

"The Old-age Pensions Act, 1898."

STATUTORY DECLARATION.

I, _____, of _____, do solemnly and sincerely declare—

1. That I have known _____, an applicant for a pension under "The Old-age Pensions Act, 1898," for about _____ years, and that he has for the whole of that time, up to the date hereof, resided in the Colony of New Zealand, and from inquiries made by me he has, to the best of my belief, resided continuously in the said colony for not less than twenty-five years, and that during that time he has never been imprisoned.

2. That he has not at any time for a period of six months or upwards deserted his wife [her husband], or, without just cause, failed to provide her with adequate means of maintenance, or neglected to maintain such of his [her] children as were under the age of fourteen years.

3. That he is, to the best of my belief, over the age of sixty-five years.

4. That he is of good moral character, and is and has for five years last past been leading a sober and reputable life.

5. That, to the best of my information and belief, his [her] income for the past twelve months did not exceed _____ pounds, and the value of his [her] property of every kind and description does not exceed _____ pounds, and he has not directly or indirectly deprived _____ self of income or property in order to qualify _____ self for pension.

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true, and by virtue of an Act of the General Assembly of New Zealand intituled "The Justices of the Peace Act, 1882."

Declared at _____, this _____ day of _____, 19____, before me, _____, Justice of the Peace, [Solicitor, or Postmaster].

This form was drawn up originally by a Magistrate in Dunedin, and you will notice in it that both the question of character and property is testified to, and that it is signed by a Justice of the Peace, whose signature has to be known to the Magistrate. Do you think it would be advisable to put such a form as that in the regulations and make it universal?—You mean in supplementing the statement of the pensioner?

46. Exactly; to minimise the work of the police constable, or whoever might be employed in the matter. It is one way out of the difficulty. The case, of course, is only a supposititious one?—Well, of course, the Magistrate, it seems to me, should determine exactly what he wants. One Magistrate may have one way of doing it, and another another way. I think it would be a very good plan to have something of this kind in written evidence.

47. I will put this form in, Mr. Chairman. The question with regard to property is answered, and, as far as we are concerned, the question as to whether a person has ever been in gaol is never asked by the Magistrate. He accepts this as being an answer. Have you seen this form also, Mr. Mason? It is for the purpose of reinvestigation [reinvestigation form produced]?—No, I do not remember having seen this form. If it came to me I sent it away. It is merely routine work; a Magistrate asks for a form, and he gets it. It is possible we may have got it printed at his special desire, or possibly it was printed in Dunedin. He may have had them printed and sent in the voucher, and it has been allowed. I do not remember it. If he had asked for it we would have had it printed for him.

Mr. Arnold: I want to put this form in, too, Mr. Chairman. [For form see Mr. Taylor's evidence.] It is a form drawn up in Dunedin by the Deputy Registrar at the request of the Magistrate. It is for the purpose of reinvestigation of old-age pensions. I want to bring out, if I possibly can, the great amount of work done by the Deputy Registrars throughout the colony; it is not recognised, and not known. The Deputy Registrar makes investigations through the police and otherwise, and fills up one of these sheets in connection with every renewal, and when this is presented to the Magistrate he simply asks one or two questions—in some cases none at all—and renews the pension.

The Chairman: The Deputy Registrar prepares the work for the Magistrate.

Mr. Mason: The work done by the Deputy Registrar in Dunedin is very good.

48. *Mr. Arnold:* It is suggested in these cases the Deputy Registrar should have power to appear and ask questions?—Well, that will be provided for in the new Bill.

Mr. Arnold: Well, I have communicated with Dunedin on the subject so that my statement might be verified. Mr. Taylor, the Deputy Registrar, says, "We have all this in Dunedin in connection with these reinvestigation sheets. I prepared all the sheets (22 in. by 17 in.) for the Stipendiary Magistrate's Court, and attend personally, and am recognised as a part of the Court. I speak on any case when necessary without going into the witness-box. If absent, I am sent for by the Stipendiary Magistrate. The enclosed sheet is my invention. The Registrar may adopt it if he pleases for the colony." I will put this information in, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Do you wish to ask Mr. Mansfield, the Deputy Registrar, any questions, Mr. Field? He is present, and will answer any questions put to him.

49. *Mr. Field:* Is it you, Mr. Mansfield, or Mr. Mason that appears in Court when these pension cases come on?

Mr. Mason: Neither of us appears. This is the position: The Deputy Registrar is in many instances the Clerk of the Court. In Wellington the work of the Clerk of the Court was of such an arduous character, and his time was so fully employed, that it was necessary for some one else to be employed. Mr. Mansfield is appointed here in Wellington, and is holding another Government position. In the other large centres persons not holding another position are appointed, and are paid. Mr. Mansfield gets no extra pay for his special work. That is the position: neither of us appears in Court.

50. *Mr. Field:* There is no real necessity for you to appear in Court?—It would be impossible for me to appear in every Court, therefore it is useless for me to appear in Wellington alone. As to the Deputy Registrar appearing in Court, that is a question for consideration.

51. You think it is more satisfactory if the Clerk of the Court is the Deputy Registrar?—It is impossible in Wellington. Mr. Thomson's work precludes him from being Deputy Registrar.

52. Apart from that consideration, would it not be well if there were somebody in Court representing the Registrar or Deputy Registrar?—Yes; and I think that will probably be done.