

Several of the estates entrusted to the administration of the Public Trustee were those of prominent persons in the community and were of considerable value.

The Public Trust Office has every reason to be satisfied with the class of testator which is now being secured. In particular, the usefulness of the Public Trust Office where the wills contain provisions of long-continuing trusts is becoming more and more widely recognized.

FINANCIAL POSITION OF ESTATES.

49. The improved financial conditions have in most cases enabled mortgagors and lessees to meet their liabilities by way of interest and rent, with consequent benefit to the beneficiaries concerned. Further, some estates which were previously threatened with foreclosure by mortgagees are now placed on a much more satisfactory basis.

The appreciation in the value of Government securities has favoured many estates holding investments of this nature. In a large number of instances it has been necessary to dispose of such assets for the purpose of paying death duties and other pressing liabilities, and the estates concerned have benefited by the satisfactory prices which have ruled throughout the year.

WORK OF OFFICE RANGERS.

50. Steps have been taken to place the work of the Office Rangers on a better footing. These officers are specially qualified by their experience and training to offer useful advice on the administration of country properties. The assistance of these experts on farming problems is appreciated by clients of the Office.

In accordance with the general policy of abolishing all fees for special services performed for estates, the inspections and reports of the Rangers are now made free of cost to estates, except in the few cases where the charge is specially warranted.

REVIEW OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF ESTATES.

51. The system of reviewing the administration of estates locally by an officer entirely independent of the District Public Trustee and directly responsible to the Board has been continued. The full fruits of the system, which has been in operation for nearly three years, are now evident. During the past year no complaints of a serious nature were received from clients, and the number of cases in which any dissatisfaction whatever was expressed, having regard to the large number of estates under administration, was negligible. Another noticeable feature is the steady diminution in errors and oversights in Office routine. Evidence is thus afforded that the system has proved to be a valuable means of educating the staff in thorough and efficient methods, with the result that the expeditious manner in which the estates are administered is becoming a subject of favourable comment by beneficiaries and others with whom the Office has business relations. Speaking generally, the system has been more than justified by the results achieved.

LEGAL DIVISION.

52. The probate and administration work has reflected the volume of the business transacted by the Office. For the twelve months ended the 31st March last the figures are—

Applications for grant of probate	..	..	..	449
Applications for grant of order to administer	..	..	..	196
Foreign grants of administration resealed	..	..	..	19
				—
				664
Other applications for Supreme Court orders	..	..	..	115
				—
Total	..	..	..	779

Under the provisions of the Public Trust Office Act, 1908, the Public Trustee, by filing an "election to administer," is enabled to administer estates not exceeding £400 in value without incurring the cost of obtaining probate or administration in the ordinary way. The total number of "elections" filed in the Supreme Court during the year was 557.