

The following statement indicates the number of staff engaged in the work of the Department on the 31st March, 1919 and 1920, at the Head Office and at the District Offices :—

HEAD OFFICE.											
On 31st March, 1919.				On 31st March, 1920.							
	Male.	Female.	Total.		Male.	Female.	Total.				
Permanent ..	120	86	206	Permanent ..	164	65	229				
Temporary ..	45	35	80	Temporary ..	30	22	52				
			— 286				— 281				
DISTRICT OFFICES.											
On 31st March, 1919.				On 31st March, 1920.							
	Male.	Female.	Total.		Male.	Female.	Total.				
Permanent ..	115	57	172	Permanent ..	250	77	327				
Temporary ..	41	30	71	Temporary ..	21	17	38				
			— 243				— 365				
			529				646				

The passing of the Public Trust Office Amendment Act, 1919, has been of great benefit to the Office, and has enabled the Board to give further effect to the policy of decentralization.

Under the authority given by this useful measure the status of nine additional offices has been raised.

There are now thirteen offices at which the work connected with the administration of estates, as well as the accounting-work connected therewith, has been localized under proper safeguards.

The benefits inherent in the new system have been greatly appreciated by clients and beneficiaries of the Office, and there is evidence that the change has commended itself to the public generally. The change has enabled those having business transactions with the Office to obtain information promptly, and has permitted of accounts being prepared and distribution of moneys being made to beneficiaries without reference to the Head Office. In addition it has strengthened the organization at such local offices, and has led to a more active and intelligent participation on the part of district officers in the work of the Office.

District Offices under the charge of permanent officers of the Department have been established at Hamilton, Palmerston North, Blenheim, Ashburton, and Timaru.

The newly appointed Local Deputy Public Trustee for the North Auckland District will shortly take up duty at Whangarei.

Arrangements are practically complete for the establishment of District Offices at Stratford, Feilding, Wairoa, Gore, and in the western Invercargill district.

A commencement has been made with a most important development in the opening of suburban offices at Newmarket (Auckland), Newtown (Wellington), and Sydenham (Christchurch).

The office at Newtown is already in active operation in suitable leased premises at the junction of Rintoul and Riddiford Streets. The area under the control of the Officer in Charge includes the districts of Berhampore, Island Bay, Melrose, Kilbirnie, Miramar, and Seatoun. A large portion of the administration work in estates within the districts named will be localized at the Newtown branch.

Offices at Newmarket and Sydenham will be opened shortly.

Offices at Petone and Lower Hutt will also be established at the first opportunity.

New Agencies of the Office under the charge of non-permanent Agents paid by commission have been opened at Woodville, Takaka, and Otautau.

The Board has in view the opening of branches of the Office at many of the smaller towns throughout the Dominion.

Probably the most important and far-reaching development introduced by the Board has been the establishment at District Offices of a system for the constant review by specially qualified officers of the administration of all estates.

During the year the inspection of District Offices has proceeded vigorously, practically all the offices having now been inspected.

The first appointment of the Public Trustee as custodian trustee in an estate to co-operate with managing trustees under the provisions of section 5 of the Public Trust Office Amendment Act, 1913, took effect during the year.