

INCOME-TAX OFFICIAL'S SUICIDE

The sad circumstances attaching to the death at Ryde of a well known Island Inland Revenue official were investigated by the coroner (R. E. A. WEBSTER, Esq.) on Saturday. The deceased was George Godfrey Leigh BLAKE, aged 53, of Camden House, Dover-street, Ryde, who was found dead in bed on the previous Thursday morning. Inspector RUGMAN represented the police.

The widow said that during the last war her husband served as a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and after he was demobilised he was subject to fits of depression. About three weeks ago he had an attack of gastritis and was attended by Dr. EDWARDS. He returned to his work at Newport on May 7th, but in the evening complained of feeling unwell. During the public holidays he celebrated VE-day and met a friend from one of the ships. On Wednesday evening they went to the Esplanade Hotel. They returned somewhere about 11 p.m., and after having supper her husband went to bed in the spare room. During the early hours of the morning she heard him go downstairs and return shortly afterwards. At 7.45 a.m. she got up, put the kettle on, and took the dogs for a walk. At about 8 o'clock she took her husband up a cup of tea. She could smell gas, so she pulled the curtains back and opened the window. She saw her husband on the bed with a gas poker there and immediately turned off the gas and telephoned for Dr. EDWARDS.

Dr. FIRMAN-EDWARDS said he arrived shortly after receiving the telephone call and found that BLAKE was dead from coal gas poisoning. There was a strong smell of gas in the room, and Mrs. BLAKE showed him a gas poker which had been lying on the bed. Deceased was a man who was jolly at times and at other times very depressed, and when in the latter condition he took more drink than was wise for him. He had been previously told by Mrs. BLAKE that some years ago her husband made an attempt on his life by taking poison.

The Coroner said he had been in touch with H.M. Inspector of Taxes in the Island, who told him that he had personally known deceased for 18 months. His work was always very satisfactory, he was greatly respected by other members of the staff, and apparently free from troubles.

Kenneth McCellan CAVE, 14 Howitt-road, London, a brother-in-law, said he knew deceased well, though he had not seen him since 1939. He was a man subject to fits of depression and when depressed he drank too much. He made an attempt on his life 15 years ago at Le Havre, when witness accompanied Mrs. BLAKE there to bring him back.

P.W.R. COFFEN said that when he visited the house at 9 a.m. he found the gas poker lying by the side of the bed. Attached to it was 3ft. of tubing connected to the gas main.

The Coroner returned a verdict that death was due to coal poisoning, self-administered, when the balance of deceased's mind was disturbed during an attack of recurrent depression. He expressed sympathy with the family.
