

important activity of the Office, which it is well qualified to perform on account of its long and varied experience in all matters relating to wills and the technical qualifications of the officers engaged upon the work.

6. The expansion of the Public Trust Office over the past twenty years is shown by the following table giving the value of the business under administration and the number of wills on deposit at regular intervals :—

Year.						Value of Estates and Funds under Administration.	Number of Wills on Deposit.
						£	
1917 ..	..	..	..	..	..	15,065,583	19,565
1927 ..	..	..	..	..	..	41,043,523	53,531
1937 ..	..	..	..	..	..	60,770,814	88,321

7. Special reference was made in last year's report to the duties and responsibilities devolving upon the Office by the passing of the special legislation appointing the Public Trustee as liquidator of a number of companies and as receiver of some further companies. It will be seen from the Public Trustee's report that a large amount of work was entailed in the carrying-out of these duties and that a considerable time will elapse before the liquidation of the various companies and the realization of the assets are complete.

8. Although conditions generally have continued to show improvement, the work entailed in the management of the individual assets of estates and in the collection of income from estate assets and the investments of Office funds has continued to be more onerous than in normal times. Notwithstanding this the operations of the Department over the past year resulted in a profit of £21,892 after making suitable provision for depreciation and for losses of interest in respect of investments, and this result is to be regarded as satisfactory.

9. The steady increase in the business of the Office has necessitated the provision of additional accommodation at a number of branches.

10. A vacant section of land adjoining the Office premises at Auckland has been purchased to provide for future requirements, and proposals for the erection of a new office building at Nelson are in hand.

11. Notwithstanding the fact that a very wide system of decentralization and local administration has been established and extended as far as appears possible at present, the accommodation at Wellington has become both insufficient and unsuitable. The working of the Office is made both difficult and expensive by reason of the fact that it is conducted in two separate buildings which do not permit of a proper classification of the work or arrangement of the staff and entail the covering of long distances in the transport of papers and the necessary and unavoidable intercourse of senior and executive officers. The Wellington district office is working under great disadvantages, and with estates in its charge of a value exceeding £9,000,000 it is evident that the provision of some better accommodation is becoming a matter of urgency. It is clear that the rebuilding of a portion of the Wellington premises will have to be taken in hand at an early date.

12. The continued expansion of business affords ample evidence that the confidence of the community in the Public Trust Office is well maintained. This is further evidenced by the absence of justifiable complaints of any moment from those for whom the Public Trustee acts or with whom the Office is brought into contact.



Minister in Charge of the Public Trust Office.

Wellington, 22nd November, 1937.