

immediate personal needs of the residents were in substantial measure provided for by the Health, Railway, Defence, and Native Departments—the Health Department in arranging for the immediate despatch of doctors and nurses and for the setting-up of field hospitals and the supervision of health matters; the Defence Department in the supplying of tents, bedding, and equipment, and the organization and control of relief camps; and the Railway Department in the evacuation and repatriation of the majority of the sufferers and the carriage of stores and supplies, all without charge of any kind; while the Native Department attended to the needs of the Maoris in the district and made funds available for that purpose. The value of the Railway Department's services alone are estimated at approximately £27,000. In the measures taken subsequently to provide for the return of sufferers to their homes very great help was given by the Public Works Department in the repair of dwellings and in the restoration of public services. This Department also provided a large number of the tents required in the early period of the disaster for the accommodation of persons whose homes were rendered uninhabitable, and later did valuable work with the clearing of the sites of business premises demolished by the earthquake. Finally, I desire to refer to the valuable services which were rendered by the Education Department in the restoration of educational facilities, and to the fact that the Audit Department is undertaking the audit of all funds subscribed for earthquake relief measures.

14. These are the principal ways in which assistance was given by the State Departments in the measures taken for the personal relief and assistance of sufferers. Immediate financial aid was also provided in the sums of £10,000 each for river-protection works and the building of temporary shop premises in Napier. Important measures introduced by Government during the emergency session earlier in the year, and then given statutory effect to, provide for substantial aid in the rehabilitation of the devastated business area and the re-establishment of commercial and business activities. A material factor in the restoration of the ruined areas will be the funds made available through the action of the State Fire Office, although under no legal liability, in making *ex gratia* payments to policy-holders who suffered loss from fire consequent on the earthquake.

15. The measures taken by the Government to relieve suffering caused by the earthquake were prompt and effective, and the provision made for rehabilitation should give very substantial aid in the restoring of normal conditions.

16. Referring to the earthquake disaster, it is, I think, a matter for congratulation for the Public Trustee not only that there was no loss or damage sustained in respect of Office records or documents, or of deeds or papers entrusted by clients to his Office for safe custody, but also that, by reason of precautions taken by the Public Trustee some years ago in regard to insurance against earthquake risk, there was no serious loss in respect of the investments made by him in the business areas destroyed by the earthquake or by fire following upon it. The Office buildings in the area, erected in comparatively recent years, did not suffer serious damage from earthquake or fire, and the protection against such risks afforded by the safe-deposit-locker system installed at the Head Office and many of the branch offices was illustrated by the fact that upon inspection after the earthquake all the lockers in the area affected were found to be intact and the contents undisturbed.

17. In addition to the matters which I have mentioned, special attention is directed to the following aspects of the work, mention of which is made in the Public Trustee's report:—

- (1) The Public Trustee's statement regarding the administration of estates:
- (2) The Public Trustee's statement in regard to the lending operations of the Department during the year:
- (3) The operation of the system of inspection and supervision in force, and also the system of audit in regard to the accountancy work of the Department.

18. The confidence reposed in the Public Trustee by the people of New Zealand is well evidenced by the figures which have been given, and I am satisfied that this confidence is well placed, and that the Office is rendering valuable service. With the difficult problems arising through the present troubled times, the responsibilities of the Public Trustee are increasing, but the absence of justifiable complaints from clients and others coming into contact with the Office bears evidence that these responsibilities are properly discharged.

GEO. W. FORBES, Prime Minister.

Wellington, 13th August, 1931.