The Finance Act (No. 2), 1948, enacted certain amendments to the Social Security Act, 1938, as follows :—

AGE-BENEFITS

Provision was made for the aggregate rate of benefit payable to a totally blind applicant for age-benefit to be not less than the rate which would have been payable if the applicant had been eligible for an invalid's benefit.

WIDOWS' BENEFITS

The position regarding benefits for deserted wives and wives of mental defectives has been amplified by the substitution of new subsections in the principal Act.

ORPHANS' BENEFITS

The date of expiry of an orphan's benefit is now the end of the month in which the orphan dies or attains the age of sixteen years.

FAMILY BENEFITS

The family benefit residential qualification of one year has been removed in respect of any child born to a mother during her temporary absence from New Zealand.

EMERGENCY BENEFITS

The principal Act has been amended to enable any benefit to be transferred to an emergency benefit or an emergency benefit to be granted where it is considered that suitable training or medical treatment will assist the beneficiary in his recovery. Authority is given to the Commission to fix the rate of benefit in such cases. It is intended to operate this provision in conjunction with the provisions made in the Tuberculosis Act, 1948, for vocational training and industrial rehabilitation of sufferers from tuberculosis.

MISCELLANEOUS

Any person employed outside New Zealand and while so employed is liable for the payment of the social security charge on his earnings arising from such employment may have his absence treated as a period of residence for the purpose of determining his eligibility for any benefit under the Social Security Act, 1938.

Any benefit may now be paid, in the discretion of the Commission, during any period of temporary absence of the beneficiary from New Zealand. This amendment to the Act does not affect the statutory rights of miners beneficiaries and certain invalids beneficiaries in receipt of benefits in respect of total blindness to be paid for periods of absence from New Zealand not exceeding two years in the aggregate.

QUARTERLY BENEFITS

SUPERANNUATION BENEFITS

Superannuation benefits, payable at the age of sixty-five years, came into operation from 1st April, 1940, at the rate of £10 a year. This rate is increased by £2 10s. each year, and will reach the maximum of £117 a year in 1983. For the year ended 31st March, 1949, the rate was £30 a year, and the sum of £1,850,079 was expended during the year, an increase of £256,322 over the figure for the previous year.

During the year, 10,030 new benefits were granted and 334 applications were declined. There were 65,839 benefits in force as at 31st March, 1949, an increase of 4,227 over the number for the previous year.