

27. The form says that the claim must be properly prepared?—Yes; and the Registrar, at my suggestion, prepared a little handbill, in large type, telling claimants what they had to do, but they do not do it.

28. Then, if you had pension agents here they would relieve the Magistrate of a great deal of work?—Yes; but a greater evil would spring up. You would find all kinds of bogus claims coming in.

29. *Mr. Field.*] What you mainly want is proof in support of the claim?—Yes.

30. And a declaration as to the material facts?—Yes; but what I chiefly want is to be relieved of the work in connection with renewals as much as possible. The original applications have been done with, and they will come in now in a comparatively small stream. At first it was very hard work, but it has been done, and well done, with a small percentage of errors. What I do think is most trying to the Magistrate, and trying to the applicant, is that they should have to come every year and go through the same process again. This I consider quite unnecessary.

31. *The Chairman.*] That occurs in the case of old and bed-ridden people?—Yes.

32. *Mr. Herries.*] It is because they may have inherited money during the year?—Yes. What I do now is to turn to the police report, and see if the report is clear. I ask if their circumstances are changed at all, or if they have had any better fortunes than the previous year. If the reply is "No," the pension is granted. I think that plan might be improved if made universal. If the roll were made up to a certain date, and revised through means of the police, the result would be that on the pension being reported on favourably the applicants would get their renewals without personal attendance being required. A mere certificate of existence would be sufficient.

33. *The Chairman.*] And a statement that there was no alteration of circumstances?—Yes; of course, that would be in the remarks reported on favourably. In cases which were questionable at all the applicants would have to come, and the Magistrate would have to inquire into the circumstances. If this course were taken, instead of having from a dozen to twenty cases to deal with every Saturday, we should probably not have more than twenty altogether; and that would deter bogus claims as well.

34. *Mr. Arnold.*] With regard to the Registrar being represented, he is always present, is he not?—Never.

35. Is he not present in Court?—No.

36. With regard to the pension agents you spoke of, do you not frequently find friends occasionally presenting themselves on behalf of the pensioners?—Yes; and we are very glad to see them. Solicitors of standing have come sometimes, and said they have known the applicant for so long, and under such circumstances. We are very glad to see gentlemen of that character appearing before us; but it is different when you find somebody else who is evidently making a business of the work.

37. And those friends frequently get all the information required, and have all the papers prepared?—I do not think I have met any cases where I have found that.

38. Of course, what you suggest will make a great deal more work for the Registrar?—Certainly; that is my intention—to put the work on the department that it belongs to.

39. The work would be very much simplified?—What I say is that it is not right to impose upon a Magistrate all this preparatory work. He should have all the papers prepared, and the evidence in support or in opposition, if there are two parties to the case.

40. *Mr. Herries.*] Have you had any difficulty with regard to the interpreters in judging Maori claims?—That is the trouble.

41. Is any officer appointed?—No.

42. Does the Maori have to find his own interpreter?—Yes; and my experience teaches me to look upon what he has stated as what he knows himself, but not altogether what the applicant has told him during the examination.

43. And the cost of employing the interpreter has to come out of the pension-claim?—Yes.

44. Have you had any cases of impersonation?—Not to my knowledge.

45. It is quite possible there may be such cases?—Yes. The Magistrate feels quite helpless in dealing with Maori applicants if he has not had any dealings with the Maoris. He does not know how to go to work to find out whether the applicant is the genuine person or not. I am quite at home when dealing with European cases, but with the Maoris I feel that I am in the hands of the interpreter. What I tried to do was to make the Native Office do the work.

46. Is clause 33 of the regulations carried out—viz., "It shall be the duty of every Government officer having the requisite knowledge of the Maori language to assist Maoris in preparing their pension-claims and income and property statements and to give the aforesaid certificate without fee"?—I cannot say. Once, I think, an official interpreter came, but the others I saw are those that I have seen about the Native Land Court.

47. There is no official interpreter given to you?—No.

48. *Mr. Field.*] The real danger lies in the future, as people become alive to the loopholes for obtaining pensions?—I think so. The percentage of fraud has been very small indeed, but lately we have had several attempts made by applicants to come in, sometimes coming in very much under age. Of course, if one gets in successfully, the neighbour says, "So-and-so has got in—I can get in." In the same way there are many people coming now whose relatives are really wealthy. At first they would not come to the Court, but the relative of some wealthy family came, and then others came.

49. *The Chairman.*] So far as evidence has been brought before you, you can only find eight cases out of 740 where pensions have been obtained by people who were not entitled to them?—I would not say that even they were all fraudulent.

50. Have not cases come under your notice where pensioners, with a view to obtaining the pension, have made over their property, say, a year or two before to their relatives?—That is