

in mind the fact that those dependent upon the estates are often in no better circumstances than those who are seeking relief from their obligations to the estates. In considering these applications each case is dealt with individually, and, in consultation with the persons beneficially interested, an endeavour is made to arrive at arrangements which, while assisting applicants genuinely in need, are consistent with the Public Trustee's duty to protect the assets under his control and the interests of those who are beneficially entitled.

All these factors have contributed to a considerable growth in the work involved in the administration of estates and funds, and the staff has been called upon to shoulder increasing burdens of work and responsibility. By careful attention to the organization of the work it has been possible to cope with the increase without a corresponding growth in the expenses of management and without either curtailing the services rendered and facilities provided or increasing the scale of charges for the Public Trustee's services. There has been no relaxation of the safeguards adopted to ensure that the interests of the estates and beneficiaries are adequately protected, and these have been increased and strengthened whenever it has been thought advisable to do so to meet any special requirements arising out of the existing conditions.

Particulars of the main classes of estates dealt with by the Office are given below.

8. *Wills and Trusts Estates*.—This class has for many years represented the most valuable portion not only of the estates under administration, but also of the new business reported from year to year. The number accepted during the year was 1,425, of a total value of £3,502,977.

In these estates it is the function of the Public Trustee to act as executor and trustee of the wills of deceased persons or as trustee of funds constituted by settlors during their lives. When in an estate administered under a will the Public Trustee has completed his duties as executor, his remaining duties are to see that the trusts in the will are performed. Whether the trusts arise under a will or under a deed of trust, the duties must be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the relevant instrument and the law applicable to trustee administration.

In estates privately administered inevitable changes in the personnel of the trustees—through death, disqualification, and other causes—are disturbing factors which, in the course of a few years, may remove any personal association with the trust concerned or any personal qualifications which the original trustees may have possessed. This may cause a trusteeship to devolve upon individuals who for various reasons may not be in a position to give the best attention to the work involved. The result is that frequently the Public Trustee is requested to take over administration of estates previously administered by private trustees.

9. *Intestate Estates*.—The number of intestate estates accepted during the present year was 380, of a total value of £245,296.

Each year greater numbers of people realize how essential it is that they should make testamentary disposition of their property to ensure that their estates will be distributed as they desire, and not in accordance with the arbitrary rules which govern distribution on intestacy. Such distribution is necessarily rigid, and at best there can be but a small minority of cases where such distribution conforms to the manner in which the deceased person would have wished to see his estate distributed.

Numbers of intestate estates are small in value and often the administration is not remunerative. The safety and security ensured by the Public Trustee's administration and the moderate charges made are of particular value to the next-of-kin in these small estates.

10. *Agencies*.—The permanence and continuity of administration by the Public Trustee and the Dominion-wide representation of the Office commend themselves to those persons who for various reasons—ill-health, advancing years, or impending absence from the country—desire to entrust the conduct of their affairs to an agent. The contacts established in this way are most valuable, and frequently result in the appointment of the Public Trustee as executor of the wills of the persons for whom he has acted as agent.