

Essential attributes of a trust officer are reliability and frankness in his dealings with his beneficiaries, combined with a due appreciation of his obligations of secrecy in the presence of outsiders in respect of the interests handled by him. When we consider the confidences reposed in him, the extent of his knowledge of the private affairs of numbers of persons in the community, it will be realized what untold mischief might be caused were he to betray his trust by divulging in any undesirable way the confidential facts in his possession. The Office takes very special pains to preserve proper secrecy, and every officer has to make an oath of secrecy and fidelity before being employed in the Department.

Administration work very frequently arises after bereavement. Beneficiaries and others—at any rate, in the first stages of the administration of a deceased person's estate—have usually suffered the loss of a kinsman or some one who is near and dear to them. Widows and orphans or persons recently bereaved are amongst a trust officers' daily clients. To such persons the personal touch and kindly, sympathetic, and humane dealing mean a great deal.

Whilst it is desirable that a trust officer should be patient, long-suffering, and kind, yet he must be firm and steadfast in essentials. He should not confuse sympathy with slackness or inaccuracy. In his dealings he cannot afford to take the line of least resistance, and to say and do only the pleasant things. It is not easy at times to refuse the supplications of those in sad or distressing circumstances, but, if the granting of those requests entails a breach of trust or adversely affects the interests of others, his duty is clear and must be firmly and honestly fulfilled. It is the function of a trustee to give effect to the wishes of a testator or settlor as far as possible.

35. In providing the organization for the Office it has been fully recognized that the personal equation is essentially one of the most important of all the considerations pertaining to the efficient conduct of its business. It is acknowledged that without a competent staff the most complete organization will fail to achieve its purpose, and therefore the greatest care has been bestowed upon the selection and distribution of the Office staff. The present age is the age of the specialist, and the Office includes on its permanent establishment specialists in the various branches of administration, investment, and accounting work.

36. All branches are now well organized, and in the ordinary course comparatively few staff changes become necessary, with the exception of those caused by promotions and resignations. This year has been somewhat exceptional, in that during its course the duties in connection with the loans work hitherto conducted by the Head Office have been delegated to the branch offices. This rendered necessary some strengthening of the staff at the branches by reason of the increase in the work, and the officers previously engaged upon the loans work in the Head Office were distributed amongst the branches as required. The principal appointments during the year were—

- (a) The appointment of Mr. D. L. McKay, First Assistant District Public Trustee, Auckland, to the position of District Public Trustee, New Plymouth.
- (b) The appointment of Mr. P. C. Jordan, Accountant, Head Office, to the position of Reviewing Inspector, Dunedin.
- (c) The appointment of Mr. E. Collins, Second Assistant District Public Trustee, Auckland, to the position of First Assistant District Public Trustee, Auckland.

The following tables indicate the number of the staff engaged at the Head Office and at the branches on the 31st March last and on 31st March, 1927:—

<i>Head Office—</i>				<i>ON 31ST MARCH, 1928.</i>			
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	Male.	Female.	Total.		Male.	Female.	Total.
Permanent ..	101	27	128	Permanent ..	84	24	108
Temporary ..	15	7	22	Temporary ..	12	10	22
			— 150				— 130
<i>District Offices—</i>							
Permanent ..	420	37	457	Permanent ..	418	32	450
Temporary ..	9	77	86	Temporary ..	15	90	105
			— 543				— 555
			693				685

It will be observed that the staff decreased by eight during the past year.