

Testators and others are entirely free to choose one or other of these two modes of investment, and it is their choice at the creation of the trust or the inception of other similar transactions which determines the form of investment to be employed in each individual case. The distinction between the two systems is carefully explained to such clients; and, moreover, in the preparation of wills by the Office the intending testator is required to answer definitely a specific question in the form of instructions whether the trust funds are to be invested in the Common Fund or outside of it, and the features and operation of such fund are set out for his guidance. As is only to be expected from the special advantages appertaining to it, the vast majority select the Common Fund. Clients whose funds are invested in it are well satisfied with the return they receive from it, and complaints in respect to it do not originate with those affected. The system of the Office investments was investigated by the Royal Commission of 1891, and it was as a result of its recommendations that the Common Fund was established in its present form. This mode of investment has been in existence ever since, and during that period has stood the test of time and shown itself to be superior to any other workable system which could be set up. In 1913 the work of the Office was again inquired into by a Royal Commission, and in their report the Commissioners did not suggest any alteration to the Common Fund system. Its cardinal features are the absolute safety which it affords and the unfailing regularity with which payments of income and the like can be made under it. When this is grasped, and the services which clients receive at the hands of the Office are borne in mind, I feel sure that it will be readily recognized that the Common Fund makes a very fair return to those whose moneys are invested in it, and at the same time affords an exceptionally fine form of investment for trust funds.

7. In considering the Public Trustee's charges for the administration of estates it must not be overlooked that the services covered by them include a large number of matters for which, if administered elsewhere, the estates would, as a rule, have to bear special fees. These services include the application for probate or other grant of administration, filing stamp accounts, registering transmission, preparation of land- and income-tax returns, the general management and supervision of property, and so forth, for which other corporate trustees here and abroad have usually to employ professional men and debit the cost to the estates concerned, in addition to their recognized commission. Furthermore, it cannot be contended that the method of assessing the Public Trustee's remuneration according to scale rates of commission is inelastic in its operation. The Public Trustee is given power by the regulations governing these matters to reduce the scale rates of commission in appropriate cases, and this power is utilized by the Public Trustee to readjust his charges in the infrequent cases where the scale charges exceed a sufficient remuneration for the services rendered.

8. An undertaking such as the Public Trust Office, the business of which is not only commercial but of a highly technical and difficult nature, should be amply staffed with a staff of skilled officers capable of efficiently carrying out the work. Special attention has been devoted to the staffing of the Department during the past few years, and I am pleased to say that at present the staff is adequate and competent, and that the work is being performed in a capable and reliable manner. Particular care is directed to the training of junior officers, and a system of training classes for tuition in theoretical and practical work has been conducted for some time, with very encouraging results.

9. The safe-deposit system, which is explained in the Public Trustee's report, is a facility which is finding greatly increased popularity with the public. The system is being extended gradually throughout the Dominion, and lockers are now available for clients in the majority of the more important towns. In a number of centres it has been found necessary from time to time to increase the number of lockers in order to cope with the public demand.

10. Reference will be found in the Public Trustee's report to the system governing the acceptance of money on deposit, and particulars are given of the terms on which money is received.

11. An interesting statement has been made by the Public Trustee as to the law in regard to legitimation and illegitimate succession. Fundamental alterations have