

Apart from the foregoing, the benefit of the salary-reductions effected by the Finance Act, 1931 (No. 1), did not enure to the Office, for it was provided by a section of the Finance Act, 1931 (No. 2), that the amount of the salary-reductions should in the case of the Office be paid to the Consolidated Fund. The amount involved was £23,121. The Office was permitted to retain the further salary-reductions effected after the close of the year by the National Expenditure Adjustment Act, 1932; but they did not affect the finances for the year under review.

35. The remaining expenditure, which had received the closest attention in past years, was with the advent of the depressed conditions subjected to a most searching examination, and it has since been periodically reviewed to ensure that savings are effected wherever it is possible to do so, in view of the increasing volume of work, without impairing efficiency.

36. The following table showing the total expenditure of the Office over the past ten years in comparison with the business being dealt with is informative:—

Year.			Value of Estates and Funds.	Number of Wills on deposit.	Gross Expenditure and Percentage of Value of Estates and Funds.	
			£		£	Per Cent.
1921	..	..	22,364,319	28,356	233,399	1·02
1922	..	..	25,497,779	31,839	210,109	0·82
1923	..	..	28,904,798	35,502	190,315	0·66
1924	..	..	32,404,724	39,682	208,015	0·64
1925	..	..	35,570,642	44,102	222,948	0·63
1926	..	..	38,009,480	48,957	251,218	0·66
1927	..	..	41,043,523	53,531	244,189	0·59
1928	..	..	44,155,548	58,065	248,401	0·56
1929	..	..	48,334,790	62,841	269,849	0·56
1930	..	..	53,049,437	68,253	301,223	0·57
1931	..	..	57,527,263	73,523	312,701	0·54
1932	..	..	59,132,512	77,124	300,819	0·51

It will be seen that the percentage of the expenditure to the value of estates and funds under administration has dropped from 1·02 in 1921 to 0·51 during the past year, a very substantial reduction. Moreover, the expenditure from 1928 onwards includes the cost of the services rendered by the Office to the Rural Intermediate Credit Board and refunded by the Board; but the statistics relating to the business do not, however, contain any representation of the additional work performed by the Office in this regard.

37. In another portion of the report it has already been explained that after the close of the year the Office sustained a retrospective deduction from the revenue of the year as a result of the operation of Part IV of the National Expenditure Adjustment Act, 1932, which imposed a special stamp duty on interest derived from certain classes of debentures and like securities. The duty which became payable on interest which had accrued during the year amounted in all to £7,049, and the loss represented by this duty has had to be borne by the Office, as the net amount of the interest had by the close of the year been credited to the individual accounts and in many cases paid to the persons beneficially interested, so that no recovery was possible at the time when the stamp duty was imposed.

38. As the result of the various factors which have been referred to, and also because in common with other institutions the Office has suffered some losses of interest in respect of its investments through deficiencies arising out of the realization of securities and remissions ordered by the Courts under the mortgagors-relief legislation, the operations of the Office over the past year resulted in a loss of £18,614, despite the restricting of the expenditure to a minimum. It will be observed that this figure is considerably less than the total amount involved in the salary-reductions under the Finance Act, 1931 (No. 1), which the Office was not permitted to retain, and the stamp duty which after the close of the year became payable retrospectively. There will, moreover, be a substantial offset from the commission earnings, which will, when times improve and realizations can be effected, be received as remuneration for services actually rendered during the year.