

The Public Trust Office Acts Amendment Act of 1891 authorized the purchase of freehold land and the erection of buildings thereon for business premises. Section 18 of that Act provided as follows: "The Queen shall have power to purchase any freehold lands and erect buildings thereon for the purpose of being wholly or partly occupied for the business of the Office."

No direction or indication was given, however, with regard to the source from which funds for this purpose were to be made available, and, in fact, in his report to Parliament in the year 1897 the Public Trustee stated that as the law then stood the Office funds could not be so invested, and that in order to acquire lands and erect buildings Parliament must either provide the money or grant its sanction to the Public Trustee investing Office funds in that manner. Section 18 of the amending Act of 1891 had apparently been repealed when the various Office statutes were consolidated in 1894.

By section 37 of the Public Trust Office Consolidation Act of 1894 a further provision was made with regard to the disposal of the profits of the Office. That section directed that the Public Trustee should invest one-fourth of each year's profits, and should retain that portion together with its accumulations as an Assurance and Reserve Fund out of which any deficiency incurred in subsequent years might be met. The remaining three-fourths of each year's profits were to be held available for payment to the Consolidated Fund at the direction of the Colonial Treasurer. In the year 1905 the sum of £20,000 was paid to the Consolidated Fund.

By section 21 of the Appropriation Act of 1899 it was enacted that the Public Trustee might apply, out of any balance at credit of the Profit and Loss Account, any sum not exceeding £12,000 in the purchase of land and in the erection of buildings thereon, and in providing office accommodation and furniture for the purpose of carrying on the business of the Public Trust Office. Further sums were appropriated by Parliament in the annual Appropriation Acts from 1901 to 1911.

The Public Trust Office Amendment Act of 1913 made further provisions regarding the disposition of the profits of the Office. Section 34 of that Act provided that—

- (a.) No portion of the profits which had been or might thereafter be expended in the acquisition and furnishing of office premises should be payable to the Consolidated Fund without the authority of a special Act.
- (b.) Out of the profits the Public Trustee might set aside each year such sum as he might think proper as an Investment Fluctuation Account.
- (c.) With the approval of the Minister of Finance, the Public Trustee might from time to time out of profits expend money in the acquisition and furnishing of office premises.
- (d.) For the space of ten years from the passing of that Act the whole of the net profits should be added to the Assurance and Reserve Fund.

The Finance Act of 1916 conferred authority on the Governor in Council to direct that profits of any one year in excess of £20,000, or part of them, should be credited *pro rata* to each estate in the Office (other than investment agencies) that received interest from the Common Fund during that year and had not been finally closed before the end of that year. In pursuance of this authority, bonuses equal to 10 per cent. of the interest allowed were credited to estates yearly from the 1st April, 1915, to the 31st March, 1920. From this latter date the rates of interest allowed to estates were increased.

The matter of utilization of the profits of the Office was again dealt with in the Public Trust Office Amendment Act of 1921. Section 29 of that Act authorized the Public Trustee, with the approval of the Minister of Finance, to expend profits in the acquisition of property other than Office premises. The same section directed that all Office premises and property of any kind previously or subsequently purchased out of the profits of the Office should constitute investments of the Assurance and Reserve Fund. Further, authority was also conferred on the Public Trustee to expend moneys, subject to the approval of the Minister of Finance, out of the Assurance and Reserve Fund and out of the Investment Fluctuation Account in the acquisition and furnishing of premises, and in the acquisition of other property required for the proper conduct of the business of the Office.

Section 28 of the same Act directed that each year the Public Trustee should pay out of the profits for that year such sum as the Minister in Charge of the Public Trust Office might determine into a fund to be called the "General Legal Expenses Account." Out of this account authority is given to pay costs, charges, and other moneys which may be incurred by the Public Trustee in obtaining legal opinions, or which may be awarded against him in any legal proceedings of general interest to which the Public Trustee is a party, if those costs by reason of the general interest and of the importance of the matter in dispute cannot be fairly charged against any particular estate under administration by the Public Trustee.

The following figures show the very large amount of profits which have been paid to the Consolidated Fund, distributed by way of bonuses to estates, or accumulated by way of reserves:—

Amount paid to Consolidated Fund during year ended 31st December, 1889	£	s.	d.
Amount paid to Consolidated Fund during year ended 31st March, 1905	18,000	0	0
Assurance and Reserve Fund—Balance as at 31st March, 1922	20,000	0	0
Investment Fluctuation Account—Balance as at 31st March, 1922	402,302	5	2
General Legal Expenses Account—Balance as at 31st March, 1922	49,283	5	3
Amount distributed by way of bonuses to estates during the period from the 1st April, 1915, to the 31st March, 1920	1,000	0	0
	140,483	6	5
	£631,068	16	10

From the above statement it will be seen the institution has been placed on an exceedingly sound financial basis.