

woman has said, "No, sir." But the Magistrate did it very nicely, and did not hurt her feelings. He did it in a very nice way, and these questions must be asked in order to prevent a scandal in people getting the pension who should not have it. I do not think many are kept away from applying for the pension by this. Mr. Haselden takes the cases here in his private room, and nobody pushes his way into his private room who has not a right to do so. So that old people are not put to any inconvenience in any way. Most of the Magistrates, however, hear the claims in open Court elsewhere, I believe, but I do not think that many are deterred from asking for a pension because they have to apply to a Magistrate. Some few very sensitive persons who have come down in the world might feel rather disinclined to come forward and ask for the pension.

31. On that question, taking all the circumstances into consideration, do you think it is best or that it is not prudent the names should be published?—I think it is better that publicity should be given. Everything should be published in the world; in my opinion, it is far better; generally it is advisable that everything should be known. If there was an attempt to suppress anything you might be told there was something serious behind what you were attempting to suppress.

32. I have known of cases of persons who want old-age pensions and who do not apply because of the publicity: do you think that there are very few cases of this description?—At first they did not like to come, but when they saw their neighbours coming they felt they were in the same position.

33. I understand that in some cases names are published, and in others the names are not published?—I understand from the Clerk of the Court here that they arranged with the newspaper reporters to give them a list of the claims once a month, and then the reporters did not come about. I do not know what is done elsewhere. Where they are taken in open Court I have no doubt the reporter just takes down what he thinks necessary, just as in other cases in Court, and I think you may trust to the discretion of the newspapers not to say more than such-and-such pensions were granted. I do not think they do more than this. I think this sort of publicity is desirable, taking it generally.

34. Do you find yourself at all hampered in making inquiries by Post-Office Savings-banks and other banks declining to give information with regard to deposits?—It is a recognised thing that they will not do it, but I think that will very likely be insisted upon.

35. You think it should be insisted upon?—I think it will be.

36. It does create an amount of difficulty, and hamper the authorities, does it not?—I think that the State has a right, in inquiring into anything of this kind, to know everything, and perhaps I might be at liberty to say that in the new Bill that will probably be insisted upon.

37. *Mr. Arnold.*] You say, Mr. Mason, that the notices of the pensions granted are sent to the various post-offices throughout the colony practically daily?—I send them to the Head Office, and they send them out to the local offices—from the Accountant's Office here in Wellington. If any notice comes in to me that a pension has been renewed or increased in amount, or that the place of payment has been changed, or any circumstances affecting a pension in respect to its payment, I send out a notice as soon as I receive it. There is not a day but I am sending notices of that kind to the Head Office in Wellington, and they communicate immediately with the local offices and instruct them.

38. Supposing the pension is in a country district, or in Auckland or Christchurch, that is then sent to Wellington before it goes to the Post Office?—That comes to me from the Deputy Registrar. If it is a renewal I get only a list of the renewals; if it is altered I get a telegraphic message.

39. Practically, in the first place this work is done by the Deputy Registrar?—He reports everything to me.

40. Speaking with regard to the police doing the work, you said if they did not do it the expense would almost prohibit the work being done at all?—I think if you were to have a private-inquiry office the expense would be enormous.

41. Supposing the police did it, would not the Justice Department charge that expense to the Old-age Pensions Department?—They are quite right in that. If a policeman is detailed off for this work they do not charge for his services, but if he has to ride his horse a distance, or get some meals, or reside away from home, we pay for any charge like that; but that is a trifle, sir—that is a small expense.

42. It is a small expense in comparison to the number of pensions?—You will recognise that the whole expense of the administration is very small compared with the amount dealt with. Of course, we get a great deal of work for nothing; I admit that. The expense would be something enormous if we had to appoint an agent in every small place for the convenience of everybody. At present it is done through the Post Office. That saves us a great amount; it is done in the Post Office people's time. In a place like Wellington a man is detailed off to pay the old-age pensioners on one day in the month, and this is generally done in the morning, and the few that come along afterwards are simply paid over the counter.

43. With regard to pensioners transferring any property or money that they might possess so as to come under the Act?—I have had a few anonymous letters in respect to this matter. In these I have asked for inquiries to be made through the police, and have found that the Magistrate knew all about it in the first instance, and judged that there was no transfer of that kind. I do not say that there have not been a few cases of that class. I do not want to say that there has not been a single case of that kind; but I really do not think that there is any serious amount of imposition in that way.

44. Have you a form in Wellington that is not in the regulations by which a private individual testifies as to the character and otherwise as to the pensioners?—Many of the Magistrates have had forms specially provided for enabling persons to give their evidence as to a person's character, and their belief in general of the eligibility of the claimant, but the form is not in universal use.

45. I have a form here that was compiled by the Deputy Registrar in Dunedin, viz. :—