control of the Public Trustee. In a number of cases, too, claims are put forward for board, and care and attention, and services of a similar nature which were performed on behalf of the deceased by relatives, friends, and neighbours, ostensibly as acts of bounty or kindness, without any