

has proved very popular with the public, and no doubt it will increase in popularity as it becomes more widely known amongst those who have a feeling of anxiety regarding the safety of securities and articles of intrinsic or sentimental value often kept in places where there is danger of loss by fire or by theft.

The demand for safe-deposit lockers has been particularly heavy in Christchurch. What was considered to be liberal accommodation was provided in the new building in that city which was first occupied during the course of the year ended 31st March, 1926. So keen has been the demand, however, that on no less than three occasions since then has it been found necessary to arrange for the instalment of additional groups of lockers, the third of these groups being now in the course of transit from the English manufacturers.

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32. The question of staffing a trust concern like the Public Trust Office is a highly important one. In recent years a great deal has been written on this subject in publications devoted to the conduct of fiduciary work, and therefore it is not necessary for me to labour what has already been said. No one will deny that one of the most urgent problems to be faced in the conduct of an institution such as the Office is the providing of a competent staff to carry out efficiently the multifarious duties of a trust officer. It is true that there is a large amount of routine work, but nevertheless a great deal of the service required is of a highly technical, difficult, and responsible nature. Nearly sixteen thousand estates are under administration by the Public Trustee, each being, "so to speak, a separate microcosm with its own characteristics and constitution, requiring in most cases close individual treatment."

33. The Royal Commission which was set up in 1913 to inquire into and report upon certain phases of the Office work, in discussing the question of staffing said:—

As compared with ordinary Departments of State, the functions of the Public Trust Office are of a peculiarly distinctive character. It is purely and simply a large business organization, and knowledge on the part of its staff of a special nature, such as accountancy and law in relation to the administration of trust estates and intestacies, is a necessary requisite. Many of the officers, very much to their credit, have qualified by study in these respects, and the good resulting is apparent in the highly satisfactory discharge of the duties assigned to them.

My view is that in creating the Public Trust Office Parliament intended that estates should have the special advantage afforded them by a public Department having at its disposal within its own walls experts capable of carrying out its difficult and technical work, and, where outside agencies have necessarily to be employed, capable of criticizing and possibly correcting the work done by them, thus supplementing the advice received through ordinary channels available to a private trustee. As was pointed out by the Committee set up in 1919 to inquire and report upon the organization of the Office of the English Public Trustee,—

It must also be remembered that one of the incidental advantages accruing to the clients of the Public Trustee is the guarantee of the Consolidated Fund to make good all breaches of trust. The security thus afforded to trust estates and the liability thus imposed on public funds make it almost essential that the proceedings of the Public Trustee should be conducted with greater care and with more competent assistance than could be expected from the ordinary private trustee.

In effect, this view has been taken by the English Public Trustee's Department from the commencement of its operations. The majority report of the aforesaid Committee approved this view, and recommended it as the basic policy upon which the Department should conduct its business.

34. Having regard to the varied and responsible nature of their work, trust officers have laid upon them constant calls on their knowledge, experience, alertness, and judgment. The ordinary routine clerk can play but a very small part in the establishment of a trust concern. Men of knowledge, initiative, adaptability, and personality are called for because the personal equation is no small matter in this class of work. As has been well said, an officer performing trust duties must not only have the requisite technical and general knowledge, but also the personality, versatility, and other qualities, to suit him for the varied character of the work and for dealing with the varying types of persons. Such an officer must realize also the importance of the human element in the administration of estates, and must be able to impart a personal touch to his correspondence, interviews, and dealings generally.