

business he must never forget this desirable combination of efficiency with sympathy and understanding. In its wide range of activities the underlying principle of trust work is clearly conservation and protection, which should be provided by a "painstaking and efficient service, conscientiously and constantly supplied." It cannot be denied that the "painstaking and efficient service" includes kindly and considerate dealing with the beneficiaries. Whilst foremost consideration must always be given to protecting and managing the estates committed to their charge, trustees have also an interest in seeing that those whose affairs they control receive needed advice and assistance, so far as their duties of trusteeship, their legal powers and authorities, permit, and the circumstances of any particular case warrant. At the same time it must not be overlooked that in the proper performance of their duties trustees must at times be firm and unflinching, even though they may incur the resentment or displeasure of the beneficiaries. It has been well observed that trustees should "early learn that they must not permit their judgment to be warped by emotion or unwise sympathy, and that their highest service is in exercising their wisest discretion in carrying out the duties imposed upon them."

10. In arranging the internal organization of the Department, and especially those units devoted to the administration of estates, due cognizance has been taken of all these facts, and very special attention given to the features and factors of which I have just made mention. Due recognition has been paid to the human element, and provision made for securing direct personal attention and contact in the conduct of the Office business. The work has been subdivided in such a way as to permit of officers to whom it is entrusted having sufficient time and opportunity not only to become acquainted with the details and circumstances of the various estates and the beneficiaries, but also to give ample consideration to the problems and difficulties which are constantly arising. On a number of former occasions I have set out at length the steps which have been taken to provide for the requirements which I have now outlined, but, as certain critics have recently compared somewhat unfavourably the Public Trustee's administration in this respect with that of other trust concerns, I deem it advisable to refer again to this important question. I cannot do better than repeat what I reported a year or two ago:—

The handling of thousands of estates and individual trusts which involve the peculiar concerns and welfare of numbers of beneficiaries raises problems of a very special nature and widely different from those arising in a strictly commercial business. Apart from the question of safety, not the least amongst these is that of assuring the efficient and personal attention to which each estate is entitled. I have shown in earlier reports the serious thought and planning which have been given to the preservation of continuity and of the personal element in the Public Trustee's administration of estates. At all times officers of the Department strive to come into close and personal contact with the beneficiaries and other parties interested in the estate.

The work in all the larger offices is divided into alphabetical sections, irrespective of the class of estate under administration. This arrangement possesses advantages both for the public and for the staff, enabling an inquirer to be directed without difficulty to the officer dealing with the estate concerned, and permitting each officer to be trained in all classes of administration. In charge of each section is an experienced officer who checks the administration, subject to the direction of the controlling officers. Care is taken to assign to an officer only such a number of estates as he can conveniently handle. This permits him to be acquainted with the special features of each estate under his care, and, moreover, he acquires the "personal touch" with the relatives and beneficiaries.

As early as possible the beneficiaries who reside in the neighbourhood are interviewed by responsible officers whom they will be able to consult in the future concerning administration matters. Where the beneficiaries reside elsewhere the same principles are observed in the correspondence incidental to the administration. Letters of a stereotyped and machine-made type are avoided, and the position is put before the interested parties as clearly and simply as possible. In other words, it is the aim of the Office to conduct the administration in as efficient a manner as possible, and at the same time by close individual attention and sympathy to encourage cordial relations with its clients and to inspire confidence in its administration.

The various branches of the Office are co-ordinated in a simple and effective manner, and there is no basis for any suggestion that the conduct of the Office is bureaucratic or that the business is "enmeshed in a web of red-tape." The scheme of decentralization which was established some years ago is in full operation, and has proved of very great benefit to the Office and its clients. Subject to certain safeguards, the administration of the estates, and of a large portion of the investment work, is completed at the various branches, thus facilitating and expediting the conduct of the business to a very marked extent.