

- (18.) The reference of the duties of the Public Trustee as Custodian of Enemy Property, Controller of Enemy Firms, and Controller of the New Zealand Clearing-house established in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles.
- (19.) The intention to further develop a liberal policy with regard to the rates of interest to be allowed on amounts held in the Common Fund on behalf of estates and beneficiaries.
- (20.) The action taken by the new Public Trustee to effect economies in the administration, the full result of which will properly form part of the report for the next financial year.
- (21.) The arrangements made to close certain offices and curtail the attendance at others where in the opinion of the Public Trustee the business did not justify maintaining the offices at their previous status.

J. G. COATES,

Minister in Charge of the Public Trust Office.

Wellington, 29th September, 1921.

REPORT ON THE WORKING OF THE PUBLIC TRUST OFFICE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1921.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit a report on the working of the Public Trust Office for the year ended 31st March, 1921.

The report as a whole, and particularly that portion which relates to the financial operations of the Office, reflects the exceptional conditions existing throughout the Dominion. Nevertheless there is evidence of real and solid progress in the affairs of the Office, and when the present abnormal position in the commercial world has improved a marked advance in the business transacted by the Office may reasonably be anticipated.

1. It is gratifying to record that, as a result of the special steps taken during the past four years, the staff of the Office is now fully adequate to cope with the work which is being performed. This result is specially pleasing as, during the war period and for many years prior thereto, the staff had been hopelessly overburdened by the volume of work to be dealt with.

2. It is with regret that I have to record the death of the late Public Trustee, Mr. R. Triggs, following a brief illness. Mr. Triggs, who was formerly Assistant Public Service Commissioner, was appointed to the position of Public Trustee on the 10th October, 1917, and from that date up to the time of his death devoted himself with characteristic energy to the work of the Office.

To fill the vacancy resulting from the death of Mr. Triggs, Mr. J. W. Macdonald, Assistant Public Trustee, and formerly Solicitor to the Office, was appointed to the position of Public Trustee on the 1st March, 1921.

Mr. M. C. Barnett, Chief Inspector, has succeeded to the position of Assistant Public Trustee rendered vacant by the retirement of Mr. T. S. Ronaldson, which was referred to in last year's report.

3. A definite attempt has been made by the management of the Office to keep in touch with the district organizations throughout the Dominion. A visit of inspection to practically every office and agency in the South Island has been made by the Assistant Public Trustee, accompanied by the Secretary of the Office. A commencement has now been made by the Public Trustee with a series of visits to offices in the North Island. The visits enabled branch officers to come into direct contact with the Head Office management, and have also enabled the directing heads of the Department to become personally acquainted with the special conditions prevailing in the various districts of the Dominion.

Prior notification of each visit has been made through the public Press, and clients and other persons interested in the working of the Office have been afforded an opportunity of discussing their affairs with the Public Trustee or the Assistant Public Trustee. In many cases appreciation has been expressed of the opportunity thus given.

On the completion of the decentralization of the work of the Office it has become more than ever imperative that frequent visits of inspection to districts should be paid by the Public Trustee or his personal representative.