*Mr. Mansfield :* A great deal of investigation already goes on in the Deputy Registrar's office. I could tell you of numbers of people who have not presented themselves to the Magistrate because of the evidence against them, which they got through the Deputy Registrar.

*The Chairman :* That is what some of the Magistrates would like us to get, a regulation to that effect—that as far as possible the Deputy Registrars should prepare the papers. In Dunedin the Deputy Registrar there does so.

*Mr. Mansfield :* It is done in Wellington too, although not brought into Court.

*The Chairman :* If a Deputy Registrar had to do that he would have to be relieved of some other burden with a view to devoting himself to that.

*Mr. Arno d :* The difficulty is, the Deputy Registrar has his time fully taken up doing that and anything else, and is receiving no extra pay for it.

67. *The Chairman.*] In Dunedin does he occupy other positions, Mr. Mason ?—No, he has not another Government position.

68. You say that there are about twelve or thirteen thousand pensioners in the colony—in round figures ?—I think there are about thirteen thousand.

69. Could you furnish us with the right figures ?—Yes, up to the end of August.

70. You say that the old-age pensioners at present in New Zealand represent, in round figures, 40 per cent. of the total number of people who are over the age of sixty in the colony ?—I made this calculation last year on the basis of the census that was taken nearly six years ago—that is, in 1895—and there was then a little over 40 per cent.—between 41 and 42 per cent. That was excluding Maoris. I was only calculating the number of persons, not including Maoris and Chinese. I did not make a calculation for this last report, because I was waiting for the figures from the Registrar-General for the census that was taken at the end of March last.

71. Could you furnish this Committee with three approximate sets of figures—first, the number of pensioners up to a certain age who have drawn the pension in New Zealand ; and, second, the number of people who in New Zealand are over sixty-five years of age ?—That is the reason why I did not give it in this year's report, because I should like to have the actual figures from the Registrar-General's figures as soon as they are out. They will be ready in a month or two.

72. You could not give us an approximate number ?—You see, it would be a calculation only by guessing, and I could not get it any nearer than, say, 40 per cent.

73. Supposing, roughly speaking, we find that there are twenty thousand people in New Zealand over sixty-five years of age ?—Say, twenty-six to twenty-seven thousand.

74. Say twenty-six thousand ; I do not suppose you can give the Committee this information : how many of that twenty-six thousand would it be fair to deduct as the number of people who had lived in New Zealand less than twenty-five years—would it be 10 per cent. ?—A very small number of them ; less than 10 per cent.—say 5 per cent.

75. You say, as far as you are aware, the number of cases of fraud are infinitesimal ?—I can only go on this fact : that I have received twenty or thirty letters—some of them signed and some of them anonymous—and I have investigated these cases, and very few of them have turned out right. When we came to inquire we found the Magistrate knew the circumstances that were reported again by the police.

76. *Mr. Field.*] Do you think that they will learn better as time goes on—there are loopholes, and all that sort of thing ?—There is always that tendency ; they must be carefully watched.

77. Is there in existence the pension agent—the gentleman you want to put down ?—No.

*Mr. Mansfield :* With reference to that question you raised about the loopholes, Mr. Field, I know of one case where a lady had her pension renewed, and the daughter—who was the agent—had to apply for renewal, the mother being unable to attend the Court. The Magistrate determined the pension was so-much, but when he looked up the previous year's pension records he found that he was giving £2 more than last year, and on looking further found the pensioner had omitted stating she had twenty pounds' worth of furniture. I think I heard it pretty well indicated that that furniture will be sent to the auction-room before next year, although it is against the statute to get rid of property for the sake of obtaining a pension.

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TUESDAY, 15TH OCTOBER, 1901.

JAMES TAYLOR, of Dunedin, Accountant, examined. (No. 3.)

*The Chairman :* Your name is James Taylor, and I believe you are Deputy Commissioner of Old-age Pensions in Dunedin. The reason for the setting-up of this Committee is to inquire into the working of the Old-age Pensions Act, and the regulations connected therewith ; and, as we have been given to understand that you have a large experience in connection with the working of these matters in your district, it has been suggested that you should make a statement before the Committee, giving us any recommendations which you may have to make in the matter of improvement of the regulations. After you have made your statement the members of the Committee will ask you any questions they may wish to put, and we shall be glad to hear your views on the subject.

*Mr. Taylor :* Well, gentlemen, Dunedin is a very exceptional place. Generally speaking, the Deputy Commissioner can bring all his cases before the one Magistrate, but in Dunedin we have four different districts—Dunedin, Mosgiel, Outram, and Middlemarch. I have prepared this form to meet the case. [See Appendix C.] The object of it is that we have three different Magistrates. [The witness then went on to describe the local working of the Act, which, by the desire of the Chairman, was not recorded.] We generally ask applicants to produce their Savings-Bank books in