

adherence to the safeguards provided enables the Office to function smoothly, and adequately to cope with the heavy volume of business which it transacts. To ensure that the internal check and all office safeguards are being observed and a general efficiency is being maintained, a very complete system of inspections of all phases of the work is in operation. This system is more fully referred to elsewhere in this report.

It is interesting to note the formula which the Parliamentary Committee on Trusts of 1895 (previously referred to by me) considered advisable to observe in establishing an official trustee in England. The report of that Committee said :—

It is indispensable to the success of any system that it should be inexpensive; that those who administer it should be easily and promptly accessible, and personally ready to take the same steps as a sensible private trustee now takes to acquaint himself with all that belongs to the trusts committed to him. Whether the system is to be worked by an official Department or by a Court of justice, or by co-operation between the two, the individual who on any particular occasion manages the trust must not be separated, either by official red-tape or by judicial etiquette, from those with whose interests he has to deal. It must be made clear that he is not a person to be approached by formal proceedings either of an official or of a legal character, requiring to be satisfied of the most trifling facts by prolix and expensive proof; but a man empowered to use his own judgment, to make any necessary inquiries for himself, and to take the initiative in the interests of the trust either of his own motion or at the request, however informal, of any one concerned. If such administrators be made available to any one who desires their services, the system would be of the highest utility.

The principles enunciated by the Parliamentary Committee have been well recognized in planning the policy and organization of the Public Trust Office of New Zealand. First and foremost, its charges have always been extremely moderate for the services rendered and the benefits conferred upon those dealing with it.

As I have shown, by its wide system of representation, and still more under its policy of decentralization, the Office is rendered “easily and promptly accessible” to its clients. The requirement that an official administrator should be “personally ready to take the same steps as a sensible private trustee now takes to acquaint himself with all that belongs to the trusts committed to him” has been amply provided for in the Office organization. It is the endeavour of the Public Trustee to give absolute satisfaction to those whose interests he controls. The human element in administration is not overlooked. It is borne in mind that no matter how efficient the organization, if the personal element of those with whom an administrator deals is neglected, misunderstandings and dissatisfaction may arise. Officers of the Department strive to come into close personal contact with the beneficiaries and other parties interested in the estates administered by the Public Trustee. Moreover, as I have stressed in former years, the work in all the larger offices is divided into alphabetical sections, irrespective of the class of estate under administration. Such an arrangement possesses advantages both for the public and for the staff, for it enables an inquirer to be directed without difficulty to the officer dealing with the estate concerned, and permits each officer to be trained in all classes of administration. In charge of each section is an experienced officer who checks the administration, subject to the direction of the controlling officers. Care is taken to assign to an officer only such a number of estates as he can conveniently handle. This permits him to be acquainted with the special features of each estate under his care, and, moreover, he acquires the personal touch with the relatives and beneficiaries. In short, it is the aim of the Office to conduct the administration in as efficient a manner as possible, and at the same time to pay close individual attention and sympathy, to encourage as much as any private trustee cordial relations with its clients, and to inspire confidence in its administration.

As I have outlined, the departmental system has been carefully developed, and its methods and procedure simplified and standardized wherever possible, and I feel sure that no one dealing with the Public Trustee can urge that the transaction of business is hampered by “official red-tape.” The policy of the Department has fostered in the staff a capacity for initiative, for taking responsibility, and for expedition in administration.

Many expressions of approval of the Office and its methods are received from clients both here and elsewhere. Here is a typical appreciation which came to hand from a relative in Dalmatia after the close of the administration of an estate in which he was interested: “Greatly thanking your Office and the British people for establishing such a splendid Office as the Public Trustee is.”