

14. *Mr. Hogg.*] In the case where a Magistrate stops a pension there is no appeal?—No.

15. And is it optional, then, with the Magistrate whether he stops a pension or recommends that an agent should be appointed?—Of course, if he stops the pension there is no appeal against that. I have no doubt he only follows the law. Perhaps the Magistrate would move in the direction of saying that you must find an agent.

16. *Mr. Field.*] We were talking about the question of a pension-year?—Yes. I thought myself that it would present difficulties. I may say we thought it all carefully out. At first I was rather in favour of that. It would be possible if it could be shown that the Magistrates could do the work; and I dare say we could do the work in the office, but it would push us very hard for a month or two to have all these pensions together, and they will go on increasing. We have not got anywhere near to the limit of the number of pensions yet. They increase faster than the population.

17. Why is that?—It is a very simple matter. You understand that in a new country like this the number of persons over sixty-five years of age who were eligible—they must be that—many years ago was only something like 1 per cent. when the first census was taken; it is now 3 or 4 per cent., and day by day it will rise, and I would not say it would not rise to 8 per cent. The death-rate of New Zealand is very low, and we hardly know what it is going to result in, and so people live to a great age. We know and can calculate as to the number for a great number of years according to the present death-rate. The difficulty we have in determining the number of pensioners who are likely to be on the roll, say, five, ten, fifteen, or twenty years ahead is that we do not now know the present age of those who are applying—of those who are entitled in respect to age. Last year when I calculated it was a little over 40 per cent., and I do not think it has risen very much in proportion to the number of persons over sixty-five years of age. In respect of the recent census, I told the Registrar-General that I thought he would find the number of people over sixty-five years of age would have gone up considerably. There is a motive now for people stating their age at its full extent, assuming they did not state it to its full amount before. I think, taking the new figures, it will be found it has gone up very much. I should not be surprised in a few years—five or ten years hence—there will be, say, 50 per cent of the people who are over sixty-five years of age applying for the pension. So it goes on increasing beyond the population.

18. From past experience you are certain that people over sixty-five years of age will continue to increase?—Oh, yes, we know that.

19. And you think the chances are it will increase up to something like 8 per cent.?—I think ultimately it may come to that.

20. You also think, of the old people over sixty-five years of age, a proportion of them will apply for a pension?—I think that is likely. I could not place any limit to them; I could not expect it to go up to 50 per cent. during the next five years. But nobody can tell; there are no figures; so many things might interfere. You know how much more difficult it is for old men to find work under the present state of things. There are so many factors that come in that one might not think of at all, and it would be impossible for any one to guess. We know roughly how many there will be over the age of sixty-five for the next sixty years.

21. It depends, of course, on the prosperity of the country?—Yes; and a great many other considerations.

22. Referring to this question of the pension-year, the Magistrate is of opinion that it will be a good thing to have a pension-year?—It might work in some districts, but might be found to be very difficult to work in others. I think it should be most carefully considered from everybody's point of view. I should like the opinion of the Magistrates upon the point.

23. Well, you see, Mr. Haselden qualified it in some way. What he suggested was that a lot of work might be taken off his hands?—That is another matter. You are coming to a side-issue; if certain other things were done, then, of course, that alters the position.

24. With regard to this question of renewals of pensions, he thinks that a lot of work might be taken off his duties in this way: The Deputy Registrars might have their lists of the old-age pensioners in their districts, and they (the Deputy Registrars) might divide them up amongst the police districts, and the police be asked to make a report?—I am getting out an arrangement for that purpose. Probably something will be done in that direction immediately. We are very busy just now, and I have got instructions to do something in that direction.

25. Instead of having to deal with the whole 100 per cent. renewals, perhaps he would only have to deal with 7 or 10 per cent. of them?—He would only have to sign his name to a certain number of them.

26. You think if that could be done a pension-year would be a good thing?—I am not quite sure about that yet. I should not like to hastily try the experiment. I should like to consider it very carefully, and I should take the opinion of Magistrates whose districts are totally different to that of a town like Wellington.

27. As to the persons best qualified to make inquiries, the opinion was expressed that the police are not the best persons to do this?—Well, who is to do it? Failing the police, unless you go and spend an enormous sum of money, who else than the police can do it?

28. Do you think the police are well qualified to make these inquiries?—There is nobody else to do it, except at a huge expense.

29. In my opinion, the police ought to do it, but there is no real reason why they should do it in police uniform?—The police were kept away from it at first, but the assistance of the police has almost been forced upon us.

30. Do you see any reason to their going round the country and making up returns for various things?—I have sometimes been in Court and heard an old-age-pension case, and the Magistrate has said in a very nice way, "I have to ask you whether you have ever been in gaol?" and the poor old