

The Board has recognized the fact that in regard to the delegation of administration what is required is not an arbitrary limit as to the value of estates which shall be delegated, but a definition of those matters in the administration of all estates, large or small, which should be excluded from the general powers granted to local officers and reserved to the Board for decision.

Action has therefore been taken to define in reasonable detail the powers which may be exercised by Local Deputy Public Trustees in the administration of delegated estates, and those which are reserved to the Public Trustee.

During the year every effort has been made to enable the Local Deputies' Offices to become self-contained. District Accountants have been appointed at Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, and all accounts relating to delegated estates are now prepared, examined, and despatched from those Offices.

District Solicitors have been appointed at Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin, and much legal work is now transacted at those offices, with a considerable saving of time and corresponding satisfaction to clients and others with whom the Office transacts its business.

The system adopted has, undoubtedly, relieved the Head Office of a considerable volume of work. Simultaneously, however, the increase of business from other districts where delegation does not exist has practically equalled the amount taken over from the Head Office by the Local Deputy Public Trustees, so that no positive advantage has been experienced at the Head Office.

At the present time the appointment of Local Deputy Public Trustees is confined by statute to the four principal centres, but it is hoped at the first opportunity to obtain legislative authority which will enable District Public Trustees to be constituted at all important centres throughout the Dominion, possessing the powers of administration which are at present confined to the four Local Deputy Public Trustees.

No special legislative authority is necessary for the keeping of estate accounts at District Managers' Offices, and the transfer of the accounts from Head Office will shortly be given effect to in the case of the Offices at Napier, Hawera, Wanganui, Nelson, and Invercargill. Similar action has been decided upon in the case of Hamilton, Palmerston North, and Gisborne. Further reference to the change will be found under the heading "Accounts" on page 20 of this report.

Constant and rigorous inspection of the District Offices by competent Inspectors will be indispensable to the success of any system of decentralization. The provision of such an inspection is now being undertaken by the Board.

ESTABLISHMENT OF DISTRICT OFFICES.

During the year the Office Agencies at Dannevirke and Taihape have been terminated, and new District Offices in charge of permanent officers of the Department have been opened.

Arrangements are also complete for the establishment of permanent District Offices at Palmerston North, Hamilton, Blenheim, and Timaru. Suitable office accommodation has been obtained, and District Managers, who will take up duty shortly, have been appointed.

A considerable amount of preliminary work has been done and expenditure incurred in the establishment of the Offices, but the Board has no doubt that the action taken is a step in the right direction. It will bring trained and competent officers into direct relations with those persons with whom the Office transacts its business.

Although the Office has every reason to be grateful for the loyal and efficient service which is rendered by its non-permanent Agents, it is found that when the business reaches a certain standard very satisfactory results follow from the appointment of permanent officers.

It is confidently anticipated that there will be a marked increase in the volume of work coming to the Office as the direct result of the appointment of these officers.

The movement forms part of the general scheme of decentralization which was decided upon by the Board some time ago, and it will lead to the major portion