

When the principles which must guide the Public Trustee in the administration of estates are borne in mind, it will be recognized how careful he must be in dealing with applications from those who have financial obligations to estates controlled by him for concessions or for relief.

It is incumbent upon the Public Trustee as administrator or executor to conserve the capital of the estate. Often it will be distinctly to the benefit of an estate to retain a mortgagor on the mortgage security and to enable him to tide over his difficulties by extending him such reasonable assistance as will enable him to carry on. When considerations such as these apply, due weight is given to them; but where it would not be in the interests of the estate to grant concessions, or if they would only benefit other mortgagees or creditors at the expense of the estate, the Public Trustee would not be justified in making the concessions.

It is also the duty of the Public Trustee to maintain as far as possible the income of an estate for the benefit of the beneficiaries entitled to receive it. It often happens that the income is needed for the support of a widow in impoverished circumstances with infant children to provide for, or for the maintenance of persons rendered helpless by either age or physical or mental disability.

14. Applications for relief are given very careful consideration, and cases of genuine hardship are dealt with as reasonably as the circumstances of the estate and of the beneficiaries will allow and the duties of a trustee permit.

It is fully recognized that the present is a time of almost unprecedented difficulty, and that, in the interests of the community as a whole, no less than in those of the persons the Public Trustee represents, it is necessary that mortgagors, lessees, and debtors generally be enabled to tide over the period of depression. Each estate is a separate entity, with its own special requirements, obligations, and limitations, and what may be possible in one estate by way of extending assistance to mortgagors and others may be impossible in another by reason of the needs of the beneficiaries and the liabilities and commitments of the estate. Thus, in dealing with such applications, there may arise what at first sight appears to be an anomaly of the Public Trustee extending consideration in one case and refusing it in another instance where the merits seem to be equal.

15. I have been dealing with the situation as it applies where the estates under administration are in the position of creditors. Obviously, the converse position also arises—namely, where estates are the debtors, and, owing to decreased income and the financial stringency generally, some measure of relief is needed. Accommodation must then be sought on their behalf at the hands of their creditors.

16. The economic troubles being experienced here and elsewhere, and brought about by the world-wide fall in prices, should in the long-run bring about the adjustment of costs and prices on a uniform and stable basis—possibly reverting to the pre-war level. This country should ultimately emerge in a stronger position as a result of this period of adjustment, for there is one factor which should not be overlooked in considering this matter—namely, that the country's output has been very substantially increased since 1914. An economic writer recently said of this:—

During recent years there has been a considerable increase in *per capita* volume of exports. Notable increases have occurred in butter, cheese, and lamb. A comparison of the export figures for 1913 and 1930 respectively shows that the quantity of butter exported has increased from 372,000 cwt. to 1,817,000 cwt., cheese from 612,000 cwt. to 1,676,000 cwt., and lamb from 1,088,000 cwt. to 2,015,000 cwt. Each of the past three years has registered a new record in butter-production and in number of sheep shorn. In dairying great advances have been made, improved methods of farming having the result of increasing the average annual butterfat-production per cow from 175 lb. in 1921-22 to 225 lb. in 1929-30. Recent investigations into the potentialities of New Zealand grasslands have revealed further possibilities of increased production of wool, meat, and butterfat at lower unit costs. Fruitful experiments are being made, and some progress has occurred in grassland-management and the profitable use of fertilizers and the improvement of pastures and of live-stock. In methods of production on the farm itself and in the handling and marketing of farm-products there is still much scope for useful experimentation. These avenues of profitable development are being explored, and will make for future prosperity as prices improve with the revival of trade in our overseas markets.