

and funds whose moneys fall for special investment. The widespread organization of the Office is invaluable in obtaining a suitable flow of applications, and during the year the volume of investments has been heavy, the money invested amounting to £4,216,590. The investments controlled by the Office at the 31st March, 1930, amounted to £33,764,341, as compared with £30,935,141 at the end of the previous year.

The Public Trustee has made mention of the increasing tendency on the part of private investors and trustees to retire from the field of private investments, particularly those on farming-lands, leaving this type of investment largely to the various lending institutions which possess the organization necessary to select suitable securities and to supervise and guard the investments when made. The figures which have just been quoted afford evidence that the Public Trustee plays a very large part in maintaining the supply of funds necessary to the community.

9. The Office is not designed as a profit-making concern, and its settled policy is to share with its clients the benefits accruing from successful working and improvements in management and control. It has long been clearly shown that, after providing the cost of working and management and the setting-aside of suitable reserves, the aim of the institution is to be no more than self-supporting, and not to seek large surpluses. Having regard to the value of the estates and funds under administration, and the capital moneys in the Common Fund, it will be seen that it is only business prudence that a substantial reserve should be accumulated to provide for the State guarantee, any deficiency that might arise in the working of the Office, and any other contingencies.

At first by means of reduced charges and increased interest, then for a time by way of substantial bonuses out of the annual profits, and latterly again through reduced charges combined with increased rates of interest on amounts held in the Common Fund and the liberalizing of the methods by which the interest is computed, beneficiaries and other clients of the Office have shared in its prosperity. During the year further concessions have been made to clients by way of reduced charges, which should prove of benefit to those concerned. Briefly, the concessions involve a reduction of the minimum fee for the administration of small estates, the reduction being from three guineas to two guineas; a reduction from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. to 1 per cent. of the commission charge which is made for the administration of compensation-moneys payable in regard to the deaths of deceased workers. This 1 per cent. charge covers all the work involved in the handling of these funds. It may here be pointed out, too, that whilst the compensation-moneys are held by the Public Trustee interest (at present at the rate of  $5\frac{1}{4}$  per cent.) is allowed. Substantial reductions have been made, too, in the fees charged for the preparation of mortgage-documents in regard to advances both from the Common Fund and from the special investments controlled by the Public Trustee. It is worthy of note that amongst those who will directly benefit by these reductions will be beneficiaries in small estates and borrowers of moderate means.

In considering the Public Trustee's charges it is important to remember that the services covered include many matters for which, if administered elsewhere, the estates would as a rule have to bear special fees. In connection with such services mention may be made of applications for grants of administration, preparation and filing of stamp accounts, supervision of repairs to properties, the settlement of mortgages, the registering of the Public Trustee's title to property, the preparation of land- and income-tax returns, and the preparation of conditions of sale. When all factors are taken into account it will be found that the Office fees for the administration of estates have always borne favourable comparison with those of concerns conducting similar business in this country.

10. The Public Trust Office is a State Department, and therefore it is the responsibility of the Government to see that the Public Trustee carries out his functions faithfully and efficiently. The bulk of the operations of the institution arise either directly or indirectly out of the administration of estates and funds and other kindred functions, and it will be at once apparent that the Government have not the power, even if they had the desire, to interfere with the Public Trustee in any way in the proper administration of the estates entrusted to him. In carrying out his duties the obligations of the Public Trustee correspond in all respects with those of any other trustee; and, of course, the assets administered by him are not the